

Australian Teachers' Voices on Religiosity, Spirituality, and Their Link to Job Satisfaction: Qualitative Data – Part Two¹

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Abstract

This paper is the second of a two-part report on a mixed methods study that examined the job satisfaction of teachers who worked in faith-based schools. In part one (Vodéll, 2023), 11 independent variables were identified through quantitative data analysis that impacted the dependent variable of overall job satisfaction (OJS). This led to the development of a model illustrating the factors influencing OJS. In part two, the teachers' voices are recorded from an unframed perspective. Qualitative data were collected from a sample that consisted of nine faith-based schools in Australia. A thematic analytical approach was applied to the qualitative data ($N = 94$), and it was found that three major themes emerged as having a major impact on OJS: People, Processes, and Purpose for Teaching. The data from both sources was then triangulated to integrate the findings using a convergent design process. It was found that religiosity impacted OJS directly and indirectly via the mediating element of spirituality. Also, spirituality itself indirectly influenced OJS via the purpose-for-teaching element. Finally, the data indicated that OJS increased when there were positive relationships (students and colleagues) and perceived organisational efficiency within the workplace.

Keywords: *Job satisfaction, religiosity, spirituality, faith-based school*

Introduction

In addition to striving to achieve organisational objectives, employees in the 21st century appear to be increasingly looking for a purpose and fulfilment in the workplace. As a result, when analysing the contributors to job satisfaction, the focus has been expanded by some to include more factors. These factors have included the transcendent domain, and the importance of studying religiosity and spirituality in the workplace also has been emphasized. One research group has suggested "that work organizations are our most significant community, replacing institutions such as the church" (Bell & Taylor, 2001, p. 2).

From an educational administrator's perspective, particularly those in faith-based institutions, the issues of religiosity and spirituality in the workplace have become of interest. Also some researchers have identified links between organisational performance and its association with health, happiness, and satisfaction of the individual employee (Sander, 2017; Sholihin et al., 2022). However, past investigations have also revealed mixed results (Hackney & Sanders, 2003). Consequently, there is a need to further understand the impact of spirituality and religiosity on job satisfaction in the educational context, because while there is considerable research in many other workplaces, there is limited research of a comparative nature in this domain.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research was to both identify and analyse the factors that influence overall job satisfaction (OJS) for those teachers who operate in faith-based environments. A specific focus was to explore whether there were any relationships among the variables of religiosity and spirituality (transcendent factors), as well as five aspects of teaching (colleagues, working conditions, responsibility, work itself, and recognition) and the dependent variable of OJS.

¹ This article is based on a thesis that was previously posted on a university website for a limited audience.

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Furthermore, recognising that the numbers from a survey can provide significant insights and yet, because of limits to the depth of understanding that this data can provide, it was considered important to collect unframed data to get to the deeper “why” questions. To find the things that really mattered to this group of teachers, it was deemed necessary to hear their voices.

Problem and Hypothesis

The under-studied nature of this area is demonstrated by the lack of any comparative studies between Australian schools that are secular and those that are faith-based. Furthermore, within the faith-based sector there have been a very limited number of multi-faith studies. This research represents a small step in seeking to remedy that situation.

The research was guided by two questions:

1. What is the nature of teachers’ perceptions of religiosity and spirituality when allowing for the respondents to formulate their own framework in which to describe these constructs?
2. What do teachers perceive impacts on satisfaction with their jobs, when allowing for the respondents to formulate their own framework in which to describe these constructs?

Methodology

This section presents a rationale and description of the research methodology used. A mixed methods approach was adopted. This can be defined as a method whereby the investigator combines both quantitative and qualitative data in such a way that analysis and explanations from both data sets help to recognise and resolve research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The research approach chosen was considered appropriate in that both components were involved in accessing different information. A specified framework was used to explore the impact of the teachers’ worldview (religiosity and spirituality) on their job satisfaction. An exploration of teacher perceptions of job satisfaction and worldview (religiosity and spirituality) required different types of data. For the first component, data were collected using a quantitative approach that enabled the generation of profiles, and the opportunity to discover relationships using path analysis within the accepted frameworks. For the second component (which this paper covers), qualitative data were collected enabling the respondents to generate their own frameworks to present their perceptions. The subsequent triangulation that was utilised enabled both validation and expansion of the conclusions obtained by the respective methodologies. This study was carried out using a one-phase design, where the two types of data were collected in the same time frame. This was achieved by the construction of a single questionnaire consisting of questions using a six-point Likert scale, and obtaining open-ended written responses to further questions.

The Sample

To obtain qualitative data from teachers working within faith-based schools, an approach was made to the administration of five Lutheran and four Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) schools in Victoria, Australia. Following agreement, a total of 221 usable questionnaires were received from the nine schools providing quantitative data. From this, a total of 94 respondents chose to provide qualitative data by giving answers to the open-ended questions, and this gave an adequate return rate of 42.5%. This follows the tendency of qualitative research to garner significantly “rich” material that is collected from a fewer number of respondents. However, there were still sufficient respondents to be able to achieve both descriptive redundancy (Glaser, 2007) and theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Qualitative Data Collection Instrument–Format and Analysis

The qualitative instrument consisted of two open-ended questions. One question related to general comments the respondent could make about their job satisfaction, and the other provided an opportunity for respondents to comment on their own religiosity and/or spirituality. The individual open-ended responses were transcribed, and this data was collated to highlight the range of

understandings that were expressed by the respondents, and to explore the links between these understandings. The data was then further analysed manually using inductive thematic analysis, (Braun, 2021), which followed a six-stage iterative process. This involved (a) data familiarisation, (b) code generation, (c) theme development, (d) reviewing, (e) naming, and (f) exemplar selection. The relationships among the themes and the dependent variable were then expressed via a model (Figure 2) that illustrated the phenomena.

Results

The Factors That Impact OJS: Teachers' Perspectives

When the teachers were given the opportunity to outline their own frameworks for factors that influenced their OJS, three major themes began to emerge from the data, namely, People (others and the individual), Processes (the job itself), and the Purpose for Teaching. (The lack of any significant mention of advancement, pay, or security as a satisfaction element is noteworthy.)

People. Within this theme, four sub-sets were identified: Administration, Colleagues, Students, and Myself. The teachers indicated that job satisfaction came when the administration was supportive of the staff, made them feel that things were organised, and they were included in the operation of the school. Further, their OJS was enhanced if the teachers perceived that the administration was seeking God's leading in running the institution. Communication, or the lack of it, also appeared to be an important factor in influencing job satisfaction. The considerable influence of the administration subset within "People" and their impact upon OJS was evident from the following two quotes: "In comparison to my past experiences, I love it here at [school name]. I feel safe with the prayerful decisions made by our leadership staff" (Respondent 12) and "[It is the] Best school I have taught at. Great colleagues, great students, supportive parents and fantastic principal" (Resp. 75).

The teacher's evaluation of the influence of the administration was also reinforced by the following three negative comments: "Job satisfaction is reduced by unorganised daily activities from administration, lack of support, workload" (Resp. 14); "My satisfaction is linked to the effectiveness of admin. to do their job well. e.g., Communicate, lead, hold students accountable for behaviour," (Resp. 64) and "Everything is OK most of the time. Job satisfaction decreases during disagreement in decision making with Admin. When I feel that I am treated no better than a student" (Resp. 11).

Second, colleagues have a very important part to play in OJS. Teachers stated that when their colleagues were helpful and assisted each other, their levels of OJS increased. Teachers also perceived that things worked better when they were able to call on and give their expertise to others. This is illustrated by comments from a number of respondents: "My job satisfaction is due in a large part to the people I work with," (Resp. 26) and "It really helps to get along with the people in your department = a better team" (Resp. 10).

Third, the students were also deemed to be an important factor in determining OJS. Teachers gained satisfaction from seeing students' progress and develop in both the academic and spiritual/social domains of their lives. This was demonstrated by three respondents' comments. "I love it when students tell me about what they have learned." (Resp. 8); "I love the job of teaching. I believe that we can make something wonderful out of every human being. The combination of religion and teaching is powerful. The value-added component is often the difference in religious schools," (Resp. 87); and "What keeps me highly motivated and focused is engaging with students, banter, camaraderie" (Resp. 52).

The fourth and final subset within the People theme was "Myself." The information gathered clearly indicated that individual teachers were significant controllers of their own job satisfaction. Some maintained that satisfaction was an intrinsic/internal thing that was not so dependent on external factors. Others stated that if they had organised themselves and prepared ahead of time, then job satisfaction was greater. The following quotes from various respondents support these concepts: "Basically, teachers' problems are self-imposed. This means that the level of satisfaction obtained from teaching requires temperance in judgment." (Resp. 4); "Like life, job satisfaction is what I make of it. I have the greatest input into whether it is 'grand' or ordinary." (Resp. 13); "Job satisfaction

is probably more dependent on my frame of mind and attitude.” (Resp. 60); “It is possible for me to remain satisfied with my job regardless of extrinsic factors.” (Resp. 21) and “Satisfaction tends to be internally driven rather than externally driven” (Resp. 46).

Processes. The second theme identified was Processes, or the job itself. It was also evident that it impacted OJS. Here the teachers outlined that while they may enjoy teaching, there are systems, processes, or protocols that reduce their level of OJS. Some teachers found that job descriptions and guidance, together with the need to be efficient, were all important in the process of teaching in order to have job satisfaction. These thoughts are outlined in quotes from various respondents: “I do enjoy it [teaching] but some things need to be changed in the school and its systems.” (Resp. 38); “It would give more clarification if I were to have a job description to compare it to.” (Resp. 19); “I get frustrated at inefficiencies within the school;” (Resp. 45); and “Apart from lack of initial guidance, job description, etc. my school is a pleasant, cooperative environment in which to work.” (Resp. 24).

Also, within the Processes theme there were numerous references to time or, more specifically, the lack of time associated with the job itself. In a similar manner to the need to be efficient, the need to get the job done within a reasonable amount of time was considered essential. The lack of time to complete various jobs significantly reduces a teacher’s job satisfaction. This is shown in the following comments by six respondents. “The first couple of years aren’t that much fun because you are too busy. I think it’s getting better though;” (Resp. 35); “Only frustration is limited time to achieve so much;” (Resp. 15); “Not enough time to spend with students and planning good classes. This decreases satisfaction;” (Resp. 61); “Job satisfaction varies based upon stress levels and ‘busyness’ of the year;” (Resp. 51); “Would be more satisfied if sufficient time was given to complete responsibilities adequately;” (Resp. 48); and “Job satisfaction is good, but it consumes almost all of my life and time—not a good balance to pursue other interests.” (Resp. 71).

Purpose of Teaching. The third theme to emerge from the data was identified as the Purpose for Teaching. It has been referred to as a “calling.” Teachers remarked that many believe that they are doing God’s will in performing the role of a teacher. This in turn gives them a sense of peace and satisfaction. This is somewhat akin to how clergy have traditionally perceived their role in society. It appears that many teachers see their purpose in the classroom as being a sort of divine mission. The following comments illustrate these sentiments. “My job satisfaction is based on intrinsic values cultivated by my Christian philosophy and influenced by my Christian teachers.” (Resp. 21); “When students are happy to come into my classroom; enjoy learning and see Jesus through me then my job is satisfying.” (Resp. 29); “I enjoy it even though it wears me out. I would move away from teaching if God called me elsewhere, otherwise I know God uses me here.” (Resp. 54); “I believe I am doing the work God has for me right now.” (Resp. 62); and “So good to have a job that fulfils my personal beliefs and calling to ministry.” (Resp. 15).

Even when teachers did not feel satisfied about their jobs, there were those who recognised that the job of teaching could be considered a calling, and the following respondent clearly did not feel called. “I am not sure that I wish to remain in teaching in the long term. I do not feel ‘called’ to be a teacher; it is simply a job.” (Resp. 44).

The Nature of Spirituality and Religiosity: Teachers’ Perspectives

The teachers perceived that there was a difference between spirituality and religiosity, and even though they could not always clearly articulate this difference, they thought that this difference was extremely important. This is illustrated by two responses: “There is a difference between spirituality and religion. I note myself as a spiritual rather than a religious person” (Resp. 14), and “I am glad the distinction was made between religious vs spiritual.” (Resp. 24).

A number of the respondents perceived that spirituality was more important in their lives than religiosity. Two respondents’ comments follow: “I believe in a relationship with God [spirituality] more than ‘religion’ [religiosity],” (Resp. 48), and “I consider my personal spirituality more important than church affiliation.” (Resp. 21). For these teachers, spirituality was first defined as a private relationship or something that dealt with their own faith. The emphasis was on the moral and ethical aspects of

the individual's worldview, and this was seen as somewhat independent of religious affiliation. One respondent stated: "I believe one's spiritual realm ought to be a private affirmation of one's faith and not necessarily a public affirmation. One's actions ought to be taken to an ethical and moral maxim in spite of one's religious affiliation." (Resp. 4).

Second, spirituality was seen to be something that added security to one's life and included prayer that is personal in nature; this reinforced the relational aspect of this construct. One respondent stated these ideas as follows: "My faith gives me an anchor point. A point of reference from which to view all the complexities of life." (Resp. 6).

Finally, the teachers acknowledged that there is a difference between spirituality and religiosity, but some felt that spirituality was a personal relationship, and as such, it may be difficult to measure. For these teachers, religiosity was firstly defined as the public relationship or something that dealt with one's community. Some respondents appeared to focus on the things that an individual does—reading books, watching DVDs, public prayer, rules, doing or not doing things. Two responses illustrated this thought. "[I am] Always interested in reading spiritual books and listening to ... talks on CDs," (Resp. 35), and "I seem to be more liberal in my application of the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of my religion." (Resp. 12).

Some respondents also appeared to lament the busyness of their lives, which prevented them from accomplishing or doing more in this area of religious expression. This is illustrated by the following respondents' comments: "I could be more involved if work wasn't so busy." (Resp. 28); "My work ... has limited my ability to volunteer due to time demands," (Resp. 16); and "I have a strong faith but find that being a busy mum limits these types of activities" (Resp. 49).

In addition to this, a considerable number of respondents indicated that a relationship with God seemed to connect both spirituality and religiosity, with some emphasising that it covered both constructs while others suggested that it moved beyond these constructs. Comments from respondents included: "Every day is an experience with God and I know and am convinced that God guides me [in] everything that I do," (Resp. 11); and "I believe that a relationship with God is what counts." (Resp. 7).

Predictors of Overall Job Satisfaction

Quantitative Data: Model for Predictors of Overall Job Satisfaction

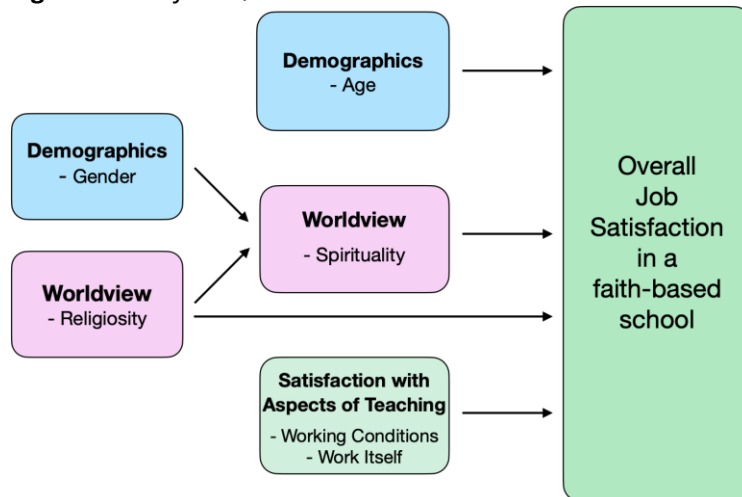
When examining the predictors for OJS, the initial analysis looked at 18 inputs from three discrete areas: Demographics, Aspects of Teaching factors, and Worldview factors. Using regression analysis, the number of potential predictor variables was reduced to 11 and an initial model for the predictors of OJS was constructed. This model was presented in Part One (Vodéll, 2023), which involved three groups of predictors: Demographics (Age, Gender, Highest Qualification, Teacher Religious Affiliation); Aspects of Teaching factors (Colleagues, Working Conditions, Responsibility, Work Itself, Recognition); and Worldview factors (Spirituality, Religiosity).

To determine the relative influence of each of these 11 factors, backward regression analysis was carried out, and four independent variables were shown to be the strongest predictors of OJS—the dependent variable. These were in order of strongest impact: Working Conditions, Work Itself, Spirituality, and the Age of the Respondent.

Because of the previously noted strong correlation between Spirituality and some other factors, it was decided to model Spirituality as a dependent variable to ascertain its predictors. The first step in this process delivered a model where Religiosity and Demographics, 45.2% and 10.1% respectively, accounted for the variance in Spirituality. This high level of interaction between Spirituality and Religiosity is in line with previous research that has been conducted on these two phenomena (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Hudson, 2007; King & Crowther, 2004; Koenig, 2007; Neff, 2006; Piedmont et al., 2009; Slater et al., 2001; Zullig et al., 2006). When the analysis was completed, backward regression was performed to identify the predictors of Spirituality. Both Religiosity and Gender were significant predictors at the 5% level. This work then resulted in the development of a modified model (Figure 1) for the predictors of OJS.

This model indicated that influences on OJS can be best described by a combination of direct and indirect relationships. The demographic variable—age, and the job satisfaction elements—Working Conditions and Work Itself, impacted OJS directly. In contrast to this, the demographic variable—Gender, and the Worldview factor—Religiosity, both influenced OJS indirectly through their influence on Spirituality. In addition to this Religiosity also had a direct influence upon OJS (Figure 1).

Figure 1 *Modified Quantitative Model*



This means that in this study, teachers indicated that working conditions which involved a pleasant physical environment and where the administration communicated its policies well, and where the work enabled one to be creative, using a variety of skills and providing opportunities to make one's own decisions, had a major positive impact on OJS. The data indicated that as age increased, OJS increased, and also that females demonstrated a higher level of OJS than males. For the teachers, the greater their perceived connectedness to the Divine, and the greater their involvement with their religious community and its rituals, then the greater their OJS. This impact was relatively minor compared to the Aspects of Work factors.

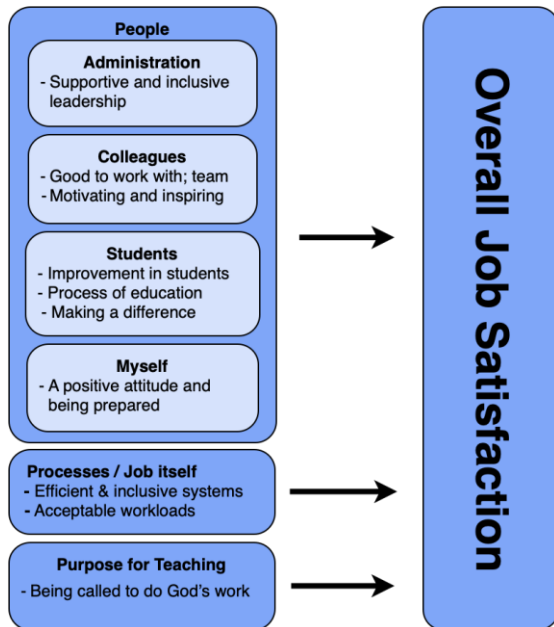
Qualitative Data: Model for Predictors of OJS

When given the opportunity to present their perspectives on factors that influence OJS without the constraints of a survey framework, the teachers in this study included elements found from the survey analysis, but also presented additional factors. From the analysis of the qualitative data, three major themes emerged as having a major impact on OJS: People, Processes, and Purpose for Teaching (Figure 2).

Within the People theme, the first sub-set was Administration. Where administration was perceived to be supportive and inclusive, this feature contributed to the teachers' OJS. This component was similar to the Working Conditions identified from the quantitative data analyses. The second sub-set was Colleagues. If these individuals were seen to be inspiring and motivating and acted with a team spirit, then this contributed positively to the teachers' OJS. This component was not identified from the quantitative data analysis. The third sub-set, which also was not identified from the regression analysis, was Students. The OJS increased where teachers were able to see improvements within the academic and social domains in their students. The fourth sub-set, which similarly was not identified from the quantitative data, was labelled as Myself. Those teachers, who maintained a positive attitude to their work and were consistent in their planning so as to remain organised, recorded greater OJS.

Within the second theme of Processes, it was those teachers who perceived the workplace to have efficient and inclusive systems in place, and scheduled acceptable workloads, that recorded higher OJS ratings. This theme had some level of similarity to the Working Conditions component from the quantitative analysis.

Figure 2 *Factors That Impact Overall Job Satisfaction—The Teachers’ Perspective*



The final theme was Purpose for Teaching. This theme was unique to the qualitative data, and was perceived to be a very important factor in influencing OJS. Where teachers saw their role as having a higher purpose and some connection with the divine, then higher levels of OJS were evident in the data.

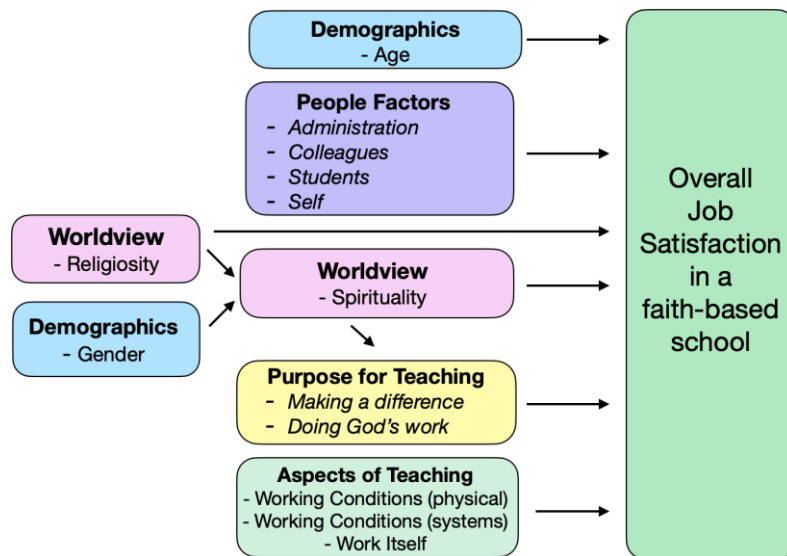
Final Model for Predictors of OJS

A more complete model may be generated by using the information that was obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. This model includes components that were unique to each of the respective analyses, as well as those components that were similar in nature (Figure 3).

The Working Conditions component identified from the quantitative analysis covered both the leadership and the system aspects of the school operations. In this final model, the Administration component was placed in the People factor under the sub-set Administration, while the Working Conditions element within the Process theme was restricted to the system aspect of processes.

The nature of the Purpose for Teaching theme would suggest that it is in some way derived from a person’s worldview. For this reason, it seemed appropriate that the Religiosity and Spirituality factors should influence teachers’ understanding of their purpose. Hence, pathways can be seen linking Religiosity, Spirituality, Purpose for Teaching, and OJS within the final model. This sequencing is supported by the work of Downey (2006), whose results indicated that vocation has an impact on personal sanctification and apostolic mission. Although Downey’s work, located within a context of Catholic spirituality, did not focus on job satisfaction, there are some parallels that exist in that the teachers’ unframed responses obtained in the present study. These pointed to the “purpose of teaching” as being a significant factor influencing the dependent variable of OJS in a faith-based school.

Figure 3 *Factors Influencing Overall Job Satisfaction for Teachers in Faith-Based Schools*



When the combined model based on both the quantitative and qualitative data is inspected, it is observed that there are some factors that have a primary or direct influence on OJS, and there are others whose influence is secondary or indirect. Finally, those factors influencing the OJS that come from the qualitative data alone are presented in italics in the final model.

Conclusions

In this research, the constructs of Religiosity and Spirituality were investigated from the perspective of teachers who worked in faith-based schools. Further, the relationship between Religiosity, Spirituality, Aspects of Teaching, and OJS were explored. The constructs of Religiosity and Spirituality in this study were determined to be distinct, yet there is an overlapping of these concepts partly brought about by both having a connectedness with the divine. For the teachers involved in the survey, spirituality was focused around the intrapersonal, while religiosity was focused around the interpersonal.

The teachers from both the Lutheran and SDA education systems, when considered as a single unit, rated themselves more spiritual ($M = 5.127$) than religious ($M = 4.256$). That is, the teachers rated themselves higher in terms of their personal connectedness with a power or source in the universe that is greater than oneself (spirituality), than their institutional, doctrinal public faith as celebrated with others (religiosity).

In this study, a positive and direct relationship was identified between some Demographics factors (age); People factors (Administration, Colleagues, Students, Myself); Working Conditions (physical and systems); Work Itself (system aspects); Religiosity and Spirituality; and OJS. In addition, the data indicated that Religiosity and Spirituality also had a positive impact on OJS indirectly, via a mediating variable—Purpose for Teaching, where teachers saw their role as having a higher purpose and some connection with the divine. It is interesting to note that Roundy (2009, p. 1) found there to be “a positive relationship between religious callings and job satisfaction.” In some sense, Purpose for Teaching could be seen to be a parallel concept to religious calling, and in this manner the present research aligns with the findings of Roundy.

The quantitative data indicated that, for both religiosity and spirituality, the teachers from the SDA school system rated these constructs slightly higher than those in the Lutheran Education System. However, the teachers from the Lutheran system were significantly more satisfied with the five aspects of their job: Colleagues, Working Conditions, Responsibility, Work Itself, and Recognition.

As previously stated, a number of possible explanations exist. First, it could be that teachers in the respective systems have different understandings of the terms Religiosity and Spirituality, and hence

the different outcomes. Second, it could be that the teachers in the respective systems have the same understandings of the terms and yet their worldviews are influenced by different sets of factors. Here one could speculate on what these factors are; however, this is an area where further research is recommended.

Of the aspects of one's job that were considered to influence OJS by Lester (1987), for the group of teachers considered in the present study, only Working Conditions and Work Itself contributed significantly to OJS. In this case, Working Conditions consisted of two components. First, there were the physical surroundings, consisting of buildings, facilities, landscaping, etc., and second, the systems, policies, and protocols as communicated by the administration. Work itself was also deemed a significant influence. This involved the variety of skills employed, whether or not one had the freedom to make personal decisions, and the extent to which routine tasks were employed—essentially a focus on the art and science of teaching. Sufficient time to be able to do this was also a major factor in the opinion of the teachers.

The present study also indicated that one of the more important influences on OJS were the People factors at one's workplace. When the Administration is able to give clear directions, Colleagues are helpful and share their expertise, and a team spirit exists, this has a positive impact on the OJS. Similarly, when the students are developing/progressing and a difference is being made in their lives, together with the teachers themselves having a positive attitude, then all of these factors work together to increase their OJS.

Finally, although some components may have a somewhat greater influence than others, this was not fully explored in this study, yet it can be clearly seen from the final model (Figure 3) that the influences of Spirituality, Religiosity, and Aspects of Teaching on OJS include both direct and indirect linkages.

As stated in the introduction, when examined within a management framework, researchers have not extensively studied teachers and the impact that religiosity and spirituality have on their job, and the satisfaction gained from this endeavour. Yet, if producing satisfied teachers is seen to be a need, then surely the academic study of religiosity and spirituality must form a part of an overall matrix of influences. It would appear for both the Lutheran and SDA schools that, where there is a concurrence between the school's ethos and the individual teacher's purpose for teaching, staff with higher levels of OJS will be seen. One would suspect that this may result in lower levels of staff turnover and a resultant positive impact on students and their educational outcomes.

In summary, even though teachers within the SDA and Lutheran school systems saw Religiosity and Spirituality as distinct constructs, they perceived that there was a connectedness in that both represent linkages to one's relationship with the transcendent. Second, while the intrapersonal worldview (Spirituality) of teachers in the SDA system was a significant contributor to their OJS, by contrast for the teachers within the Lutheran system, it was their interpersonal worldview (Religiosity) that contributed more significantly to their OJS. This outcome was not expected and needs further exploration. Finally, the most important factors in determining OJS were the Working Conditions, Work Itself, and the People Factors (Colleagues, Students, Self). In terms of Working Conditions, when there was perceived to be a pleasant physical environment and an organised systems environment, the teachers' OJS was increased. When work itself provided opportunities for creativity, use of skills, and the freedom to make decisions within their own classrooms, OJS was increased. OJS was increased when teachers perceived there was a collaborative ethos amongst staff, that their students were progressing within the academic, social and spiritual domains, and when their own attitude to teaching was positive.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations stem from this study. First, as recommended by others, there is a need for further study in this area because of the far-reaching impact this area has on people's lives. Irrespective of the conceptualisations utilised for religiosity and spirituality and how they may be related, they are frequently absent in organisational research despite their substantial influence.

Considered by some to be the “father of psychology,” William James claimed a complete understanding of the individual is not possible without considering the impact of the transcendent (James, 1958). Furthermore, when religiosity and spirituality are put into the context of an examination of aspects of workplace diversity, one can clearly see the limited amount of research that has been completed in this area.

Second, it is well documented that to achieve a significant level of teacher job satisfaction in faith-based education, systems need to be in place to ensure that the physical working conditions are pleasant for the teachers, that the administrative systems are well communicated, that the administration engender a collaborative approach to decision making, and that there are opportunities provided for teachers to express their religiosity and spirituality.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, self-reported data can be seen as a limitation. Yet, the very nature of this research, which focused on an area of significant personal value, suggests that this method is an extremely effective way to collect the data. Both job satisfaction and the factors of spirituality and religiosity are intensely personal, and one could argue that gaining the information from any other source or method would be fraught with difficulties of access and of questionable accuracy.

While there was a relative degree of diversity of race (almost 15% overseas born), this sample lacked any significant degree of diversity for religion. Just over 83% of respondents came from either an SDA or Lutheran background, and the remaining respondents came from mainly a mixture of other Christian denominations. It would be expected that future research is needed to explore variance across religions or possibly even within specified denominations. Therefore, these findings should be used with care before generalising to other religious faiths or other contexts.

While these results generate interpretations based on the population of teachers from a number of schools, there was a range of school sizes within this sample, and such interpretations may not accurately represent the situation for schools of different sizes. It is important to note that the stressors in small schools are significantly different from those in larger schools. Furthermore, there was a self-imposed geographic limitation that restricted respondents to the state of Victoria.

Although areas for further research have been identified in the discussion of the results gained from the study of faith-based schools, to gain a greater understanding of the impact of religiosity and spirituality on teachers’ job satisfaction, studies ideally need to be carried out in multiple faith-based and perhaps even incorporate some non-faith-based schools.

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