
DOES SPIRITUALITY MEDIATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IN DISTRESSED UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE?

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A sample of 231 unemployed adults was surveyed using scales tapping psychological distress, the latent and manifest benefits of employment, and spirituality (connectedness, universality, prayer fulfilment, attendance at worship). It was hypothesised that the latent and manifest benefits would be associated with wellbeing; spirituality would be associated with wellbeing; spirituality would be associated with the latent and manifest benefits; and spirituality would mediate the relationship between the latent and manifest benefits and psychological distress. The latent and manifest benefits were associated with psychological wellbeing in the expected direction, with the strongest associations existing between wellbeing and financial deprivation; and social support and time structure. One spirituality dimension—prayer fulfilment—was positively associated with wellbeing, and adults reporting higher spirituality also reported greater access to the latent, but not manifest, benefits. Finally, spirituality mediated the relationship between the latent benefits of employment (social support and collective purpose) and wellbeing. Results are discussed in the context of the latent deprivation and agency restriction theories of wellbeing and unemployment. Practical implications are highlighted.

Unemployment rates in Australia increased from 88,000 in August 1982 to record levels of 963,200 in August 1993 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993), but have tapered off to the present level of just over 600,000 people out of work, or 6 per cent of the workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). However, during the current decade there have been changes in the definition and legislation regarding full-time employment, and the reduction may reflect some of these changes rather than an actual decrease in the number of people unemployed. These statistics represent a large number of Australians whose lives are adversely affected by being deprived of the means to earn a living and, in many cases, the opportunity to experience a full life. According to researchers, the nature of unemployment facilitates experiences that undermine the person's self-esteem, prospects for the future and ultimately the person's sense of wellbeing (Fryer, 1986; Haworth, 1997; Jahoda, 1982).

Two prominent theories that have made significant contributions to understanding this decline in wellbeing as a result of unemployment are the latent deprivation model (Jahoda, 1982, 1984) and the agency restriction model (Fryer, 1986; Fryer & Payne, 1984). Jahoda (1982) viewed employment as the means of accessing both the manifest benefits (associated with income) and latent benefits (associated with meeting psychological needs) of paid work. She theorised that people primarily engaged in paid work to attain manifest benefits, but while employed they profited from five main categories of psychological experience related to innate human needs for: structured time; social contact; collective purpose; personal identity and activity. When access to these latent benefits is severed by unemployment, the deprivation contributes to a decline in mental health.

Fryer (1986; Fryer & Payne, 1984) has criticised the latent deprivation model by suggesting that Jahoda placed too much emphasis on the role of social factors, and too little emphasis on personal agency and its restriction by the financial deprivation associated with unemployment. Fryer considered that the main negative consequence of unemployment was the loss of the manifest benefits (loss of income) rather than the loss of the latent benefits, as argued by Jahoda. Financial gains facilitate the acquisition of necessities for daily living and give people the opportunity to plan a meaningful future. When this personal agency

is restricted by relative and absolute poverty and economic insecurity due to unemployment, the result is a decline in psychological wellbeing.

Both theories acknowledge the importance of the manifest and latent benefits gained from work and their relationship with wellbeing; although, there is disagreement as to which benefits are the more influential in predicting wellbeing. Recent researchers (Creed & Macintyre, 2001; Waters & Muller, 2003) have treated the two theories as complementary, rather than in competition. By examining the combined effects of these experiences, it is possible to gain a more complete understanding of the relative importance of each benefit, their relationship with each other and their relationship with wellbeing.

One of Jahoda's main hypotheses was that the latent benefits are mainly derived from paid employment. Fryer has disputed this, suggesting that the latent benefits can be obtained away from paid work, but, due to financial constraints, the unemployed find it difficult to access them from other avenues.

The current study proposes to test the capacity of spiritual organisation as an alternative to paid employment, as it is a prime candidate to offer latent benefits. The experiences of work and the experiences of spiritual belongingness are likely to provide similar latent benefits. Both are 'collectives' with hierarchies of power (Weber, 1924; cited in Pugh 1997) dedicated to achieving a particular mission, although one is for profit (work) and the other is not-for-profit (spiritual organisation) (Wood et al., 1998). Both experiences provide the benefits of time structure (to attain organisational and personal goals); social contact (activities with co-workers/members); having a collective purpose (a sense of unity with others); personal identity (as a worker/through relationship with spiritual other); and structured activities (job tasks/serving others). In other words, it is argued that spiritual belongingness provides a social structure and access to latent benefits that were previously only attributed to paid employment. Under these circumstances, it is expected that access to latent benefits will improve psychological wellbeing.

Past research involving religion and spirituality has suffered from an inability to operationally define both religion and spirituality. The term 'religion' traditionally has been used as a broad term referring

to an institutionalised form of faith, whereas its modern-day counterpart of 'spirituality' usually has been used in a more personalised context (Slater, Hall & Edwards, 2001). This study taps both constructs, but uses the term 'spirituality' to refer to both religion and spirituality.

A summary of findings from previous research on spirituality relevant to the current study indicates that traditional conceptions of spirituality—such as a belief in a higher power, prayer and attendance at worship—are associated with higher levels of wellbeing (Francis & Kaldor, 2002). Attendance at worship is positively associated with wellbeing and negatively related to distress (Ellison, Boardman, Williams & Jackson, 2001). Further, religious beliefs are associated with lower levels of depression and hopelessness (Murphy et al., 2000), and spiritual wellbeing is negatively correlated with stress (Ellison & Smith, 1991) and depression (Fehring, Brennan & Keller, 1987).

A focus on the benefits of employment, spirituality and psychological wellbeing has not been included in unemployment research previously. The unemployment studies reviewed above indicate support for a direct effect of financial deprivation and the loss of the latent benefits of employment on reducing psychological wellbeing. The spirituality studies indicate a direct effect of spirituality on improving wellbeing. It is also likely that spirituality not only influences wellbeing directly, but that it has an influence through reducing the effects of people's loss of the latent benefits of employment. This latter case refers to spirituality mediating the effects of the latent benefits of employment on wellbeing. It is hypothesised that this will happen because the individual is associated with a social institution other than work that allows access to latent benefits, and because such an association allows the unemployed person to adopt a more future-orientated view of their circumstances. From this perspective, spiritual beliefs can be seen as a style of cognitive coping that may protect against the adverse effects of stress and deprivation caused by unemployment. Research shows that several factors—such as designating yourself as 'born-again', believing in a god as a causal agent and making a spiritual commitment—have been found to be associated with an increased sense of spiritual wellbeing and an overall sense of psychological wellbeing (Ellison & Smith, 1991).



In light of these results, it is possible to conclude that spirituality assists individuals to cope better with life disruptions and allows them to view life more positively. Additionally, it is possible to argue that the spiritual institutions and sense of belonging that form the social support system will provide access to latent benefits and, therefore, enhance psychological wellbeing. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate links between spirituality, the latent benefits of employment, financial deprivation and psychological wellbeing in unemployed persons. The spirituality measures used are: prayer fulfilment; universality; connectedness; and attendance at worship. The following hypotheses are proposed:

1. The latent and manifest benefits of employment will be associated with wellbeing, with people having less access to the latent benefits and more financial deprivation reporting more psychological distress;
2. Spirituality will be associated with wellbeing, with people more spiritually involved reporting less psychological distress;
3. Spirituality will be associated with the latent and manifest benefits of employment, with people more spiritually involved increasingly likely to have better access to the latent benefits and perceive lower financial deprivation;
4. Spirituality will mediate the relationship between the latent and manifest benefits of employment and psychological distress.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 248 unemployed adults were surveyed. A list-wise deletion procedure indicated that 17 participants did not adequately complete all components of the survey. This left 231 in the sample, which comprised 127 (55 per cent) females and 104 (45 per cent) males, who had a mean age of 30.71 years ($SD = 11.47$) and who had been unemployed on average for 1.80 years ($SD = 3.15$).

Measures

Psychological Distress. Wellbeing was operationalised as the 12-item version of the *General Health Questionnaire* (Goldberg, 1972), which provides a global measure of psychological distress. This version has been recommended by Banks et al. (1980) for use in occupational studies and has been used extensively by researchers in this area (Creed & Macintyre, 2001). Respondents indicated on a four-point response format how they have felt recently in a number of areas, including cognitive processing, self-esteem, anxiety and depression (e.g. 'Have you recently been losing confidence in yourself?'). Higher scores indicate more psychological distress. Creed and Macintyre reported an internal reliability coefficient of 0.89 with an unemployed sample; the coefficient for the current sample was 0.92.

Latent Benefits of Employment. Five six-item subscales from the latent and manifest benefits scale (Muller, Creed, Waters & Machin, 2000) were used to measure the latent benefits of time structure, social support, collective purpose, status and activity. Participants indicated the strength of their agreement to bipolar statements using a 7-point response format. Sample items were 'Time usually drags for me/Time rarely drags for me' (time structure); 'I regularly do things with other people/I rarely do things with other people' (social support); 'I usually feel a part of the community/I rarely feel a part of the community' (collective purpose); 'What I do is important/What I do is not important' (status); and 'I usually have a lot of things to do/I rarely have a lot of things to do' (activity). Higher scores indicate more access to the latent benefits. Muller et al. reported satisfactory psychometric properties for the scale. The internal

reliability coefficients for the present sample were 0.87 (time structure), 0.92 (social support), 0.90 (collective purpose), 0.91 (status), and 0.88 (activity).

Manifest Benefits of Employment. The six-item financial deprivation subscale from the latent and manifest benefits scale (Muller et al., 2000) was used to measure the manifest benefit of employment. Respondents indicated their strength of agreement to bipolar statements, such as 'I can usually live on the money I receive/I usually have trouble living on the money I receive'. Higher scores indicate more financial deprivation. The internal reliability coefficient for the subscale with this sample was 0.91.

Spirituality. The 24-item spiritual transcendence scale (Piedmont, 1999) was used to assess three related themes of prayer fulfilment, universality and connectedness. The nine-item prayer fulfilment subscale provides a measure of belief in personal prayer (e.g. 'I find inner strength and/or peace from my prayers or meditations'); the nine-item universality subscale taps meaning and purpose of life ('I believe that there is a larger plan to life'); and the six-item connectedness subscale taps a sense of community and relationship with others, past, present and future (e.g. 'I am concerned about those who will come after me in life'). Participants responded to all items using a five-item response format. Higher scores indicate more prayer fulfilment, universality and connectedness, respectively. In their review of religion and spirituality measures, Slater et al. (2001) reported that the spiritual transcendence scale appeared to capture the three concepts in the corresponding subscales. Piedmont (1999) reported internal reliability coefficients for the subscales of 0.97, 0.97 and 0.94, respectively; the corresponding coefficients for the present sample were 0.94, 0.94 and 0.76.

Biographic. Participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, length of unemployment and regularity of attendance at worship. Attendance at worship was measured with the single item, 'How often do you participate in church or other corporate spiritual practice?' (Francis & Kaldor, 2002), using an eight-point response format ('more than once a week' to 'never').

PROCEDURE

The study was cross-sectional and involved administering surveys to unemployed participants who utilised the national employment agency in metropolitan south-eastern Queensland.

RESULTS

Validity of Study Measures

To test the construct validity and independence of the scales used in the study, the 78 items from the *General Health Questionnaire* (12 items), the latent and manifest benefits subscales of time structure (6), social support (6), collective purpose (6), status (6), activity (6) and financial deprivation (6), and the three spirituality subscales of prayer fulfilment (9), universality (9) and connectedness (6) were included in a principal axis factor analysis, using a direct oblimin rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.85) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$) indicated the suitability of the data for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Initially, 12 factors were indicated based on the criterion of eigenvalues being greater than one. However, this solution was factorially complex and difficult to interpret. When ten factors were rotated to reflect the number of scales included in the analysis, ten interpretable factors emerged. All items were loaded on their respective factors and there were only three cross-loadings (> 0.30), where three connectedness items also loaded on the universality subscale. This solution accounted for 67.35 per cent of the variance and demonstrated the independence of the scales. Given this result, all 78 items were retained and subscale totals were calculated based on the original number of items in each scale. Summary data and bivariate correlations among all variables based on these factor analyses are reported in Table 1.

Effects of Spirituality and the Latent and Manifest Benefits on Psychological Distress

A standard regression analysis was used to test for the effects of spirituality, and the latent and manifest benefits of employment in contributing to the prediction of psychological distress. In this analysis, psychological distress was used as the dependent variable. The independent variables included were time structure, social support, collective purpose,

activity, status, financial deprivation, prayer fulfilment, universality, connectedness and attendance at worship. The demographic variables of age, gender and length of unemployment were also included as independent variables. All variables together were able to significantly predict psychological distress, $F(13, 213) = 6.73$, $p < 0.001$, and account for 29.1 per cent of the variance. In order of importance, the variables to make significant individual contributions were financial deprivation (4.41 per cent), social support (2.53 per cent), time structure (2.19 per cent), and prayer fulfilment (1.49 per cent). Summary data for this regression analysis are reported in Table 2.

Mediation Effects

Structural equation modelling (using AMOS) (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1995) was employed to test whether spirituality acted as a mediating variable between the effects of the loss of the latent and manifest benefits of employment and wellbeing. Structural equation modelling allows for the examination of a number of dependent relationships simultaneously (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). This was required to allow spirituality (consisting of a composite of prayer fulfilment, universality, connectedness and attendance at worship) to be modelled as both a dependent (being predicted by the latent and manifest benefits) and an independent variable (predicting psychological distress). AMOS generates statistical measures of goodness-of-fit, the amount of variance explained by a model, and standardised regression coefficients to examine the effect of direct and indirect pathways. Six models were tested. The latent (time structure, social support, collective purpose, activity and status) and manifest benefits (financial deprivation) were modelled separately to determine the effect of spirituality as a mediator on each. Only two models met the criteria for mediation. The first model included social support as the initial variable and the second model utilised collective purpose in this capacity. Standardised beta weights and squared multiple correlations for these models are reported in Figure 1. Each model produced a good fit to the data. For social support, the fit statistics were: $\chi^2(7) = 15.52$, $p = 0.03$; GFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.94; IFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.07; and PCLOSE = 0.19 (Byrne, 2001). For collective purpose, these were: $\chi^2(7) = 12.73$,

TABLE 1: SUMMARY DATA FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS, TIME STRUCTURE, SOCIAL SUPPORT, COLLECTIVE PURPOSE, ACTIVITY, STATUS, FINANCIAL DEPRIVATION, PRAYER FULFILMENT, UNIVERSALITY, CONNECTEDNESS, ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP, AGE, GENDER AND LENGTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Psychological Distress	231	14.78	7.78	–	–.21**	–.35***	–.31***	–.19**	–.15*	.37***	–.20**	–.01	.10	–.15*	.06	.17**	.09
2 Time Structure	231	27.47	9.22	–	–	.13	.24***	.36***	.32***	–.01	.03	.05	.02	.06	–.16*	.08	.07
3 Social Support	231	25.99	9.98	–	–	–	.49***	.17**	.36***	–.29***	.15*	.09	–.12	.09	–.15*	–.16*	–.05
4 Collective Purpose	231	23.09	9.56	–	–	–	–	.28***	.28***	–.36***	.27***	.17*	.13	.25***	–.07	.06	–.06
5 Activity	231	29.79	8.42	–	–	–	–	–	.61***	.03	.11	.15*	.05	.06	–.14*	–.01	.11
6 Status	231	32.22	8.64	–	–	–	–	–	–	.11	.10	.18**	.01	–.01	–.22**	–.16*	.13
7 Financial Deprivation	231	31.33	9.61	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–.09	.01	.06	–.09	.23***	.20**	.03
8 Prayer Fulfilment	231	21.40	10.99	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.58***	.29***	.64***	.08	.07	.02
9 Universality	231	30.37	10.50	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.58***	.34***	–.05	.05	.19***
10 Connectedness	231	18.50	5.88	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.17**	.05	.17**	.12
11 Attendance at Worship	231	2.91	2.56	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.06	.15*	.02
12 Length of Unemployment ^a	227	–0.18	0.60	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.15*	–.10
13 Age	231	30.71	11.47	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–.02
14 Gender	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

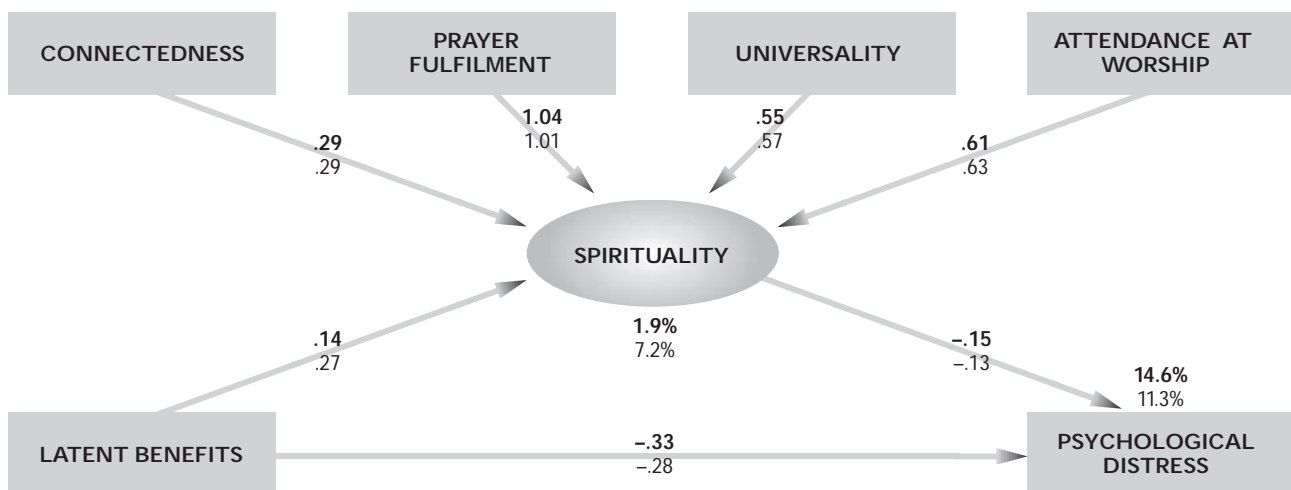
Note: ^a Length of Unemployment was Log10 transformed to meet normality assumptions. * = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY DATA FOR STANDARD REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR TIME STRUCTURE, SOCIAL SUPPORT, COLLECTIVE PURPOSE, ACTIVITY, STATUS, FINANCIAL DEPRIVATION, PRAYER FULFILMENT, UNIVERSALITY, CONNECTEDNESS, ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP, AGE, GENDER AND LENGTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT PREDICTING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS ($N = 227$)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	Partial Correlation
Time structure	-0.14	0.05	-0.16*	-0.15
Social support	-0.16	0.06	-0.21**	-0.16
Collective purpose	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	-0.01
Activity	-0.11	0.07	-0.12	-0.09
Status	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.01
Financial deprivation	0.21	0.06	0.25***	0.21
Prayer fulfilment	-0.13	0.06	0.19*	-0.12
Universality	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.05
Connectedness	0.07	0.10	0.05	0.04
Attendance at worship	-0.07	0.23	-0.02	-0.02
Age	0.08	0.04	0.11	0.10
Length of unemployment	-0.28	0.19	-0.09	-0.08
Gender	1.39	0.94	0.09	0.09

Note: $R^2 = 0.291$; * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

FIGURE 1: MODEL FOR SPIRITUALITY MEDIATING THE EFFECTS OF THE LATENT BENEFITS OF EMPLOYMENT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS



Note: Results for social support are bold; results for collective purpose are not bold. Percentages are squared multiple correlations; numbers are standardised beta weights. All pathways are significant.

$p = 0.08$; GFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.97; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.06; and PCLOSE = 0.33. Spirituality mediated the effects of social support and collective purpose on psychological distress. The indirect effects were -0.02 ($\beta = 0.14 \times -0.15$) for Social Support and -0.04 ($\beta = 0.27 \times -0.13$) for collective purpose. The other three latent benefits of employment—time structure, activity and status—and the manifest benefit of employment—financial deprivation—did not meet the criteria for mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986), as they did not significantly predict the latent variable of spirituality (see Figure 1).

Association between Spirituality and Latent and Manifest Benefits

The bivariate correlations reported in Table 1 indicate small to moderate associations between some of the latent benefits of employment and spirituality, and no significant bivariate associations between the manifest benefits of employment and spirituality. Specifically, social support was significantly associated with prayer fulfilment. Activity and status were significantly associated with universality, and collective purpose was significantly associated with prayer fulfilment, universality, connectedness and attendance at worship. Associations between the latent and manifest benefits of employment and the latent variable of spirituality (see Figure 1) were consistent with these bivariate correlations, with only collective purpose and social support recording significant associations.

In summary, age, gender, length of unemployment, the latent and manifest benefits of employment, and the spirituality variables significantly predicted Psychological Distress in this sample of unemployed. Financial deprivation, social support, time structure and prayer fulfilment made significant individual contributions. Spirituality did mediate the impact of the latent benefits of employment on psychological distress, although the effect was evident for only two variables: social support and collective purpose. Spirituality was significantly positively associated with two of the latent benefits—social support and collective purpose—but not associated with the manifest benefits of employment.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between spirituality, the latent and manifest benefits

of employment, and psychological wellbeing in unemployed individuals. The rationale was to investigate whether spirituality would provide access to the latent benefits of employment that previous research suggested could only be gained from paid work, and whether spirituality would have a positive effect on wellbeing.

Hypothesis one was that the latent and manifest benefits of employment would be associated with wellbeing. Financial deprivation and the two latent benefits of time structure and social support were significantly associated with psychological distress; with the largest association between financial deprivation and distress. These results are consistent with other studies. Financial deprivation is typically found to be the variable most strongly associated with wellbeing, with the latent benefits having weaker effects (e.g. Creed & Macintyre, 2001; Waters & Muller, 2003). Other studies have found different latent variables to be significantly associated with psychological distress. For example, Creed and Macintyre (2001) identified significant associations for status, time structure and collective purpose, indicating that different unemployed samples record different losses of the latent benefits. Creed and Watson (2003) found latent benefit differences across different age groups, indicating that the impact of losing the latent benefits of employment is a function of other life variables.

Hypothesis two was that spirituality would be associated with wellbeing. This hypothesis was partially supported, with one of the spirituality variables, prayer fulfilment (or belief in personal prayer), being significantly associated with distress; with a greater belief in personal prayer associated with better wellbeing. This was a weak direct effect compared to the effects of the latent and manifest benefits of employment, indicating a minor role for spirituality in psychological wellbeing in unemployed people. However, it is consistent with one of the findings of Francis and Kaldor (2002) that belief in prayer is associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Hypothesis three proposed that spirituality would be associated with the latent and manifest benefits of employment. There was partial support for this hypothesis, with modest bivariate associations in the expected direction found between four of the five latent benefits and the spirituality measures. The

strongest associations were found between collective purpose and spirituality, and no association was found for activity. These modest associations were confirmed in the latent variable analyses, with collective purpose and social support recording significant associations with spirituality, indicating that unemployed people with high levels of spirituality also report more access to the latent benefits. It is not surprising that collective purpose and social support were the most significant latent benefits, since they are also likely to be the most salient benefits associated with involvement in spiritual organisation. No association was found between the manifest benefit of financial deprivation and spirituality, indicating that spiritual beliefs may not operate as a cognitive coping style offering protection against the distress of unemployment as hypothesised.

Hypothesis four proposed that spirituality would mediate the relationship between the latent and manifest benefits of employment and psychological distress. Some support was found for this proposition, but this came from two of the latent benefits only and no mediating relationship was found for financial deprivation. These results indicate that wellbeing is influenced by the latent benefits of employment (social support and collective purpose) and spirituality directly; and that wellbeing is also influenced by the latent benefits indirectly via spirituality—those with better access to the latent benefits have more of a spiritual outlook, which is associated with better wellbeing. The evidence is that the latent benefits influence wellbeing directly, and also influence it indirectly by enhancing feelings of spirituality. This finding has implications for training and counselling for unemployed people. Providing unemployed people with the opportunity to be involved in organisations that provide them with a sense of collective purpose and social contact should assist in reducing the social isolation, lack of sense of purpose and other negative consequences of unemployment, and may enhance feelings of belongingness. Government-initiated interventions that may achieve this include 'Work for the Dole' and other supported work schemes, as well as further education and training. Alternatively, from an individual counselling perspective, encouragement to become involved in other social, leisure or spiritual organisations is likely to provide individuals with such opportunities.

This study has a number of limitations, some of which have already been identified—such as the problem of operationalising spirituality. The main limitation is that the study has proposed causal relationships, but has used cross-sectional methodology. While the notion that a spiritual organisation can provide an alternative social institution to work as an avenue for accessing latent benefits is an interesting proposition, longitudinal data are required to tease out the roles played by the latent and manifest benefits of employment and spirituality. Despite these shortcomings, there are some important findings from this study for unemployed people, including that:

1. access to latent and manifest benefits of employment is associated with positive psychological wellbeing;
2. reporting a spiritual orientation is associated with better wellbeing;
3. reporting higher spirituality is associated with better access to the latent benefits of employment;
4. spirituality mediates the relationship of the latent benefits of employment and wellbeing.

These results are contrary to Jahoda's argument that only the social institution of work can provide access to these latent benefits, and thus maintain wellbeing. However, the results do provide support for Fryer's views that the latent benefits of employment are less important to psychological wellbeing than the manifest benefits, and the latent benefits can be accessed from other avenues. This study also extends current research using these theoretical frameworks and supports the recent approach of treating the two theories as complementary (Creed & Macintyre, 2001; Waters & Muller, 2003).

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

This section is designed as a brief professional review of the article. It provides relevant study questions and answers for readers to test their knowledge of the article.

Theoretically, what is the significance of this study?

Answer: There has been much debate in the unemployment literature on the reasons for negative wellbeing. Both Jahoda and Fryer argue that impaired wellbeing is associated with the lack of access to the manifest and latent benefits that are generally provided in the work situation. For example, work provides access to structured time use, social contact, sense of collective purpose, status, enforced activity and money. Jahoda has argued that only work provides such experiences, whereas Fryer suggests that these experiences can be obtained from other avenues. In this study, it was found that spirituality also accounted for access to the latent benefits of social support and collective purpose, and also mediated the effect of the latent benefits on wellbeing. This finding makes a unique contribution to the debate in unemployment research.

What are the practical implications of the study?

Answer: Since both work and spirituality can offer access to some latent benefits to maintain wellbeing, it is

suggested that involvement in other systems or organisations may also provide such access. Unemployed people generally have lowered wellbeing. To maintain wellbeing in the absence of paid work, individuals may benefit from counselling to encourage them to join organisations (e.g. sporting, volunteering, community service) that can provide them with access to the latent benefits. This could form part of the career or employment-counselling repertoire, which focuses on quality of life rather than specifically on work.

Does spirituality replace the need to work?

Answer: No. Spirituality provides access to only one of the belief systems/organisations in which unemployed people could find opportunities to access latent benefits and maintain wellbeing. Other activities/institutions—such as voluntary work, sports, serious leisure or education—may also provide such opportunities. However, more research is required to tease out the contributions other avenues may provide.