

# COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELF-TRANSCENDENCE, SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING, OPTIMISM AND MEANING IN LIFE AMONG RETIREES AND POST-RETIREMENT EMPLOYEES

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the inter-correlations of self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Additionally, the aim was to find out the differences in mean scores of self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees. The sample consisted of people with Bachelor Degree. Retirees sample consisted of 60 participants (52 men, and 8 women), while post-retirement employees consisted of 60 participants (all of them were men). The Self-Transcendence Scale (STS) (Reed 2018), The Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB) (Daaleman and Frey 2004), The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) (Scheier, Carver and Bridges, 1994) and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler 2006) were used. The data were analyzed with Pearson correlation. The t-test was used. Findings indicated that there were significant positive correlations between self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Self-transcendence correlated positively with spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Spiritual well-being correlated positively with optimism and meaning in life. There were differences in mean scores of self-transcendence, optimism and meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees. However there was not difference in spiritual well-being between the two groups. Findings were discussed and conclusion was included.

**Keywords:** self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism, meaning in life, retirees, post-retirement employees

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## INTRODUCTION

Work can be a resource of income, security. It provides people with behavioural confirmation through colleagues and supervisors. Work can help people deal with new tasks and developing skills through what is called stimulation (Martin, Oliver and Clemens 2016). One can presume that work is more than securing economic support; work is an important element in one's life that involves important psychological and social aspects that extend beyond basic needs (Ulrike, Mo, Jan-Bennet and Jürgen 2016). However, if the amount of money paid is low, if the person feels insecure, receives low approval and exposed to strenuous working conditions, this may be stressful (Martin, Oliver and Clemens 2016). Retirement from work is a milestone and marks the end of working life. Retirement is can be considered as a dramatic change of social status as well as transition from “worker” to “retired”, which affects all domains of life (Özlem, Efe and Umut 2014). Although retirement may promote a sense of well-being of workers moving out of demanding and /or stressful career jobs, this process may also involve distancing the person both psychologically and behaviourally from the workforce. This in turn exposes new social roles, expectations, challenges, and opportunities, on the person and all of which can influence well-being (Wang and Shi 2014). Post-retirement employment can be conceptualized as a developmental stage in one's (the retiree) late career (Wang and Shi 2014). This important stage in one's life may include part-time jobs and self-employment (Beehr and Bennett 2015).

Self-transcendence is regarded as purpose in one's life and can be described as one's awareness of something or other people other than oneself (Sharpnack, Griffin and Fitzpatrick 2011). It was found to provide hope which helps a person adapt and cope with life obstacles. Through self-transcendence, one can find meaning in life. Reed (2003) described self-transcendence as the capacity to ascend one's personal needs and desires and connect with others, their environment, and a spiritual dimension or God (Sharpnack et al. 2011). Sharing wisdom, integrating the aging process, accepting death as a part of life, and finding a spiritual meaning in life, all of which express self-transcendence Reed 2003). The correlation

between spiritual well-being and self-transcendence has not been previously examined in retirees and in –service public employees.

Well-being is seen as a sense of feeling whole and healthy and is an outcome of self-transcendence (Sharpnack et al. 2011). Spiritual well-being can be regarded as the impact of spirituality, a sense of meaning, purpose, or power within a transcendent source, on subjective well-being (Daaleman, Perera, and Studenski 2004) Spirituality has great impact on and importance to well-being in the lives of elderlies as it can lead to or be predictor of overall satisfaction (Gørill et al. 2011). Self-transcendence becomes evident through spirituality which is regarded as a human pattern (Sharpnack et al. 2011). It was found that spirituality was an effective variable in the overall well-being as well as in quality of life (Beery, Baas, Fowler and Allen 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-transcendence and spiritual well-being as well as the differences between retirees and in –service public employees. Optimism is seen as positive expectations about one's own future. Optimism was found to be positively correlated with employee performance (Mishra, Patnaik and Mishra 2016). It can be presume that those with high levels of optimism tend to expect good things to happen to them, anticipate positive results and success in challenging individual tasks. According to results of Raina, Elizabeth and Thomas (2018), optimism is effective since those in -service employees who are supposed to be high on optimism maintain positive expectation and believe they will succeed regardless of their abilities.. Optimism was found to influence successful exits from the world of work (Topa, Alcover, Moriano and Depolo 2014) and would affect retirement adjustment quality (Topa and Inmaculada 2018).

How people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives is a simple definition of meaning in life as well as the degree to which those people have a purpose, mission, or over-arching aim in life (Krause and Hayward 2014). Those authors (Krause and Hayward 2014) proposed a model composed of five factors of meaning in life, the first factor is one's own values, which are considered to be norms that describe desirable behaviours and beliefs. The second is a sense of purpose, that is, the affective evaluation

that the person has after successful implementing; those behaviours which are consistent with one's values. The third comprises goals people seek to achieve investing their energy, efforts and ambitions. Reconciling the past is the fourth factor. The feeling that life makes sense is the fifth factor. It means the ability to explain the events in one's life, as well as others behaviours and one's own actions.

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Work is thought of as a central aspect of our lives, where it enables workers to feel happier, hopeful, optimistic and be more punctual. Meanwhile, retirement is supposed to be a major transition in the life of eldest people. According to research studies (Hershey, Henkens and van Dalen 2010; Peiró, Tordera and Potocnik 2013); employees, when they come to retire, are concerned with financial aspects and quality of life. Moreover, social, affective and family bonds are markedly mattered (Kubicek, Korunka, Raymo and Hoonakker, 2011; Antonucci 2001).

This study poses the following questions:

1. Are there relationships between and among self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life?
2. Are there significant difference in self-transcendence between retirees and post-retirement employees?
3. Are there significant difference in spiritual well-being between retirees and post-retirement employees?
4. Are there significant difference in optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees?
5. Are there significant difference in meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees?

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study could contribute to the literature on self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life among retirees and post-retirement employees. The study is concerned with retirees and post-retirement employees and presents some factors, namely self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life that might

contribute to and have impact on both retirees and post-retirement employees.

#### HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: There are positive correlation between and among self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life.

Hypothesis 2: There would not be significant difference in self-transcendence between retirees and post-retirement employees.

Hypothesis 3: There would not be significant difference in spiritual well-being between retirees and post-retirement employees.

Hypothesis 4: There would not be significant difference in optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees.

Hypothesis 5: There would not be significant difference in meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees.

#### METHOD

##### DESIGN

The researcher has adopted a descriptive research design to describe and compare self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life among retirees and post-retirement employees.

##### SAMPLE

The participants were sampled using purposive sampling technique. They were typical cases that provided requisite data or information. In this regard, the researcher identified actual population of interest (retirees and post-retirement employees). The sample consisted of people with Bachelor Degree. Retirees sample (those who no longer hold jobs) consisted of 60 participants (52 men, and 8 women), while post-retirement employees (those who hold jobs after retirement) consisted of 60 participants (all of them were men). They aged from 61-66 (M= 62.3 years, SD= 1.12). The marital status were as follows: married = 110,

widow = 10 (all of them were females). They were from Water Resource Company (n=6), Electricity Company (n= 3), Ministry Of Agriculture (n=10), Ministry of Local Government (n=14) and Ministry of Education (n=87).

#### INSTRUMENTS

*The Self-Transcendence Scale (STS) (Reed, 2018).* A 15 items, one-dimensional, 4-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The intention was to identify intrapersonal, interpersonal, transpersonal, and temporal experiences characteristic of later life, which reflect expanded boundaries of self (Reed, 2018). The Scale was translated into Arabic and translated back into English. The back-translated version was reviewed and approved by a panel of three assistant professors in English department. The scale scores range from 15 to 60 (from 1 to 4 for each item), and the high scores indicate a high self-transcendence. The internal consistency of the scale was measured through Cronbach's alpha estimated at 0.91. The content validity of the scale was examined by a group of 10 experts. They assessed the relevance of each item using a four-point Likert scale (where 1 represents "irrelevant" and 4 represents "highly relevant"). They provided suggestions and comments. The 15 items were judged to be quite or highly relevant. A content validity index was calculated at the item level (I-CVI = 0.90).

*The Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB) (Daaleman and Frey, 2004).* A 12 items, 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The intention was to measure well-being within the context of spirituality. The final score of the scale is obtained by adding those of each item and then dividing by number of items each respondent answer to obtain a mean score. The scale scores range from 12 to 60 (from 1 to 5 for each item), and high scores are indicative of high levels of spirituality well-being. The Scale was translated into Arabic and translated back into English. The back-translated version was reviewed and approved by a panel of three assistant professors in English department. In this study, reliability was calculated by using t-retest after 14 days. Correlation coefficient were 0.688 for the whole scale. For convergent validity of The Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB),

correlation with Religious Orientation Questionnaire (Taha 2015) was significant ( $r=0.62, p<.01$ ).

*The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994).* A widely used, unidimensional, 10 items, 5-point Likert dispositional optimism scale. Respondents rate each item on a 4-point scale: 0 = *strongly disagree*, 1 = *disagree*, 2 = *neutral*, 3 = *agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*. The final score of the scale is obtained by summing the items' scores after reverse-scoring the negative items (items 3, 7, and 9) and eliminating the four filler items (items 2, 5, 6, and 8). Computed scores are on ranged from 0 to 24 where high scores are indicative of high levels of optimism. The Scale was translated into Arabic and translated back into English. The back-translated version was reviewed and approved by a panel of three assistant professors in English department. In this study, the reliability of the scale in terms of internal consistency was assessed by Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ). For convergent validity of The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R), correlation with Optimism Scale (Eid, Mahmoud and Farag 2015) was significant ( $r=0.60, p<.01$ ).

*Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler, 2006).* A 10-item, 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely True) to 7 (Absolutely Untrue). The intention was to assess the presence of, and search for, meaning in life. Computed scores are on ranged from 10 to 70. The Scale was translated into Arabic and translated back into English. The back-translated version was reviewed and approved by a panel of three assistant professors in English department. The reliability of the scale in terms of internal consistency was assessed by Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). The split half reliability index for the ten MLQ items was Spearman-Brown Coefficient (equal and unequal length) = .69 and Guttman Coefficient = .68. For convergent validity of Meaning in Life Questionnaire, correlation with The Five Factor Scale of Resilience (Othman 2009) was significant ( $r=0.63, p<.01$ ).

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Retirees and post-retirement employees voluntarily participated in the study. They were free to discontinue responding to the questionnaires or in the study as a whole at any time. The researcher explained verbally about the study purposes privately before obtaining consent from each retiree and post-retirement employee. Information collected in the study was kept strictly confidential, concealed, and it was used strictly for the purposes of this study. Sure, there were neither known risks for participating in this study nor any incentives provided for participation.

## PROCEDURES

Prior to administering the scales, retirees and post-retirement employees were informed about purpose of the study and voluntarily stated that they accept to participate to the study. To ensure that the respondents responded to the items honestly and sincerely, they were told not to identify themselves in any way on the scale paper. They were also informed that they should not be concerned with anything concerning their participation in the study and their responses are for research purposes only and would be kept confidential. Each questionnaire took about 10-15

minutes to complete. Data were entered in Excel and SPSS files.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed with Pearson correlation. The t-test was used to explore the differences in self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life among retirees and post-retirement employees.

## RESULTS

### DESCRIPTIVE DATA AND INTER-CORRELATION

*Table 1.* shows the means, descriptive statistics and inter-correlations of self-transcendence ,spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Table 1 shows that there are significant positive correlations between self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Self-transcendence correlates positively with spiritual well-being ( $r = 0.542$ ), optimism ( $r = 0.508$ ) and meaning in life( $r = 0.443$ ). Spiritual well-being correlates positively with optimism( $r = 0.514$ ) and meaning in life( $r = 0.455$ ).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations of self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life.

Variables	self-transcendence	spiritual well-being	Optimism	meaning in life
self-transcendence	1.00	0.542**	0.508**	0.443**
spiritual well-being	0.542**	1.00	0.514**	0.455**
optimism	0.508**	0.514**	1.00	0.520**
meaning in life	0.443**	0.455**	0.520**	1.00
Mean	35.591	45.125	12.750	33.125
Standard deviation	10.059	5.453	4.106	11.007
** P <.01				

## DIFFERENCE IN SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

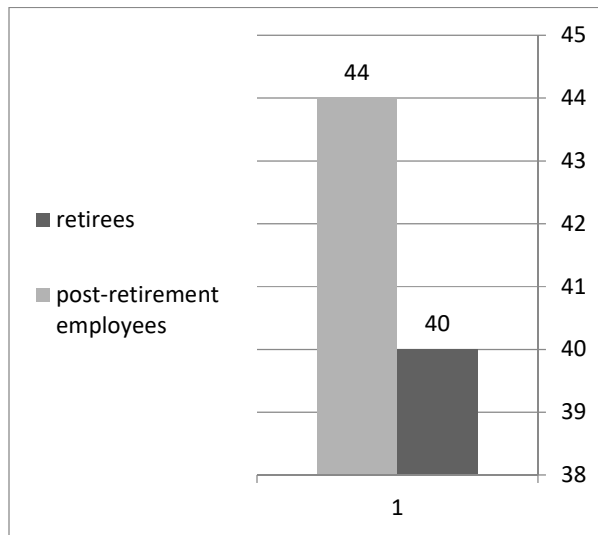
Table 2. shows the t-test results for the differences in mean scores of self-transcendence between retirees and post-retirement employees. The table shows that (t) vale was (3.027). This value is

significant at the level ( $p < 0,01$ ) in the favor of the post-retirement employees.

Table 2. The t-test results for the differences in mean scores of self-transcendence between retirees and post-retirement employees

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
retirees	60	40.616	9.010	3.027	0.01
post-retirement employees	60	44.866	5.321		

Figure 1. The differences in mean scores of self-transcendence between retirees and post-retirement employees



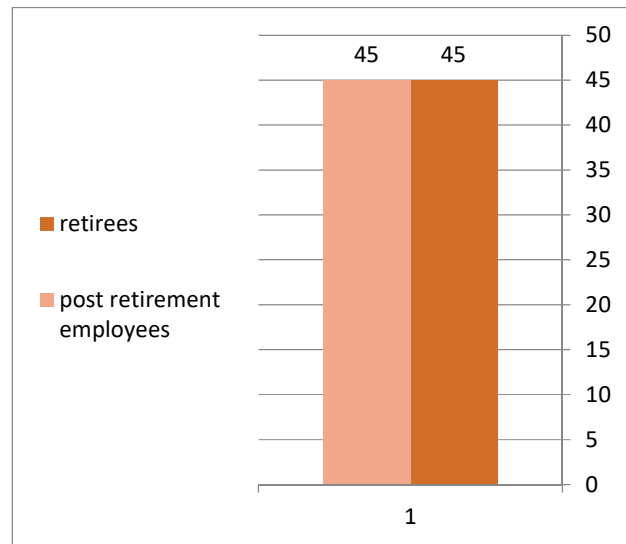
DIFFERENCE IN SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

Table 3. shows the t-test results for the differences in mean scores of spiritual well-being between retirees and post-retirement employees . The table shows that (t) vale was (0.977). This value is not significant. This means that there are no differences between retirees and post-retirement employees groups in spiritual well-being.

Table 3. The t-test results for the differences in mean scores of spiritual well-being between retirees and post-retirement employees.

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
retirees	60	45.116	5.437	0.977	Not
post-retirement employees	60	45.133	5.515		

Figure 2. The differences in mean scores of spiritual well-being between retirees and post-retirement employees



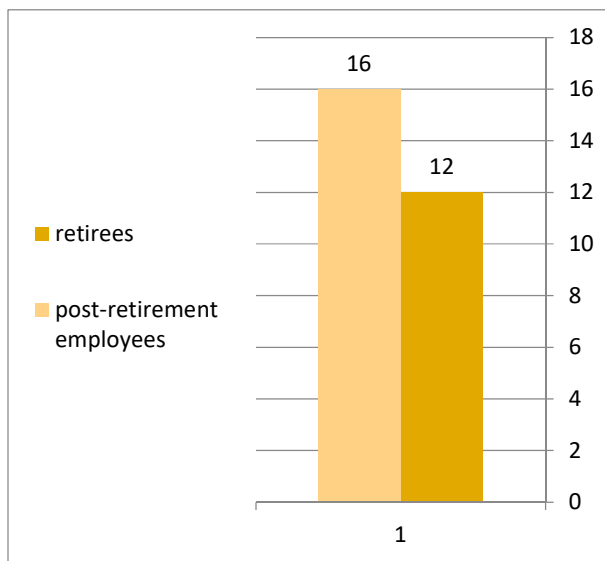
DIFFERENCE IN OPTIMISM

Table 4. shows the t-test results for the differences in mean scores of optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees. The table shows that (t) vale was (5.700). This value is significant at the level ( $p < 0,01$ ) in the favour of the post-retirement employees.

Table 4. The t-test results for the differences in mean scores of optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees.

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
Retirees	60	12.400	4.592	5.700	0.01
post-retirement employees	60	16.300	2.644		

Figure 3. The differences in mean scores of optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees



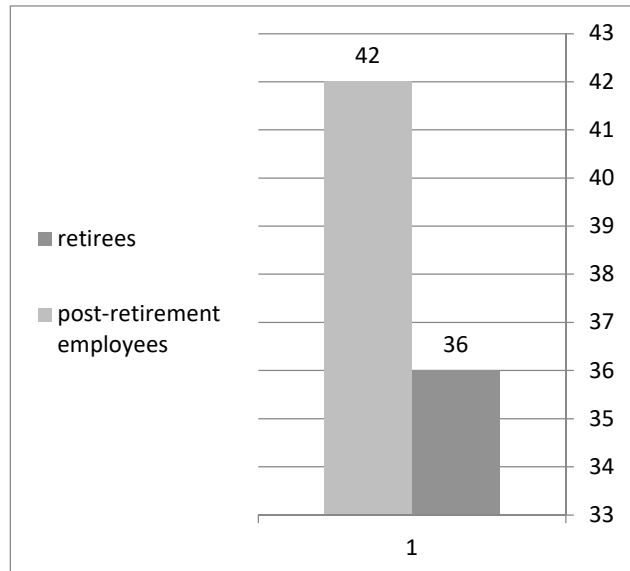
DIFFERENCE IN THE MEANING OF LIFE

Table 5. shows the t-test results for the differences in mean scores of optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees . The table shows that (t) vale was (2.437). This value is significant at the level ( $p < 0,01$ ) in the favour of the post-retirement employees.

Table 5. The t-test results for the differences in mean scores of meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees.

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
retirees	60	36.016	13.609	2.437	0.01
post-retirement employees	60	42.550	12.943		

Figure 4. The differences in mean scores of meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees



DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the inter-correlations of self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Additionally, the aim was to find out the differences in mean scores of self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees. There were significant positive correlations between self-transcendence, spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Self-transcendence correlated positively with spiritual well-being, optimism and meaning in life. Spiritual well-being



correlated positively with optimism and meaning in life. Spirituality is a particularly important factor to general well-being in the lives of people who retired from work and those who continued to work post-retirement. Self-transcendence can be described as a powerful coping mechanism that help people adapt to physical, emotional and spiritual distress (Teixera 2008). Self-transcendence addresses an enhanced understanding of wellbeing in those who continued to work post-retirement (Reed 2018). Spiritual concept lies at the heart of self-transcendence. This concept looks at the true meaning of life (Reed 2018).

People by nature strive to find meaning and purpose in life through self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is regarded as a process of achieving changes in one's live through which one strives for new and deeper understandings of life, meaning, and acceptance of the self, others and the life situation (Gørill et al. 2011).

Meaning in life and spiritual well-being can be achieved through one's relationships and connectedness with others, by communication with those who are around him/her, and his/ her ability to self-reflect on responsibilities .Spirituality is regarded as a personal effort to understand the meaning in life and its goal (Gørill et al. 2011; Mohsen and Faraji 2015).

Results, as shown in *Table 2*. indicated that there were differences in mean scores of self-transcendence between retirees and post-retirement employees. Self-transcendence, which is the ability to expand one's relationship with others and the environment, provides hope and meaning, but sometimes some retirees cannot cope with the loss of work through retirement. However, some other people can cope with the loss of work through retirement and search for work. This new work broadens their relationship with others and the environment (Reed 2018). This self-transcendence shapes post-retirement employees' perspectives on self, others, the nature of this world, and of a dimension beyond the here and now (Valerie, Sharon, Lynne and Jennifer 2015). Self-transcendence helps retirees through personal growth, integration of present with past and future, and investing in personal relationships.

Results, as shown in *Table 3*. indicated that there were no differences between retirees and post-retirement employees groups in spiritual well-

being. Faith and belief in religion is an important part in our lives as Egyptians. Faith represents the religious component of spiritual well-being (Gørill et al. 2011). Faith in God and satisfaction in the judgment of God can be considered as a part of our faith. This can explained that those who were included as participants in this study, especially the retirees, had belief and faith in God so that this could be a buffering factor against feelings of loneliness and other psychological problems associated with retirement, or stop working. Spirituality includes vital quality of life resources such as hope, self-transcendence, and meaning (Gørill, Unni and Audhild 2016). Results, as shown in *Table 4*. indicated that their differences in mean scores of optimism between retirees and post-retirement employees in the favour of the post-retirement employees. Optimism is positively related to employee performance (Mishra et al. 2016). Dispositional optimism can be regarded as a resource that keeps a positive mood, and can be a buffering factor against potential negative effects of retirement. People who are optimistic can easily adjust more favourably to life transitions. Those who engage in work after retirement have optimism about the future and hope to stay longer.

They do not give in to retirement. Those who return to work after retirement expect positive outcomes and tend to see the best in a bad situation, they are likely to demonstrate more proactive coping behaviours (Reinhoudt 2004). Finally, results, as shown in *Table 5*. indicated that there were differences in mean scores of meaning in life between retirees and post-retirement employees in the favour of the post-retirement employees. Meaning in life constitutes an important resource in later life stages. It can said that work represents meaning for a specific life domain. People who experience transition to retirement lose their work-role as they are no longer workers. Work as a source of meaning disappears. This in turn has important implications in terms of meaning in life. Some people search for another meaning, that is meaning in life by continuing to work or engage in a new type of work. Through this new meaning in life, people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives (Steger, Oishi and Kashdan 2009).



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study provided evidence that through self-transcendence, one can find meaning in life. Spirituality well-being is a particularly important factor to general well-being in the lives of people who retired from work and those who continued to work post-retirement. Meaning in life and spiritual well-being can be achieved through one's relationships and connectedness with others, by communication with those who are around him/her, and his/ her ability to self-reflect on responsibilities. Dispositional optimism can be regarded as a resource that keeps a positive mood, and can be a buffering factor against potential negative effects of retirement. Those who engage in work after retirement and are high on optimism believe they will succeed regardless of their abilities.

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