

*THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
TRANSCENDENCE AND WELL-BEING: A  
COGNITIVE-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS*

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSCENDENCE AND WELL-BEING: A  
COGNITIVE-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

by

Monir Ahmed

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A Dissertation Submitted to the

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## ABSTRACT

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Title: The Relationship Between Transcendence and Well-being: A Cognitive-theological Analysis  
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This research investigates transcendence and its relationship with psychological well-being. Its aims are i) to critically discuss the existing literature and current tools used to examine the relationship between transcendence and well-being; ii) to analyse transcendence from a cognitive-theological perspective (in particular, using a cognitive-psychological approach with the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine); and iii) to demonstrate the need for a new tool to study transcendence and better understand its relationship with well-being.

In the psychology of religion and spirituality, the term 'transcendence' refers to an individual's relationship with the divine. In other words, the term describes the ability of human beings to relate their existence to something beyond physical reality. As described by psychologist Ralph L. Piedmont, transcendence is considered as a 'fundamental capacity' of an individual that drives his or her behaviour. However, this inner motivation does not always result

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in any observable acts but may only manifest itself as an internal belief. The prevalence of latent behaviour brings some difficulties for researchers when studying transcendence and trying to identify actions as clear and evident marks of any relationships with the divine. The current tools used to measure the level of transcendence focus on dimensions that do not necessarily relate to the relationship with the divine, but rather the relationships with the self, with other people and with the past, present and future (inward, outward and temporal dimensions). Such relationships seem to overlook one fundamental point, namely that transcendence involves a deep connection with the sacred. This research illustrates that transcendence can be better understood with a theological knowledge of the creation, that is '*creatio ex nihilo*' and a cognitive-psychological understanding of the relationship with the divine. This relationship involves thoughts, faith and belief, emotions and behaviours concerning the creation and the creator as outlined in the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine. Inevitably, understanding, and relating to, the creation and the creator is shown to be crucial in determining the relationship between transcendence and well-being. This study demonstrates that there is a significant gap between understanding transcendence and understanding its relationship with well-being. It reveals the contexts, dimensions and contents for a newly proposed transcendence tool that could be used to measure transcendence, taking into account religious and cultural sensitivities based on Abrahamic traditions i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

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**To my parents**

## List of Abbreviations

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
ABS	Affect Balance Scale
ADL	The activity of Daily Living
APA	American Psychological Association
BSI	Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)
CES-D	Centre for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale
CWB	Cognitive Well-being scale
EAT	Eating Attitude Test
EWB	Emotional Well-Being Scale
FACIT-Sp	Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy-Spiritual Well-Being Scale
GDS	Geriatric Depression Scale
HAV	Health-as-value
HHI	Herth Hope Index
IWB	Index of Well-Being
JCS	Jalowiec Coping Scale
LOT	Life Orientation Test
LOT-R	Life Orientation Test-Revised
MHS	Langner Scale of Mental Health Symptomatology
MIL	Meaning in Life
MILQ	Meaning in Life Questionnaire
MMSE	Mini-Mental State Examination
MNA	Minimal Nutritional Assessment
PA	Positive Affect Scale
PCCMS	Philadelphia Geriatric Centre Moral Scale
PHS	Perceived Health Status
PIL	Purpose in Life
PILT	Purpose in Life Test
PMP	Personal Meaning Profile
POMS	Profile of Mood States
ROS	Religious Orientation Scale
RCI-10	Religious Commitment Inventory-10
RS	The Resilience Scale
SDS	Symptom Distress Scale
SEG	Self-Esteem Scale (Bergress)
SER	Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenburg)
SF-36	Health Survey
SIWB	Spirituality Index of Well-Being
SMILE	Schedule for Meaning in Life Evaluation
SDS	Symptom Distress Scale
SOC	Sense of Coherence Scale
SOC-13	13-item semantic differential Sense of Coherence scale
SPC	Spiritual Practices Checklist

List of Abbreviations...continued

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
SPS	Spiritual Perspective Scale
SSQ	Social Support Questionnaire
ST <sub>a</sub>	Self-Transcendence
ST <sub>b</sub>	Spiritual Transcendence
STEs	Self-Transcendence Experiences
STS <sub>a</sub>	Self-Transcendence Scale (Reed)
STS <sub>b</sub>	Spiritual Transcendence Scale (Piedmont)
WBMMS	Well-Being Manifestation Measure Scale

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### 1.1.0 Setting the scene

There would appear to be a relational link between human transcendence<sup>4</sup> and well-being. Transcendence is fundamentally rooted in the idea of the universe as a creation<sup>5</sup> and the created order (laws that govern the universe). The universe, where human beings exist, originated 13.8 billion years ago. It would be impossible for human beings to have existed before the universe. Limited human intelligence makes it impossible to understand or detect any evidence of existence before the universe (creation). However, the universe emerged long before the existence of human beings. Inevitably, the existence of human beings would be impossible without the universe (creation) and its creator, a necessary being.<sup>6</sup> Ability to transcend involves relating the self beyond physical reality to the divine that is believed to be the ultimate source of all existence. This is how human transcendence is not only related to but also fundamental to the creation and the creator. It is likely that human transcendence is better understood by exploring the relationship between human beings and creation as well as the creator. Studies on both a healthy population (Coward 1996) and a population of diverse health

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<sup>4</sup> Transcendence is concerned with the perception that there is something out of the ordinary in a particular object or experience, something that goes beyond our everyday lives and beyond our usual understanding (Pargament 2011: p. 39).

Transcendence is considered as “the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective” (Piedmont 1999a: p. 988).

<sup>5</sup> Creation refers to the existence of the world (universe), everything of which including its form and its substance, the nature of law and the nature of matter is contingent upon the creator’s (God) will. (Polkinghorne 2009: p. 51).

<sup>6</sup> On a realistic ground, it is meaningless to find a reason for everything because the source of all causalities cannot be infinite. The ultimate source of creation, therefore, must be a necessary being, i.e. God who is beyond our ability to comprehend. (Davies and Williams 1992: p. 189).

conditions (Coward 1991; Runquist and Reed 2007; Chin-A-Loy and Fernsler 1998; Matthews and Cook 2009a; Ellermann and Reed 2001) have suggested that there is a positive relationship between the ability to transcend and well-being.

‘Ability to transcend’ refers to an individual’s cognitive orientation towards the ultimate source of the creation and the created order. In other words, a person’s ‘ability to transcend’ is determined by his/her thoughts or feelings, or behaviours, including any activities, or rituals, which the person performs, or intends to perform, or a combination of any, or all, of these (thoughts, feelings, behaviours) for such an orientation. The ‘ability to transcend’ thus, results in determining an individual’s level of relationship with the divine creator. It is worth noting that ‘ability to transcend’ requires an individual’s understanding of the creation and the ultimate source of the created order. We can understand and relate to a person’s understanding in this way by using the ‘*creatio ex nihilo*’<sup>7</sup> doctrine of creation, as the doctrine is well recognized by scholars from Abrahamic traditions. Because ‘ability to transcend’ is primarily cognitive in orientation, it does not necessarily require the person to have faith, or belief, in any specific religion, such as Judaism, Christianity or Islam, nor does it require the person to perform any ritual either, as his/her ability to transcend could be latent, that is, unobservable. Furthermore, an individual may not have faith in a specific religion but may have an orientation to the ultimate source of the created order. Therefore, capacity, or ability, to transcend does not necessarily mean having

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<sup>7</sup> ‘*Creatio ex nihilo*’ is the most fundamental doctrine in the Abrahamic faiths, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam and is widely accepted scriptural and philosophical background about the creation, creator, the divine that God created the universe out of nothing, and is based on Genesis 1:1 and 2. (Anderson and Bockmuehl 2017) (Oliver 2017).

faith or belief in any specific religion but rather, relates to a person's cognitive orientation towards creation and the transcendent creator.

Well-Being, a human emotional state, depends on the nature and functionality of the human mind. Some of the most important properties of the human mind are cognitive ability, the ability to think and to reason. Thinking, or cognitive ability, allows human beings to form assumptions and beliefs on which emotions and behaviours are based. In other words, well-being, and the state of the human mind appears to be the result of how an individual thinks, feels and behaves in a particular circumstance or situation. One of the fundamental objectives of the psychology of religion and spirituality<sup>8</sup> is to understand how human beings flourish in the divine relationship. Understandably, some individuals do not have faith and belief in the creator. However, it is still not unreasonable for many to believe that the existence of the physical world depends on a transcendent source, namely the divine. This research is fundamentally interested in how faith and belief (cognitive process) in a transcendent source influence or affect well-being.

The routes and pathways towards achieving a divine relationship vary. For instance, prayers and worship (religion) could form the basis of a relationship with the divine for some whereas, for others, forgiveness, gratitude and kindness (spirituality) are key ingredients in the search for the divine. Meta-analytic reviews have shown a significant positive relationship between religiosity and mental health (Hackney and Sanders 2003); spirituality and quality of life (Sawatzky,

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<sup>8</sup> Psychology of religion and spirituality is concerned with individual beliefs, experiences and behaviours (William 1903,). It incorporates clinical interests and concerns within a broader applied psychology of religion and spirituality (Shafranske 2005).

Ratner, and Chiu 2005); and religion or spirituality and physical health (Jim et al. 2015). It is likely that, by practising spirituality or religion, individuals can gain a sense of connection with the divine, thereby giving them empowerment, which eventually promotes their well-being. However, the properties of the divine relationship appear to be complex as it requires a comprehensive understanding of the human mind encompassing thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In addition, the importance of a comprehensive methodology, with the inclusion of cultures, traditions and theological integration, has been noted when examining the relationships among spirituality or religion and mental health (Dein, Cook, and Koenig 2012). Although spirituality and religion enhance well-being, this does not necessarily confirm a divine relationship or any ability to transcend. In other words, the strength and magnitude of transcendence or ability to transcend depend on the cognitive constructs (faith and belief) of spirituality or religion. As such, transcendence is not necessarily limited to spiritual or religious acts, rituals or behaviours. Furthermore, the type and nature of spirituality or religion (intrinsic or extrinsic motivation) can indicate or determine the presence of transcendence or the divine relationship. Religious rituals or religiosity can be either extrinsically or intrinsically motivated (Allport and Ross 1967).

Similarly, spiritual pathways differ from person to person. Spirituality is practised through searching for sacred meaning (Pargament 2007), and various routes in the pursuit of the divine relationship can be followed by individuals. Thus, spirituality or religion is an attempt or an initiative pursued by an individual to achieve a divine relationship. Such an attempt or search does not necessarily guarantee success if the searcher lacks belief or the ability to relate to the divine, extrinsically motivated rather than intrinsically motivated. In other words, any search for the sacred without the cognitive ability (inner faith or belief) or the

intrinsic motivation to find the divine relationship is unlikely to detect any ability to transcend.

The author of this thesis proposes that beliefs about transcendence or the transcendent relationship, or a relationship with the divine, contributes to well-being as such relationships can empower an individual's strength in maintaining and sustaining adversity in day-to-day living. In other words, the ability to transcend provides opportunities to have a sense of connection with the ultimate source of creation and the created order for hope, sense of meaning and purpose in life. Psychologically, an ultimate, secure attachment figure, such as the divine creator, allows for an individual's growth and development throughout their life span. This is through consideration of his/her existence, securely attached to the divine creator, in the same way, that a child's positive growth and development are dependent on a secure attachment figure like a parent or caregiver (Bowlby 1969; Bowlby 1973, 1982). This is how a sense of divine connection can empower an individual's well-being by sourcing and sensing meaning and purpose of life from the ultimate source of creation.

Understandably, searches for the sacred can detect or not detect the presence of transcendent belief. For example, an individual can search for the divine by observing or following religious rituals without having any intrinsic motivation or faith in the divine. As such, not all searches for the sacred confirm the presence of the ability to transcend. The author of this thesis proposes that faith and belief in the transcendent God are likely to enhance well-being. Existing literature indicates positive relationships between spirituality or religion and mental health (Dein et al. 2010) (Bergin 1983a; Witter et al. 1985). This positive

relationship has also been evidenced by several studies suggesting that the well-being of individuals with spirituality or religion is better than those without spirituality or religion (Shiah et al. 2015). The positive relationship between spirituality or religion and mental health is consistent with several meta-analyses (Salsman et al. 2015) (Sherman et al. 2015) (Yonker, Schnabelrauch, and DeHaan 2012) (Hackney and Sanders 2003) (Gartner, Larson, and Allen 1991) (Bergin 1983b). Although existing studies have shown a positive relationship between spirituality or religion and well-being, it is indicated that there are factors, such as self-transcendent positive emotions (awe, gratitude, love, and peace), that can mediate well-being (Van Cappellen et al. 2016). This suggests that it is not spirituality or religion itself, but rather the nature and type of spirituality or religion that could influence or affect mental health and well-being. For example, well-being is determined by intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Studies indicating a positive relationship between spirituality or religion and well-being have suggested that individuals with spirituality or religion had either intrinsic motivation about the sacred or, had faith or belief in a transcendent God. This forms the basis of the argument of the author of this thesis that ability to transcend or faith and belief in the divine is likely to be positively correlated to well-being. As such, spiritual acts or religious rituals without belief in transcendence or an ability to transcend are unlikely to enhance well-being. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the human cognitive process involving faith and belief in the divine to establish the extent of the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

This chapter first discusses and analyses the terms transcendence, spirituality and religion, and well-being, taking into account the current literature. It will then synthesise the terms to see how they relate to the divine relationship.

Finally, the chapter discusses the relationship between transcendence and well-being with research questions and hypotheses presented in the process.

### 1.2.0 Aims and objectives

This research, entitled 'The relationship between transcendence and well-being: a cognitive theological analysis' aims:

- a) To examine the relationship between transcendence and well-being;
- b) To establish the relationship between transcendence and well-being by integrating theological knowledge (the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine) with the psychology of religion and spirituality (cognitive psychological process, thoughts, faith, beliefs);
- c) To analyse the status of transcendence and well-being; and
- d) To demonstrate the need for a new transcendent tool for systematic, comprehensive measurement of the divine relationship concerning well-being.

It is likely that the existing literature on the ability to transcend has not completely and satisfactorily clarified how the divine relationship affects well-being. The objectives of the research, therefore, are:

- i) To provide clarity on transcendence, spirituality and religion;
- ii) To see how transcendence, as well as well-being, could be better understood with a cognitive-theological analysis; and
- iii) To propose a new measure for transcendence or the ability to relate to the divine.

The above aims and objectives of the research are pursued through: a discussion of transcendence and how it differs from spirituality and religion (chapter one); a critical review of the existing measures of transcendence for well-

being (chapter two); an investigation of the relationship between transcendence and well-being by conducting a critical literature review through exclusion and inclusion criteria (chapter three); an analysis of transcendence and well-being in light of the psychology of religion and spirituality (chapter four); and recommending a new transcendence measure based on the proposed contexts, dimensions and contents (chapter five).

### 1.3.0 Transcendence

The dictionary meaning of transcendence is '*existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level*' (Stevenson 2010). The word 'transcendence' originates from the Latin prefix *trans*, meaning "beyond", and the Latin word *scandere*, meaning "to climb". As such, transcendence means stepping up or going beyond physical existence or reality. When determining the meaning of transcendence, two important questions arise: i) what is meant by 'beyond physical existence'? and ii) how is it possible to reach something that does not exist within physical reality? The first question requires an understanding of the ultimate source, the eternity, or the divine creator from which physical reality is believed to originate. It may be useful to understand how faith in religion can facilitate understanding and belief in the divine source. Traditionally, belief in the divine is facilitated by religious books and scriptures. For instance, for the Judaeo-Christian faith traditions, the ancient creation story, 'Genesis', illustrates how God created the world and is the foundation of belief in the divine source. According to the primaeval story, Genesis 1:1: "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" The ancient creation story not only presents an account of the origin of physical reality but also indicates the ultimate source, the divine creator, courtesy of whom the creation, physical reality, came into existence. The existence of

God, the creator of physical reality, as far as the creation story is concerned, can lead individuals to have faith and belief in God and is the primary ingredient for them to form a relationship with the divine.

While the ancient creation story guides individuals with Judaeo-Christian traditions in the divine relationship, the formation of this divine relationship does not necessarily have to be limited to Genesis, or a biblical context, nor any specific or particular religious context. The reason for such an argument is that transcendence, or the relationship with the divine, is likely to be found in an individual's cognitive psychological process: cognitive orientation in understanding, maintaining and sustaining a relationship with the divine. Such an orientation, inevitably, involves an understanding of the divine relationship in a theological (*creatio ex nihilo*), multi-religious context. In addition, such a cognitive orientation likely requires an understanding of the *God-image* and *God-concept* and attachment theory, to establish a relationship with the divine attachment figure. It might be useful to consider first how transcendence could be understood in a theological (*'creatio ex nihilo'*) context.

### 1.3.1 Transcendence and '*creatio ex nihilo*'

The formation of faith and belief in the divine involves an understanding of physical reality, the creation, and its origin and purpose. '*Creatio ex nihilo*' is the most accepted doctrine of the creation among theologians. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most influential theologians, indicated that the creation included anything created *ex nihilo* because God is the only cause for their existence (Copan and Craig 2004: p. 148). As such, '*creatio ex nihilo*' presents an account of the nature of existence beyond physical reality.

The positive relationship between religiosity and mental health indicated above suggests that faith in the divine enhances well-being. It is now well evidenced that religious individuals, or believers in God, enjoy better health and well-being than non-religious individuals, or non-believers in the divine (Hayward et al. 2016). In other words, individuals with faith and belief in the divine flourish and enjoy better well-being than those without such faith and belief. This research is based on the interest in ascertaining how faith and belief in the divine facilitate well-being. Such an exploration inevitably entails an investigation to understand how individuals form ideas, thoughts, assumptions, faith and beliefs about the creation and the creator. The formation of such a cognitive process requires a psychological explanation of a cognitive phenomenon, namely the divine relationship.

Inevitably, the divine relationship requires an individual to learn about and understand the ultimate source of everything around us, and to form his/her ideas, thoughts and assumptions about the divine creator in a way that can lead him/her to believe that the divine creator (God) created everything around us. In other words, understanding the divine creator and formation of the belief in the divine begins with an understanding of abstract concepts such as the *God-image* and *God-concept*. Such understanding requires an individual to use his/her cognitive orientation, as well as cognitive ability, to form, maintain and sustain the relationship with the divine.

### 1.3.2 Transcendence and *God-image*, *God-concept*

The understanding of the formation of faith and belief in the divine can primarily be facilitated by *God images*<sup>9</sup> (Davis 2010) and *God concepts*<sup>10</sup> (Davis 2010). The existing God-image literature suggests the inclusion of *God schemas* (Gibson 2006) and *God representations* (Rizzuto 2011) as God-image-related terms. All of these terms are theoretically related phenomena (Davis, Moriarty, and Mauch 2013). However, for transcendence and its relationship with well-being, *God images* and *God concepts* appear to be significant both cognitively and theologically. For instance, *God images* are cognitive-affective units (Mischel and Shoda 2008) that are linked to inherent thoughts, memories and knowledge. The link indicates that individuals with faith and belief in the divine present theological knowledge, such as information about God, and demonstrate an ability to sustain and maintain such information cognitively. Similarly, *God concepts* are context-sensitive, belief-laden mental and neural representations (Garzon 2007; Decharms and Zador 2000; Smith and Conrey 2007) that are mediated precisely by cognition (thoughts) including memories and knowledge. Essentially, *God images* and *God concepts* are cognitive-theological constructs for transcendence. *God images* and *God concepts*, as outlined above, are active ingredients in the formation of a transcendent relationship.

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<sup>9</sup> *God images* refer to internally functioning ideals of specific divine attachment figures, such as God, Allah, Jesus, Buddah, Great Spirit, Krishna, Brahman, Vishnu, Shiva, ancestor spirits and many others (Barrett 2007) and the experienced self in relationship with that divine attachment figure (Davis 2010).

<sup>10</sup> *God concepts* refer to an individual's theological set of beliefs about a specific divine attachment figure and it's qualities, about how that figure relates with, thinks about, and feels towards humans (including the self); and how humans (including self) should relate with, think about, and feel toward the divine attachment figure (Davis, Moriarty, and Mauch 2013).

### 1.3.3 Transcendence and attachment theory

It is evident from the above that the divine relationship requires an individual's attachment with a divine figure. Eventually, the development and dynamics of attachment-based conceptualisations of faith and belief in the divine appear to be important in understanding transcendence as well as well-being. The influential attachment theory, as pioneered by John Bowlby (1907-1990) (Bowlby 1969; Bowlby 1973, 1982), indicates that human relationships are guided by their cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioural functioning (Pietromonaco and Barrett 2000), including their relationships with divine attachment figures (Davis 2010). The foundation of the attachment theory is that relationships begin to develop through early-life experiences, usually with parents or caregivers, but they (relationships) remain open across their life span with subsequent attachment figures such as friends, romantic partners, or mentors in addition to divine attachment figures (Bowlby 1973, 1988; Siegel and Bryson 2012). The attachment theory, thus, suggests that faith and belief in the divine begin with the formation of a relationship by fulfilling some form of attachment needs<sup>11</sup>. The formation process entails two main components: the attachment figure and the self. The quality of the attachment inevitably depends on whether the attachment figure, such as God, is consistently available, sensitive, and responsive when needed. The attachment is also contingent on the experience of the self in terms of being worthy of love, acceptance, care and esteem (Collins et al. 2004). The formation of the divine relationship, thus, is a product of knowledge and understanding about the divine from *God images* and *God concepts* and individuals' cognitive processing ability about the self.

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<sup>11</sup> Attachment needs refer to maintain proximity to the attachment figure, regulating attachment related distress, and achieving felt security (Davis, Moriarty, and Mauch 2013).

The author of this thesis proposes that the experience of transcendence, or the transcendent relationship with the divine, based on the above-mentioned attachment theory, is likely to form the basis of faith and belief in God. However, the transcendent relationship, as far the attachment theory is concerned, is likely to stimulate relationship-specific attachment styles or tendencies, such as anxiety (about separation, abandonment, or insufficient love) and avoidance (of intimacy, dependency, and emotional expressiveness) (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007: p. 88). The anxiety style refers to a person's internal functioning of self, whereas the avoidance style represents the person's internal working models of others, such as the divine. The internal functioning of the self is primarily cognitive (ideas, thoughts, faith and belief) focused on both the self and the divine attachment figure, God. It appears that such a transcendent relationship is cognitive-theological as the relationship involves the formation of *God images* and *God concepts* with a set of theological beliefs. Inevitably, an individual's sense of well-being, with a divine attachment figure, could be enhanced by reducing anxiety and avoidance. In other words, it is likely that the strength and quality of a relationship with a divine attachment figure will enhance an individual's psychological well-being whereas anxiety and avoidance towards a divine attachment figure, such as God, will affect their well-being.

The strength and magnitude of the presence of a relationship (the less anxiety and avoidance, the more strength) with a divine attachment figure, as outlined above, are likely to determine the level of psychological well-being. This link indicates that the presence of a divine attachment figure provides individuals with the opportunity to flourish. However, the presence of anxiety and avoidance

about the divine attachment figure is likely to be potential barriers for transcendence as well as well-being. Research indicates that divine struggles<sup>12</sup> could potentially lead to anxiety (due to separation) or depression (McConnell et al. 2006). Separation anxiety about the divine attachment figure, according to Bowlby's attachment theory, is determined by the level of separation, love and intimacy from, or dependence on, the divine. In other words, a high level of attachment separation and a high level of attachment avoidance would indicate a high level of divine anxiety. Consequently, separation (internal working models of self) and avoidance (a person's internal working models of others) can influence or affect the relationship with the divine. According to (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991), divine attachment styles can be classified as:

(a) secure attachment-low attachment anxiety and low attachment avoidance;

(b) preoccupied attachment-high attachment anxiety and low attachment avoidance;

(c) fearful-avoidant attachment-high attachment anxiety and high attachment avoidance; and

(d) dismissive attachment-low attachment anxiety and high attachment avoidance. The presence of particular attachment styles would influence or affect transcendence and the divine relationship, and would inevitably determine well-being.

The negative impact of divine struggles on mental health and well-being is consistent with several meta-analyses (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005; Smith, McCullough, and Poll 2003). The divine struggles refer to negative emotions

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<sup>12</sup> Divine struggles refer to negative thoughts or feelings focused on a person's ideas about God (or Gods) (Exline, Homolka, and Harriott 2016).

toward or conflict with, one's belief in God or one's perceived attachment with God (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991). For instance, depression arising from one's disappointment in the divine struggles could affect how individuals can flourish in the divine relationship. The psychopathology<sup>13</sup> of the divine struggles holds that faulty assumptions or beliefs towards the divine can cause one to blame God for unexpected suffering such as significant loss, or serious life-threatening illness. Kenneth I. Pargament (Pargament 2007) categorised the divine struggles (e.g. feeling angry at God) into intrapersonal (e.g. inability to forgive the self for wrongdoing) and interpersonal (e.g. feeling betrayed by a religious figure). The main source of the divine struggles appears to be the way an individual views God in a specific event or situation. For instance, having been diagnosed with cancer, a person may become angry at God, and the underlying psychopathology could entail maladaptive thoughts such as 'God is punishing me.' Depending on the strength and magnitude of the divine relationship that the person holds, such psychopathology inevitably could affect transcendence as well as well-being.

#### 1.3.4 Transcendence and mental health

The author of this thesis proposes that the divine struggles could further be explored by using the cognitive model (Beck 2002: p. 35) of depression. The model indicates that depression is caused by "cognitive triad" of negative views of experience (interpersonal - past and present), self (intrapersonal), and future (hopelessness from viewing God as cruel). As such, what God means to an individual in specific circumstances depends on the nature of the individual's thoughts, assumptions, faith and belief the person forms about physical reality or

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<sup>13</sup> Psychopathology is defined as significant restriction in the ability of a person on his (or her) ability (a) to engage in deliberate action and, equivalently, (b) to participate in the social practices of the community (Bergner 1997).

the divine. Individuals, particularly those practising religion, can view their religious beliefs as central to their spiritual life (Park 2005: p. 357-79). As such, perceiving God as unhelpful or punishing during times of suffering could lead an individual to view their life as hopeless or meaningless. It is worth noting that the meaning a person attaches to the divine could be culturally influenced. However, such culturally distinct meanings are likely to be reflected in their faith and belief in the divine attachment figure. As such, psychological explanations for the cognitive process in the formation of the divine relationship are likely to be culturally sensitive, meaning that the psychological exploration of faith and belief will need to be inclusive of all religious traditions and cultures. A cognitive model of depression (Beck 2002) could well be used to understand the formation of the divine struggles to the sense that a cognitive processing system, including thoughts, assumptions and beliefs, is linked to well-being. Thoughts can be considered as ideas, whereas assumptions are known as intermediary beliefs and are contingent with 'if...then' links (Beck 1995: p. 19). As such, the cognitive processing system in a divine relationship involves ideas or assumptions about God images, God concepts, God schemas and God representations. For instance, 'God is punishing me' is considered as a thought whereas 'if I pray, then God will help me' is classed as an assumption. These thoughts and assumptions can form the basis of faith and belief, such as 'God is all-powerful.' This is how psychological theories, such as the attachment theory as well as the cognitive theory, could be used to understand transcendence and its relationship with well-being.

Further to the above-mentioned attachment styles and cognitive processing system, transcendence inevitably requires an understanding of the divine.

Understanding the divine is a developmental learning process across cultures and religions. In other words, *God images* are learned, mainly through implicit, emotional and incidental learning (Smith, Kosslyn, and Barsalou 2007) and are stored in the memory through sub-symbolic and non-verbal symbolic representation codes (Davis 2010; Hall et al. 2009). The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine represents a widely accepted resource about God's existence and providence. It is likely that the doctrine could be helpful concerning *God images*, *God concepts* throughout the life span of human beings in their development and their divine relationship. However, the understanding of the divine, such as *God images*, requires not only the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine but also demands consideration of the cognitive-psychological process. Psychological mechanisms, such as attachment styles including the cognitive processing system and the theological understanding, form the foundation of the presence of transcendence or the ability to relate to the divine. The integration of the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine with the psychological mechanism of divine belief is likely to enhance understanding of transcendence as well as well-being. For instance, individuals can find it difficult to relate to the divine due to the psychopathology in the cognitive process. As such, divine struggles have clinical significance, requiring the assessment and management of faulty psychopathology about transcendence or the divine relationship for well-being.

### 1.3.5 The formation of transcendence

The second question above, which asks how one can reach the divine, relates to an individual's capability to relate or form a relationship with the divine creator. Psychologist Ralph Piedmont (Piedmont 1999a: p.998) indicated this capacity to be a source of motivation that drives the direction and selection of

behaviours. However, this intrinsic motivation may or may not lead to, or direct, any specific behaviour in relation to transcendence. For instance, an individual with intrinsic motivation to relate to the divine may not perform any observable acts towards the divine relationship. Furthermore, it is likely that intrinsic motivation is latent and sustained within an individual lacking drive to perform or behave at all. Even if the intrinsic motivation does lead an individual to act or perform in a particular way, it is not clear as to whether such behaviour(s) should be considered as transcendent behaviour(s). For example, an individual with intrinsic motivation might search for the divine by attending Church and prayers. However, psychologist Gordon Allport (1897-1967) (Allport and Ross 1967) indicated that such behaviours carry the possibility of either intrinsic religiosity or extrinsic religiosity. As such, it is unlikely that intrinsic motivation could be determined by just observing such religious performance or behaviours.

Furthermore, other forms of behaviours could materialise due to intrinsic motivation. Patriotism, self-sacrificing altruism and secular humanism, as Piedmont acknowledged, are some such behaviours but they do not necessarily constitute transcendent behaviour(s) for a divine relationship unless such behaviours are intrinsically motivated. This limitation leaves Piedmont's definition of transcendence vague and incomplete. The argument here is that transcendence requires an intrinsic motivation but does not necessarily require the consideration of drive or direction about any specific behaviour(s). The primary basis of the argument is that the key ingredients, such as ideas, thoughts, faith and belief, could still be present for the divine relationship without any drive or direction concerning behaviours or performances. Therefore, it is likely that such intrinsic motivation is better understood through underlying cognition as well

as feelings rather than rituals, including acts or behaviours. As such, the formation of a relationship with the divine, or the ability to relate to God, primarily depends on the strength and quality of an individual's thoughts, faith and belief about the divine existence rather than any act or performance concerning the transcendent God.

Transcendence, in principle, involves some ability based on intrinsic motivation to form a relationship with the creator, or the divine. Understandably, such ability or motivation is established by understanding an individual's cognitive thoughts and ideas, including faith and belief about the transcendent creator. As such, both cognitive psychological principles and knowledge and understanding of the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine are necessary when investigating transcendence as well as well-being. The doctrine is significant in understanding the creation and the creator so that individuals can develop a meaningful relationship with the divine creator. Cognitive psychological theories such as the modal model of cognition (Atkinson and Shiffrin 1971) and Beck's cognitive theory (Beck 1976b) appear to be promising when trying to understand the cognitive process in the divine relationship. Moreover, Bowlby's attachment theory can shed light on how individuals flourish when they have faith in a divine attachment figure. However, psychological theories are likely to be incomplete in understanding transcendence as the latter involves not only thoughts and beliefs but also demands an understanding of the existence of the divine. In other words, it is essential to know what the creation, as well as the creator, is all about for an individual to form a relationship with it.

There are many aspects of '*creatio ex nihilo*' that are not physical and which cannot be explained by physics. In general terms, the creation is understood as physical reality by individuals who may not have sufficient knowledge of '*creatio ex nihilo*' nor of physics. However, the ultimate source of the creation, in fact, does not belong to physical reality. In addition, the creation is meaningless without its source or origin. Science, due to its disciplinary boundaries, is limited to explain any entity or phenomenon that is beyond physical reality. Scientists may attest that there is nothing to explain beyond physical reality. However, there is nothing beyond the physical reality that can be explained scientifically. Some individuals could believe that the source of the creation of physical reality comes from beyond physical reality created by a necessary being, namely God. Such a necessary being is not a testable entity but rather a psychological and theological divinity. As such, a relationship with the divine is not something to test scientifically but is an entity to be understood in terms of faith and belief in the human mind.

One may raise the question of why a theological understanding is important when it comes to transcendence. The reason is that a method or discipline other than theology or religion is unable to provide a sensible, plausible explanation of the creation and its ultimate source. A fundamental human quest to develop and form a relationship with the divine attachment figure entails understanding 'why' and 'how' the creation (everything around us) came into existence. The relationship with the divine inevitably depends not only on what individuals understand but also on their internal working models (thoughts and beliefs) in the relationship. Individuals' understanding of the divine attachment figure is based on what they know and how they think about the creation and the creator. As such,

answers to 'why' and 'how' have profound importance in terms of how human beings should think about God, the creation and the relationship between the two (Oord 2014: p. 1). Seeking answers to these questions involves an understanding of the origin and existence of the creation as well as its creator. Science functions within disciplinary boundaries and is unable to explain any existence beyond physical reality. The divine existence cannot be either proved or disproved by science. No single discipline, to the knowledge of the author of this thesis, can put forward a reasonable explanation for the creation and its creator. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' appears to be a promising doctrine that explores the creation and its creator in a systematic, pragmatic way. Theologians from many faiths, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have agreed on this doctrine.

The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine originates from influential Christian theologians, namely Saint Augustine (c.354 – 430) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (c.1225 – 1274). This Christian thought was later adapted in Judaism as well (Burrell et al. 2010). The '*creatio ex nihilo*' states that God created the universe out of nothing, without any pre-existing matter, space or time. It also illustrates that God exists necessarily, that God acted freely in bringing the creation and the subsequently created order, and that God is omnipotent and creates without needing anything at all (Copan and Craig 2004: p. 25). The doctrine also indicates that the creation (universe) is God's creative act, that it is directed towards an end or goal (teleology), and that it strives for perfection<sup>14</sup> to enter deeply into the life of God, the creator. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, thus, illuminates that the creation (universe) does not have a material cause as nothing that exists has not been caused by the creator. As the creation did not have anything to begin from, it is,

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<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, III(1),20 on 'how things imitate divine goodness'.

therefore created '*ex nihilo*' by the creator's (God's) creative act. The creation and the creator ( God) are inseparable, meaning that God is self-sufficient and that no pre-existing material is necessary for God's creative act. Creation proceeds with God's providence<sup>15</sup> towards a proper, teleological end or destiny. God is totally self-sufficient, self-subsistent and does not need to receive or have anything to stimulate his creativity. Therefore, "creation is a purely free, completely unique, totally gracious and wholly unnecessary act" (Oliver 2017: p.37).

The existence of the creation (universe) reveals that God exists by necessity and that the creation, all creatures, including human beings, exist through participation in God's creative act. The necessity of the existence of God means that human beings could not exist without God's wish to create in the first place. As such, God is the first cause of all that exists, and everything that came into existence did so according to God's wish. This theological doctrine is significant for the formation of the divine attachment figure in maintaining and sustaining a divine relationship. The doctrine also illuminates that God is not detached or separated from his creation and is involved in preserving and guiding his creation in a particular direction or end. God's creation, preservation and providence indicate that God is available around individuals, within them, everywhere, in all directions and all places and that human beings can seek help and support from the divine creator whenever needed.

As far as '*creatio ex nihilo*' is concerned, God is omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, and timeless. Therefore, it is only God who knows the reasoning behind the creation. Even the most powerful, intelligent agent of the creatures is unable

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<sup>15</sup> Providence refers to the way God governs creation i.e. universe towards particular ends, the same way a King or Queen rules his or her territory.

to determine the reasoning behind the creation. In other words, it is beyond the knowledge of any agent or individual within the creation to dictate or know such reasoning. The reason for such inability is that any agent or individual is from God's creation or creative act. As such, the agent or individual could well be part of the creation but does not necessarily belong to the source, the timeless eternity, meaning that nothing except the divine creator possesses the source of or reasoning behind creation. Everything within the creation is in motion in relation to time and space. Nothing except the divine creator possesses the source of, or reasoning behind, creation as the creation does not belong within the source. So, a creature or the creation is determined by what it is and what it has. God does not possess anything; what God is and what God possesses are the same thing<sup>16</sup>. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that it is beyond human intelligence or the capacity to understand why or how the creation happened.

Another reason for individuals' inability to detect the source of the creation (universe) is that the cause of causalities belongs somewhere else, not in causalities. In terms of causality, the universe, including its agents, came into being with Big Bang. The reason for or source of the Big Bang is not addressed in this particular causality. The Big Bang was instead caused by an external source, which is considered to be the transcendent God. It is only God who is the source of the causality (Big Bang) and is all-knowing. '*Creatio ex nihilo*' does not necessarily mean that the 'Big Bang' created the universe but the doctrine provides an opportunity to discuss the 'Big Bang' scientific theory which explains how the universe began. The author of this thesis attempts to present such a theory to illustrate that the source, or cause, of the beginning of the universe,

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<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, XI.10, p. 462.

does not belong to causality, that is, the 'Big Bang'. The standard 'Big Bang' model is used in the sense that the origin it points to is an absolute origin of *ex nihilo*, and that if the universe originated in a singularity, it is very likely that we would truly have creation *ex nihilo*.<sup>17</sup> Understanding the reasoning is likely beyond human capacity or intelligence. The reason behind the existence of the creation (universe) is known only by the divine creator. The ultimate reason for individuals' existence, including all creatures and agents, is held exclusively by the transcendent creator. This understanding of creation and creator thus can contribute towards individuals' ability to form a relationship with the divine. It is likely that this transcendent relationship with the divine eventually can enhance and empower well-being. Understanding the creation and its creator, and the ability to form a relationship with the divine could thus be beneficial for human beings and their well-being.

Human beings, being part of the creator's creative act, are the participants towards destiny or a proper end. In other words, the purpose of human beings, including everything around them, is to strive for perfection through participating in the divine goodness.<sup>18</sup> In the same way, the creation (universe) strives for perfection to enter more deeply in the life of God, the creator. As such, the ultimate purpose of human beings and everything around them is to achieve and to gain the deepest possible access to the life of God. People with spirituality and religion likely to enhance their psychological well-being by adopting and maintaining faith and belief in a way that enables them to find meaning and purpose<sup>19</sup> of their lives better than those without spirituality and religion, and those

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<sup>17</sup> John Barrow and Frank Tipler: *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 442

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III(10.20 on 'how things imitate divine goodness'.

<sup>19</sup> Meaning in life refers to general meaning in life, and consists of three aspects: beliefs, goals, and subjective feelings (Park and Folkman 1997).

struggling to find meaning and purpose in their lives. The positive impact of finding meaning and purpose in life can be supported by the structure of psychological well-being (Ryff and Keyes 1995) where the purpose of life is indicated as one of the key ingredients. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, therefore, demonstrates psychological significance in achieving a sense of meaning and purpose of life for well-being. The importance of the divine relationship in relation to well-being can be supported by an empirical study that suggested that a belief in God (not necessarily religion-related affiliation) enhances mental health treatment outcomes (Rosmarin et al. 2013).

### 1.3.6 Transcendence and the Abrahamic traditions

The nature of the creation and the creator could be understood further through scriptures and biblical texts. Various passages of scripture, including in early Christian thought, do not necessarily insist upon 'creation out of nothing' (May 1994a). For instance, the Hebrew and Greek meaning of 'create' indicates that something was created with something else, meaning that God's creation could be compared to the work of a potter (Is. 29:16; Rm. 9:19-21). Moreover, the New Testament indicates that God creates from something (Oord 2014: p.2). Quranic scripture (114 surahs), i.e. "It is Allah<sup>20</sup> Who created the heavens and the earth, and all between them, in six days, then He established Himself on the Throne: you have none, besides Him, to protect or intercede (for you): will not then receive admiration?" (Qur'an 32:4-5, Surah as-sajdah 'The Prostration') is

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Purpose provides a broader motivational component that stimulates goals and influences behaviour. Purpose does not necessitate a designated outcome to be attained, but it must motivate the person to be goal oriented (Park and Folkman 1997: p. 113).

<sup>20</sup> In Islam, the last of the three Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), God is Allah but is not a title rather a personal name and cannot be translated as 'God'. Allah is derived from al-Ila'h, 'the divinity' and is a revelation from God and has a sacrament value. (Negus 2011).

fundamental to understanding creation in Islam. The differences in the presentation styles, however, are mainly in the interpretation of scriptures, and this does not necessarily mean there are fundamental distinctions.

Furthermore, there is a consensus among the three Abrahamic faiths, whereby it is not permissible to separate the creation from God (Oliver 2017: p. 37). Theologians from the three Abrahamic faiths share a common opinion about the creation and its creator. For example, Islamic theologian Allama Muhammed Iqbal's (1879-1938) thought<sup>21</sup> of three models of God: Infinite, The Cosmic Ego or Self, and the creative co-worker. Iqbal's thought reflects the Christian doctrine of Trinity, God as Father, of incarnation, or the central action of the Spirit (Ward 1996: p. 68). However, Iqbal's view of God as a creative co-worker does not necessarily comply fully with Aquinas's Doctrine of Divine Simplicity (DDS) as outlined in '*creatio ex nihilo*.' The DDS explicitly illustrates that God does not need to receive or possess anything to exist either as a worker or a co-worker. God does not need any form or shape or structure to exist. So, God does not need to exist as a substance or a co-worker, rather it is of God's essence that God exists<sup>22</sup>, as essence and existence are indistinguishable in God. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Iqbal's third view of God as a creative co-worker is incorrect.

It is likely that Iqbal misinterpreted what God is and what God has. God exists transcendentally, meaning that God exists without needing anything for Him

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<sup>21</sup> Iqbal argued Greek influence on Islam and refused to accept the classical Aristotelian view of simplicity mainly because he viewed the authority as an alien intrusion. According to Iqbal, unlike the Greek theologians (Plato), for Qur'an time has a purpose and represents the actual reality of a created order. (Ward 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.4.3.

to exist. In other words, according to Augustine, God *is* what God *has*, indicating that attributes and existence are the same in God; formlessness and timelessness are the only substances of God's transcendental presence. This transcendental presence means that God is present in all places and directions. Iqbal's view of God as a co-worker thus appears to be incongruent with DDS. Nonetheless, his view about the creation and its creator, including the two other models of God, i.e. the infinite and the cosmic-self, is compatible with DDS. Thus, despite some controversy, Iqbal's overall theological explanation about the creation appears to be symmetrical to DDS.

The similarity between the Islamic theological doctrine and the Christian one could be demonstrated further by Imam Gazzali (1058-1111), a Persian Islamic theologian. Gazzali and the Italian Christian theologian, Thomas Aquinas, both agreed on the classical influences, God and the creation. This agreement indicates that there is no significant difference between the Islamic doctrine of creation and the Christian doctrine as both adopt the same basic ideas, i.e. the simplicity of the divine nature (DDS). Interestingly, the Qur'anic doctrine of creation is widely perceived to adopt divine simplicity better than the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Ward 1996: p. 60). For instance, in comparison to the triangular relationship of God, Father and Holy Spirit, the Qur'an's creation, adaptation and uniqueness are focused on the oneness of Allah and Allah's sovereignty and power over all creation (2:106 and 109; 3:29; 5:19; 8:41; 9:39, 22:6, 29:20, 46:33 and 64:1; cf. Bell, 148).

Furthermore, creation according to the Qur'an emphasises that there is nothing that can escape God's power and authority (2:116 and 255; 10:55; 16:52;

30:26 and 53:31). Genesis and Hebrew scriptures are considered as original thoughts in the Jewish doctrine of creation. Further to the original thoughts of the creation and the creator, Jewish creation theology is called 'Kabbalah,' a rabbinic Jewish mystical tradition based on 13<sup>th</sup>-century text 'Zohar,' the most important of over 3000 texts. According to 'Zohar,' God is so transcendent that it is unexplainable with words. God is known as 'Ein Sof (without end)' referring to God's lack of boundaries in terms of both time and space and that God interacts with the universe through His essence of ten emanations called ten *Seffiroth* (Dein 2011). The lack of boundaries means that God exists both within and outside of time and space and is inseparable from the creation. The doctrine of creation based on Judaism thus confirms DDS as outlined in '*creatio ex nihilo*.' So, the three Abrahamic faiths see the creation and God as inseparable. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, thus, not only considered to be the most influential and fundamental theology of the creation but is also the most prominently shared platform for these three faiths.

The consensus or unity among the three Abrahamic traditions indicates that when it comes to talking about creation it is about '*creatio ex nihilo*' and is considered to be theologically grounded and biblically originated (Oliver 2017: p. 2). However, an issue for debate is whether the creation materialised from pre-existing material or nothing at all. It appears quite obvious that biblical text did not insist upon creation 'out of nothing' (May 1994b). In addition, the creation story (Genesis 1:1) does not appear to provide a clear indication that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and earth from nothing. Promisingly, P. Copan and W. L. Craig (Copan and Craig 2004) concluded that even though the earth was a formless waste, it was a two-stage creation where God created His initial raw

materials out of nothing and then gave them a proper shape to create the cosmos or the universe. Copan and Craig's analysis and conclusion could eradicate any confusion or doubt that the New Testament and Old Testament might support '*creatio ex nihilo*.' The Islamic creation story based on Qur'anic text (Surah as-sajdah) states there was nothing alongside Him (Allah) when He created. This story is an indication of support for '*creatio ex nihilo*,' confirming that Allah created the universe out of nothing.

Although the three Abrahamic faiths are in tune with '*creatio ex nihilo*,' it is not known whether any other faiths consider '*creatio ex nihilo*' as a religious doctrine. For instance, the Hindu scripture 'Bhagavad Gita' indicates transcendence as a layer of reality accessible to all, and not as a religious doctrine (Raman 2003). The Hindu scripture raises an important question as to whether or not '*creatio ex nihilo*' could be considered as a religious doctrine for all faiths. It is likely that '*creatio ex nihilo*' is a theological or metaphysical doctrine rather than an exclusively religious doctrine. Understanding the creation and the creator using '*creatio ex nihilo*' would allow the 'transcendence' definition to be more pragmatic and accessible. As transcendence requires understanding about the creation, as well as the creator, it is important that such understanding is not limited exclusively to a religious domain. A sensible understanding to take away from '*creatio ex nihilo*' is that the ultimate origin and source of any creature or human being, and the creation itself, is the transcendent God. The source of existence for a time and space, creatures, including human beings, belong to the divine. As such, it is neither possible nor permissible to dictate the reasoning behind creation definitively. As theologian Aquinas stated, creatures are granted existence in addition to their essence; they do not possess existence. The

existence of creatures, including human beings, is contingent on their essence. The dependency of human existence on their essence means that the existence of human beings, including their essence, does not belong to anything within the creation. It, rather, originates in the eternity, the transcendent God.

The existence of human beings, including all creatures, as '*creatio ex nihilo*' explains is contingent and dependent upon the transcendent creator. Understanding the psychological well-being of humans would be incomplete without understanding non-contingent being, that is, the transcendent creator, upon which, the existence of human beings inevitably depends. Because '*creatio ex nihilo*' explains how everything, including human beings, exists within God's providence, it is, therefore, crucial to include the doctrine of understanding human existence and the psychological well-being of humans within the whole system. The inclusion of the theological doctrine in understanding psychological well-being would apply to three Abrahamic faith traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) as they agree that creation and the creator are inseparable. In the psychology of religion and spirituality, this is why an understanding of the creation as well as the creator based on '*creatio ex nihilo*' is crucial for transcendence and well-being. A relationship with the divine can not only empower individuals' existence but is also fundamental to their day-to-day living and well-being.

#### 1.4.0 Self-transcendence

The concept of 'self-transcendence' (ST<sub>a</sub>) was originally coined by Pamela G. Reed and Doris D. Coward, American nurses. They defined self-transcendence as the expansion of self-boundaries in multi-dimensional ways: a)

inwardly in introspective activities; b) outwardly through concerns about others' welfare; c) temporally with the perception of one's past and future to enhance the present; and d) transpersonally through connections with a higher or greater dimension (Coward and Reed 1996). However, it is not clear whether or not these multi-dimensional ways constitute or determine the relationship with the divine in relation to well-being. It appears that the definition of self-transcendence does not indicate ST<sub>a</sub> as the ability to step beyond physical existence or reality. It rather indicates ST<sub>a</sub> to entail expanding one's relationships within the self, with others and connecting the self with a higher or greater dimension. Furthermore, it is not clear what the authors meant by connecting the self with a higher or greater power. Although it is indicated that such a connection involves a spiritual perspective in a way that empowers the self (Reed 1992), but the type or nature of empowering the self is not adequately clarified. For example, it is not clear if this empowerment can be achieved through a relationship with the divine. The author of this thesis argues that the presence of self-transcendence may enhance well-being but does not necessarily confirm transcendence or a relationship with the divine as the features of self-transcendence, such as the relationship within self, with others do not necessarily occur due to faith and belief in the transcendent God. In other words, a person can achieve or enhance his/her self-transcendence (ST<sub>a</sub>) without believing that the existence of all sources is dependent on the transcendent God.

Spirituality or the spiritual perspective are complex terms to be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. In broad terms, spirituality is defined as a search for the sacred (Pargament 1999), and this is a widely used and accepted definition of spirituality. However, searching for the sacred does not necessarily

confirm a relationship with the divine or connecting beyond physical existence. The most likely reason for that is that the types and forms of search vary from individual to individual. For instance, attending Church or Mosque is a way of searching for the sacred for someone, whereas meditation could be a way used by others to relate to the transcendent creator. Neither of these types of search can confirm the divine relationship without intrinsic motivation to relate to the divine. Relating the self beyond physical existence or the divine requires an intrinsic motivation stemming from an individual's beliefs about the existence of the transcendent God. As such, the author of this thesis argues that Coward and Reed's inclusion of the spiritual perspective for transpersonal connection does not confirm a transcendent or divine relationship. The authors' inclusion of inward, outward and temporal dimensions is not intended to indicate a divine relationship either. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that 'self-transcendence' does not define or mean transcendence or indicate an ability to relate beyond physical existence. This argument raises an important question about the appropriateness of the clinical application of Reed's Self-Transcendence Scale (STS<sub>a</sub>) (Reed 1987b) to determine the ability to transcend concerning well-being. A critical discussion on the STS<sub>a</sub> and its relevance to well-being is provided in chapter two.

#### 1.5.0 Spirituality and religion

Spirituality is defined as "a subjective experience of the sacred" (Vaughan 1991: p. 105) whereas religion is considered as "a system of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power, and practices of worship or other rituals directed towards such a power" (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi 2013: p. 1). This research does not intend to enter into a debate on the differences between spirituality and religion. However, a discussion of spirituality and religion appears necessary to ascertain

how they are linked to transcendence as well as well-being. Existing literature indicates that the meaning of spirituality and religion overlaps (Koenig, King, and Carson 2012: p. 45) showing that spirituality includes both religious and non-religious practices whereas religion stimulates beliefs, practices and rituals about the transcendent God. This overlap in meanings is supported by a study (Zinnbauer et al. 1997) suggesting points of convergence and divergence between the constructs of religion and spirituality.

It is likely that an individual conducting spiritual practices, such as forgiveness, gratitude, and kindness, can be either religious or non-religious. Similarly, an individual who undertakes religious rituals, such as Church prayer or congregation, can be with or without forgiveness (spirituality). As such, the terms 'spirituality' and 'religion' are used interchangeably to indicate that spirituality does not differ significantly from religion (Spilka and McIntosh 1996). Although spiritual and religious practices present similar attributes, their constructs may vary when it comes to the transcendent relationship as well as well-being. For instance, extrinsic religiosity or forgiveness without acceptance may not lead to the formation of an ability to transcend. Such an inability even with religious or spiritual practice is unlikely to enhance well-being.

Spirituality and religion appear, together, to be a growing concept for a range of disciplines such as medicine, psychiatry and psychology. It is likely that the extensive use of the terms among various disciplines makes it difficult to give either term a universal definition. Interestingly, spirituality could be considered as an integral part of one's identity and personal experience of transcendence, whereas religiousness could be viewed as an external tool through which

individuals can access their spirituality and their relationship with the divine (Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger 2011). These views are supported by a national study of English households indicating that spirituality and religion were seen as distinct terms. The study revealed that some participants regarded themselves as spiritual but not religious, and vice versa (King et al. 2013). In the psychology of religion and spirituality, the terms 'spirituality' and 'religion' are considered separately with distinct meanings. Religion refers to commitments or faithfulness within a particular institutional setting, whereas spirituality is regarded as engagement with, or experience of, transcendence (Pargament, Exline, and Jones 2013: p. 22).

Despite having some differences, both spirituality and religion aim to establish a relationship with the sacred. However, being religious or spiritual does not necessarily warrant belief in transcendence or establish a divine relationship. As such, it is important to establish the elements that determine the divine relationship in relation to well-being. Transcendence, as discussed above, entails an ability to relate to the divine which may or may not occur through religion or spirituality. Understandably, religion involves the social and institutional practice of certain faith and rituals. Spirituality allows individuals to engage in activities or practices searching for the sacred, or the divine. On the other hand, transcendence is the ability to relate the self to the divine and, therefore, it does indicate a divine relationship which could be achieved with or without religion or spirituality. Spirituality or religion can refer to certain acts, rituals or practices that may or may not engage cognitive elements such as faith and belief whereas transcendence may or may not involve any of the religious or spiritual practices but must contain faith and the belief in relating to the divine. The author of this

thesis proposes that only a type of spirituality or religiousness that constitutes the ability to transcend could predict or enhance well-being. As such, belief in transcendence, or the ability to relate to the divine, is the central focus of spirituality and religion. The thesis is primarily focused on understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being. The correlation between non-transcendent spirituality/religion (for example, extrinsic religiosity) and well-being, is discussed, to some extent, in chapter three (literature review).

#### 1.6.0 Spiritual transcendence

Spiritual transcendence (ST<sub>b</sub>) refers to “the capability of human beings to reach beyond their immediate perception of time and space so that life could be viewed from a wider perspective” (Piedmont 1999a: p. 988). This definition raises the question of whether viewing life from a wider perspective can potentially lead to the establishment of a transcendent relationship. However, transcendence itself is meant to relate to life beyond physical reality. This definition of ST<sub>b</sub> appears to be lacking clarity in terms of the nature of perception or view resulting from going beyond time and space. Most importantly, it is not clear whether ST<sub>b</sub> indicates a sense of relationship with the divine. It appears that the author included the transcendence perspective to refer to bonding and commitment to others (Piedmont 1997). Arguably, a bond or commitment cannot be considered as intrinsic motivation, bonds and commitments to others within physical reality do not necessarily constitute the ability to transcend without faith and belief in the transcendent God. For instance, attending community services and rituals (spirituality) without intrinsic motivation or belief in the divine would not equate to the transcendence perspective. Transcendence is considered as a source of intrinsic motivation to drive, direct and select behaviours. Intrinsic motivation

refers to the genuine interest, wish and aspiration for the establishment of something whereas a bond or commitment is itself an establishment of something. The former is a source of initiation for an establishment, whereas the latter is the result. As such, transcendence and spirituality appear to be two separate terms and using them in combination as 'spiritual transcendence' is likely to lead to doubt and confusion about the divine relationship. The main argument here is that transcendence does not need to be used in combination with either spirituality or religion. Transcendence itself is sufficient to relate to the divine either with or without, spiritual/religious acts albeit with intrinsic motivation (faith and belief). This argument can be supported by empirical evidence, which has suggested that intrinsically-oriented individuals are more transcendent than those of an extrinsic orientation (Hood 1973).

Piedmont included three components of transcendence in describing, defining and measuring spiritual transcendence: i) connectedness; ii) universality; and iii) prayer fulfilment. In summary, 'connectedness' implies a sense of belief that an individual is part of a larger human group that is needed to continue life, 'universality' indicates believing in the unitive nature of life, and 'prayer fulfilment' highlights feelings of joy and contentment resulting from personal encounters in a transcendent reality. The author evaluated these three dimensions to constitute the first approximation of the spiritual transcendence domain. In addition to the above, there are other dimensions that the author stressed as being important for spiritual transcendence. These additional dimensions were as follows: 'tolerance of paradoxes,' which is an ability to live with inconsistencies and contradictions; 'non-judgemental,' which refers to a person's ability to accept life on their terms; 'existentialism,' which is the desire to live in the moment and an acceptance that

life confronts us with opportunities for growth and joy; and 'gratefulness,' which is an innate sense of wonder and thankfulness.

All of the above dimensions are determinants of an individual's personality. This is why the author, in this case, analysed the spiritual transcendence using the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. The five dimensions of the FFM are neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A), and conscientiousness (C). These FFM dimensions are considered to be empirically grounded, and it has been found to have predictive qualities in terms of well-being and coping ability (Costa and McCrae 1984; Costa and McCrae 1980; Costa, McCrae, and Zonderman 1987; Magnus et al. 1993; Piedmont 1993; McCrae and John 1992). By bringing the FFM in to define and measure spiritual transcendence, the author piedmont claimed that: i) ST<sub>b</sub> variables need to be distinct from the existing FFM; ii) the ST<sub>b</sub> variables need to have generality comparable with FFM, and iii) ST<sub>b</sub> variables need to be recoverable with regard to sources of information.

Accordingly, it appears that the author intended to discover a new set of personality traits, comparable to those of the FFM model when measuring ST<sub>b</sub>. To do so, the author considered two sets of distinct student samples: developmental (227 women, 102 men; age: 17-40) and validation (265 women, 91 men; age: 17-52). The student participants received course credits as a reward for their participation in the study. Overall, 98% of the developmental sample were Christian, and 88% of the validation sample were Christian. The NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO PI-R) Scale (Costa and McCrae 1992) and the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn 1969) were used. During the STS<sub>b</sub> development,

the transcendence items correlated significantly with personality scales, and personality variables were deleted. A 24-item STS<sub>b</sub> was then formed under the dimensions of prayer fulfilment, universality and connectedness. The construction of STS<sub>b</sub> in defining ST<sub>b</sub> demonstrate methodological clarity. However, both samples (developmental and validation) were female-dominated indicating a gender bias for the STS<sub>b</sub> as well as for ST<sub>b</sub> definition. Also, all participants were students, and the majority were Christian, suggesting that the 24 items are not representative of the whole population and faith in particular. These limitations raise the question of whether the STS<sub>b</sub> could be used globally to define or determine spiritual transcendence as outlined by the author.

Furthermore, an important question arises as to whether transcendence or spirituality has anything to do with human personality. The author of this thesis strongly argues that transcendence or spirituality are independent of human personality. There is a lack of empirical evidence that personality traits can influence or affect an individual's ability to transcend or his/her perceptions of a relationship with the divine. In other words, there is no evidence to suggest that personality traits can influence or affect an individual's ability to transcend or his/her perceptions of a relationship with the divine. As such, the author's attempt to define and measure spiritual transcendence appears to have been unsuccessful and unnecessary. The author of this thesis proposes that it may be useful to define and measure transcendence based on cognitive ability rather than personality traits, or spirituality as the ability to transcend is primarily based on what an individual thinks and believes (cognition) about the divine source rather than what a person does or shows (personality) towards a transcendent creator. A

critical discussion on the STS<sub>b</sub> and its relevance to well-being is presented in chapter two.

### 1.7.0 Well-being

The dictionary<sup>23</sup> meaning of well-being is '*the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.*' This suggests that the well-being of an individual refers to the extent to which they feel contented, relaxed, well, and joyful in a specific situation or condition. As such, well-being indicates the incorporation of the individual's health status and their physical and emotional status in a specific situation or at a specific time. Well-being in broad terms is understood as the degree to which one is satisfied in their present existence, as characterised by their health, happiness and prosperity. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO 1995). This definition indicates that well-being is part of the integrated concept of health. In fact, well-being is significant in individuals' day-to-day lives and is fundamental to their healthy living. In addition to physical, mental and social well-being, the importance of spiritual well-being has also been fully recognised by the WHO and is included in the concept of general health as well as in the Quality of Life Assessment (Group 1998) (Robert 2003). This recognition indicates that health without psychological and spiritual well-being is insignificant and insufficient. The WHO definition of health also suggests that health is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires a multi-disciplinary approach encompassing the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being of individuals. In other words, a state of complete well-being demands individuals' satisfactory psycho-social and spiritual functioning in addition to their satisfactory physical state. As such, a discussion of psychological well-being and

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<sup>23</sup> (Brown 1993)

spiritual well-being appears to be crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of well-being.

### 1.7.1 Psychological well-being

One of the key features of psychological functioning is that individuals interact, and form relationships, with society and others by using cognitive process encompassing thoughts, faith and belief. It was indicated by (Greenberger and Padesky 2015: p. 7) that the well-being of an individual depends on the way a person thinks (cognitive) and behaves (relationship with society and others) in a given situation or environment. Individuals form relationships with others based on their ideas, thoughts and beliefs about them. The quality of a person's relationship with society and others would be likely to have an impact on their overall mental health and well-being. In other words, the cognitive process is the building block of relationships with others, which can dictate the extent of the divine relationship's influence or affect psychological well-being. Furthermore, a widely used concept applies six distinct dimensions (autonomy; environmental mastery; personal growth; positive relations with others; purpose in life (PIL); and self-acceptance of wellness determine a person's psychological well-being (Ryff and Keyes 1995). Interestingly, Riff's structure of psychological well-being includes purpose in life (PIL). PIL is likely to be achieved by relating the self to the divine. However, Riff's structure of psychological well-being does not necessarily indicate the importance of the divine relationship in terms of gaining meaning and purpose in life. It rather indicates PIL as being productive or creative, having goals, intentions and a sense of direction (Ryff 1989).

Arguably, PIL is not necessarily limited to being creative or having goals only. It is rather centred on wider aspects of life beyond physical reality, such as relating the self to something beyond physical reality or having a relationship with the divine. This argument has been supported by various authors (Batson and Stocks 2004; Emmons 2005; Steger and Frazier 2005) who have indicated religion as a central source of PIL. Understandably, religion or religious practices such as prayer are known as a form of searching for the sacred that enhances well-being by relating to the divine. As such, as far as Riff's structure of psychological well-being is concerned, psychological well-being includes religious and spiritual dimensions, such as the relationship with the divine. The ultimate meaning and purpose of life are rooted in how well individuals understand the meaning and purpose of everything around them. In other words, the meaning and purpose of human life are better understood by relating life to the origin of physical reality: the ultimate source of the creation and the creator.

The fundamental reason for viewing life beyond physical reality is that such a view would allow individuals to understand the meaning and purpose of their lives from a wider perspective. Riff's indication of PIL is focused somewhat narrowly by excluding the transcendental dimension. This claim has been supported by the findings of psychological well-being research (Hills and Argyle 2002) indicating that previous literature on psychological function was also guided by a narrow conception of positive functioning. Furthermore, an individual's goal or purpose cannot be considered as short-term happiness. The goal or purpose instead requires effort and discipline (Waterman 1984). Clearly, PIL includes a relationship with the transcendent God, a religious or spiritual aspect of meaning

and purpose in life. However, Riff's structure of psychological well-being appears to exclude such a divine aspect concerning meaning and purpose in life.

Understandably, an individual can view the meaning and purpose of life on a short-term basis and according to the achievement of certain goals. However, setting and achieving goals are likely to be continuous. There is no guarantee that an individual will always achieve their set goals for their entire life. Ironically, not being able to achieve goals does not mean the person has no purpose in life. Inevitably, the ultimate meaning and purpose of life rest on a search for the sacred, or the divine. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine presents pathways for individuals to flourish in the search for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life. According to '*creatio ex nihilo*,' the creator of the universe exists by necessity and creation exists by participation. The purpose of participation is teleologically driven. Teleology, the goal or the ultimate purpose of the universe, as well as all creatures and the created order including human beings, is to participate in the divine goodness<sup>24</sup>. This could suggest that the ultimate purpose of human beings rests on the transcendent God and that PIL is likely to be achieved by relating the self to the divine creator. To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, no theory or structure has included a transcendent dimension to explain psychological well-being. Therefore, it appears that the existing understanding of psychological well-being is limited and incomplete without integrating the transcendental dimension based on the '*creatio ex nihilo*.' As such, psychological well-being is better understood by including the transcendent dimension and by integrating the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine for the divine relationship.

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<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, III(1).20 on 'how things imitate divine goodness'.

The above claim could be supported by an investigation of existing psychological well-being measures to see whether or not the transcendental dimension is included. None of the existing psychological well-being measures likely includes concepts from the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine. One of the best-known psychological well-being tools is Bradburn's Affect Balance Scale (ABS) (Bradburn 1969). The thrust of this scale is that happiness is a global decision that people make by comparing negative effects with positive ones. The 10-item ABS is calculated by subtracting the sum of negative items from the sum of positive items. The questions the ABS asks respondents include whether or not during the last few weeks, they felt proud (positive effect) or upset (negative effect) (Hills and Argyle 2002). However, the scale does not include items to understand views on the divine relationship or the ultimate purpose of human beings, such as divine perfection through participation. This suggests that the transcendental dimension is not included in the ABS. As such, it could be argued that ABS is an incomplete tool for the measurement of psychological well-being.

### 1.7.2 Spiritual well-being

Spiritual well-being is defined as "the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community, and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness" (Aging 1975). This definition appears to indicate that an individual's relationships with wider society may include a relationship with the divine. However, it is not clear to whom the "affirmation" is being made. Making a statement or declaration does not necessarily confirm a relationship with God or others. The author of this thesis argues that spiritual well-being is determined by an individual's relationship with both God and everything that is not God. The

determination could be measured by not only an individual's affirmation or declaration but also by his or her engagement, activities, emotions, behaviour and beliefs concerning God and others. As such, spiritual well-being includes belief in transcendence or a transcendent relationship beyond physical reality and a relationship with the self and others. It is likely that a stronger non-pathological relationship with God and with others would indicate a better sense of meaning and purpose in life as well as better well-being. Pathological/psychologically destructive relationships are considered as 'divine struggles' that are discussed earlier in the chapter. This argument is supported by Moberg and Brusek (Moberg and Brusek 1978) who indicated that spiritual well-being comprised having a relationship with a higher power, the divine, and sensing meaning and purpose in life. Any human relationship, including the divine relationship, involves a cognitive process including ideas, thoughts, faith or beliefs about existence, the existence of the divine. As such, the divine relationship appears to be a cognitive-theological construct within the human mind, which can enhance/dictate well-being. The cognitive-theological dimensions of well-being could be further supported by Seaward (Seaward 1991), who suggested that spiritual well-being is an integrated concept covered by many disciplines, such as psychology and theology.

Since human beings are physical, mental and spiritual unities, it is reasonable to assume that well-being includes spiritual well-being, thus indicating that well-being cannot be gauged completely without taking into account spiritual well-being. It is likely that well-being, including spiritual well-being, is better understood through the cognitive-theological approach. An individual's psycho-social well-being depends on how the person views, thinks and believes of his world and his existence within it. His/her existence, as far as '*creatio ex nihilo*' is

concerned, is dependent on the transcendent God, a theological concept which is necessary to understand well-being. The psychological well-being of an individual, thus, requires the cognitive - theological approach. However, the approach does not require an individual to have a specific faith, or belief, in a higher power or God, but instead, awareness and understanding that he/she is part of the creation which originates from an ultimate, unknown source.

Essentially, spiritual well-being requires an individual's cognitive-theological mechanism to perceive the ability to transcend as well as to establish a divine relationship. As discussed above, 'transcendence' is considered as an ability to relate the self beyond physical reality. Transcendence involves individuals' relationship with an entity that is 'out of the ordinary.' The nature of this entity can be mystical or supernatural, with varying names (e.g. God, Allah, etc.) according to the given faith or tradition. Transcendence, therefore, is not about whether individuals believe in a higher power or not, but whether they can relate themselves beyond their physical existence and, if so, to what extent. Research suggests that self-transcendence is positively related to patients' spiritual well-being (Haugan et al. 2014). It is arguable whether self-transcendence is confirmatory of the divine relationship. However, it is evident that the ability to transcend or divine relationship can enhance well-being.

Physicians use a range of diagnostic tools to assess, and attend to, the physical health needs of individuals. There is no single psychometric tool that can measure an individual's psychological and spiritual well-being. As discussed above, the limited nature of the theoretical construct of well-being does not make the existing psychological well-being measures adequate. Here, it would perhaps

be useful to explore the existing spiritual well-being measures currently available. Paloutzian and Ellison (Paloutzian and Ellison 2012) developed a spiritual well-being scale based on the concept that spiritual well-being is composed of religious and existential dimensions. Accordingly, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SBWS) comprises religious and existential well-being subscales. To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, this is the only psychometric tool available in the psychology of religion and spirituality for measuring spiritual well-being. The SBWS is designed to measure spiritual well-being in the adult population only. No spiritual well-being measure has yet been developed for children. However, according to Piaget's cognitive development theory (Piaget 1970), children are unable to begin abstract thinking<sup>25</sup> until the age of 12. The cognitive development theory indicates that it is the formal operational stage (age 12+) at which children become capable of abstract thinking. To clarify, abstract thinking refers to the mental ability to apply to reason to things that are invisible and intangible. This suggests that children from the age of 12 could develop relationships with the divine. The cognitive development theory, thus, arouses the possibility of developing a tool to measure psychological well-being as well as spiritual well-being in adolescents.

The SWBS is a 20-item tool composed of two subscales:

The Religious Well-being Scale (RWS) and the Existential Well-being Scale (EWS) (10 items each). For each item, participants are asked to indicate their agreement (strongly agree, moderately agree, agree) or disagreement (strongly disagree, moderately disagree, disagree). Each item is scored from 1 (high well-being) to 6 (low well-being). The RWS items are focused on obtaining the extent to which individuals experience a satisfying relationship with God. For example,

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<sup>25</sup> In Psychology, abstract thinking is an intellectual ability that allows an individual to form concept, ideas about things that are not visible, such as divine God.

one such item states: *'I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with God'* with each respondent using the scale to identify the extent to which they agree with this statement. On the other hand, the EWS items are dedicated to sensing life satisfaction and purpose, with items such as: *'I feel unsettled about my future.'* The sum of an individual's scores for RWS and EWS items provides a total SWBS score. Ostensibly, none of the RWS items is about individuals' belief in the existence of the divine. The RWS items do not seek or obtain participants' thoughts, ideas or beliefs about the creation, the created order, or God's providence in sustaining the creation. For instance, the item *'my relationship with God helps me not to feel lonely'* does not actually indicate the basis of the divine relationship. The lack of cognitive and theological perspective in determining the presence of the divine relationship is supported by (Ledbetter et al. 1991) who suggested that further studies should explore factoring techniques to identify possible components of spiritual well-being. Meanwhile, the EWS items do not refer to the ability to form a positive and meaningful relationship between the self and others or society. Most importantly, the RWS subscale does not help to demonstrate a clear ability to transcend. Also, the SWBS is developed predominantly with Judeo-Christian traditions in mind, meaning that the scale's usefulness beyond Judaism or Christianity may be limited.

Based on the above, both the psychological well-being scale and SBWS require a comprehensive inclusion of well-being items reflecting cognitive-theological constructs of the transcendent relationship with the divine. It has also been revealed that the existing assessment and management of well-being issues is inadequate and incomplete. The existing mental health and well-being services in the UK, particularly those supplied by the National Health Service (NHS), do not

necessarily adopt the belief in transcendence or an ability to relate to the divine to understand and determine the well-being of service users. Culturally and traditionally, the NHS is rather focused on assessing, and intervening in, well-being issues by using the psycho-social model. In other words, service providers use methods and tools that are only equipped to understand an individual's psycho-social functioning. In most cases, the service providers either lack proper resources or are restricted by policy and practice when assessing, and attending to, service users' ability to transcend concerning their well-being.

Furthermore, the existing mental health assessment and treatment models for well-being do not allow professionals to assess service users' belief in transcendence or their ability to relate to the divine. For instance, the cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) model is widely used by mental health service providers across the NHS, but the model only measures cognitive ability based on the psycho-social domain. The CBT model does not take into account the transcendent dimension. As such, the existing methods used by these service providers likely to overlook a key component of an individual's mental health and well-being. Empirical studies (discussed in chapter three) indicate that transcendence is positively related to well-being, meaning that having a greater ability to transcend would enhance an individual's sense of well-being (Haugan et al. 2014) (Ellermann and Reed 2001). The author of this thesis, therefore, proposes that an understanding of well-being cannot be complete without assessing the transcendence or a service user's ability to transcend. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine must be integrated into the psychology of religion and spirituality to ensure a comprehensive assessment and measurement of transcendence. This integration would allow enhancing the understanding of well-

being. Indeed, well-being requires an integrated assessment and treatment model combining theological knowledge, such as the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, and cognitive psychological principles encompassing thoughts, assumptions, faith and beliefs in the divine that underpin a person's well-being.

### 1.8.0 Research questions

Understanding and finding meaning and purpose in life is crucial for mental health and well-being in individuals' day-to-day living. For instance, a lack of meaning and purpose in life could eventually lead to depression (Koenig 2018; Lester and Badro 1992; Harlow, Newcomb, and Bentler 1986); mortality and cardiovascular disease (Cohen, Bavishi, and Rozanski 2016; Kim et al. 2013). Inevitably, meaning and purpose in life are rooted in the creation, and the creator (the divine). This is because humanity is part of the entire creation, the universe, meaning that humanity has evolved since the beginning of the creation. In other words, without creation, humanity would not have existed. As such, the author of this thesis proposes that understanding the meaning and purpose in human lives fundamentally depends on individuals' understanding, faith and beliefs about the creation and the creator. This claim could be supported by existing literature indicating that the ultimate meaning and purpose in life is found by connecting with, or adhering to, the sacred, achieving enlightenment, knowing God or experiencing the transcendent (Emmons 1999; Pargament, Magyar-Russell, and Murray-Swank 2005).

Everything that exists has a cause. Creation exists, therefore, it has a cause, namely the creator, the divine, or the first being<sup>26</sup>. Understanding the

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<sup>26</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.3.4, responsio; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.4.3ad 3.

meaning and purpose of the creation would necessarily involve understanding the creator, the divine. It is likely that the better human beings understand, and relate to, the creation and the creator, the better their well-being will be. Religion or religiosity pave the way for relating to the divine. Research shows that individuals with higher levels of spirituality and religion are less likely to suffer from mental and emotional illness (Brown et al. 2013). The link indicates that individuals, through spirituality and religion, attempt to discover a sense of connection with the divine, which subsequently enhances their meaning and purpose in life as well as their overall well-being. Religion and spirituality offer individuals an opportunity to transcend or an ability to relate to the divine. As such, individuals with religion and spirituality develop a sense of connection with the divine creator to pursue a greater sense of well-being. The current research aims to explore the following questions:

- i) What are the fundamental ingredients of meaning and purpose in life?
- ii) Is meaning and purpose in life rooted in the meaning and purpose of the creation?
- iii) Is transcendence itself related to the meaning and purpose of the creation and the creator?
- iv) What constitutes transcendence or the divine relationship?
- v) Are the existing transcendence measures (STSa, STSb) valid?
- vi) Does being religious or spiritual indicate an ability to transcend or belief in transcendence?
- vii) Does transcendence enhance well-being?
- viii) Is the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine necessary for transcendence?
- ix) Does a cognitive-theological analysis enhance our understanding of mental health and well-being?

### 1.9.0 Research hypotheses

With the above research questions in mind, the following research hypotheses have been prepared:

- a) An understanding and awareness about the creation and the creator, and everything around human beings is the foundation of relating to something beyond physical reality, and having such an understanding (and awareness) is likely to give meaning and purpose to everything around human beings.
- b) Because the universe (creation) came into existence long before the existence of human beings, and because human beings are part of the creation, the ultimate meaning and purpose of human beings are likely rooted in the meaning and purpose of the creation.
- c) An awareness and understanding of the creation are necessary to develop and acquire the ability to transcend. Whilst a faith, or a belief in God, is not mandatory for transcendent ability, an awareness of and understanding about everything around us (creation) and its ultimate source are important for developing transcendent ability.
- d) It is likely that the greater individuals' understanding of the meaning and purpose of the creation, the better their ability to relate to the divine creator and the better their well-being.
- e) The nature of ideas, thoughts, faith and beliefs about the creation and the creator and acts, rituals and emotions about them (the creation and the creator) are the fundamental components of transcendence.
- f) It is likely that spiritual or religious performances or acts alone, without faith and belief in the divine, will not lead to the establishment of the divine relationship.

- g) It appears that the existing measures (STS<sub>a</sub>, STS<sub>b</sub>) are inadequate to measure the ability to transcend.
- h) Because the spiritual and religious practices vary from individual to individual, these practices are unlikely to be confirmatory of the divine relationship without having the intrinsic motivation or a cognitive-theological understanding of such practices.
- i) Because the divine relationship can be a source of empowerment for human beings, transcendence can enhance well-being.
- j) The widely accepted '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine is necessary to understand transcendence as well as well-being.
- k) It is likely that a cognitive-theological analysis could enhance understanding of transcendence as well as well-being.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Measures of Transcendence

#### 2.1.0 Background

Chapter one above clarifies concepts of transcendence, including spirituality and religion. It also indicates the importance of a cognitive-theological basis for transcendence. The aims of this chapter are i) to critically discuss the two existing tools (STS<sub>a</sub>, STS<sub>b</sub>) used for transcendence and its relationship with well-being; ii) to ascertain whether these tools measure transcendence, e.g. ability to relate to the divine, God or Higher Power; and iii) to evaluate whether or not these tools reflect an ability to transcend based on the proposed cognitive-theological understanding of the divine relationship. The existing tools are likely to be inadequate to measure transcendence and its relationship with well-being. As such, this chapter aims at demonstrating the importance of a new version of transcendence measure applicable to adequately measure transcendence and its relationship with well-being. The proposal for the new transcendence measure would indicate the need for cognitive-theological contents, dimensions necessary for transcendence. It is likely that such contents, dimensions would facilitate a comprehensive measurement of transcendence and its relationship with well-being with cultural sensitivity. In other words, a new transcendence measure using the above cognitive-theological framework would demonstrate flexibility in measuring transcendence as well as the well-being of individuals, including those from theistic and non-theistic orientation. It is hypothesized that none of the existing transcendence measures would be able to measure transcendence with such flexibility or can demonstrate evidence of measuring transcendence adequately. It is also likely that none of the current transcendence measures

would indicate a cognitive-theological basis for understanding and measuring the relationship with the divine. A critical analysis of the current transcendence measures is illustrated below.

Currently, two psychometric tools are used for transcendence and well-being. They are a) Self-transcendence Scale, STS<sub>a</sub> (Reed 1986a; Reed, Boyd, and Buckwalter 1989; Reed 1987b; Reed 1991b), and b) Spiritual Transcendence Scale, STS<sub>b</sub> (Piedmont 1999a; Piedmont 2004b). Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> is designed to measure spiritual transcendence, such as the capacity to stand outside of an immediate sense of time and place whereas Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> measures self-transcendence, such as an expansion of self-boundaries. Both scales claim to measure transcendent ability. However, none of the scales, by the face value, does necessarily mean to measure transcendence adequately. For instance, Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> includes a spiritual dimension in understanding and measuring the ability to transcend. Arguably, spiritual or religious practices or rituals do not necessarily confirm the presence of the relationship with the divine unless an individual's faith and belief in the divine were already known. It is not clear why Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> included only the spiritual dimension to measure an ability beyond physical reality. Similarly, Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> is dedicated to understanding and measuring the expansion of an individual's sense of self-boundaries rather than the ability to relate to the transcendent source. The author of this thesis argues that the expansion of self-boundaries does not necessarily mean an ability to relate to the divine, the creator that is beyond physical reality. For example, the interpersonal (outward) dimension of the self-boundary, as indicated by Reed, requires relating with others and are within the physical world. Reed's

interpersonal (outward) dimension, thus, clearly does not show an ability to connect the self beyond physical reality for the relationship with the divine.

### 2.2.0 Self-transcendence scale, STS<sub>a</sub> (Reed, 1987)

The STS<sub>a</sub> is a 15 item questionnaire and responses are based on 1-4 Likert scale<sup>27</sup> (Likert 1932). Respondents can choose an answer from 1. *Not at all* to 2. *Very little*, 3. *Some-what*, and 4. *Very much*. Some of the STS<sub>a</sub> items are '*Having hobbies or interest I can enjoy*', '*Sharing my wisdom or experience with others*', '*Accepting death as part of my life*', '*Letting go of past regrets*'. Total score (15-64) is obtained by summing participants' scores on each of the 15 items. The higher score on the STS<sub>a</sub> would indicate a greater sense of self-transcendence<sup>28</sup>: 15 to 30 is considered to be a low level of self-transcendence; 31-45 is moderate, and 46 to 60 is considered as the high level of self-transcendence.

Although the scale claims to apply to both religious and non-religious individuals, none of the 15 items includes items on the creation and the creator. Moreover, there is no item to suggest that the scale intends to identify individuals' cognition (ideas, thoughts, faith and belief) for a divine relationship. For example, the item '*Having hobbies or interest*' or '*Accepting death as part of my life*' does not identify individuals' thoughts, faith and belief in relating beyond physical existence. None of the items leads to having an understanding of an individual's knowledge about the creation and the creator. Besides, it is not clear how having

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<sup>27</sup> A Likert scale is a psychometric rating scale widely used in research, survey after its inventor, an American Psychologist Rensis Likert (1903-1981). The scale allows respondents to questions of interests in order to measure attitudes.

<sup>28</sup> The term, self-transcendence, refers to an expansion of self-boundaries including outward, inward, temporal and transpersonal dimensions. It does not refer to a transcendence of oneself or the world (implying a detachment from others) but rather the term refers to a transcendence of perceived boundaries or narrow kinds of thinking that can limit one's potential (Reed 1987b).

hobbies or interest could necessarily relate to transcendence. Furthermore, attitude towards '*accepting death as part of my life*' does not necessarily demonstrate either a religious or non-religious item or indicate an ability to relate to the divine. There is no indication to suggest that the author of the STS<sub>a</sub> scale included any item related to the creation and the creator either on a theological/religious term or in a cognitive-theological framework. For instance, the STS<sub>a</sub> (Reed 1987b) scale does not present any item or question about respondents' views on the creation, i.e. the universe or the creator, i.e. the divine. None of the 15 items seeks respondents' views about their relationship beyond physical existence. The lack of inclusion of the divine relationship indicates that Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> does not measure transcendence adequately.

Transcendence is an individual's ability to relate to the divine. Inevitably, the ability demands an understanding of the creation, as well as the creator, simply because the creation and the creator are inseparable. There is a consensus among the three Abrahamic traditions that the creation (universe) and the divine creator cannot be separated. The divine creator is without boundary and is deeply rooted in eternity, beyond the physical existence. The nature of the existence of the creation and the divine creator could well be understood better with a cognitive-theological framework. For example, according to '*creatio ex nihilo*', God created the universe out of nothing, meaning that the creation, i.e. universe has a cause, and God is the ultimate cause. This causal effect means that although the universe exists within physical reality, its origin is likely to be rooted in the eternal source. Therefore, it is sensible, reasonable to consider the source of the creation as eternal that belongs beyond physical existence. As the creation (universe) is deeply rooted beyond physical reality, an individual's

relationship with the creation and the creator is likely to be a relationship beyond physical existence. As such, any transcendence tool that aims at measuring the ability to transcend must-have items that provide information about respondents' understanding, views, faith and belief in relating to the creation and the divine creator. Disappointingly, none of the 15 items of Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> scale appears to seek response for such understanding from the respondents. The scale presents items that can help some understanding of the respondent's inward (intrapersonal), outward (interpersonal) and temporal (past, present and future) activities and beliefs. However, it is not understandable why the author included these terrestrial items to measure an individual's transcendence ability. The author of this thesis argues that these three dimensions (inward, outward, temporal) are not necessary for assessing an individual's ability to transcend. They are instead an individual's personal and social attributes for forming a healthy relationship with the self and others within physical reality.

A further limitation of Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> scale is that it is not very clear if the scale measures the respondent's transpersonal (upward) ability adequately to understand the relationship with the divine creator. Understandably, the divine relationship is very fundamental to assess the ability to transcend. It appears '*Finding meaning in my spiritual beliefs*' is the only item related to faith and belief in the divine. It is not understood why the author included only one item (upward out of 15 items) for measuring the ability to transcend. The upward item attempts to get respondents' meaning of life-based on their spiritual belief rather than the meaning of life resulting from the relationship with the divine creator. The author of this thesis argues that spiritual beliefs do not necessarily mean to be the faith and belief in the divine creator. Inevitably, spirituality or spiritual belief can be

interpreted differently by different individuals. Spiritual practices, such as attending community services and rituals, could well be an individual's way of spiritual belief. However, such rituals do not necessarily guarantee a relationship with the divine if the individual's belief for participating in the rituals is extrinsic or externally motivated. There is no way to know that '*Finding meaning in my spiritual beliefs*' illustrates an understanding of intrinsic religious motivation. The STS<sub>a</sub> scale, thus, does not appear to include appropriate items to measure transcendence. An essential requirement for a psychometric tool is that in addition to any statistical or pragmatic validity, the scale should measure what it is supposed to measure, meaning that such test should not only be valid but it should also appear valid (Mosier 1947; Holden 2010). So, the STS<sub>a</sub> (Reed 1986a; Reed, Boyd, and Buckwalter 1989; Reed 1987b; Reed 1991b) scale with the 15 items appears to have limited face validity<sup>29</sup>.

The author, Pamela G. Reed claims that the STS<sub>a</sub> scale demonstrates to have both reliability<sup>30</sup> and content validity<sup>31</sup> adequately. According to Reed, the STS<sub>a</sub> scale validity was aimed at measuring person's ability to obtain a sense of well-being based on cognitive, creative, social, spiritual, and introspective avenues (Reed 2017: p. 1). Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> contents are drawn from a wide range of psychological, social and spiritual factors to determine ability to transcend. Arguably, contents based on creative, social abilities do not constitute the ability

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<sup>29</sup> Face validity is one the statistical norms to refer to the degree to which a procedure, especially a psychological test or assessment, appears effective in terms of its stated aims. In other words, face validity requires that the test should be able to measure what it claims to.

<sup>30</sup> Reliability is the most fundamental statistical norm to refer to the degree to which the result of a measurement, calculation, or specification can be depended on to be accurate meaning that a test or measure must be consistent with replication.

<sup>31</sup> Content validity refers to the degree to which elements of an assessment tool are relevant and representative of target construct for a particular assessment purpose (Haynes, Richard, and Kubany 1995).

to transcend as such abilities do not mean to relate beyond physical reality. Furthermore, it is not clear how the author used contents based on cognitive, spiritual and introspective dimensions. As such, the contents of Reed's STS<sub>a</sub>, as the author acknowledged and indicated, are terrestrial. They are not necessarily transcendental for relating to the divine. The author of this thesis, therefore, argues that the STS<sub>a</sub> scale presents poor content validity for understanding and measuring transcendence. Although the author Reed claims that the content validity and reliability are drawn from empirical results, but they are based on multi-dimensional developmental tasks, qualitative studies of subjective experiences of self-transcendence. The validity and reliability of the scale are from secondary data analysis (Reed 1991c; Coward 1990a). Notwithstanding, the main limitation of Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> scale is that the contents do not demonstrate to measure what they are supposed to measure, such as an individual's understanding about the creation and the creator as well as the ability to relate to the divine. Moreover, Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> reliability is based on phenomenological analysis where only a few and seriously ill, i.e. breast cancer patients indicated their experiences about self-transcendence. The limited number of specific participants raises a question on whether such subjective experiences could be generalised or applied to human beings. The reliability of the scale is drawn from terminally ill patients in a nursing environment, and there is no indication to suggest that the measure is replicated with any other patients in a different environment. The lack of adequate replication and limited subjective experiences indicate that the STS<sub>a</sub> scale appears inadequate, unreliable to be applicable to measure transcendence in general.

The STS<sub>a</sub> by Reed is based on Self-transcendence theory (Reed 1991c) that is used to describe transcendence as an expansion of self-boundary inwardly, outwardly, temporally and trans-personally<sup>32</sup>. It is named as 'self-transcendence' scale in the sense that the scale focuses on the ability to orient the self in activities and purposes beyond the self without undermining the value of self and current circumstances. Although intrapersonal (inward), interpersonal (outward), temporal (past, present, future) are essential qualities for understanding the self and expanding self-boundary, it is however not clear how these three qualities could relate to transcendence. Transcendence, as defined by Piedmont (Piedmont 1999a: p.988), is the ability to relate the self to the divine, God or Higher Power. It is not necessarily an ability for relating the self with the outside of the self-boundary. The limitation raises a fundamental question of whether Reed's Self-transcendence theory defines transcendence adequately. Reed's self-transcendence theory considers transcendence as an extension of self-boundary but included the intrapersonal (inward) ability. The intrapersonal ability is all about the self within the self-boundary. The author of this thesis, therefore, argues that the inward ability is not necessarily an expansion of self-boundary; it is instead a personal quality. Similarly, outward and temporal abilities are some of the personal qualities that can help an individual understand the outside world rather than relating the self beyond the physical existence.

The author included trans-personal ability to describe transcendence but with lack of clarity on how this ability could be identified and measured. For instance, the self-transcendence theory or the STS<sub>a</sub> does not adequately explain

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<sup>32</sup> Intrapersonal (inward), interpersonal (outward), temporal (integration of past, future and present) and transpersonal (upward) dimensions are used to understand and define self-transcendence (ST). (Coward and Reed 1996).

how an individual without any faith or religious orientation could relate self to the creation or Higher Power, the divine. The problem of defining self-boundary and the lack of clarity on trans-personal ability make Reed's self-transcendence theory as well as the STS<sub>a</sub> inadequate in understanding and measuring transcendence. The author of this thesis, therefore, strongly argues that neither STS<sub>a</sub>(Reed 1987b) nor the self-transcendence theory by Reed is sufficient to explain transcendence or to measure the ability to relate to the divine.

Ability to transcend aims at developing and forming a relationship with the divine by understanding creation as well as the creator. To understand and measure transcendence it is crucial that any measure or theory of transcendence explains and clarifies the extent of the human relationship with the creation and the creator rather than the relationship within the self, such as intrapersonal or within physical world (interpersonal). That is to say; a transcendent measure should not necessarily focus on self-ability or any form of social ability within the physical world. Ability to transcend instead should aim at solely measuring the meaning and purpose of life derived from the relationship with the divine, the creation and the creator. The necessity of the meaning and purpose of life could be supported by Victor Frankl (1905-1997), an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who defines transcendence as an integral part of the human ability to create meaning (Frankl 1966). Finding the meaning and purpose of human life, according to Frankl's (Frankl 2011) theory of '*Will to meaning*' largely depends on striving to find meaning in personal existence. Inevitably, the meaning of personal existence depends on understanding and relating the self to the creation and the creator. The need for relating the self to the divine means that the better an individual understands the creation and the creator, the stronger the meaning and

purpose of the person's life. As such, it is crucial to consider individuals' thoughts, ideas, faith and belief about the creation and divine creator. Such cognitive understanding is likely to predict individuals' intrinsic motivation for divine relationship.

One may raise the question of whether the purpose of life has anything to do with the purpose of the creation or divine relationship. The author of this thesis proposes that everything about the meaning and the purpose of life is related to the creation and the creator. The most likely reason is that human existence is not possible without creation. The creation exists within the human body and mind. The claim could be supported by the evidence that the most fundamental building block of life, such as amino acid was created on Earth between 4.0 and 3.5 billions of years ago when asteroids, meteoroids collided with the primordial Earth (Miller and Lazcano 1995). This evidence means that Asteroids, meteoroids- the leftover debris of supernova explosion<sup>33</sup> by a dying Sun; carried the amino acid, the fundamental building block of life. Formation of amino acid on Earth by asteroids, meteoroids means that life, as well as human beings, originated from Sun. The formation of life on earth is rooted in stardust and indicates that we are part of the creation (universe). As such, our existence, meaning and purpose depend on the ultimate source (transcendent God) of creation (the universe) including the physical world, such as stars, from which life evolved on earth. It is evident that asteroids, meteoroids contained the amino acid, and other organic chemical compounds, such as ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>), water (H<sub>2</sub>O) that were not readily present on the primordial Earth before the collision, bombardment (De Duve

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<sup>33</sup> Supernova explosion is considered as the largest astronomical event, a type of stellar explosion in the universe where a star, at the end of its lifetime, runs out of its fuel and dies out with a massive explosion illuminating the entire galaxy.

1995) (Jenniskens et al. 1998). The origin of life on Earth from the leftover debris of dying star indicates that the creation (universe) is within human beings. The author of this thesis proposes that the meaning and purpose of human beings fundamentally depend on how they understand the meaning and purpose of the creation (the universe) as a whole as well as the divine creator.

Further to the above, the relationship between human beings and the divine creator could also be understood using a theological/religious framework. For instance, the creation book Genesis states '*God created the heavens and the earth*' meaning that the transcendent God created life, including human being on earth. The creation of life, as well as human beings, not only indicates significance on a scientific ground but also shows theological/religious importance. According to '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, God created the universe out of nothing and that the universe strives for perfection to reach out to the likeness of God. It is likely that the meaning of life is well understood and achieved by the relationship with the divine, the extent to which a person sees the self as an integral part of the creation (universe) as a whole (Cloninger, Svrakic, and Przybeck 1998). Understanding the creation as well as the creator and ability to relate beyond the physical existence can be understood fully with a cognitive-theological framework.

The author of this thesis argues that Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> (Reed 1987b) scale does not demonstrate to be a useful psychometric measure in understanding and measuring transcendence. The measure does not indicate respondents' relationship with the creation and the creator. Furthermore, the scale does not measure respondents' cognitions such as ideas, thoughts, faith and belief about the creation and the divine creator. The reason for such a significant limitation is

that the scale does not contain items that can provide information about an individual's ability to relate to the creation and the creator either theologically/religiously or cognitively.

### 2.3.0 The spiritual transcendence scale, STS<sub>b</sub> (Piedmont 1999a; Piedmont 2004b)

Spiritual transcendence is defined as the capacity or ability of individuals to stand beyond the time and space so that they are in a position to view life from a broader, more objective perspective (Piedmont 1999a: p.988). Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> scale has two versions: Short STS<sub>b</sub> (9 items) and Revised STS<sub>b</sub> (23 items). Both short and revised versions are part of the Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) scale (Piedmont 1999b). The initial development of the ASPIRES scale is based on the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality (Goldberg 1992). However, the FFM was used in the revised NEO personality inventory (Costa and McCrea 1992). The FFM, thus, describes personality traits and attributes for assessing personality. Overall, The FFM uses a total of 30 specific traits such as calmness, warmth, openness to fantasy, trust, competence under the five basic personality dimensions, e.g. i. Neuroticism (N), ii. Extraversion (E), iii. Openness to Experience (O), iv. Agreeableness (A), and v. Conscientiousness' (C).

Understandably, the ASPIRES scale developed by Piedmont is a combination of items consisting of both spiritual and religious sentiments. The scale is fundamentally based on the personality traits and attributes using the FFM. The author used 'sentiments' instead of 'traits' to the fact that sentiments are likely to be more powerful motivators for individuals than the traits. According to the author, sentiments, unlike spirituality, can be used in a varied degree across

cultures and likely to be amenable than traits (Piedmont 2004a). The ASPIRES-SF scale (Piedmont 2004c) short form is a 13-items brief version. The first four items measure religiosity index such as religious rituals. For example, respondents are given options to indicate how often they read the Bible/Torah/Koran/Geeta from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*several times a week*). The respondents are asked to indicate how often they attend religious services from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*quite often*). The final nine items form the basis for the Spiritual Transcendence Scale, STS<sub>b</sub> that is devoted to measuring individuals' motivation or efforts to create a broader sense of meaning beyond physical existence under three domains such as Prayer Fulfilment, Universality and Connectedness.

Understandably, the items 1, 4 and 8 for the prayer fulfilment dimension, e.g. *'In the quiet of my prayers and/or meditations, I find a sense of wholeness'*, *'I find inner strength and/or peace from my prayers and/or meditations'*, *'My prayers and/or meditations provide me with a sense of emotional support'* intend to understand and measure respondents' encounters with the divine. The author of this thesis argues that the three items do not necessarily indicate to determine the respondents' relationship with the divine creator. However, neither prayers/meditations nor the absence of any rituals could guarantee or determine an individual's relationship with the divine. The reason for the argument is that religious behaviour; rituals are not necessarily confirmatory of an individual's faith and belief in God. Ritualistic behaviours, i.e. prayers, attending congregations could be due to either intrinsic or extrinsic religious motivation<sup>34</sup> (Allport 1966). As

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<sup>34</sup> Intrinsic religious motivation refers to an individual's inner motivation to attend religious rituals such as prayer, congregation at church mainly for personality support or help in crisis whereas extrinsic religious motivation refers to outer motivation where an individual is likely to use religious membership or to participate in religious rituals for social purposes such as meeting the right people or for acceptance in the community.

such, prayer or meditation alone cannot be used for determining an individual's transcendence or relationship with the divine unless the type of motivation is already known.

Transcendence is an ability to relate the self beyond physical existence, i.e. the divine creator. Inevitably, an individual's faith and belief in the transcendent creator is the fundamental determining factor for such a relationship. Arguably, none of the above three items could indicate such faith and belief about the existence of the divine creator. They do not seek to know from individuals that God created the universe out of nothing or that the creation popped into existence out of nothing. For example, finding wholeness, inner strength and sensing emotional support from rituals or meditations do not adequately demonstrate respondents' faith and belief in the divine. Furthermore, the items would only apply to those who are practising religious rituals. Prayer fulfilment or rituals/meditations are not the only ways to determine an individual's faith and belief in God. Neither could they be used to form a basis of the respondent's relationship with the creation and the creator. The reason is that it is reasonable for some individuals to have faith and belief in the existence of God, even though they do not necessarily practice rituals. As such, respondents without rituals but with a faith in God would be unable to respond to Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> to indicate their ability to transcend. This difficulty raises an important question of whether Piedmont's spiritual transcendence scale (STS<sub>b</sub>) measures what it is supposed to measure.

Further to the above face validity issue, Piedmont's spiritual transcendence scale (STS<sub>b</sub>) includes aspects of spiritual dimensions that are within physical

reality rather than beyond physical existence. For instance, the items 6, 7 and 9 for Universality dimension, e.g. *'there is no higher plans of consciousness or spirituality that binds all people'*, *'Although individual people may be difficult, I feel an emotional bond with all of humanity'*, *'I feel that on a higher level all of us share a common bond'* ask for responses to measure an individual's sense of unity with humanity in a physical world. This unity or bond neither indicates an individual's faith and belief in God or Higher Power nor determines the respondent's relationship beyond physical existence. Similarly, the STS<sub>b</sub> items 2, 3, and 5 for Connectedness, e.g. *'I have done things in my life because I believed it would please a parent, relative, or friend that had died'*, *'Although dead, memories and thoughts of some of my relatives continue to influence my current life'*, and *'I do not have any strong emotional ties to someone who has died'* indicate a respondent's sense of connection with a deceased person and not with an entity that is beyond physical existence, such as God. Understandably, the unity or bond with humanity or with a deceased person can be considered as a way of someone's spiritual practice. However, such practice is unlikely to be considered as the ability to transcend unless the person's faith and belief in the divine have already been known. As such, it is argued that the STS<sub>b</sub> items intend to measure spirituality in a broad sense but do not appear to measure specifically the ability to relate to the divine.

Although transcendence is considered as an essential part of spirituality, the author of this thesis argues that there is a difference between transcendence and spirituality, as discussed in chapter one above. Therefore, understanding and measuring spirituality or spiritual dimension and transcendence or ability to

transcend require different constructs. Spirituality<sup>35</sup> implies aspects of life other than transcendence, could well be involved in searching the sacred, God or Higher Power. Contents of spirituality are varied and different from those of transcendence. Notwithstanding, understanding spirituality or spiritual dimension of an individual does not necessarily guarantee transcendence. It is, therefore, argued that Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> presents spiritual contents which appear insufficient, unsuitable for understanding, and measuring transcendence adequately.

Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> measure raises a fundamental question of whether the scale measures spiritual dimension or transcendence dimension. Based on its contents and pieces of literature published by the author about the STS<sub>b</sub> indicate that the scale measures respondents' spiritual transcendence. The author indicates spiritual transcendence as the capacity to stand outside of immediate time and place to view life from a broader perspective. There is no indication to suggest the capacity involves relating beyond physical reality or the divine. On the contrary, transcendence is concerned with the perception that there is an entity which appears unknown, undiscovered which lies outside of everyday life and usually beyond individuals' general understanding (Pargament 2011: p.39). Transcendence, thus, involves individuals' relationship beyond physical reality. The meaning of transcendence is supported further in recent literature to state that transcendence is considered as the ability to see beyond the boundary of self, environment and current limitations (Weathers, McCarthy, and Coffey 2016). Piedmont's spiritual transcendence lacks clarity on how standing outside of time and space can indicate or demonstrate a relationship with the divine. It is,

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<sup>35</sup> Spirituality is an integral part of one's identity and the personal experience of the transcendence whereas religiousness is an external tool through which individuals can access their spirituality and relationship to the divine. (Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger 2011).

therefore, argued that although Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> measures the aspects of spiritual transcendence, it does not necessarily measure an aspect of respondents' relationship with the divine, Higher Power that is the key to understanding and measuring ability to transcend.

#### 2.4.0 Evaluation

On reflection, Reed's self-transcendence scale, STS<sub>a</sub> (Reed 1986a; Reed, Boyd, and Buckwalter 1989; Reed 1987b; Reed 1991b) and Piedmont's spiritual transcendence scale, STS<sub>b</sub> (Piedmont 1999a; Piedmont 2004b) contain contents that seek to understand and measure respondents' ability to relate to elements within the physical existence and not necessarily beyond physical existence i.e. the divine existence. For instance, Reed's STS<sub>a</sub> measure, that is based on self-transcendence theory, mostly contains elements and dimensions that are intended to establish individuals' relationship within the physical existence. Similarly, Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> scale includes predominantly spiritual contents, e.g. measuring respondents' relationship within humanity as a unit. None of the measures entirely devoted to measuring respondents' relationship with the creation and the creator, the divine, Higher Power. To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, there is no other scale that is committed to measuring the ability to transcend adequately. Furthermore, none of the existing tools indicates a cognitive-theological framework involving faith and belief in the divine so that ability to transcend can be measured. The limitation leaves a significant, crucial gap in the psychology of religion and spirituality to understand and measure the divine relationship adequately. This gap indicates an urgent need to design and device a new transcendence scale dedicated to understanding and measuring individuals' relationship with the divine, the creation and the creator.

Furthermore, such measure needs to include contents, dimensions reflecting theological/religious as well as cognitive-psychological components for understanding human relationship with the divine creator. This inclusion would facilitate understanding individuals' ability to relate to the creation and the creator so that the scale would apply to individuals with cultural and religious sensitivities. The inclusion of a cognitive-theological approach for the proposed new transcendence measure is likely to be promising in understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being. The new proposed transcendence scale using the above cognitive-theological framework would likely to reveal the relationship between transcendence and well-being adequately with cultural and religious sensitivities. In other words, the new transcendent tool, with a cognitive-theological framework, would be equally applicable to individuals with no faith and belief in specific religious traditions and those with faith and belief in any of the Abrahamic traditions. Chapter five provides an outline of how such a new transcendence measure could be constructed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Literature Review

#### 3.1.0 Background

The primary objective of the literature review is to determine the status of the relationship between transcendence and well-being. Moreover, the literature review aims at determining whether the existing literature adequately demonstrates the relationship between transcendence and well-being, including spiritual well-being. A further objective of this literature review is to see if the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine is necessary to understand transcendence and its relationship with well-being. The author of this thesis proposes that the inclusion of the theological doctrine in understanding transcendence and well-being is crucial, necessary and unavoidable.

This literature review firstly describes the search methods for the relevant papers on the relationship between transcendence and well-being. Then, it presents the results of the search process based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, the literature review discusses and analyses both conceptual and empirical papers derived from the search methods.

#### 3.2.0 Methods

DISCOVER (Durham University's online library catalogue), Google Scholar, Google, and Web of Science search engines were used in the literature review on the topic of transcendence and well-being. Initially, the search was conducted using the following terms: 'transcendence and well-being', 'transcendence and mental health', 'transcendence, creation and well-being',

'transcendence, creation and theology', and 'transcendence, creation and religion'. The literature review also investigated the state of the art of the relationship between transcendence and well-being. As such, specific terms such as 'relationship between transcendence and well-being', 'relationship between transcendence and mental health', 'transcendence, mental health/well-being: theological analysis' and 'transcendence and mental health/well-being: a cognitive analysis' were searched using the above search engines.

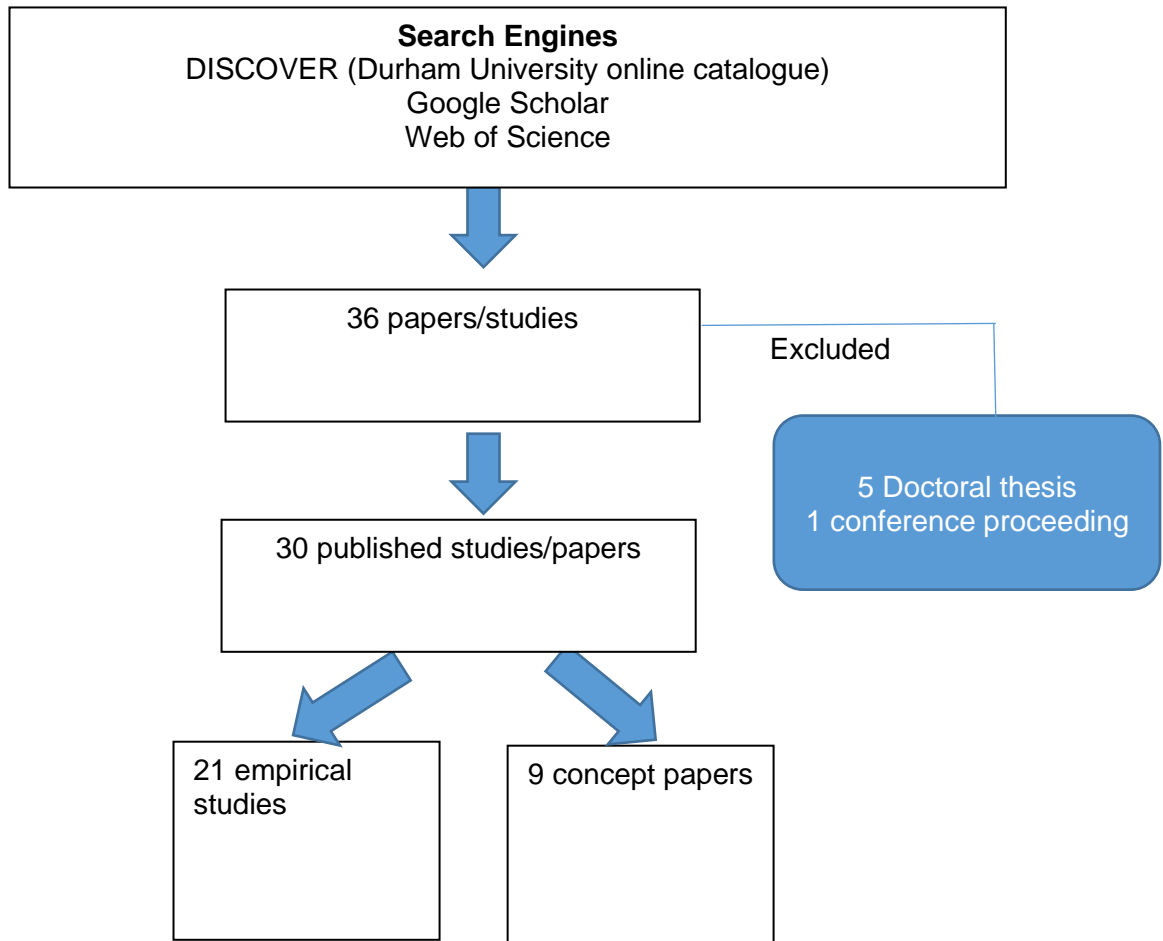
The inclusion criteria for conceptual papers were i) non-empirical published paper(s) on the relationship between transcendence and well-being; ii) non-empirical published article(s) on transcendence; iii) non-empirical published papers on a topic where transcendence appeared to be a component or deemed to be considered as a critical element related to either spirituality or well-being. The exclusion criteria included: a) empirical paper(s) on the relationship between transcendence and well-being, b) empirical paper(s) on transcendence; c) empirical paper(s) where transcendence is considered as an element. As all empirical papers are discussed separately (Literature review: Part-2), they are excluded from part-1 (conceptual papers) of the literature review. The conceptual articles that fulfilled the above inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined briefly in table 1.

The inclusion criteria used for empirical literature were: a) published empirical studies on transcendence and well-being, b) published empirical papers on transcendence and mental health/well-being. The exclusion criteria were: i) empirical dissertations/theses that are not published, ii) published or unpublished articles that are not based on clinical studies on the relationship between

transcendence and well-being. Besides, any empirical study designed to establish a relationship other than transcendence and well-being was excluded. For example, empirical studies on the relationship between religion and well-being were excluded from this literature review as the review primarily aims at evaluating the empirical status of the relationship between transcendence (including self-transcendence, spiritual transcendence) and well-being. Ironically, religious motivation, i.e. Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale IRS (Hoge 1972), does not necessarily guarantee transcendence. Similarly, although the Spiritual Transcendence Scale, STS<sub>b</sub> (Piedmont 1999a; Piedmont 2007) includes religious practices, such as prayers; it would not determine the ability to transcend or divine relationship. Empirical studies on spirituality and well-being were included only when a transcendence scale, either STS<sub>a</sub> or STS<sub>b</sub> was used to determine spirituality or spiritual well-being. The empirical papers that fulfilled the above inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined briefly in Table 2.

A total of thirty-six studies and papers were found initially. A summary flow chart of the methods used is illustrated below:

## The relationship between Transcendence and well-being



**Fig. 1:** A flow chart of systematic search strategy and outcome

### 3.3.0 Results

Of the total thirty-six studies and papers, thirty were published, and six were unpublished. Of the six unpublished papers, five were doctoral theses, and one was conference proceeding. These unpublished papers were excluded from the literature review as they did not meet the inclusion criteria as outlined above. Of the remaining thirty published studies and papers, twenty-one were published as quantitative, empirical studies and nine of them were published non-empirical, conceptual papers on the relationship between transcendence and well-being. The twenty-one empirical papers and the nine theoretical papers on transcendence and

well-being were thus selected and considered for the literature review. These papers were published between 1973 and 2017.

The literature review is discussed in two parts: a) part-1 and b) part-2. Part-1 discusses conceptual papers on transcendence and well-being, whereas part-2 talks about existing empirical studies on the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

#### 3.4.0 Literature review: Part-1 (conceptual papers)

As this part of the literature review is focused on the conceptual understanding of the relationship between transcendence and well-being, only the nine conceptual papers are considered and form the basis of the part-1 literature review as outlined below.

The relationship between Transcendence and well-being has drawn considerable popularity among academics. This part of the literature review discusses the nine conceptual papers (Table 1) that were found using a systematic search method as described above. Seven of the papers are from the USA, one from the UK, and the remaining one is from Iran. An in-depth analysis of these nine papers on transcendence and well-being is illustrated below.

**Table 1:** Summary of published conceptual papers identified for the literature review (part-1)

	<b>Paper, author, year, location</b>	<b>Purpose/objective</b>	<b>Summary/conclusion</b>
1	The Varieties of Self-Transcendence Experience, (Yaden et al. 2017), USA.	To propose psychological and neurobiological mechanisms that may mediate the effects of STEs.	STEs profoundly affect basic aspects (sense of time, space, mind perception, and self) of consciousness. Results being inconclusive. Further empirical research on STEs is needed.
2	Spiritual Health: A Concept Analysis (Jaberi et al. 2017), Iran.	To achieve a clearer understanding of spiritual health and to address the definition and characteristics of this concept.	Spiritual health is considered as dynamic, developmental, conscious. It is a personal capacity strongly related to transcendence.
3	Investigating Psychology and Transcendence, (Richardson 2014), USA.	To engage psychology with the possible reality of transcendence, spirit, or the divine.	Responsible, mature psychology, concerned about human flourishing cannot avoid investigating the matter of psychology and transcendence.
4	Transcendence, Immanence and Mental Health, (Cook 2013), UK	To provide a clearer analysis of the relationship between immanence and transcendence	Transcendence, inseparable from immanence, enables both scientific research and clinical engagement to proceed.
5	Separating Spirituality From Religiosity: A Hylomorphic Attitudinal Perspective, (Del Rio and White 2012), USA.	To argue that spirituality is different from religiosity and further state that spirituality is an attitude towards life, an important factor to establish relationships, and seeking unity with transcendence.	Spirituality must be separated from religiosity if effective epistemic endeavours are to be achieved on either construct.
6	Suffering and transcendence, (Long 2006), USA	To explore the experience of sufferings within the context of the human condition without denying the meaning of human existence and divine reality.	Suffering is a transcendent reality and is somehow necessary for greater goodness in the future.
7	Self-transcendence: A Resource for Healing at the End of Life, (Coward and Reed 1996), USA.	To propose a relationship between ST and healing based on clinical and empirical literature.	Both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research indicate strategies, i.e. making connections, altruistic activities, acceptance that might be used by nurses to help people expand their boundaries.

**Table 1:** Summary of published conceptual papers identified for the literature review (part-1) ...continued

	<b>Paper, author, year, location</b>	<b>Purpose/objective</b>	<b>Summary/conclusion</b>
8	Simultaneous Concept Analysis of Spiritual perspective, Hope, Acceptance and Self-transcendence, (Haase et al. 1992), USA	To clarify the spiritual perspective, hope, acceptance, and self-transcendence that were previously considered as elusive concepts of concern to nurses.	Spiritual perspective, hope, acceptance, and ST are some of the psychosocial processes needing both theoretical and empirical attention.
9	Psychological Health and the Experience of Transcendence, (Noble 1987), USA.	To review recent literature and its impact for psychological STS <sub>a</sub> whose clients have had a transcendent experience of some kind, and who need support in the adjustment period that follows.	Transcendence experiences of clients deserve to be explored in greater detail to access, understand, and utilise the depths of human consciousness.

### 3.4.1 Paper 1

(Yaden et al. 2017), The Varieties of Self-Transcendence Experience

The paper (Yaden et al. 2017) discusses various forms of self-transcendent experiences (STEs) which are momentary or short-lived mental states characterised by an increased sense of connectedness. The authors identified these STEs with some psychological constructs such as mindfulness, flow, peak experiences, mystical-type experiences and certain positive emotions (love or awe). The STEs with the mental constructs were then analysed using psychological and neuropsychological mechanisms. For example, the authors explained that the STEs occurred at the same time as a relative lack of self-awareness called a *hypogenic state* (Leary and Guadagno 2011).

Neuropsychological evidence from neuroimaging suggests that this *hypogenic condition* or *self-loss* is due to the decreased metabolic activity in the superior parietal lobe (Newberg et al. 2001). The metabolic activity thus revealed in the reduction of neural flow and is associated with lower spatial body awareness (Newberg et al. 2001; Newberg and Iversen 2003). Furthermore, subjects who reported mystical-type experiences had decreased their parietal functioning (Azari et al. 2001). STEs thus present both psychological and biological basis indicating parietal regions of the brain links to STEs. However, the author of this thesis argues that these links do not mean that reduction of neural flow in the brain areas is solely responsible for STEs as there is no indication to suggest that reduction for neural flow is the only basis for STEs or is only present in individuals with STEs.

In addition to the neuropsychological basis of STEs, the paper also

Indicates that STEs could potentially generate social-cognitive processes about the theory of mind, such as increased perception leading to perceived social connection. This process suggests that the parietal regions have a close relationship with the theory of mind and neurobiological functions (Decety and Chaminade 2003; Frith and Frith 2012). This connection between the parietal regions and its associated function of cognitive orientation is defined as 'mentalisation'. Notably, due to this 'mentalisation' effect, an individual during STEs can feel very closely connected to a specific religion or a significant religious figure. There is evidence that 'mentalisation' is related to a social connection (Kozak, Marsh, and Wegner 2006; Zaki and Ochsner 2012). Due to this intense connection with social and particular unity, individual with STEs or mystical experiences can gain an increased sense of spirituality and thus likely to achieve a heightened sense of well-being.

Self-transcendence (ST<sub>a</sub>), as defined by Ericson (Erikson 1982) is a non-egocentric understanding of the world. However, individuals with STEs do not necessarily have changed their perception of a self-centred world. For instance, an individual with STEs, as outlined above, can experience a *hypogenic state* or *self-loss*. This experience can make it difficult for the individual to become self-aware enough to be non-ego centric. This self-loss indicates a vital distinction between ST<sub>a</sub> and STEs. The difference between ST<sub>a</sub> and STEs is further supported by other authors (Frankl 1966), who indicated ST<sub>a</sub> as prioritising other people over themselves. Ironically, it is unlikely that an individual during STEs with self-loss is prone to execute this mentalisation. Interestingly, the paper contributes to an essential understanding of both ST<sub>a</sub> and STEs outlining their distinctive features. Although STEs results in an increased sense of connectedness, it does

not mean that an individual during STEs is self-transcendent. Some states of STEs can have pathological manifestations, which Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) classifies as a 'depersonalization' disorder. Nonetheless, STEs presents self-transcendent features, i.e. connectedness, which are likely to influence individuals' state of mind, including beliefs and values. Despite losing one's sense of self, STEs are considered to be sources of well-being, according to James (James 1985), they are moments of 'greatest peace'.

### *3.4.2 Paper 2*

*(Jaberi et al. 2017), Spiritual Health: A Concept Analysis*

The paper (Jaberi et al., 2017) analyses spiritual health using the concept analysis method based on strategies (Walker and Avant 2005) for theory construction in nursing. One of the main reasons that the authors used this technique for spiritual health is that despite numerous empirical, qualitative and mixed studies, the spiritual health concept is without consensus. However, it is not very clear why the authors used the theory that is based on nursing. The authors indicated that there are many vague spiritual concepts in nursing (McBrien 2006) and that these vague, ill-defined ideas, due to misinterpretations, can have severe implications for nursing practice (Emblen 1992; Buck 2006). Arguably, spiritual health concept is unclear in many other disciplines. For instance, in the psychology of religion, it is yet challenging to differentiate between theistic and non-theistic dimensions of spiritual health (Westerink 2012). Nonetheless, the author indicated that the concept analysis method was used for greater clarification on the concept of spiritual health by using a step-by-step interactive strategy.

The authors analysed the spiritual health concept from 436 relevant pieces of literature, of which 183 were quantitative, 180 qualitative, 46 mixed and 27 other resources. The pieces of literature, as indicated by the authors, considered transcendence as a salient characteristic of spiritual health (Albaugh 2003; Banks-Wallace and Parks 2004; Barker and Floersch 2010; Barney and Buckingham 2012; Bradley 2011; Buck and Meghani 2012; Chiu et al. 2004; Coyle 2002; Crossley and Salter 2005; Daly 2005; Delgado 2005; Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger 2011; Griffith et al. 2007; Hodge and McGrew 2006; McSherry and Jamieson 2013; Miner-Williams 2006; Molzahn et al. 2012; Morrison-Orton 2004; Newlin, Knafl, and Melkus 2002; Oh and Kang 2005; Penman, Oliver, and Harrington 2013; Řičan 2004; Rich and Cinamon 2007; Tanyi 2002; Van Dover and Pfeiffer 2012; Walton and Molzahan 2002; Woodgate and Degner 2003; Wright 2004).

Understandably, there is a high consensus from a range of disciplines, as outlined above, that transcendence is not only the critical feature for spiritual health but also guides an individual in finding the meaning and purpose in life. Transcendence is further considered as the ability to see beyond the boundary of self and the environment (Weathers, McCarthy, and Coffey 2016). The understanding inevitably strengthens Piedmont's definition of transcendence, including the intrinsic motivation that drives an individual's behaviour. The author indicated that transcendence means seeing others above the self. However, the meaning of 'beyond the boundary of self' appears not clear from the paper. Inevitably, the source of the creation (universe) is the creator, that is, a necessary being that inevitably exists everywhere including above the self although the source can appear mysterious as it is beyond the general

understanding of human beings. The creation and the creator are mysterious in the sense that none of them can be seen, understood, observed fully. For instance, about 95% (70% dark energy, 25% dark matter) of the universe (creation) is entirely unknown to us. Similarly, the creator or the necessary being cannot be seen or noticed: it is not a physical appearance or presence, but a perception of the spiritual existence beyond the physical environment. For example, the *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine tells that God is without any structure, and the divine simplicity is the only way to know God's presence, unity and oneness.

According to the Italian theologian Thomas Aquinas, creation is contingent and does exist in addition to their essence to form who they are. On the other hand, unlike creatures or the creation, God is non-contingent, and existence is the very substance of God without requiring essence from anything.<sup>36</sup> The divine simplicity based on Aquinas, thus means that creation and creatures, including human beings, are dependent on the creator to whom individuals can transcend and are inevitable for their existence and well-being. Understanding the creation and the creator is thus crucial to transcendence and well-being. This understanding does not mean that an individual has to believe in a creator or be religious to be able to relate to the divine. What it means is that it is the extent to which an individual can connect himself or herself beyond physical existence. The ability to relate to the creation and the divine creator could be either through faith in religion and rituals or through a personal sense of connectedness. However, the authors did not indicate any literature on the creation and the creator to understand transcendence. The authors seem to have focused their analysis on spiritual health concept using nursing and health science database only.

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<sup>36</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.3.4. sed contra.

Inevitably, spiritual health concept and transcendence cannot be understood fully without a theological understanding of the creation and the creator. It can, therefore, be proposed that transcendence is concerned with the ability to relate beyond physical boundaries, the creation and the creator.

### *3.4.3 Paper 3*

*(Richardson 2014), Investigating Psychology and Transcendence*

The paper (Richardson 2014) advocates engaging psychology in exploring transcendence. The author discusses the ideas of a philosopher, Eugene Thomas Long (Long 2006, 1998). The paper also refers to the hermeneutic philosopher, sociologist and Protestant theologian, Peter Berger's 'dilemmas of modernisation' (Berger 1977; Peter 1979). It indicates that despite having vibrant literature in philosophy and psychology of religion, religious beliefs and experiences are almost ignored when it comes to considering transcendence. The author suggests that theological psychology might have a unique role. Furthermore, the paper warns with the reference of (Berger 1977) that the modern life with increasing human powers and uniqueness is missing the ground of social ties and urgently seeks for transcendence to dissolve what the author labelled as 'encapsulated self'.

The author criticises Long and some of his previous papers (Long 2006, 1998). In particular, the author argues that theologians are too focused on a radical concept of transcendence and the importance of revelation. The author indicates that such a radicalised approach to transcendence can lead to non-cognitive approaches or the miracle of faith and revelation. The paper indicates that the radicalism causes a disconnection between transcendence and

immanence, that is, a dichotomy between sacred and secular. This disconnection is likely to lead inhumanity and human catastrophes. The modern world experiences unprecedented destructions due to the extreme 'encapsulated self' of radicalised individuals or groups. This statement can be supported further by the incidence of suicide attacks rooted in radical extremist self-declared religious groups. For example, the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were hit by hijacked planes in 09/11 (2001), and suicide bombers blew three London subway trains and a bus in 7/7 (2005). Such human catastrophes may likely due to radicalism and the lack of ability to relate to the divine.

The paper further discusses transcendence in light of sufferings and religion. According to (Long 2006), the practice of 'ultimacy' or relating beyond physical world demands to rise against the limit of capability, and therefore, it is termed as a transcendent dimension of suffering. The author of this thesis argues that transcendence does not mean to suffer. Moreover, being transcendent does not necessarily mean that someone has to struggle against his/her capacities. What transcendence involves is the relationship between the self and beyond the physical world as perceived by five senses. Transcendence is the ability to relate to the Higher Power. It is understandable, as the paper indicated, sufferings or evil is seen by the 'traditional theistic belief' as a part of the journey of transcendence. Although (Long 2006) labelled it as 'transcendent dimensions of suffering', it can be argued that suffering is not necessarily a part of transcendence. For instance, according to (Borg 1997), both Old and New Testaments see God not only intensely immanent but also radically transcendent. The existence of God means that transcendence does not necessarily require someone to rise against the limit of one's capability. It is instead the ability within

the self to rise beyond the self and of the environment (Weathers, McCarthy, and Coffey 2016). Some authors indicated transcendence as the relationship with others (Reed 1987a; Soeken and Carson 1987) because the capability to transcend is inherently present in human beings (Haase et al. 1992). However, the transcendence is not limited to human relationships but rather an ability to relate to the divine.

The author also discussed obstacles to transcendence. Obstacles are indicated in the sense that an 'encapsulated self', that is, the strong individualism diffuses the modern culture (Bellah et al. 1985; Taylor 1989). Fostering human relationships can help sort out this problem as human actions are considered as merely instrumental. According to the hermeneutic view, on the other hand, humans are considered self-interpreting beings (Taylor 1985) and have a temporal and narrative structure. This structure is likely to gain meaning from present activities to sense future direction. The paper thus indicates that the conception of a strong-relational life from hermeneutic philosophy and Berger's (Peter 1979: p. 36-41) analysis can have a positive effect on transcendence. However, psychological theories involving faith and belief in the divine can help understand transcendence pragmatically. For instance, the psychology of religion and spirituality is aimed at understanding how individuals flourish through faith and searching for sacred (Pargament 1999).

#### *3.4.4 Paper 4*

*(Cook 2013), Transcendence, Immanence and Mental Health*

The (Cook 2013) paper discusses transcendence considering the current controversies about spirituality in psychiatry. The author stresses that transcendence should be seen in a close relationship with immanence and

concludes that they are inseparable for either scientific research or clinical practice. Interestingly, the paper indicates that transcendence is considered as a central concept in understanding spirituality in mental health. For instance, the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is considered as transcendence. According to the author, the AA process involves a transcendent relationship with God. On the other hand, as the author shows, mindfulness that is nationally recognised as a clinical practice (Excellence 2009), is considered to be of more 'immanent'. The author of this thesis argues that the primary focus of the AA programme involves addicts to surrender their lives to God as they are powerless to restore them to sanity. It is, of course, difficult to measure how the individuals surrender to God. Further research is needed to establish whether these subjects have any transcendent abilities. Arguably, Mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn 1994) does not necessarily teach individuals to relate to God. It instead encourages individuals to focus on the present moment by moment by ignoring whatever thoughts come through during the meditation.

Although the author states that immanence is considered as God or Higher power, it is not clear how immanence and transcendence are inseparable. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how the author's notion of immanence relates to transcendence and whether they are the same or different. The author indicated that both the transcendence and Immanence are inherently metaphorical. The author of this thesis argues that immanence and transcendence are two different concepts as immanence does not necessarily mean intrinsic motivation or ability to relate to the divine. Immanence indicates a state of being meaning within, such as God and the creation that are inseparable. Transcendence, on the other hand, does not involve unity of God and creation but

suggests the extent to which individuals relate themselves beyond physical reality as indicated by Ralph Piedmont. It is not appropriate to say that true transcendence<sup>37</sup> is what really makes possible for true immanence; there is no such scenario because transcendence cannot be true or false. An individual can be with, or without, transcendence. Similarly, immanence cannot be true or false but rather, creation emanates from the transcendent God. In other words, transcendence, as Piedmont explains, is a measurable ability to relate to the divine whereas immanence is a more abstract concept and is usually beyond the human ability to comprehend. Relating transcendence with immanence appears incorrect, speculative. It is a matter of grave concern that such inaccurate representation of transcendence can potentially exacerbate doubt, confusion among readers and the general public about spirituality, transcendence and well-being.

#### *3.4.5 Paper 5*

*(Del Rio and White 2012), Separating Spirituality From Religiosity: A Hylomorphic Attitudinal Perspective*

The paper (Del Rio and White 2012) strongly criticises the dualistic, the hylomorphic attitude of seeing spirituality as same as religiosity or religion. The authors proposed that spirituality should be separated from religiosity as individuals are born spiritual, not religious. The authors indicated that spirituality and religion present clear differences in every stage of human life. Therefore, they asked for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV. 1993) to remove any codification of spirituality. The authors indicated transcendence as a component of spirituality. Alongside transcendence,

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<sup>37</sup> Transcendence is discussed here as it is used in the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality.

spirituality includes the attitude towards life and making sense of life, relating to others.

While taking an active stance in separating spirituality from religion, the paper also brings essential issues such as the dualistic nature of the mind-body relationship. Human beings are indeed natural aggregates as they composed of mind and body. Interestingly, this dualistic perspective is shared by all the major religions, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam (Pagels 1989). The authors also considered the dichotomy of religion-spirituality as a consequence of this intrinsically human duality. They also discussed relevant literature supporting their claim. For instance, (Lukoff, Lu, and Turner 1992; Piedmont et al. 2009) indicated both theoretically and empirically that the two constructs bring separate meanings and they cannot be merged into a single construct.

The paper considers transcendence (spirituality) to the soul of human body alongside free will and volition. Due to the free will and volition, human beings are special aggregates with a rational mind. Human beings are therefore different from animals and plants which do not possess a rational mind. The difference indicates how belief in transcendence with free will and volition direct human beings to their proper ends<sup>38</sup> that are truth and goodness. The volition and free will also provide human beings with the opportunity to choose what to believe despite the influence of religious dogmas. Furthermore, religious

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<sup>38</sup>. The proper end indicates the final cause, the ultimate purpose of human beings for which they exist, i.e. striving for perfection through participating the divine creation. The *material cause* is what the human beings are made of, i.e. body and soul; *efficient cause* is from where human beings are made of, i.e. parents and the *formal cause* is what gives human beings the definite shape, i.e. male or female. (Apostle 1980).

belief systems vary from culture to culture, but the transcendent God remains the same and cannot be limited to a particular faith or belief or religion. God is available to all who wish to find truth and goodness. Although this idea is unique and is potentially challenging for some faith communities, '*creatio ex nihilo*' offers a robust framework to consider the creator's existence mirrored in the creation.

#### 3.4.6 Paper 6

(Long 2006), *Suffering and transcendence*

The author of the paper (Long 2006) explored suffering within the context of the human condition itself but did not reject the idea of a relationship with the divine. Interestingly, the paper calls the human suffering as 'the transcendent dimensions of suffering' and interprets it in light of religious faith, philosophical and theological theories. For instance, the theistic argument supports the claim that sufferings are due to sin and cannot be sufficiently explained by human reasoning. However, as the authors indicated, according to any theodicies, a reasonable explanation is that suffering is caused by the evil allowed by God for those who sin. The author of this thesis argues that the existence of evil is questionable. According to the divine simplicity postulated by '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, there is no need for God to interact with the created order. Furthermore, suffering does not mean evil from God; instead, it is a lack of goodness. Also, some sufferings such as an earthquake could be so devastating that no future good could outweigh the impact. Most importantly, as the author indicated, suffering is integral to human lives and can help them understand transcendent reality.

The paper discusses the human suffering and explores the idea of

the 'being'. This 'being' was well studied by the existentialism (Heidegger 1995). It indicates that human beings are both continuously transcending and advancing to a new being. Suffering is seen as the boundary between transcending and a new being. The author suggests that sufferings help human beings understand the obligation, responsiveness to each other. This responsiveness is likely to create relations with others and to be transcendent. However, the paper limits the concept of suffering just within a philosophical context. Arguably, theological, i.e. '*creatio ex nihilo*' understanding along with the cognitive-psychological process in the divine relationship provides a more plausible account and reasonable explanation of transcendence. Indeed, a cognitive-theological approach can offer a comprehensive and meaningful explanation of suffering that underpins well-being.

The paper discusses suffering in light of the doctrine of creation, indicating that suffering is present to provide awareness to help human beings to be aware of their dependence on God. The '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine teaches to understand that something stands between being and nothingness. However, the understanding of nothingness and mood of anxiety around this is limited to the theological and philosophical theories. For instance, the author brought Macquarrie's discussion to provide a Christian theology context in understanding suffering and human responsibility. However, Macquarrie's reference is not ideal for non-believers in any religions to understand the meaning and suffering. Theologically, suffering is considered to be part of creation. Everything, including humans and the universe, strives for perfection to reach the life of God; that is the ultimate goal. In summary, suffering makes human beings aware of their dependence on God. Throughout the journey, suffering comes in different forms.

As far as the psychology of religion and spirituality is concerned, suffering is seen as the boundary between transcending and a new being, meaning that suffering helps us to understand our obligations and responsiveness to each other. This responsiveness is likely to create relations with others, becoming transcendent in order to flourish. However, not all human beings can view, or understand, suffering as part of their obligation to others. Some may isolate themselves from others. An individual's views about suffering inevitably depend on the ability to transcend his/her views about the ultimate source of creation and the created order, including his/her ideas, thoughts and beliefs about the transcendent God. This is to say, it is important to understand the meaning of suffering individually, by using a cognitive-theological approach, to establish whether we can transcend to a new being through suffering. Cognitive and theological theories better understand suffering as they can allow both religious and non-religious individuals to understand the truth and purpose of sufferings. For instance, based on the theological doctrine (*creatio ex nihilo*), sufferings can be seen as part of the creation, to strive perfection for reaching out to the life of God that is the ultimate goal of everything including human beings. The cognitive-psychological process, such as faith and belief in the divine creator, can help individuals overcome sufferings and enhance well-being.

#### 3.4.7 Paper 7

(Coward and Reed 1996), *Self-transcendence: A Resource for Healing at the End of Life*

The paper (Coward and Reed 1996) discusses ST<sub>a</sub> in the context of elderly subjects with life-threatening and chronic diseases. The primary purpose of the paper is to discover the process of healing for severe illnesses so that nurses can find ways to facilitate ST<sub>a</sub> for healing. Interestingly, healing is seen as

different from the cure. Healing is about the human experience of illness, whereas curing involves biomedical recognition and treatment of disease (Kleinman, Eisenberg, and Good 1978). In other words, healing is defined as a sense of well-being that results from an acute awareness of wholeness and involves all the dimensions of being. On the other hand, curing involves the application of an external agent(s) such as drugs. This distinction indicates that healing has the potential for transcendence. However, this does not mean that diseases requiring external agents for cure play no role in the process of transcendence. For instance, diseases may provide an opportunity for increased self-understanding and may enhance consciousness. A disease can act as a wake-up call for a re-evaluation of meaning and direction of the patients' lives (Moch 1990).

The paper presents the origins of the concept of ST<sub>a</sub> and indicates this as an essential resource for healing, particularly for terminally ill elderly patients. ST<sub>a</sub> emerged from the 'unitary human beings theory' of Martha E. Roger (1914-1994), an American nurse, researcher, theorist and author. The fundamental idea of the theory is that human beings possess the potential for an awareness that expands beyond physical limits and is thus considered as fundamental for human functioning. Following Roger's (Rogers 1980, 1988) contribution, the concept of ST<sub>a</sub> was further advanced by Viktor E. Frankl (1905-1997), an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, the founder of logotherapy. Frankl theorised that ST<sub>a</sub> is a distinguishing characteristic of humans and that human beings transcend themselves through reaching towards others and searching for meaning (Frankl 1963; Frankl 1969). Frankl's theory was then enhanced by the Self-Transcendence Theory of Professor Pamela G. Reed, an American Nurse. Frankl's theory included the intrapersonal, interpersonal and temporal dimension

of ST<sub>a</sub>. Reed's (Reed 1991d) theory of ST<sub>a</sub> included all of the three dimensions but added transpersonal<sup>39</sup> dimension to bring a spiritual perspective to ST<sub>a</sub>. The current model of ST<sub>a</sub> includes four dimensions: intrapersonal, interpersonal, transpersonal and temporal in the Self-Transcendence Scale (STS<sub>a</sub>) by Reed (Reed 1991d, 2008).

The Self-Transcendence Scale (STS<sub>a</sub>) is a 15-item self-report psychometric test that measures the degree and extent to which an individual can expand outside of personal boundaries. The paper presents the vital significance of ST<sub>a</sub> and STS<sub>a</sub>, demonstrating that ST<sub>a</sub> is predictive of mental health and well-being. Hospitalised depressed patients present a lack of ST<sub>a</sub> as one of the principal precipitants of psychiatric admission (Reed, Boyd, and Buckwalter 1989). Similarly, ST<sub>a</sub> was strongly correlated with both cognitive and affective well-being. However, case studies and clinical examples are primarily based on elderly and terminally ill patients. Altruistic activities and prayers play a significant role in healing at the end of life and thus provide essential guidance for nurses. However, the significance does not necessarily mean that the process and tools indicated in the paper cannot be used in other areas, such as pastoral care, chaplaincy, counselling, or psychotherapy. Further researches are therefore needed to explore whether this approach can be extended to other areas.

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<sup>39</sup> *Transpersonal* dimension of ST<sub>a</sub> involves spiritual perspective. Transpersonal dimension allows individuals expand their boundaries through experiences i.e. prayer, worship, belief in a power greater than oneself, forgiveness, and for many, belief in the form of life after death. (Coward and Reed 1996)

### 3.4.8 Paper 8

(Haase et al. 1992), *Simultaneous Concept Analysis of Spiritual perspective, Hope, Acceptance and Self-transcendence*

The paper (Haase et al. 1992) focuses on four key concepts: spirituality/spiritual perspective, hope, acceptance and ST<sub>a</sub>. Spiritual perspective or spirituality is defined as a fundamental, inherent quality of all human beings (Reed, Boyd, and Buckwalter 1989) involving all the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions (Banks 1980; Hiatt 1986) of the person. Spirituality includes three key areas: *connectedness*, *belief*, and *creating energy*. *Connectedness* is the ability to relate with others, nature, the universe or God; *belief* is the ability to believe in something more significant than self, and positively guides life (Hiatt 1986; Hungelmann et al. 1985; Reed 1986b); and *creative energy* is the potential for any dynamic changes (Bowers 1987; Ley and Corless 1988).

The four key areas would be deeply interconnected phenomena with particular relevance in nursing practice. The authors developed a simultaneous concept analysis (SCA) method, initially proposed by (Wilson 1963). This method is fully described by (Walker and Avant 2005). The three outcomes of spiritual perspective were identified to be *the purpose and meaning in life* (Banks 1980; Hiatt 1986; Highfield and Cason 1983; Hungelmann et al. 1985; Jourard 1974; Moberg 1971); *the guidance of human values that direct any actions* (Banks 1980; Hiatt 1986; Moberg 1971; Ellerhorst-Ryan 1985; Soeken and Carson 1987); and ST<sub>a</sub> (Bowers 1987; Britt 1989; Brooke 1987; Labun 1988; Reed 1991a). SCA is, in particular, based on a matrix tool where the horizontal axis represents the four concepts and their characteristics, and the vertical axis contains common factors. Based on the SCA analysis, ST<sub>a</sub> is inherently present in human beings

and is a by-product of spiritual dimensions present in any individual. The presence indicates an essential distinction between ST<sub>a</sub> and spirituality. Being spiritual does not involve ST<sub>a</sub> and vice-versa. The SCA also identified spiritual perspective as one of the five ST<sub>a</sub> antecedents and may facilitate ST<sub>a</sub>. However, this does not mean that being ST<sub>a</sub> would automatically demonstrate spirituality. The reason is that spirituality requires other attributes in addition to ST<sub>a</sub>. Consequently, spiritual perspective or spirituality and ST<sub>a</sub> are different meaning that the presence of one does not necessarily warrant the presence of the other.

SCA appears necessary to help compare similarities and differences in the four phenomena. However, it is not evident that this method applies to other disciplines. SCA does not seem to be the only concept analysis method to study phenomena related to faith and spirituality. For instance, thematic analysis and discourse analysis are some of the qualitative psychological methods widely used in arts, science as well as social science (Braun and Clarke 2006; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002).

#### 3.4.9 Paper 9

*(Noble 1987), Psychological Health and the Experience of Transcendence*

The paper (Noble 1987) explores the impact of various transcendence experiences on the psychological functioning of the individuals. The paper shows that such transcendence experiences have both positive and negative outcomes. Furthermore, the author stated that transcendence experience not only influences the individual but also his/her family, friends. For instance, while near-death experiences (NDEs) are related to a greater sense of self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-worth, and self-regard (Ring 1984); NDEs may also lead to

family break up and divorces (Ring 1984: p. 96). The most likely reasons for such a multi-facet effect is that such experiences have a dramatic impact on human lives. However, transcendence experiences may be just the by-product of emotional distress (Wuthnow 1978).

The relationship between psychological health and transcendence experiences, as the author acknowledged, is complicated. This complexity may come from the pathological nature of transcendence experiences, as outlined in the paper. Neuropsychological evidence, as discussed under paper 1, support the claim that transcendence experiences can result from *hypogenic state* or *self-loss* due to the decreased metabolic activity in the superior parietal lobe (Newberg et al. 2001). The link raises the question of whether the transcendence experiences with pathological nature are transcendence experiences or rather psychological manifestations. In other words, the relationship between transcendence experiences and *hypogenic state* indicates that transcendence experiences have neurological correlations. Empirical studies in part-2 (below) claim that self-transcendence and well-being are positively correlated. Hence, any experiences leading to pathological consequences are not transcendent experiences at all. It is essential to take into account that the paper was published decades ago in 1984 when a clear understanding of transcendence and transcendent experiences were very premature. Nonetheless, the paper offers a fascinating insight into a wide range of transcendence experiences and their impact on psychological well-being.

#### 3.4.10 Evaluation (conceptual papers)

On reflection, the above nine conceptual papers provide a detailed account of the relationship between transcendence and well-being from a wide range of

disciplines, from psychology and philosophy to theology and religion. The papers present various contexts and variables, such as the dichotomy between body and mind and the role of free will in exploring the relationship between transcendence and well-being. For instance, paper 1 shows that transcendence experiences and well-being are linked to the neuropsychological and social-cognitive process. Paper 3 provides with a broader understanding of the relationship from a variety of different points of view including philosophical, sociological, hermeneutic, theological and religious theories. For instance, paper 5 provides interesting distinctions between spirituality and religion, indicating that transcendence is integral to spiritual/religious beliefs which guide individuals towards achieving the meaning and purpose of life. The relationship between transcendence and well-being is also explored in the context of suffering, such as life-threatening and chronic disease. Papers 6 and 7 highlights the importance of transcendence and the relationship with the divine in terms of healing and well-being in the event of traumatic events and suffering. Moreover, it is clear from the papers that having transcendent experiences does not necessarily mean having a relationship with the divine or transcendence; not all transcendent experiences are free from our pathological nature. Paper 9 contains neuropsychological evidence suggesting that some transcendent experiences, especially those of 'hypogenic state' or 'self-loss', are due to psychological distress.

It is evident that a relationship with the transcendent God, or the presence of transcendence, plays a significant role in making sense of the world we live in, dealing with unpredictable circumstances and strengthening our psychological health and well-being. An important question is how do we know whether or not an individual has a relationship with the transcendent God. Answering such a

question would inevitably require cognitive-theological understanding as to whether an individual relates himself/herself to the ultimate source of everything around us. The papers clearly show the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being. The outcome of the part-1 of the literature review is that a cognitive-theological model involving faith and belief about the creation and the creator, the transcendent God is likely to offer a comprehensive understanding of transcendence and its relationship with well-being. This cognitive-theological approach would apply to human beings holistically, including those with or without religion.

The next part of the literature review (part 2) discusses the twenty-one empirical papers found in the above search method on the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

### 3.5.0 Literature review: Part-2 (empirical)

All of the twenty-one empirical studies (Table 2) found in the systematic search on the relationship between transcendence and well-being were conducted in four different countries outside the UK: sixteen of them were in the USA, three were in Sweden, one in Norway and one in India. Each of the studies is named according to the institution or place where the study was conducted.

**Table 2:** Summary of studies identified for the literature review (part-2)

<b>Studies, location, author, year</b>	<b>Purpose/Objective</b>	<b>Sample/Design</b>	<b>Gender/Measures</b>	<b>Key research question/Hypothesis</b>	<b>Finding/conclusion</b>
i) Umea (Sweden) 85+ Study (Norberg et al. 2015)	To describe the association between ST <sub>a</sub> and psychological and physical well-being among oldest-old people and to test the influence of STS <sub>a</sub> for mortality.	N =190 The correlational, prospective and longitudinal design	F=123 M=67 (age: 85+)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , MMSE, PCCMS, GDS, ADL	Are there changes in ST <sub>a</sub> over time; associations between ST and negative life events?	Pearson's r test showed a positive correlation (r=0.235, p<.001) between ST <sub>a</sub> and measures of independence and social contacts and a negative correlation (r=-0.446, p<.001) to depression.
ii) Brigham (USA) Study-3 (Sanders et al. 2015)	To investigate whether intrinsic/extrinsic religiousness, self-transcendence are predictive of higher levels of life meaning (MIL) and lower levels of psychological distress, i.e. depression, anxiety among adolescents and young adults.	N=341 (94.4% Caucasian, 2.4% Asian, 1.5% Hispanic)/ Cross-sectional, correlational design	F=213, M=128 (age: 17-41)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , ROS, EAT, MILQ, SMILE, BSI	Is ST <sub>a</sub> , religiousness (Intrinsic/extrinsic) predictive of both MIL and fewer psychiatric symptoms?	Pearson's r test revealed ST <sub>a</sub> and intrinsic religiousness strongly predicted MIL, fewer psychiatric symptoms [r=.52, p<.001, r=.53, p<.001; r=-.42, p<.001, r=-.13, p<.001]. Extrinsic religiousness was found predictive of and positively associated with more symptoms (r=.18, p<.001).
iii) Trondheim (Norway) study (Haugan et al. 2014)	To identify the relationships between self-transcendence, i.e. Interpersonal (ST-1), Intrapersonal (ST-2) and spiritual well-being in cognitively intact nursing home patients.	N=202 (81% religious 19% not religious) Cross-sectional Design	F=146, M=56 (age: 65-104)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , FACIT-Sp	Are ST-1 and ST-2 positively affects spiritual well-being (meaning, peace and faith)?	Cronbach's alpha coefficient $\alpha$ test indicated ST-1 ( $\alpha$ =0.76) and ST-2 ( $\alpha$ =0.63) are positively associated with spiritual well-being (meaning, peace and faith).
iv) Ohio (USA) study (Sharpnack et al. 2011)	To describe the relationship between ST <sub>a</sub> and SW in adult Amish.	N=134 (89% married, 4% single, 2% widowed)/Descriptive correlational design.	F=91, M=43 (age:23-80)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , SIWB	Examination of ST <sub>a</sub> and SW may provide insight useful to holistic nursing practice.	Pearson r test showed a significant positive correlation (r=.52, p<.01) between ST <sub>a</sub> and SIWB, indicating the holistic nature of Amish beliefs.

Table 2: Summary of studies identified for the literature review (part-2)...continued

Studies, location, author, year	Purpose/Objective	Sample/Design	Gender/Measures	Key research question/Hypothesis	Finding/conclusion
v) Kentucky (USA) study (Thomas et al. 2010)	To describe the relationship between self-transcendence and spiritual well-being and to identify the spiritual practices among older women recovering from breast cancer.	N=87 (83% Caucasian, 03% Black/African 01% Asian)/ Descriptive correlational Design	F=87, M=n/a (age: 65+)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , SIWB, SPC	Are women with breast cancer able to i) achieve self-transcendence and spiritual well-being? ii) move beyond breast cancer to transcend the disease process?	Pearson's r test presented significant positive relationship ( $r=.59$ , $p<.000$ ) between self-transcendence and spiritual well-being among the women with breast cancer and that multiple spiritual practices, i.e. praying, worship was present.
vi) Umea (Sweden) 85+ study (Hedberg et al. 2010)	To investigate i) the relationship between purpose in life and depression, ii) whether in a five-year follow-up study purpose in life can prevent very old men and women from developing depression.	N =78 A correlational, prospective and longitudinal design	F=40 M=17 (age: 85+)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , GDS, PIL, MNA, MMSE, ADL	i)Is there a relationship between depression and PIL among very old and ii)whether a high degree of PIL could prevent the development of depression	Student's t-test demonstrated no association ( $t=0.75$ ) between PIL and depression, indicating a high degree of PIL could not prevent the very old from developing depression during a five-year period.
vii) Colorado (USA) study (Matthews and Cook 2009b)	To investigate the relationship between optimism and emotional well-being; ii) the role of mediators, i.e. social support (SS), problem-focused coping (PFC) and ST in women with breast cancer during radiation therapy.	N=93 (93.5% Caucasian, 4.3% African, 1% Hispanic)/ Correlational design	F=93, M=n/a (age: 39-79)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , PA, LOT, SSQ, SDS	i) Are SSQ, PFC, ST <sub>a</sub> and EWB positively correlated? ii) Do SSQ, PFC and ST <sub>a</sub> mediate the effects of optimism on EWB?	Optimism positively related to EWB ( $\beta_1=.25$ , $p=0.0016$ ), ST <sub>a</sub> positively related to EWB ( $\beta_1 =.31$ , $p=0.021$ ). Optimism predicted ST ( $\beta_1 =.033$ , $p= 0.001$ ) and SSQ ( $\beta_1 =.002$ , $p=0.009$ ).

Table 2: Summary of studies identified for the literature review (part-2)...continued

Studies, location, author, year	Purpose/Objective	Sample/Design	Gender/Measures	Key research question/Hypothesis	Finding/conclusion
viii) Kentucky (USA) study (Burriss et al. 2009)	To identify demographic, individual, and behavioural factors linked to university students' psychological health	N=353 (88.7% Caucasian, 7.1% African American, 1.4% Asian American) Cross-sectional design	F=215, M=138 (age:17-29)/ HAV, LOT-R, RCI-10, STS <sub>b</sub> , MHI II	It was hypothesized that HAV, LOT-R, RCI-10, and STS <sub>b</sub> would be associated with more favourable outcomes, whereas reporting greater levels of alcohol use and sexual behaviours would be associated with a more negative outcome.	Correlational analysis (r) indicated that all individual difference variables (HAV, LOT-R, RCI-10, STS <sub>b</sub> ) demonstrated strong positive associations (median $r=.155$ , $p<.01$ ) with the students' psychological health. Numbers of sexual partners were significantly associated ( $p<.01$ ) with psychological distress.
ix) Roorkee (India) Study (Rathi and Rastogi 2007)	To examine meaning in life and psychological well-being in male and female students of pre-adolescence and adolescence periods.	N=104 (81% religious 19% not religious) Cross-sectional Design	F=20, M=34 (age: 12-18)/ PMP, WBMMS PMP presents components of ST	Are there significant differences among male and female (pre-adolescents, adolescents) students on the subscales of PMP, WBMMS?	Paired comparison analysis, t-test showed that adolescent females were higher than that of males on all subscales of PMP ( $t=0.61-3.00$ , $p<0.05-.01$ ) including ST. No significant difference was found in any subscale of WBMMS among male and female adolescents, pre-adolescents.
x) Arizona (USA) study (Runquist and Reed 2007)	To examine the relationships of spirituality and physically related variables to well-being among homeless adults.	N=61 (59% Caucasian, 18% Mexican, 12% African, 02% Asian) Descriptive correlational Design	F=14, M=47 (age: 19-62)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , SPS, IWB	i) what are the relationships of ST <sub>a</sub> , spiritual perspective, PHS and fatigue to well-being in homeless persons? ii) which of these variables together best explain well-being in homeless persons.	Pearson's r test indicates both spiritual perspective ( $r=.57$ , $p<.001$ ) and ST <sub>a</sub> ( $r=.68$ , $p<.001$ ) correlated positively with well-being. ST <sub>a</sub> [ $F(1,54)=48.75$ , $p=.000$ ] and PHS [ $F(2,53)=40.43$ , $p<.000$ ] together explained a significant 59% of the variance in well-being among the homeless adults.

Table 2: Summary of studies identified for the literature review (part-2)...continued

Studies, location, author, year	Purpose/Objective	Sample/Design	Gender/Measures	Key research question/Hypothesis	Finding/conclusion
xi) Umea (Sweden) 85+study (Nygren et al. 2005)	To describe RS (resilience), SOC, PIL, and ST about perceived physical and mental health in a sample of the oldest old.	N =125 The correlational, prospective design	F=86 M=39 (age: 85+)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , RS, SOC, PILT, SF-36	Resilience, SOC, PIL and ST <sub>a</sub> will affect perceived physical and mental health.	Correlation among RS, SOC, PIL and ST <sub>a</sub> was found significant; they were also significantly correlated to perceived mental health among the women but not among the men.
xii) Texas (USA) study, (Coward and Kahn 2005)	To explore how newly diagnosed women with breast cancer who begin to feel like victims are transformed to view themselves as survivors.	N=14 (majority Caucasian) Qualitative approach study	F=14 (age: 31-63) Phenomenological analysis (transcribed audio-tapes)	It was expected that the support group sessions would help participants move beyond the constraints of a difficult situation and transcend feeling like victims to become survivors.	Clarification and modification of values and behaviours assisted the women in forming meaning from their experiences.
xiii) Texas (USA) study (Coward 2003)	To pilot a second support group intervention study promoting ST perspectives and activities for changes in well-being in support group participants compared with nonparticipants.	N=41: 22 experimental 17 control (82% Protestant, 12% none, 6% Catholic) Quasi-experimental, partial randomization, preference trial	F=41 (age: 35-64) STS <sub>a</sub> , PIL, ABS, POMS, CWB, KPS, PRQ	It was hypothesized that an increased sense of ST <sub>a</sub> would result in an improved sense of physical and emotional well-being in participants by using ST views and behaviours in group sessions.	Findings from this pilot indicated a strong relationship between STS <sub>a</sub> and PIL (r=0.78-0.85), STS <sub>a</sub> and among the three emotional well-being measures ABS, CWB, and POMS (r=0.56-0.79). Continuous assessment for post-treatment recommended.

Table 2: Summary of studies identified for the literature review (part-2)...continued

Studies, location, author, year	Purpose/Objective	Sample/Design	Gender/Measures	Key research question/Hypothesis	Finding/conclusion
xiv) Arizona (USA) study (Ellermann and Reed 2001)	To examine the relationship between transcendence and other transcendence variables to depression in middle-aged adults.	N=133  Correlational design	F=67, M=66 (age: 25-64)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , CES-D	What is the nature, magnitude, and significance of the relationship between ST <sub>a</sub> and depression in middle-aged adults?	The relationship between ST <sub>a</sub> and depression was significant in the total group ( $r=-.51$ , $p<.001$ ) and in the younger subgroup ( $r=-.68$ , $p<.001$ ) indicating that increased levels of ST <sub>a</sub> were associated with lower levels of depression.
xv) Texas(USA) study (Coward 1998)	To test out the effectiveness of a breast cancer support group intervention to facilitate ST <sub>a</sub> views for enhancing emotional and psychological well-being.	N=16 (44% Protestant, 25% Catholic, 6% Jewish) Pre-experimental design pilot study	F=16 (age: 40-62)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , PIL, ABS, POMS, CWB (Coward 1990b; Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers 1976), KPS, SDS, PRQ	It was hypothesized that after attending the support group intervention, the participants would show an increased sense of ST <sub>a</sub> and well-being.	Relationships among participants' scores on study variables indicated an association between STS <sub>a</sub> and PIL ( $r=.82$ , $p<.01$ ); STS <sub>a</sub> and ABS ( $r=.81$ , $p<.000$ ).
xvi) Texas (USA) study (Coward 1996)	To derive data concerning ST <sub>a</sub> views and behaviours in a healthy population.	N=152 (86% Caucasian) Cross-sectional design	F=110, M=42 (age: 19-85)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , SOC-13, SER, HHI, ABS, CWB	What are the relationships among ST <sub>a</sub> and SOC, HHI, SER, ABS and CWB?	t-test revealed that ST <sub>a</sub> was strongly correlated with PIL ( $t=.76$ ), SOC ( $t=.58$ ), SER ( $t=.48$ ), SEG ( $t=.51$ ), HHI ( $t=.66$ ), ABS ( $t=.69$ ), CWB ( $t=.60$ ); $p<.01$ .
xvii) Texas (USA) study (Coward 1995)	To describe the lived experience of ST <sub>a</sub> in women with AIDS, associated with an increased sense of meaning and purpose, well-being, self-esteem, and connectedness with self and others.	N=10 (White=5, Black=3 N. American=2)/ Exploratory, descriptive using phenomenological research methods	F=10, M=N/A (age: 21-50)/  Phenomenological analysis	Is ST <sub>a</sub> a pattern and a correlate of emotional well-being in persons (women with AIDS) who have an increased awareness of personal mortality?	Phenomenological analysis (participant descriptions) revealed that women with AIDS continued to find meaning and purpose in their lives through experiences of receiving from others, giving to others, and maintaining hope.

Table 2: Summary of studies identified for the literature review (part-2)...continued

<b>Studies, location, author, year</b>	<b>Purpose/Objective</b>	<b>Sample/Design</b>	<b>Gender/Measures</b>	<b>Key research question/Hypothesis</b>	<b>Finding/conclusion</b>
xviii) Texas (USA) (Coward 1994)	To illustrate how male and female with AIDS search meaning through the process of ST <sub>a</sub> .	N=20 (5 women and one man from minority groups) Descriptive, phenomenological	F=10, M=10 Age (32-48: men, 21-50: women)/ Phenomenological analysis (Colaizzi 1978)	ST <sub>a</sub> experiences, as proposed by reed (Reed 1991a) may lead to maintenance or restoration of mental health in persons facing end-of-life crisis, i.e. AIDS	The phenomenological analysis revealed that the participants expressed feelings of increased self-worth, inner strength from their expanded views and behaviours as outlined Reed's (Reed 1991a) theory of ST <sub>a</sub> .
xix) Arizona (USA) study (Reed 1991a)	To extend research on ST <sub>a</sub> in ageing by examining the potential significance of ST <sub>a</sub> among oldest-old adults.	N=55 (75% Protestants 13% Catholic 12% Other) Mixed method correlational	F=36, M=19 (age: 80-97)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , SSIS, CESD, MHS	Is there a relationship between ST <sub>a</sub> and mental health among the oldest old adults?	Pearson's r (correlation) test indicated significant relationships of moderate magnitude between ST <sub>a</sub> as measured by STS <sub>a</sub> and both measures of mental health symptomatology, the CESD (-.33, p<.01) and MHS (r=-.32, p<.01).
xx) Texas (USA) study (Coward 1991)	To examine relationships among ST <sub>a</sub> , emotional well-being, and illness-related distress in a large group of women with advanced breast cancer.	N=107 (92% Caucasian, 7% Hispanic) Cross-sectional correlational	F=107 (age: 29-86)/ STS <sub>a</sub> , ABS, CWB, NAS, SDS, KPS	It was expected that there would be a strong positive relationship between ST <sub>a</sub> and emotional well-being.	ST <sub>a</sub> directly affected emotional well-being (beta=0.69, p<.05) and emotional well-being had a strong negative effect on illness distress (beta=-.84, p<.05)
xxi) Tennessee (USA) study (Hood 1973)	To relate significant personal experiences to intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation measured by Allport's Intrinsic and Extrinsic subscales.	N=41: 20 intrinsic, 21 extrinsic (majority fundamental Protestants) Interview method	Allport's Religious Orientation Scale	Intrinsic religious persons would have more codifiable transcendent experiences than that of extrinsic religious persons	Intrinsically oriented participants reported more experiences codifiable as transcendent than did groups of extrinsically oriented participants.

### 3.5.1 Studies on elderly

Umea 85+ (Sweden) (Norberg et al. 2015) (Hedberg et al. 2010)

(Nygren et al. 2005) studies investigated the relationship between transcendence and well-being among very older adults. The research team published three papers at different times between 2005 and 2015. It appears not clear whether the participants of these three papers are from the same study cohort. The author of this thesis contacted the research team via email, and the response received was below:

*"The Umeå 85+ study started in the year 2000 in the University city of Umeå and was expanded in 2002 to 6 rural municipalities in the same county. The project changed name to GERDA in 2003 when it started to include participants in Finland. Today we have included more than 3000 participants who have been assessed in their homes, and many of them have been reassessed after 5 and ten years. Different papers from the study include different numbers of participants depending on how many participants that had been included at different time-points. Several other studies are ongoing about the importance of religion in old peoples life".*

The above response suggests that the participants of the published three papers (Norberg et al. 2015), (Hedberg et al. 2010), (Nygren et al. 2005) appear to be taken from different locations, and therefore each of them was considered as a separate study. These three studies attempted to establish relationships among self-transcendence (ST<sub>a</sub>) and a range of psychological, social and medical factors. They experimented both physical and mental health in a sample of the very elderly. The findings of the studies show that ST<sub>a</sub> was positively correlated with the mental state (MS), resilience (RS), sense of coherence (SOC), and

purpose in life (PIL). The results were consistent with other studies (Hsu et al. 2013), (Wagnild and Young 1993). Interestingly, the studies reveal that ST<sub>a</sub> was found significantly associated with women mental health but not men's mental health indicating gender difference in the relationship of ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being. For instance, (Nygren et al. 2005) study established significant positive relationships of ST<sub>a</sub>, resilience (RS), sense of coherence (SOC), purpose in life (PIL) only in females but not in males.

One of the possible explanations, as indicated by the researchers, is that women were found more depressed due to isolation, loneliness and lack of social integration (de Jong Gierveld and Hagestad 2006). However, a five-year prospective, longitudinal study (Hedberg et al. 2010) carried out by the Umea 85+ (Sweden) research team revealed that older men developed depression in the same way as the older women. The research team indicated the need for further research, particularly in the area of underlying causes of the development of depression among very old. To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, there is no study suggesting a gender difference in the psychopathology of depression among older men and women. Interestingly, the research team expressed their doubt about whether the questionnaires used in the study were gender-biased. The doubt indicated by the research team could potentially mean that the inconsistency in gender difference in the outcome of the relationship between STS<sub>a</sub> and well-being could be due to the (STS<sub>a</sub>) contents that are gender-biased. This limitation potentially raises the question of whether the items the STS<sub>a</sub> scale are valid to be applicable to human beings in general. For example, one of the STS<sub>a</sub> contents asked participants "*letting others help me when I may need it*" for which women and men could perceive and respond differently. Arguably, a

woman is more likely to seek help than a man. This claim could be supported by (Gibson and Cook 1997) suggesting that a gender difference in coping styles due to the difference in both personality and their approach to health.

A further limitation of the Umea 85+ (Sweden) studies is that they included female participant more than the male participants. For instance, (Nygren et al. 2005) study sample was 190, of whom 123 were female, and only 67 were male participants. The difference means a methodological problem with the study as the female participants were almost double than the male participants. The gender difference in the outcome was likely due to the over-representation of the female participants. Understandably, this study was aimed at establishing the association between ST<sub>a</sub> and social, medical factors as well as development over five years period. The study title does not indicate to see any relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being or any psychological or mental health functioning. Of the 190 participants, only 55 (29.5%) were still alive after five years period and were somehow able to complete the STS<sub>a</sub> assessment for the second time. Although the researchers indicated a high mortality rate among the participants, the follow-up sample size is significantly low to make any generalisation or to compare and conclude any findings between ST<sub>a</sub> and social, medical or other development. A further limitation, as well as concern for the outcome of the study, is that it used MMSE as well-being measure. However, MMSE is a screening tool for assessing cognitive function and not necessarily a psychological well-being measure. Very disappointingly, the study (Nygren et al. 2005) claims ST<sub>a</sub> as a source of well-being, without including a valid well-being measure. The above limitations indicate that the study presents methodological and procedural problems. Moreover, there

are significant discrepancies between the title of the study and the claims, such as an association between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being, it makes.

In contrast with Umea 85+ (Sweden) studies, Arizona (USA) studies (Runquist and Reed 2007; Ellermann and Reed 2001; Reed 1991a) did not indicate gender difference in the relationships of ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being among the very elderly population. For instance, (Reed 1991a) study included older adults (N=55, F=36, M=19, age: 80-97) to evaluate the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and mental health among the oldest-old adults. The outcome of the study reveals that ST<sub>a</sub> is negatively correlated to depression (CESD) and mental health symptoms (MHS) (table 2). These relationships were found independent of the study variables and demographic variables (age, sex). The results were consistent with findings from previous research (Reed 1986a; Reed, Boyd, and Buckwalter 1989). Despite having more female participants than males in Arizona (USA) (Reed 1991a) study, the inconsistency in gender difference in the outcome among Arizona (USA) and Umea 85+ (Sweden) studies suggests that the STS<sub>a</sub> is not independent of location, geography and culture. In other words, it is likely that men and women in Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden) responded differently to STS<sub>a</sub> than that of the USA. Moreover, the STS<sub>a</sub> contents are likely presented in a way that could mean different to different people from diverse geography and cultures. It is vital that any tool measuring transcendence needs to be independent of culture, geography and gender. Although it appears challenging to have a transcendence tool, independent of culture and geography, it is not impossible. It is likely that cognitive mechanism in the formation of faith and belief in the divine is the same for all individuals. For instance, a popular cognitive approach (Beck 1976b) is used to understand specific cultural, religious

and spiritual beliefs. In other words, the items/contents of such a transcendence tool can be presented in a way so that they are not limited by any specific cultural or geographical interpretation. The contents presented in chapter five (Recommendations) describes such an attempt. No study indicated a difference in the outcome of well-being measures due to gender difference. The author of this thesis argues that the difference in gender bias in the outcome of the relationship between transcendence and well-being between Umea 85+ (Sweden) study and Arizona (US) study is not due to the well-being questionnaires. It is likely that the difference was somewhat due to the gender-biased transcendence measure (STS<sub>a</sub>).

The evidence from Arizona (USA) studies and Umea 85+ (Sweden) studies suggest a positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and mental health among older adults. However, the indication of gender, geographical as well as cultural differences make it difficult for the (STS<sub>a</sub>) measure to be culturally sensitive. Furthermore, the methodological and procedural problems, particularly small sample sizes used in the studies are a significant barrier to generalise the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being among the elderly population.

### *3.5.2 Studies on adolescents*

The lack of cultural and gender sensitivity for the (STS<sub>a</sub>) measure Could be supported further by Roorkee (India) study (Rathi and Rastogi 2007). The study was conducted among pre-adolescents and adolescents population to see if there is any difference in MIL and psychological well-being in males and females. ST<sub>a</sub> is considered as an essential dimension for MIL as measured by PMP scale (Wong 1998). PMP is a fifty-seven items questionnaire on

achievement (16 items), relationship (9 items), religion (9 items), ST<sub>a</sub> (8 items), self-acceptance (6 items), intimacy (5 items) and fair treatment (4 items). For example, some of the ST<sub>a</sub> items are '*I seek higher values-values that transcend self-interests*' '*I have a purpose and direction in life*', '*It is important to dedicate my life to a cause*'. ST<sub>a</sub>, along with religion, relationship, achievement has been identified as a major factor of PMP (Ebersole 1998; Reker, Peacock, and Wong 1987). This importance means that a high level of ST<sub>a</sub> would indicate an increased sense of MIL. The Roorkee (India) study included male participants more than the female participants (F=20, M=34) but revealed that adolescent females scored higher on PMP including ST<sub>a</sub> than that of males (Table 2) indicating a gender difference in ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being among the adolescents. This outcome could potentially mean that MIL, as well as ST<sub>a</sub>, is more critical among young females than young males. Interestingly, the study did not find any difference among pre-adolescent and adolescent students in any subscale of WBMMS.

Understandably, the Roorkee (India) study did not use the self-transcendence measure (STS<sub>a</sub>). However, the PMP included components and dimensions of ST<sub>a</sub>, and the outcome provides a gender difference between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being measures among the adolescents in India, a cultural and geographical region different to the USA and Sweden. The gender difference in the Roorkee (India) study strengthens the argument that ST<sub>a</sub>, including the STS<sub>a</sub> measure, is gender-biased for both young and older adults. Despite having inconsistencies in gender, geographical, and cultural differences, Umea 85+ (Sweden) studies, Arizona (USA) studies and Roorkee (India) study shed light in understanding the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being among the

adolescents, adults and older adults. However, due to the limitations as outlined above, none of the studies can generalise the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being. Further research is necessary, as indicated by the studies.

### *3.5.3 Studies on breast cancer*

The (Coward 1991) study examined the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub>, emotional well-being and illness-related distress among women (N=107) with advanced breast cancer. The sample was selected from a regional cancer centre and three community hospitals in Texas. The author clearly described the demographic characteristics of the participants. However, the sampling technique used in the study is not indicated. For instance, it is not clear whether participants were randomly selected. Health care providers selected the participants, and the sample selection was based on their judgement. Besides, the researcher indicated that some of the participants had other medical problems, but the proportion of the participants who had such problems is not indicated. It is not clear why the researcher had to include some of the participants with other medical problems. Moreover, 98% of the participants were Caucasians; no explanation was given for such over-representation. Undoubtedly, the study shows some methodological issues. However, the research design was clearly articulated, and the measures (STS<sub>a</sub>, ABS, CWB, SDS) selected were appropriate for the study. No intervention or treatment was delivered to the participants. Consent was obtained, and the participants attended a one-off interview to complete the questionnaires. Data were then analysed with Pearson correlations and statistical software (structural equations modelling). A strong positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and emotional well-being was found; there was no association between ST<sub>a</sub> and illness distress. However, emotional well-being had

a strong negative effect on illness distress (Table 2). Although the sample size appears satisfactory, the results obtained cannot be generalised due to methodological issues, such as poor sampling technique.

A group of women (N=16) with breast cancer were further studied by the (Coward 1998) study to examine the effectiveness of a group intervention. The participants attended a 90-minute group session weekly for eight weeks. The group intervention was primarily based on a theory of self-transcendence. Values clarification, problem-solving, assertive communication skill training, feelings management, pleasant activity planning, constructive thinking, and relaxation training were implemented to facilitate ST<sub>a</sub> among the participants. Only five of the sixteen women attended all the eight support sessions. Association of STS<sub>a</sub> with PIL, ABS, POMS, CWB, SDS and KPS was analysed by using Wilcoxon signed ranks tests. Findings show a strong association between STS<sub>a</sub> and PIL, STS<sub>a</sub> and emotional well-being (Table 2). The results were consistent with the researcher's previous study (Coward 1991). The study design, methodology and procedure were clearly articulated. However, there was no control group; all of the participants attended the group interventions were Caucasians and were Christians. Efforts were made to recruit representative ethnic groups but no clarification given for the under-representation of other ethnicity and religious background. The lack of ethnic and religious representation in sample selection is a barrier for generalising the effectiveness of the group intervention. Moreover, the study sample is not large enough, but it was too many to attend in one treatment group. However, the measures used were appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the study. The interventions delivered had a sound theoretical basis and were relevant to the objectives of the study. Limitations of the study

were not indicated or acknowledged by the researcher. Promisingly, the study demonstrates a good foundation for further studies and the researcher indicated a plan to carry out a further study with a larger group of women with breast cancer.

The (Coward 2003) study evaluated the outcome of a group intervention programme with a second support group participants (women with breast cancer). The study design and methodology were similar to the previous study. However, this study had a control group. A total of forty-one newly diagnosed breast cancer women were recruited by using a partially randomised preference trial design (Coward, 2002), initially proposed by (Bradley, 1989). The final sample comprised thirty-nine women, twenty-two of them received the group intervention, and seventeen women were in a control group. Data were collected and analysed at the time of recruitment (T1), within a month completing the support group sessions (T2) and twelve months after the T2 data collection (T3). Correlations at all three-time points show that STS<sub>a</sub> is strongly related to well-being as indicated by the three well-being measures (table 2). The findings are consistent with the researcher's previous study (Coward, 1998). This study presents a better methodology and procedure than the previous study. For example, a sampling technique was followed for the recruitment of women with breast cancer and was appropriate for this group of participants. Another strength of this study is that it had a control group. The effectiveness of the group intervention was compared at treatment (T2) and twelve months follow up (T3). However, the lack of a representative sample remains in this pilot study. It appears that all the thirty-nine women were included in one group. The inclusion means too many participants for group intervention. The limitations of the study are not clarified. Overall, the

need for supportive intervention for women with breast cancer is highlighted. The researcher indicated her intention for further study to be carried out.

The (Coward and Kahn 2005) study is a qualitative study based on the phenomenological analysis<sup>40</sup>. This study is a subset of previous (Coward 2003) study. Fourteen women with breast cancer were selected sequentially from the previous study sample. The participants were interviewed during baseline, group intervention and after five months following the intervention. All interviews were audiotaped after obtaining consent from the participants. Steps for the phenomenological analysis were followed through. All the audiotaped interviews with the participants were transcribed. Meanings and themes from the transcribed descriptions were formulated and were reviewed and critiqued by a second author. However, there is no indication to suggest that an independent reviewer reviewed the transcriptions and formulated themes. The outcome of this qualitative study reveals the group intervention facilitated the participants construct meaning from their breast cancer experience. The researcher indicated that the meaning-making from the life-threatening illness shows an indication of transcending breast cancer.

Interestingly, the researchers assert that the reason for such transcendence is due to the life-threatening event itself, which is a motivating force for the expansion of self-conceptual boundaries. The researcher's claim is consistent with other existing pieces of literature (Halstead and Hull 2001; Taylor 2000; Nelson 1996; Pelusi 1997; Utley 1999). The outcome raises the question of whether the group intervention itself motivated the participants for the meaning-

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<sup>40</sup> (Colaizzi 1978).

making. The researchers indicated that the intervention was particularly beneficial for the participants for accessing information and useful resources, such as reading materials, peer group support. The author of this thesis argues that accessing such a resource does not necessarily mean to enhance the ability to transcend. Eventually, helping to improve transcendence in such life-threatening distress requires intervention or programme to facilitate participants relate beyond physical reality, helping them to understand the ultimate meaning and purpose of human beings. Most importantly, this group of participants must help understand the meaning and purpose of sufferings-that sufferings are the transcendent reality and that they appear for the transformation of being to a new being (Long 2006). The Self-Transcendence Themes derived from the audiotaped transcripts do not show any of the transcendent dimensions.

Colorado (USA) (Matthews and Cook 2009b) study investigated the relationships among ST<sub>a</sub>, optimism and well-being in women with breast cancer during radiation therapy. Ninety-three women (age: 39-79) completed STS<sub>a</sub>, PA (EWB), SSQ (optimism), JCS (PFC-problem-focused coping). Results revealed a positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and EWB, SSQ (optimism) and EWB (well-being). Optimism predicted ST<sub>a</sub> and perceived social support (SSQ) (table 2). The finding of the relationship between optimism and ST<sub>a</sub> was consistent with other studies (Coward 1996; Coward and Reed 1996; Thompson and Pitts 1994). The relationship between optimism and perceived social support was also consistent with other studies (Antoni et al. 2001; Sears, Stanton, and Danoff-Burg 2003; Urcuyo et al. 2005) indicating optimism enhances support network for women with breast cancer. The study presents a clear goal, as indicated in the research title. The measures used were relevant and appropriate for the research objective. The

Participants' written consent was obtained. However, no specific sampling technique was used, indicating the lack of random sampling. The participants were predominantly Caucasian, which presents an issue with the homogeneity of sampling due to the lack of other ethnicities. Moreover, the sample size does not appear to be good enough for generalisability. The researchers clearly articulated the analysis of the study variables, limitations of the study were indicated. It is recommended that a longitudinal study could resolve the issue with the causal order of optimism.

Kentucky (USA) study (Thomas et al. 2010) described the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and spiritual well-being among women with diagnosed breast cancer. The study identified the nature and type of spiritual practices performed by the participants. A total of eighty-seven women with diagnosed breast cancer completed STS<sub>a</sub>, SIWB, SPC via post. The outcome reveals a significant positive correlation between STS<sub>a</sub> and SIWB (table 2). The finding is consistent with (Griffin et al. 2007) (Coward 1991) (López et al. 2009) (Scarinci et al. 2009). The study indicates that the participant women engaged in a range of spiritual practices, such as prayers and worships with others. The presence of spiritual practices is likely to predict ST<sub>a</sub>, but such prediction is not analysed or presented. However, the presence of such practices is likely to support the relationship of ST<sub>a</sub> and spiritual well-being. The spiritual practices of the participants were consistent with another study (Baldacchino and Draper 2001) indicating that spiritual coping strategies can enhance ST<sub>a</sub>. The researchers clearly described the recruitment process and the data collection procedure. For example, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were indicated. No sampling technique appears to be evident; the research participants were selected from the cancer registry of a

hospital in Kentucky, USA. Majority of the participants were White or Caucasian indicating data homogeneity issue. There was no control group which limits the strength of the outcome.

#### *3.5.4 Studies on AIDS*

The researcher Doris D. Coward carried out studies on individuals With other types of life-threatening illness and conditions, such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The (Coward 1994) study examined the process of searching meaning through ST<sub>a</sub> among a group of men and women with AIDS. It is a qualitative study based on phenomenological analysis, similar to (Coward and Kahn 2005) study. Twenty individuals (ten men and ten women) with AIDS diagnosis were recruited through advertisement in a gay newspaper, flyers and colleagues in the AIDS community. They were given \$50 each for consenting and participating in the study. The participants were asked to describe their feelings of increased self-worth, purpose, and meaning in their lives as a result of having AIDS. All the participants had audio-taped interviews except three men and one woman who preferred to write their descriptions. Meanings and themes were created separately for men and women from the descriptions given by the participants. The outcome of the phenomenological study reveals the participants with AIDS showed increased self-understanding and a sense of increased connectedness to others. This understanding and connectedness eventually helped them find the meaning of their lives and sense mental well-being within the context of their illness.

The researcher published a further paper on the phenomenological study on women with AIDS. The (Coward 1995) study described the lived experience of

ST<sub>a</sub> in women with AIDS, associated with an increased sense of meaning and purpose, well-being, self-esteem and connectedness with others. The sample selection, methodology and procedure indicated on the paper appear similar to the previous study on persons with AIDS. The researcher did not indicate the source of this paper, but it appears the paper is duplicated from the previous (Coward 1994) publication.

The research design of the above two papers (Coward 1994), (Coward 1995) was appropriate for the study. However, obtaining the participants' consent in the study for the exchange of money can be against the principle of research ethics due to undue inducement or influence. Such influence may be considered as inappropriate or improper (Grady 2001). There is no indication to suggest that an appropriate ethics committee or authority approved the study. Most importantly, it is not clear whether the researcher obtained written consent from the participants. Also, the study presents a concern for classifying meaning and purpose for men and women. For instance, the research obtained themes separately for men and women participants from their descriptions. There is no evidence or study to suggest that transcendence or meaning and purpose of life is dependent on the type of gender. The concept of ST<sub>a</sub> used in the study was based on the work of Victor Frankl (Frankl 1988) and Pamela G. Reed's (Reed 1991c) self-transcendence theory. Neither Frankl nor Reed theory indicates that the meaning and purpose of life depends on gender. The phenomenological study presents conceptual and procedural issues in understanding meaning and purpose in the lives of persons with AIDS. The limitations of the study were not acknowledged. However, the researcher recommended the need for developing

and testing psychosocial interventions for encouraging meaning-discovery and meaning-making in persons with a life-threatening illness.

### *3.5.5 Studies on a healthy population*

The (Coward 1996) study was aimed at obtaining ST<sub>a</sub> views and behaviours in a healthy population and to study the relationship of ST<sub>a</sub> with variables associated with mental health. A total of one hundred and fifty-two adults (F=110, M=42) were recruited from a waiting line of free blood pressure or cholesterol screening. Ninety per cent of the participants indicated their health as 'good' or 'very good'. The participants completed the questionnaires (STS<sub>a</sub>, PIL, SOC, SER, SEG, HHI, POMS, ABS, CWB) on the spot or via post. Findings of the study indicate moderate to strong correlations of ST<sub>a</sub> with well-being measures (table 2). The results were consistent with other studies that found a similar association among good elderly persons (Britt 1989; Reed 1991a). The study presented a clear purpose and objectives. The measures used were relevant to the objective of the study. However, participants' recruitment process clearly shows that the sample selection was not randomised. There is no indication to suggest that a specific sampling technique was used for the study, indicating a sampling bias. Besides, most of the participants completed the questionnaire in a noisy, open public place. The noisy environment indicates that the responses obtained in the questionnaires may not be genuine. Furthermore, the sample was predominantly white, female, Christian faith. The issues with sample selection and procedure do not allow the study outcome to be generalised. The researcher acknowledged these limitations.

Ohio (USA) study (Sharpnack et al. 2011) describes the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and spiritual well-being in adult Amish. Amish is a community in the

USA, its core values are grounded in spiritual beliefs (Hostetler 1993). One hundred and thirty-four Amish adults (age: 23-80) were recruited by using stratified random sampling from the Ohio Amish Directory. The participants completed STS<sub>a</sub>, SIWB via post. The result indicates a positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and spiritual well-being among the Amish community (table 2). The study outcome is consistent with other studies (Bickerstaff, Grasser, and McCabe 2003; Chin-A-Loy and Fernsler 1998; Coward 1991; Coward 1996; Coward 2003; Coward and Kahn 2005; Ellermann and Reed 2001; Mellors, Riley, and Erlen 1997; Ramer et al. 2006; Reed 1991a; Stinson and Kirk 2006) indicating a positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being. No other study is available for the relationship of ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being in the Amish community to check the consistency of the outcomes. The recruitment process of the participants was articulated clearly. The methodology and the procedure were well described. For example, a specific sampling technique (stratified random sampling) was used. Measures used were relevant for the study. The size of the sample appears good enough for a specific community, but there is no indication of ethnic data, the ethnic diversity of the participants is not indicated which eventually weakens the strength of the study outcome. The need for further research with Amish indicated.

Arizona (USA) studies used STS<sub>a</sub> and well-being measures in the other two studies (Runquist and Reed 2007), (Ellermann and Reed 2001) samples (N=133, age=25-64; N=61, age=19-62) for the relationship of ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being among homeless adults and middle-age adults respectively. None of the studies found any difference in the well-being measures due to any gender bias despite having unequal gender participants. The studies found that ST<sub>a</sub> is positively

correlated with well-being; the level of depression reduces with the increased level of ST<sub>a</sub>, significant positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and mental health (table 2) among the middle-aged adults and homeless adults.

### *3.5.6 Studies on university students*

Kentucky (Burriss et al. 2009) study attempted to see if demographic variables (age, sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity), individual differences (Health-as-a-value, optimism, religiousness and spirituality), and behavioural factors (alcohol use, sexual behaviour) were associated with psychological well-being among university students. A large sample (N=353) young university undergraduate psychology students (age: 17-29) completed self-report questionnaires (HAV, LOT-R, RCI-10, STS<sub>b</sub>, MHI) and questions to assess the frequency of alcohol use, sexual behaviour. The researchers reported that all behavioural factors had a strong positive association with students' psychological health. None of the demographic factors showed was significantly correlated with psychological health. No association was found between the frequency of alcohol use and psychological health. The number of sexual partners was positively related to psychological distress (Table 2).

There is a lack of clarity on sample selection and sampling technique. For example, it was not indicated which sampling technique was used and why only psychology undergraduate students were selected for the study. Majority of the research participants were Caucasian (88.7%) indicating data homogeneity issue. The research design (cross-sectional) and procedure appear appropriate for the study. The measures used for the relationships of the variables are reasonable except alcohol and sexual behaviour for which no valid measure was used. There

appears inaccuracy in the reporting of the findings. For instance, the researchers reported that the number of sexual partners had a significant positive relationship with psychological distress. However, the data table does not show a positive relationship at all, but a negative correlation ( $r = -.132$ ,  $p < .01$ ) between the current number of sexual partners and psychological distress. Furthermore, the researchers claim HAV, religiousness and spirituality were significantly associated with psychological well-being. This claim appears incorrect as the correlation data table shows only a positive relationship but not significant. However, optimism was reported as significantly correlated ( $r = .608$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with psychological well-being measure (MHI) and the best predictor of well-being, which matches well with the data table. The researchers did not report the consistency of this finding with other relevant studies. However, Colorado (USA) (Matthews and Cook 2009b) study reported a significant positive relationship between optimism and well-being among women with breast cancer.

Interestingly, the study did not find spirituality (STS<sub>b</sub>, Piedmont) as predictive of well-being, meaning that the university students did not show a significant relationship between spirituality and well-being. It is likely that because Piedmont's STS<sub>b</sub> is based on personality theory rather than dimensions of transcendence, it was not possible to measure the ability to transcend of the participants. The researchers indicated that it is likely that the university students struggled with a transcendent relationship. The difficulty in measuring transcendence among the students could indicate that either university students find it is challenging to understand transcendent or the presence of spiritual struggle<sup>41</sup> is significant. Such difficulties or struggles likely resulted in no

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<sup>41</sup> Religious or spiritual struggle is considered as a form of distress or conflict in the religious or spiritual realm (Pargament, Exline, and Jones 2013: p. 460).

significant positive relationship with the well-being measure. This claim could be supported by the researchers indicating the need for a psycho-spiritual intervention for the students who might be struggling relating to transcendence. The researchers acknowledged the limitations of the study, particularly the lack of data from the minority ethnic community. Despite having some limitations, Kentucky (USA) (Burriss et al. 2009) study sheds light on psycho-spiritual aspects of students' well-being.

The Brigham (USA) (Sanders et al. 2015) study investigated whether ST<sub>a</sub>, religiousness (intrinsic/extrinsic) predicted reduced symptoms of psychological distress (depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsiveness, global distress, and eating disorder symptoms) among university students. A total of three hundred forty-one students (age: 17-41) completed ROS, STS<sub>a</sub>, EAT, MILQ, BSI. Results revealed that ST<sub>a</sub>, intrinsic religiousness strongly predicted MIL and lowered psychiatric symptoms, whereas extrinsic religiousness was associated with increased mental health problems (Table 2). The findings are consistent with other studies (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Scales 2012; Miller et al. 1997; Miller, Davies, and Greenwald 2000; Richards 1991) showing faith in God or a higher power is positively related to psychological health in adolescents and young adults. The study outcomes are also consistent with (Miller 2016; Barton et al. 2013; Desrosiers and Miller 2007) indicating an inner awareness and sense of relationship with the Higher power is more strongly related to positive mental health than institutional involvement, in particular when the involvement is not chosen or internalised for adolescents and young adults.

The researchers recruited participants students (N=341) sample from one university. It is not clear why the researcher decided to take such a large sample from a single institution. Furthermore, this sample is taken from a religion department, and the reason for choosing the department is not clear. There is no indication to suggest that a specific sampling method was used or whether it was random sampling. About 95% of the participants were Caucasian showing data homogeneity issue. The APA guidelines were followed, mainly to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' test results. Measures used met the purpose of the study. Results were analysed in detail; associations of all variables were presented clearly. Overall, despite having a large sample, the study outcome cannot be generalised due to the above limitations, mainly due to the poor methodology of the study. However, the findings of the study illuminate increasingly empirical evidence that intrinsic religiousness and transcendence are a vast untapped resource for the understanding of human development, mental health and well-being.

The Tennessee (USA) study (Hood 1973) investigated the relationship between religiosity (intrinsic, extrinsic) and transcendence. A total of one hundred twenty-three psychology students were recruited for the study. The participants completed Allport's Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) and were separated into two groups: one group for a high score on intrinsic subscale and the other group for high on extrinsic subscale. The two groups were then taken for an individual interview to focus on significant personal experience. All interviews were tape-recorded, and responses were matched with the appropriate defining categories of transcendent experience. They were categorised across five categories (ego quality, noetic quality, communicable quality, effective quality, and religious

quality) were classified and codified. Results showed that intrinsically oriented participants reported more transcendent experiences than did groups of extrinsically oriented participants (table 2). The findings are congruent with (Allport 1966) asserting that intrinsically oriented person is likely to have benefits of transcendence experience.

The aim and purpose of the study were outlined clearly. The measure used was relevant to the purpose of the study. Sample size appears promising from one institution, but it is not clarified why only psychology department students were considered. Information about the participants' race and ethnicity was not provided, so it is not possible to assess data homogeneity. Majority of the participants were Protestants indicating the outcome cannot be generalised for all faith communities. The author of this thesis argues that the classification of the transcendent nature of participants' experience derived from Stace (1960) is not appropriate for determining transcendence. The reason for the argument is that understanding transcendence is not necessarily about mysticism or past experiences. Transcendence is instead an inner drive, motivation to relate beyond physical reality. Past experiences, mysticism are unlikely to assist in establishing such a divine relationship. It is likely that understanding the participants' cognition (ideas, thoughts, belief) about their personal experiences could have assisted better for obtaining more reliable information about transcendence. Moreover, the categories used do not provide enough information for relating past experiences to transcendence or non-transcendence. It is evident that the study presents methodological and procedural issues. The limitations of the study were not acknowledged. The researchers indicated the determination of exact parameters

of ultimate personal experiences as a paradox-an interface of God and the unconsciousness that theologians, philosophers and psychologists can benefit.

### 3.5.7 Evaluation (empirical papers)

The above twenty-one empirical studies were conducted in adolescents, adults and older adults. They investigated the relationship between transcendence and well-being in healthy population and individuals with specific socio-economic and life-threatening conditions such as breast cancer, AIDS. The studies collectively indicate that ST<sub>a</sub> is significantly related to well-being in adolescents, adults and the elderly population. While these studies demonstrate evidence of a strong positive relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being, they are also an indication that ST<sub>a</sub> is a valuable resource and dimension of life for those who are vulnerable or suffering from specific life-threatening conditions. In other words, vulnerability and mortality increase the likelihood of enhancing ST<sub>a</sub> in individuals (Coward and Reed 1996). However, this does not mean that ST<sub>a</sub> is less important in a healthy population for well-being. Promisingly, the relationship between ST<sub>a</sub> and well-being was evaluated in a healthy population by Austin, Arizona (USA) (Coward 1995) study. Results from the study provided a clear indication that ST<sub>a</sub> was highly associated with a various dimension of life such as the sense of coherence, affect balance, hope, self-esteem and cognitive well-being in healthy population too. Besides, there is evidence that the nature and type of religiosity, i.e. intrinsic/extrinsic determines and predicts ST<sub>a</sub> as well as well-being.

Understandably, the evidence is very suggestive, and it is fair to conclude that ST<sub>a</sub> is positively related to well-being. However, it is not clear from any of the

studies if lack of faith in religion or non-religiousness influence or affect ST<sub>a</sub> or well-being. One of the reasons for the lack of clarity could be that there is no such scale yet developed for cultural and religious sensitivity. The STS<sub>a</sub> scale developed by (Reed 1991a) is tested to be a reliable and valid scale, but there is no indication to suggest that the STS<sub>a</sub> or STS<sub>b</sub> is culturally and religiously sensitive. The lack of sensitivity indicates a vital need to review the dimensions of ST<sub>a</sub> in a culturally and religiously sensitive manner so that this could apply to all individuals regardless of faith or religion. For example, as Pargament defines transcendence as individuals' relationship with something beyond physical existence, it is a possibility that this relationship is individuals' relationship with the creation (the universe) and the creator, the divine. Understanding the relationship with the creation and the creator is likely to require the dimensions and contents as outlined in '*creatio ex nihilo*', a theological doctrine accepted by the three Abrahamic traditions. Transcendence thus is well understood by including a theological understanding of the creation and a cognitive-psychological process that underpins well-being. Ironically, a relationship with an entity beyond physical existence is complicated, requiring an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary approach. An individual's relationship with a particular religious' faith would be incomplete too as measuring transcendence with a specific religion is likely to be inadequate without understanding his or her faith and belief in the divine. Because the existing transcendence measures do not appear to be culturally and religiously sensitive, it seems reasonable that exploring transcendence with a theological understanding of the creation and the creator and cognitive psychological knowledge is a timely need for enhancing the understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

A detail discussion of the existing transcendence measures (STS<sub>a</sub> and STS<sub>b</sub>) is presented in chapter two above. The main argument about the above empirical studies is that the findings do not mean to validate the relationship between transcendence and well-being as neither ST<sub>a</sub> nor ST<sub>b</sub> indicates meaning similar to transcendence. There is no study yet available to establish the relationship between transcendence and well-being adequately due to the lack of a comprehensive transcendence tool that is absent and unavailable. Unless a new transcendence measure is invented, the relationship between transcendence and well-being remains as an untapped resource for advancing the understanding of divine relationship and well-being.

### **The Analysis: Transcendence and Well-being**

#### 4.1.0 Background

This chapter aims at discussing transcendence and well-being in light of the psychology of religion and spirituality. It illustrates the importance of cognition (thoughts, faith and beliefs), emotions including religious emotions and behaviours, religious rituals and practices for transcendence and well-being. Psychological studies of religious phenomena have been advanced in the decade, mainly to understand how faith, religious rituals influence or contribute to human well-being. Psychologists of religion and spirituality have put forward methods, tools and approaches necessary for promoting well-being. For instance, Kenneth I. Pargament, an American psychologist of religion and spirituality, developed spiritually integrated psychotherapy for clinical practice in dealing with the spiritual and religious issues affecting well-being. However, not much progress has been made in understanding the ability to transcend and how such ability influences well-being. A possible reason could be that well-being has only been understood in a spiritual and religious context. It appears that transcendence, the core element of spirituality and religion, has not been explored adequately for well-being. In other words, it is likely that the approaches that have been used so far for well-being lack an integrated approach combining theology and psychology for transcendence and well-being. Eventually, the ability to transcend involves a relationship with the divine and can be better understood with an integrated disciplinary approach. The need for such integration is indicated in several pieces of literature discussed in chapter three (part-1) above. The integration is likely to

be a timely need to advance further in understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

It is inevitable that the creation is contingent and that the ultimate origin, source of the contingent physical reality is a non-contingent being, the divine creator. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for many individuals to believe that the source of existence of non-contingent being although undiscoverable in physical reality but transcendently exists. The belief about the existence of non-contingent being could raise the need for exploring faith beyond spirituality and religion. The most reasonable need for such exploration is that the divine relationship or ability to transcend is unlikely to be limited to spiritual and religious practices or rituals. Most importantly, the existing pieces of literature, including the empirical studies discussed above in chapter three (part-1 and part-2), indicate that the inclusion of spirituality and religion for understanding transcendence appears incomplete. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate theology and psychology for promoting well-being through an integrated approach for a comprehensive understanding of transcendence and its relationship with well-being. The importance and clarity about the need for '*creatio ex nihilo*', a theological doctrine is outlined in chapter one above. It is perhaps helpful to see how human cognition, emotion, behaviour including religious rituals are related in understanding transcendence and well-being.

#### 4.2.0 Cognition and transcendence

Thoughts, including faith and belief, are considered to be the fundamental building block that individuals experience cognitively from life situations. A popular, widely used cognitive model for well-being is that thoughts, beliefs that

individuals experience from situations affect their feeling and behaviour (Beck 1976a). Beck's cognitive model focuses on an individual's maladaptive negative automatic thoughts (NAT) that are considered to be the root cause affecting well-being. For instance, feeling anxious or depressed is the result of unhelpful thoughts, beliefs which can lead to reduced activity or withdrawn behaviour. Beck's cognitive model employs cognitive modifications where individuals with mental health issues are taught to identify and correct faulty thoughts, beliefs with more adaptive, positive ones. However, Beck's cognitive model, although a useful contemporary cognitive treatment model for wellbeing, does not necessarily incorporate individuals' faith and beliefs rooted in transcendence. In other words, the model does not explain how to understand individuals' thoughts, faith and belief concerning the relationship with the divine. Empirical studies suggest that self-transcendence is positively related to well-being, meaning that an increased sense of self-transcendence enhances psychological well-being (Ellermann and Reed 2001; Coward 1996; Reed 1991a). Understandably, self-transcendence incorporates inward, outward, temporal and transpersonal dimensions to understand well-being among individuals. However, the author of this thesis argues that all of these dimensions do not necessarily relate to the relationship with the divine. For example, inward, outward and temporal dimension, as outlined by Pamela G. Reed (Reed 2017; Reed 1987b), is about an individual's relationship within the physical world and not necessarily about the relationship beyond physical reality. This limitation leaves an essential question of whether the relationship to the divine is essential for well-being, and if so to what extent.

Spirituality and religion are novel ways to understand Individuals' transcendence as they involve a search for the sacred (Pargament 2007). It is

likely that spirituality and religion through which a relationship with the divine could well be determined can enhance well-being. Inevitably, cognitive factors, such as thoughts, faith and belief, are essential determinant factors for establishing a divine relationship. The importance of spirituality and religion in well-being reveals that faith elements, such as spiritual and religious thoughts, beliefs are essential to be included in a cognitive model of well-being. Interests have considerably grown in the last decades for a spiritually modified cognitive approach for well-being. Several meta-analytic outcome studies on faith communities, such as Christianity, Islam concluded that spiritually/religiously (S/R) oriented cognitive therapy was found effective (Hook et al. 2010).

The S/R oriented cognitive therapy, although found as effective as traditional Beck's cognitive therapy, there is no evidence to suggest that S/R oriented cognitive therapy is better than standard Beck's CBT. The S/R oriented cognitive therapy was likely limited to spiritual and religious aspects of well-being rather than transcendental dimensions of well-being. In other words, the S/R oriented cognitive therapy did not seem to include ability to transcend adequately with cultural and religious sensitivities. This claim can be supported by a study indicating that integrating S/R was helpful to highly religious individuals but not for those who were not highly religious (Razali, Aminah, and Khan 2002). The finding is consistent with (Wade, Worthington Jr, and Vogel 2007) indicating that only highly religious individuals had benefited from S/R therapy. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the S/R oriented cognitive approach for well-being sheds light in understanding the divine relationship and its significance to well-being. It is likely that the cognitive-psychological factors, including faith and belief in the divine,

could enhance understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

Further to Aaron T. Beck's cognitive model, cognitive experience plays a crucial role in determining the pathway on which an individual builds a relationship to the divine, search for the sacred. The relationship with the sacred can be considered with both traditional and non-traditional beliefs, religiously and spiritually based practices, including rituals that can form the basis of experiences with the sacred<sup>42</sup> (Pargament 2013: p.169). Transcendence, the ability to relate to the divine, inevitably depends on the sacred experience resulting from the cognitive orientation. Such cognitive orientation could well be explored to determine an individual's ability to transcend. Because transcendence requires individuals to relate to the divine, the ability to transcend likely involves faith in religion, the formation of God-image. It is considered that formation of faith or image of God is multilevel and people embark on their journeys through social and cultural forces, including religious group, ethnicity, family, community, and culture (Pargament, Exline, and Jones 2013: p.6). Cognitive theories in understanding the formation of individuals' faith and belief as well as their relationship with the divine are not only illuminating but bring promising implication in enhancing well-being.

In the psychology of religion and spirituality, understanding the content and origins of religious beliefs involves psychological explanations of spiritual and religious phenomena, including transcendence. Understanding transcendence,

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<sup>42</sup> The sacred refers to conceptions of God and manifestations of the transcendent. Experience of sacred is considered to be a key component of identity for many people although diversity i.e. race, gender, class can shape and influence how search for the sacred is expressed.

relationship with the divine is significant indeed and inevitably requires cognitive theories, approaches to spirituality and religion so that the formation of such a relationship including religious faith and belief could well be identified. For instance, a well-known model, the so-called modal model of cognition, is used as a cognitive approach to religion (Atkinson and Shiffrin 1971). According to this model, spiritual as well as religious faith and belief is understood with information processing through which environmental inputs are channelled through sensory, short-term or working memory. The information is then finally processed into long term memory where faith, schemas and scripts are organised based on current knowledge. The conventional Beck's cognitive model is used to identify and correct maladaptive or negative thoughts that individual get from life experiences. However, Beck's model does not incorporate thoughts and belief related to individuals' spiritual and religious experiences. For instance, the spiritual struggle among individuals could potentially affect their *God-images* or transcendence. In other words, the struggle could potentially lead to difficulties relating to the divine. It is evident that spiritual struggle and well-being are negatively correlated. This negative correlation means that difficulties relating to the divine are linked to distress, reduced well-being, and growth (Pargament, Exline, and Jones 2013: p.462). Spiritual struggle or difficulties relating to the divine is likely to be cognitive phenomena where the formation of information and knowledge about the divine is processed. As such, transcendence is better understood by using spiritually and religiously oriented cognitive approach rather than the conventional cognitive model. Because transcendence or spirituality and religion are all linked to individuals' cognitive orientation, integration of spirituality and religion into the cognitive approach has brought much interest in the psychology of religion and spirituality. Researchers, including practitioners, have put their efforts on how

spiritual and religious phenomena could be used in the cognitive model to enhance transcendence and well-being.

A multi-site randomised controlled trial using manual-based religiously/spiritually integrated cognitive therapy approach (RCBT) was implemented to Christianity, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist religious individuals who suffered from depression and chronic illness. The outcome of the clinical trial revealed that although spiritually/religiously oriented cognitive therapy (RCBT) was not superior to conventional cognitive therapy (CCBT), such as Beck's cognitive therapy but RCBT was found as effective as CCBT for therapeutic alliance (Koenig et al. 2015); reducing stress (Berk et al. 2015); increasing purpose in life (PIL) (Daher et al. 2016); and reducing spiritual struggle (Pearce and Koenig 2016). The manualised RCBT was based on specific faith tradition allowing the researchers to integrate religious texts, scriptures to formulate and intervene religiously/spiritually oriented maladaptive thoughts, beliefs, such as 'God is punishing me'. However, it is not very clear how the manualised RCBT incorporated individuals' relationship with the divine. Although promising, the RCBT was administered over the telephone only to individuals with chronic medical conditions. There are two forms of CBT: i) High Intensity (HI) CBT and ii) Low intensity (LI) CBT. The former is delivered face-to-face whereas the latter is offered over the telephone and is based on bibliography. HI CBT is usually considered to be the standard form of CBT as therapists can use all necessary skills based on the Cognitive Therapy Skills-Revised (CTS-R) scale. On the other hand, the therapy administered over the phone limits application of the therapist's skills. For example, in telephone administered CBT, the therapist is unable to see the client and his/her emotions. This could be a barrier to using

some of the CTS-R skills, such as: 'eliciting appropriate emotional expression' or 'interpersonal effectiveness'. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of RCBT demonstrates that individuals from different faith traditions present thoughts, beliefs that are spiritually/religiously oriented. The evidence indicates that transcendence, as well as well-being, is linked to religiously/spiritually oriented cognitions. The relationship is supported by other empirical studies (Akuchekian et al. 2011) (Rosmarin et al. 2010) (Ebrahimi, Nasiri-Dehsorkhi, and Mousavi 2015) indicating that RCBT is effective for religious individuals with anxiety and depression. The effectiveness of RCBT also shows that integration of cognitive theories, approaches in spirituality/religion brings important significance in understanding transcendence and promoting well-being.

#### 4.2.0 Emotion and transcendence

Emotions are considered as heightened, intense, brief psychophysiological changes that result from an individual's response to a meaningful situation (Rosenberg 1998). Anger, disgust, joy, sadness, and fear are considered as basic, universal emotions whereas guilt, shame, pride, gratitude, hope are known as cognitively complex emotions that are based heavily on cognitive appraisals (Paloutzian and Park 2014: p.236). While the former is basic human emotion on a day to day life, the latter is more Intune with religion. It is likely that both the basic, universal emotions and cognitively complex sacred (spiritually/religiously oriented) emotions are involved in the divine relationship. For example, the basic/universal emotions, such as anger, joy can be expressed towards God. Similarly, sacred emotions such as gratitude, love are more likely to occur in religious (e.g. churches, mosques) settings but that does not mean they cannot be occurred in nonreligious situations or cannot be felt by non-religious people (Mahoney et al.

1999). As such, both the basic, universal and the sacred emotions that contain positive and negative emotions are linked to transcendence, the relationship with the divine. While cognition (thoughts, faith and belief) discussed earlier is involved in the formation of the pathway through which individuals relate themselves with the divine, emotions (both positive and negative) are seen as agents through which individuals can discover a sense of spiritual transformation (Hill 2002; Oatley and Djikic 2002). Both positive and negative emotions result from a cognitive appraisal or meaning-making of the situations or environment, including religious settings where individuals interact on a day to day basis.

Emotions, both positive and negative, generated through cognitive orientation or appraisals of religious/spiritual events or situations, could potentially influence ability to transcend. For instance, gratitude towards God through prayer is likely to enhance the divine relationship, whereas anger towards God due to chronic illness or unpleasant life situations could hinder the ability to transcend. In other words, positive emotions lead to enhance transcendence, whereas negative emotions significantly could lead to religious psychopathology and could potentially affect the divine relationship as well as well-being. Understandably, some individuals can view God as an eternal partner, all-powerful, holy that cannot be seen or heard with physical senses (Pargament, Exline, and Jones 2013). However, faith and belief in the divine are likely to be in danger when individuals go through unexpected, painful life events, such as bereavement, cancer. Studies suggest that such unexpected, painful life experiences could lead to a spiritual struggle in the form of doubt about God's existence (Exline et al. 2011) and negative coping by showing anger towards people who have a positive image of God (Exline, Kaplan, and Grubbs 2012). In the psychology of religion

and spirituality, “emotion regulation” (Gross 1999) is used to help those individuals with negative coping resulting from the spiritual struggle. It involves processes by which individuals influence the type, intensity and expression of emotions by intentionally engaging themselves in religious/spiritual practices, such as forgiveness, mindfulness.

Forgiveness is a religiously based psychological technique used for emotional regulation. Various definitions of forgiveness exist, and there is a lack of consensus on a specifically agreed definition about forgiveness. However, forgiveness is considered as a psycho-social construct where both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions are present (McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen 2001). Understandably, forgiveness allows individuals to rebuild, repair a broken relation for improved well-being. However, an individual’s readiness, willingness to forgive the offender is crucial in determining the success of rebuilding the relationship. A meta-analysis of a total of 54 published and unpublished research reports indicates that research participants received explicit forgiveness treatments reported significantly greater forgiveness than participants not receiving treatment [ $\Delta^+ = 0.56$  (0.43, 0.68)] and participants, receiving alternative treatments [ $\Delta^+ = 0.45$  (0.21, 0.69)] (Wade et al. 2014). The meta-analysis also revealed that forgiveness treatments improved depression, anxiety, and hope better than no-treatment conditions. However, not all broken relations can be re-built through forgiveness, mainly when a particular offence is severe (Krumrei, Mahoney, and Pargament 2011). Furthermore, the victims’ cognitive evaluation of the offences could make it difficult to forgive even though the quality of offences are not very intense (Exline et al. 2003; McCullough and Worthington

1999) meaning that the victims' thoughts, beliefs, feelings about the offences and towards the offenders are significant in considering forgiveness.

Although forgiveness does not appear to be a simple, straightforward intervention, it presents promising results in repairing a broken relationship as well as enhancing well-being. It is essential to determine how forgiveness influence or improve the transcendent relationship. Existing pieces of literature lack evidence to suggest that forgiveness has a direct impact on the individuals' relationship to the divine. However, (Fox and Thomas 2008) study revealed a link between religiosity and forgiveness among Christian, Muslim, Jewish and secular affiliations. The study concluded that religious individuals indicated significantly higher attitudinal and projective forgiveness than the secular groups. However, this difference does not necessarily mean that forgiveness can influence the divine relationship, a relationship between the individual and the transcendent God. Neither does it indicate that individuals with a high level of forgiveness would present a greater sense of well-being. The reason is that religiosity or religion does not necessarily confirm the divine relationship. For instance, the (Fox and Thomas 2008) study measured prayer and attendance dimensions of religiosity for the relationship. The author of this thesis argues that prayer or attendance at Church or any religious establishment do not confirm intrinsic religious motivation or reveal a real indication of individuals' or religious groups' relation with the divine. As such, transcendent measure with contents reflecting dimensions of divine relationship rather than religiosity is vital to understanding whether or not forgiveness can directly influence or improve the relationship with the divine as well as well-being. Besides, it is also essential to understand individuals' faith and belief about specific offences for which forgiveness could be considered.

Mindfulness is another essential emotional regulation in the psychology of religion and spirituality. It is enhanced attention where individuals are instructed and trained for increased awareness of the present, moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn 2003). Research suggests that the use of mindfulness practice has a positive impact on well-being. For instance, the (Brown and Ryan 2003) study revealed that higher score on Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) would indicate a greater sense of self-regulatory capacity and higher levels of well-being. It is understandable, according to the authors, that mindfulness can enhance self-awareness, self-esteem, promote peace, tranquility. This outcome is consistent with a randomised control trial (Neff and Germer 2013) where Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) programme enhanced well-being. The effectiveness of mindfulness increases self-awareness through which individuals are in a position to discover a sense of their existence, moment by moment. Such existence could potentially indicate an aspect of individuals' relationship with the present moment and thus could contribute to alleviating negative emotions such as anger. However, this relationship does not indicate to enhance a divine relationship as the awareness does not confirm that individuals discover the presence or existence of the divine or can relate themselves beyond physical reality. Promoting transcendence is likely to require emotional regulations that are beyond awareness of the presence. The reason is that ability to transcend is not limited to the present or physical awareness. It is instead an ability to relate to beyond physical reality, the transcendent creator, the divine. The author of this thesis argues that while mindfulness is a compelling emotional regulation approach for improving negative emotions, the approach does not necessarily confirm transcendence or relationship with the divine.

Both forgiveness and mindfulness appear to have a positive impact on well-being by reducing spiritual struggle as well as negative emotions. For example, the (Witvliet, Ludwig, and Laan 2001) study revealed that visualising forgiving responses among the victims reduced negative emotions, such as anger, sadness towards offenders. However, further research is necessary for integrating emotional regulation into RCBT for transcendence and well-being. In other words, it is essential to explore emotional regulation approaches for understanding the relationship between transcendence and emotions, religious emotions in particular. For instance, it is crucial to understand whether an improved sense of transcendence would reduce negative emotions, such as anger. The understanding is particularly important for individuals with spiritual struggle. It is likely that spiritual struggle occurs due to underlying religious psychopathology, and that improvement in transcendence is likely to reduce the spiritual struggle for improved well-being. The presence of religious psychopathology demands an integration of emotional regulation into RCBT in a way so that negative emotions, such as anger towards God could be modified for enhanced transcendence as well as well-being. The reason for such integration is that both positive and negative emotions involve the whole person, and it is through the instrumentalities of language, symbols, and rituals that an encounter or relationship with the sacred or transcendent is articulated and expressed (O'Connor 1996).

#### 4.3.0 Behaviour and transcendence

Religiousness, religiosity including rituals, appears to be essential determinants of transcendent relation. Relationship with the divine, the

transcendent God, is usually developed through rituals, behaviours that are acceptable social norms in specific religious traditions. For instance, *abadeeth*<sup>43</sup> for Muslims; *sermons*<sup>44</sup> for Christians encourage the followers to perform the good works for entrance to paradise. The formation and development of religious behaviours, including rituals, are shaped by specific society as well as social norms. As such religion or religiosity could be considered as a social phenomenon. Religious behaviours, including rituals, are thus rooted in the social-scientific study of religion. Due to the social nature of religious behaviour, prominent personality-social theories such as dissonance theory (Brock 1962), attribution theory (Bulman and Wortman 1977), and theories of altruism (Batson et al. 2001) have been used for analysing and understanding religious behaviours.

The dissonance theory is about the implications and attitudes of a change or conversion that an individual might experience. For instance, for religious conversion, an individual is likely to be concerned about habitual or behavioural changes or changes in his/her thinking and beliefs. According to the cognitive dissonance theory by L. Festinger (Festinger 1962b), the cognitive implication of such religious conversion is the amount of pressure the individual gets to adopt a more positive attitude towards an alien religion. This theory was supported by (Brehm and Cohen 1959; Cohen, Terry, and Jones 1959; Davis and Jones 1960) that cognitive dissonance decreases with a decrease in personal volition by increasing force to comply. Overall, dissonance theory is about attitude change for conversion, such as giving up one religious affiliation to adopt a different one. Although such attitude change has both cognitive (thoughts, beliefs) and

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<sup>43</sup> *Abadeeth* for Muslim followers is collections of teachings of Mohammed, the Prophet, on various specific topics including prayer, helping and supporting those in need with donations.

<sup>44</sup> Jesus' *sermons* in the Christian synoptic gospels; Mathew, Mark and Luke including the so-called Golden Rule (Mathew: 7:12), Lord's prayer call, forgiving others.(Paloutzian and Park 2014).

behavioural (rituals) implications, individuals were found to be attitudinally more favourable for behavioural change (having to go to Church every Sunday) than that of cognitive change (accepting the authority of an infallible Pope) (Brock 1962). This outcome is an indication that conversion is likely to be successful with the initiation of ritualistic, behavioural change with a prompt (a level of force to perform such ritual, behaviour necessary for compliance) at the very first place. The likelihood of the success of behavioural change over cognitive one indicates an interesting practical implication indeed. For instance, based on the dissonance theory one can predict that initiation of behavioural, ritualistic change is likely to be effective in dealing with individuals with spiritual struggle, gender (sexuality) and identity crisis that require a change in attitude. This prediction could well be supported by spiritual direction, an intervention where individuals with spiritual struggles are instructed in prayer and prescriptions of rituals and other spiritual practices.

Although results appear promising in directing individuals for behaviour change for spiritual growth, it is however cautioned that such approach is not a priority when individuals are having underlying psychological problems requiring the course of psychotherapy at the first place (Pargament 2013: p.226). Such caution indicates that any behavioural intervention for spiritual growth and development requires meticulous and careful consideration of religiously/spiritually integrated intervention. Kenneth I. Pargament, after years of his research and practice in the field of psychology of religion and spirituality, advocates spiritually integrated psychotherapy where the primary emphasis is psychological change followed by religious, spiritual change or growth as secondary.

The attribution theory is one of the social psychological theories that explain the relationship between victims' attribution of causality for their accidents and their ability to cope with the severe misfortune. Because religion and spirituality are considered to be a social phenomenon, the attribution theory is useful in understanding religious, spiritual behaviour. The (Bulman and Wortman 1977) study interviewed 29 seriously injured, paralysed individuals to see the relationship between attributes and coping. It was found that perceived avoidability was negatively correlated with effective coping, whereas self-blame was positively correlated with effective coping. As such, self-blame was helpful to cope with injury for those individuals who were able to re-evaluate the accident positively [the victimisation was highly correlated with attributions of self-blame for the accident ( $r = .550, p < .01$ )]. A good proportion of the individuals who re-evaluated positively indicated that God had a reason for the victimisation. The attribution theory thus brings important insight into how pain, sufferings of the victims could be linked to their attribution of causality.

Based on the attribution theory, it is likely to predict that the individuals with spiritual struggle are unable to re-evaluate the cause of their sufferings positively. In other words, people with spiritual struggle are unlikely to cope well due to the lack of positive re-evaluation of the causality. For example, religious individuals suffering from a severe illness, such as cancer, are vulnerable to spiritual struggle if they blame God for the cause of their illness. The Bulman and Wortman study included that the more victims blamed another, or the more they believed they could have avoided the accident, the worse they coped. This claim is also supported by (Shaver 1970) suggesting that blaming others, such as God, is a

defensive attribution in order to maintain and enhance self-esteem. As such, religiously/spiritually integrated intervention, as advocated by Pargament can target intervention designed to help individuals enhancing their ability to re-evaluate the cause of sufferings positively. For instance, reading inspirational materials, such as Holy Scriptures (Christian Bible, Holy Qur'an or Torah), singing hymns, and prayer are some of the behavioural techniques that could help individuals to re-evaluate their sufferings, spiritual struggle in particular.

The altruism theories are also significant social psychological theories which tell that empathetic emotion generates the possibility of enhancing help and support for others who are in need. Research conducted (Batson and Ahmad 2001) among undergraduate women participants using randomized block procedure indicates that empathetic emotion among the participants in experimental conditions evoked an altruistic motive directed toward the goal of increasing the defector's welfare between no communication and high empathy conditions [ $\chi^2 (1, N=40)=5.52, p<0.02$ ], and between the low-empathy and high-empathy conditions [ $\chi^2 (1, N=40) = 5.06, p<0.025$ ]. The outcome of the relationship between empathy and the altruistic motive is consistent with (Batson 1991; Batson and Shaw 1991) study that also suggests that individuals having empathetic emotion for the person(s) present altruistic motivation-a motivation with the ultimate goal to increase the welfare of the person or people for whom empathy is felt.

Altruism theory helps understand the link between empathy and motive to help others. However, understanding how and why individuals in a religious society express help and support for each other are complicated as it involves an individual's specific cognitions, emotions, and behaviours.

Furthermore, the altruistic motive also depends on circumstances and contexts. For instance, individuals' pro-social behaviours (help, donation) could well be dependent on costs and benefits, frequency and duration as well as the urgency of the situation (Pargament, Exline, and Jones 2013: p.440). Altruistic or prosocial behaviour is an essential parameter of developing or enhancing spirituality. It is likely that prosocial behaviour, indicated by (Piedmont 2007) as *connectedness*, is a spiritual dimension that helps individuals for a sense of connection and commitment to others for enhanced well-being. Because religion is a novel way of achieving spiritually, it is crucial to understand whether or not religion or religiousness enhances prosocial behaviour or a sense of connection with others. A critical review by (Galen 2012) concluded no real, causal effects of religion on prosociality. The review also indicated that religious prosociality is simply a stereotype, in-group favouritism, and possibly even a myth. The finding of the review suggests that prosocial behaviour is independent of religion or religiousness.

#### 4.4.0 Religiousness and transcendence

Religion or religiosity inevitably involves cognitive process including belief, thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Understandably religiosity is a social phenomenon shared by a particular group of people in a specific religious community through performing everyday rituals or religious norms. For instance, attending Church for prayer, worship provides a sense of religious unity as well as searching for the sacred, relationship with the divine. However, it is questionable whether all rituals or religious behaviours are confirmatory of divine relationship. The reason is that religious behaviours, including rituals, can be either intrinsic or extrinsic (Allport and Ross 1967). Understandably, intrinsic religiosity or

religiousness demonstrates an individual's rituals due to his or her personal belief in God, the divine whereas extrinsically motivated individual's rituals are due to be part of the religious community rather than belief in the divine. As such, individuals with intrinsic religiosity are with true potentials for transcendence. An empirical study discussed in chapter three (Hood 1973), conducted with 41 religious individuals (20 intrinsic, 21 extrinsic) revealed that the intrinsically oriented participants' experiences were more codifiable as transcendent than that of extrinsically oriented participants<sup>45</sup>. The outcome indicates that intrinsically motivated individuals are likely to have better resilience for mental health and well-being than extrinsically motivated individuals. The result of the above study is supported by another empirical study (Mosqueiro, da Rocha, and de Almeida Fleck 2015) that concluded that intrinsic religiosity is associated with resilience, quality of life and well-being.

Religiosity or religious practices, including rituals, are significant social phenomena for transcendence as well as well-being. It is essential that these social phenomena are carefully understood and investigated to enhance transcendence as well as the well-being of individuals with religious practices. Understandably, religious practices or individuals with intrinsic religiosity demonstrate an ability to transcend for well-being. While it is a task for the psychology of religion and spirituality to enhance transcendence and well-being of intrinsically motivated religious individuals, it is a challenging task indeed to promote well-being for those with extrinsic religiosity. One of the reasons is that those religious individuals attending religious rituals harbour more racial, ethnic and religious prejudice than non-attending individuals (Allport 1966). It is likely

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<sup>45</sup>  $\chi^2 = 13.0, p < .001$

that individuals with extrinsic religious motivation present even more intense and complex prejudice. Besides, intervening extrinsic religious motivation could be considered an invasion of personal faith and belief in God. It is likely that such challenges can raise ethical and professional dilemma for the psychology of religion and spirituality. Kenneth I. Pargament advocates spiritual and religious competence<sup>46</sup> in addition to professional competence for spiritually/religiously integrated psychotherapy to promote well-being. It is vital that the religious motivation of individuals are aligned well to their quality of life and well-being. It is, therefore, important to assess religiosity or religiousness of an individual to promote transcendence and well-being.

#### 4.5.0 Promotion of transcendence and well-being

Improving the quality of life as well as well-being is an important agenda in the changing world. One in six adults in the UK suffers from common mental health (CMH) problems (Roberts et al. 2014). Individuals with poor quality of life and well-being are a burden for the society for various reasons: loss of jobs or skills, depending on social benefits, disabilities. Professor Lord Richard Layard (Layard 2006) indicated CMH problems as the biggest misery in the UK. Based on Layard's report the Department of Health (DoH) as well as National Health Services (NHS) has introduced Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme in Primary Care Mental Health Services in the aim of reducing economic burden due to incapacity benefits. However, the IAPT initiative, as well as Layard's report, did not seem to promote well-being completely. For instance, it did not incorporate the importance of transcendence, spirituality and religion in understanding and promoting well-being. Inevitably, psychopathology has an

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<sup>46</sup> Spiritual and religious competence involves a dynamic set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills about various faith traditions and is usually developed over time. (Pargament 2013).

impact on the individuals' religious and spiritual functioning (Dein 2013). The exclusion of religion and spirituality left the IAPT initiative incomplete in addressing mental health and well-being adequately. Although Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has been a promising approach to improve access to some extent, the overall impact does not appear to be highly promising.

Recovery and reliable change rates from IAPT CBT services reveal that recovery rates were 21% for anxiety and 26% for depression (Griffiths and Griffiths 2015). Furthermore, the overall costs, £102.38 per session for low-intensity therapy, and £173.88 per session for high-intensity therapy were considerably higher than expected compared to DH Impact Assessment estimates of £32.50 and £55.20 respectively (Griffiths and Steen 2013). The expenses suggest further attention in designing and developing an integrated therapy approach that would be reasonably cost-effective, user-friendly and would bring better treatment outcome and recovery. Most recent developments in CBT are religious and spiritual (R/S) integrations of CBT to refer to CBT interventions directly addressing R/S issues such as Christian CBT, Muslim CBT for depression as well as for anxiety and were found clinically as good as traditional therapies (Hook et al. 2010). Integrating CBT into R/S approach thus appears promising development for a comprehensive and transparent system of service delivery that could address service users' religious/spiritual needs.

Promoting transcendence and well-being inevitably requires understanding and assessing individuals' religious practices. Psychology of religion and spirituality is a new applied branch of psychology. Significant progress has been made over the last decades in addressing religion and spirituality for well-being. For instance, psychometric tools, such as Brief Multidimensional Measure of

Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Masters 2013), Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS) (Paloutzian and Ellison 1982), Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS) (Piedmont 1999b), Self-Transcendence Scale (STS) (Reed 1987b) were developed and implemented in promoting the well-being of individuals with spirituality and religion. Recently, religion/spirituality has been integrated for designing treatment approaches addressing patients' religious and spiritual issues. However, understanding transcendence appears incomplete as the existing measures appear to be limited to spirituality and religion only. The author of this thesis argues that the ability to transcend does not necessarily have to be limited to spirituality and religion. As indicated by Allport (Allport and Ross 1967), religious as well as spiritual orientation is not confirmatory of the relationship with the divine. This limitation leaves a significant need for designing and devising a new transcendent tool for promoting well-being.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Recommendations and conclusion

#### 5.1.0 Recommendations (new transcendence measure)

Belief in transcendence is typically a religious phenomenon. However, non-religious people are likely to have some potential to transcend themselves, and we can determine whether such transcendence would amount to a relationship with the divine or not through a cognitive psychological process (thoughts, faith and beliefs) using theological doctrines such as '*creatio ex nihilo*.' Therefore, to understand transcendence or the ability to transcend, the use of a cognitive-theological framework would be required. The previous chapters have illustrated the status of the relationship between transcendence and well-being. They have also demonstrated that neither the ability to transcend nor the relationship with the divine has been addressed adequately in the existing literature, primarily as the existing tools used to measure transcendence and its relationship with well-being are insufficient. For instance, the empirical studies, discussed in part-2 of the literature review (chapter three), used the Self-Transcendence Scale (STS<sub>a</sub>) and Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS<sub>b</sub>) to evaluate the relationship between transcendence and well-being. The dimensions used in these scales to understand transcendence appear inadequate as they both lack clarity on the extent and magnitude of the relationship with the divine. The lack of transparency was particularly evident when these scales were applied to measure an individual's ability to relate to the divine according to their connection within physical reality (self and others) rather than the relationship with the transcendent God. None of the scales, as discussed in chapter two, appeared adequate for measuring transcendence. This inadequacy means that there is a significant gap

in the literature in understanding the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

With this in mind, there appears a need to design and devise a comprehensive tool to measure transcendence. This chapter proposes a cognitive-theological construct to produce a new transcendence measure. The construct involves a discussion of the contexts, dimensions, and contents that are likely to be useful when inventing a new transcendence measure. The cognitive-theological construct of the newly proposed transcendence measure is based on a cognitive-theological framework to measure transcendence exclusively for the first time. The structure comprises the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine and cognitive processes such as thoughts, faith and beliefs, in understanding and measuring the relationship with the divine. This framework integrates the theological tradition of '*creatio ex nihilo*' with a cognitive psychological process to measure transcendence as well as well-being.

The foundations of the proposal of a cognitive-theological framework to understand and measure transcendence and well-being have been discussed and analysed in the previous chapters. It is evident that transcendence, or the ability to relate to the divine, is at the heart of spirituality and religion as well as individuals' overall well-being. Undoubtedly, in the existing literature, there is little to suggest that transcendence has been either well-defined or measured correctly. Therefore, it is necessary to outline a framework that can define and measure transcendence fully and adequately. Such a task appears challenging indeed as it involves individuals' cognition, such as their faiths and beliefs concerning creation as well as the creator. Individuals possess different understandings, knowledge

and experiences about the world in which they live. Importantly, relating to the creator, or transcendent God may be reasonable and accessible for some individuals, whereas, for others, this could be unreasonable or difficult. For instance, theists are likely to express their relationship with the divine by attending religious establishments, such as Church for prayers, whereas atheists and agnostics are unlikely to indicate any point of reference for a relationship with the divine unless their beliefs about the creation and the creator are made known. The importance of the cognitive process in the relationship with the divine raises a fundamental question as to whether or not individuals who do not undertake any spiritual and religious rituals possess the ability to transcend. At the same time, there appears to be an ethical issue in terms of whether or not a cognitive-theological framework should be used to determine a relationship with the divine whose existence is impossible to prove. Bearing this moral dilemma in mind the structure needs to be carefully outlined, designed and formed so that individuals' cognitive process, as well as their understanding and knowledge about the creation and creator, is identified in a way without demanding their direct faith or belief in God. Flexibility is particularly important here when a framework needs to be culturally and religiously sensitive in measuring such an important human ability, namely the relationship with the divine. The author of this thesis proposes the following cognitive-theological construct to understand and measure transcendence or the relationship with the divine.

### 5.1.1 The contexts

The roles of faith and belief, rituals, and behaviours concerning the divine are at the heart of the psychology of religion and spirituality. Importantly, connecting the self to the divine allows an individual the opportunity to sense

meaning and purpose in life that ultimately enhances their well-being. A significant amount of research has confirmed that religious individuals enjoy better health and well-being compared to non-religious individuals (Van Cappellen et al. 2016; Willits and Crider 1988; Witter et al. 1985; Chamberlain and Zika 1988). The decisive role played by religion in a person's well-being was supported by a large adult sample (N=3010) where it was indicated that atheists and agnostics had worse psychological well-being than either theists or non-religious individuals (Hayward et al. 2016). So, it has been well established already that religious rituals and behaviours to connect or relate to the divine are good for a person's well-being. However, this does not mean that by performing religious rituals, a person confirms a relationship with the divine or improves their well-being. Indeed, research suggests that spiritual or religious struggles among religious individuals can *negatively* affect their well-being (Wilt et al. 2016; Abu-Raiya et al. 2015; Abu-Raiya, Pargament, and Krause 2016). The issue of spiritual struggle raises a vital question as to whether religion or religious rituals are the only determinants of transcendence. Religious rituals, including any human performances or behaviours towards the divine, are likely to be either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (Allport 1966). In other words, religiousness, including any action towards the divine, is dependent on whether individuals intend to connect to the physical reality or beyond physical reality. For instance, receiving support and benefits from membership of a Church could motivate someone to continue engaging in Church activities whereas, for others, attending prayers in Church could be a way to experience closeness to the divine, giving them empowerment, as well as an emotional and psychological strength. It is impossible to understand the true intentions of individuals by just knowing or observing their religious rituals and behaviours. Identifying and detecting the actual meaning behind such rituals

and practices requires knowledge of the given individual's thoughts, faith and beliefs. Therefore, understanding the human mind through the cognitive process is crucial to detecting ability to transcend.

Further to the importance of cognition in the divine relationship for religious individuals, it would perhaps be sensible to ascertain whether cognition plays any role in detecting the relationship with the divine among non-religious individuals or individuals who undertake no religious rituals at all. Religious acts do not necessarily confirm the ability to transcend unless the intention and purpose are already known or have already been identified. The need here to understand an individual's faith and beliefs indicates that individuals who do not undertake any religious rituals may still possess the potential for a relationship with the divine or ability to transcend depending on how they perceive the world. In other words, it is possible for some individuals not to practice religion or perform rituals but to have faith in the existence of the divine creator. This possibility could be supported by cognitive dissonance, a psychological theory discussed above in chapter four. The cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1962a) suggests that an individual is capable of holding two or more ideas or values at the same time. This human capability indicates the importance of the cognitive process in understanding the relationship with the divine for theists, atheists, agnostics or even individuals without any religious considerations at all. The author of this thesis, therefore, proposes that measuring transcendence does not have to be limited to religious individuals. Furthermore, cognitive factors, such as ideas, thoughts, faith and beliefs, are fundamental to understanding and measuring the divine relationship regardless of an individual's religion, ethnicity and culture. As such, the cognitive process for understanding the relationship with the divine creator would be likely

to reveal some religious and cultural sensitivities based on the three Abrahamic traditions.

The inclusion of cognition, as outlined above, would inevitably widen the opportunity to understand the human mind in relation to transcendence. The inclusion of the cognitive process would be incomplete without a doctrine on which knowledge and understanding about the divine, as well as the creation, is based. This renders it necessary to include a doctrine of creation to understand the divine relationship. In other words, it is essential to use a frame of reference about creation and the creator through which individuals' understanding of the divine can be assessed and measured. The inclusion of such a doctrine is challenging, particularly when it is deemed necessary for the doctrine to be religiously and culturally sensitive. Promisingly, '*creatio ex nihilo*' is a doctrine of creation that is used among the three Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). However, there is no indication that this doctrine is accepted by all other religions, such as Hinduism. To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, there is no single doctrine of creation that is accepted and used by all religions. As such, the inclusion of the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine in understanding and measuring the divine relationship is likely to present a serious risk. The lack of a doctrine of creation for all religions makes it difficult to design and devise a tool that is religiously and culturally neutral.

One of the aims of this chapter is to understand the contexts in which a new transcendent measure can be designed and invented that is immune to religious and cultural sensitivities based on the three Abrahamic traditions. A fundamental question thus arises as to whether or not '*creatio ex nihilo*' could be

used in a biblical/religious context, a theological context or a metaphysical context. It is apparent that '*creatio ex nihilo*' is not purely a concept grounded in biblical texts or scriptures (May 1994c). Alister McGrath (McGrath 2007) and Ian Barbour (Barbour 1966) also indicated that '*creatio ex nihilo*' is not a biblical concept. As such, it is reasonable to consider '*creatio ex nihilo*' as a post-biblical concept. However, its invention being post-biblical does not necessarily invalidate biblical texts and scriptures (as outlined in chapter one above). A different consensus about the idea of '*creatio ex nihilo*' emerged amongst Jewish and Christian theologians during the first century AD, and later among Islamic scholars (Burrell 1995). Although '*creatio ex nihilo*' is currently limited to Abrahamic traditions, the doctrine can be used in combination with cognitive psychological processes in understanding an individual's ability to transcend, regardless of faith and belief, in any specific religious tradition.

Furthermore, this doctrine is likely to accommodate knowledge and understanding about creation and the creator in individuals that are not necessarily religiously bound. It is expected that for persons free from religious constraints, the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine is well-equipped to understand human relationships beyond physical reality, specifically those involving the creation and the creator. In other words, the divine connection of individuals is better understood in a theological context rather than a specific religious context. John Polkinghorne indicated the Christian doctrine of creation ('*creatio ex nihilo*') as being of ontological origin (Polkinghorne 1995: p. 64). The inclusion of a theological context of creation and the creator, namely '*creatio ex nihilo*,' in a new transcendence measure is likely to withstand any religious and cultural sensitivity. The theological context of the doctrine is expected to allow for a sensible,

reasonable approach to understanding and assessing the relationship with the divine.

### 5.1.2 The dimensions

The above sections have presented the possible contexts in which a new transcendence measure could be constructed. The next step is to consider the aspects and elements deemed necessary to include in the new transcendence tool. As outlined in chapter four above, it is evident that cognition, emotion, and behaviour, including religiousness, appear to be fundamental in understanding transcendence. Furthermore, an individual's relationship with the creation and the creator in a theological context is significant when measuring transcendence. In other words, for a new transcendence measure, it is vital that individuals' cognition, emotion, behaviour including religiousness are taken into account. On a practical level, an individuals' faith and belief in the divine creator may vary depending on their attachment with certain religious traditions. For instance, an individual attending Church might have faith and hope in a personal God, such as God is depicted in the Christian tradition. Besides, many individuals attending Church may not be aware of the concept of creation and the divine creator if they have not received a Christian education. As such, individuals from different faith backgrounds may struggle to understand the context of creation and the creator based on the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine. A fundamental challenge for a new transcendence tool, then, is how to present items and questions relating to the creation and the creator from an intellectual level to a practical level given the varying faith backgrounds.

People's views on creation and the creator will naturally be influenced by their religious affiliation. Nevertheless, religious affiliation does not appear to be a barrier when it comes to an understanding and detecting a person's relationship with the divine. Accommodating different religious affiliations would require that the dimensions of creation and the creator are presented in a way that items and questions on creation and the creator would take into account individuals' understanding of their own personal God as well as their view of the world. It is possible to understand faith in religious traditions, particularly the three Abrahamic traditions, by using the dimensions of creation and the creator as outlined in the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine. This possibility highlights the importance of considering the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine to understand and measure transcendence for different faiths, especially the three Abrahamic faiths.

Furthermore, it is incredibly challenging to use the dimensions of creation and the creator for individuals, such as atheists and agnostics, who either do not believe in God or do not necessarily relate themselves to the creation and the creator. Because the contents (i-xii) of the proposed transcendence measure aim to understand and identify an individual's view of his/her world in a religious, non-religious and neutral context, the proposed scale can, therefore, include atheists and agnostics, including theists. For instance, the content: 'I think I am part of nature that is within and beyond physical existence' encourages religious and non-religious, as well as agnostic, responses. In summary, the proposed contents are aimed at understanding and measuring the extent and magnitude of an individual's ability to relate to the divine. The proposed scale is open to anyone and it does not require an individual to have faith, or belief, in the transcendent God. Moreover, regardless of their faith and belief in the transcendent source, it

is likely that every individual has their own view about the world. The cognitive dimensions of the proposed cognitive-theological construct could well be applied in understanding the aspects of how they perceive the world. The items (i)-(xii) in the contents section below outline individuals' visions of their relationships with their world, creation and the creator so that their responses could be understood and assessed for transcendence. As far as the dimensions of the newly proposed transcendence measure are concerned, it is likely that the cognitive aspects are equally applicable for the divine relationship regardless of individuals' faith and belief in God. As discussed above, psychological theories, such as cognitive dissonance theory, suggest that an individual possesses the ability to have and not have faith in God at the same time. This duality indicates that an individual's belief in, or relationship with, the divine is not known until it has been observed or assessed cognitively. By knowing individuals' ideas or thoughts about their world, it becomes possible to establish an understanding of their relationship with the creation and the creator as outlined in the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine. Therefore, cognitive dimensions are significant in understanding and measuring the transcendence of all individuals.

The realistic perspective, as far as the creation (universe) is concerned, is that all baryonic<sup>47</sup> and non-baryonic matters including creatures and human beings are the result of the creator's (God's) creative act. In other words, all existence including both observable and unobservable are rooted in the non-contingent transcendent source. It is the ultimate human quest to search for the origin and purpose of the creation, which includes everything around us. The

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<sup>47</sup> 'Baryonic matter' refers to all objects made of normal atomic matter and includes clouds of cold gas, planets, comets and asteroids, stars, neutron stars, black holes (<http://astronomy.swin.edu.au/cosmos/B/Baryonic+Matter>).

significance of relating ourselves to nature as well as the creator is that the way we understand our world has everything to do with how we live in it (Oord 2014). The extent and magnitude to which one understands the creation vary from individual to individual. For instance, some view planet Earth as everything around them, whereas others have a broader view and consider everything around to include the multiverse. The view individuals hold about nature or everything around them, ultimately reflects the extent to which they express their relationship with, and self-awareness concerning, beyond physical reality. It is likely that by relating themselves to nature as well as the creator, individuals are not only opening the door to the divine relationship but are also exhibiting the extent of their self-awareness or consciousness<sup>48</sup>. It is expected that the more an individual can relate to nature and the creator, the more, the stronger their self-awareness of consciousness is likely to be. As such, the ability to relate to creation and the creator demonstrates not only a relationship with the divine but also exhibits the individual's level of self-awareness and consciousness. The dimensions for the newly proposed transcendence measure need to include the extent and magnitude of factors related to nature, including those also related to self-awareness. The inclusion of these dimensions about nature, including self-awareness, is likely to be useful in understanding and measuring transcendence.

From philosophers to scientists, the origin, reason and purpose of the creation (universe) have become increasingly important. Every discipline is limited by its disciplinary boundaries. For example, in science, it is more challenging to detect or investigate *why* the universe came into existence rather than *how* the world came to exist. It is a challenging task to determine scientifically how the

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<sup>48</sup> 'Consciousness' refers to the functional unit of volitional attention (mental effort) and conscious experience, such as feeling pain, anger (Pierson and Trout 2017).

universe began. The origins of the laws of nature are still unknown in science, and there is no indication that these laws could have been created themselves. For instance, sub-atomic particles come from a quantum field, known as a quantum vacuum which is not “nothing” but a powerful entity, or a gift graciously given by the divine creator (Polkinghorne and Beale 2009: p. 41). The particles in a quantum field or vacuum present wave-particle duality which is better known as quantum electrodynamics. However, there is no indication that the origin of this duality and the laws that govern it are known and identified. Essentially, in today’s technologically-advanced civilised world, it is not feasible for human beings or science to detect how the universe began. It is therefore reasonable for many individuals to believe that the ultimate origin of physical reality would have required a divine creator. It is likely that the divine creator is accessible and available for an individual, with or without religious faith or tradition, to relate to.

A reasonable conclusion as far as the origin of the universe is concerned, could be that if the particles at the most fundamental level are not known precisely and if the laws of nature could not have been created themselves then they both must have been created by an entity that is a supreme power, which is likely to be the divine. This claim could be supported by the work of quantum cosmologist Christopher Isham (Isham 1988) who indicated the presence of psychological forces lying at the deepest level of cosmic origin. Such an indication adds weight to the conclusion that, at the very deepest level of the source of the creation, it is the divine creator’s presence which cannot be theorised or brought in to the equation to support any scientific theory about the origin of the universe. These psychological forces are not forces derived from any matter or particle as they are somewhat invisible or undetectable, stemming from the mind of the divine.

Furthermore, it is likely that the existence of the universe is the result of choices and possibilities. This is because the presence of anything is expected to have required a contingent or noncontingent origin. In this respect, it is reasonable to state that the one half of the ultimate origin of the universe is a probability, as far as the 'cosmic initial condition' (state of origin of the universe) is concerned, in terms of the unpredictable particles and their quantum interactions. The other half of the ultimate origin of the universe is the free will of God, who exists by necessity, is a necessary supreme being, and is the creator of possibilities (quantum interactions). According to physicist Paul Davies: "God is a necessary being who creates a contingent universe as an act of his free will" (Davies and Davies 1993: p. 189).

Accordingly, it would be reasonable to conclude that human beings are part of the creation (universe) that is contingent on the non-contingent supreme being, the divine. Nature, thus, cannot be separated from its creator. In other words, a stand-alone universe does not provide any existence or meaning. As such, the dimensions of transcendence would require the taking into account of the extent and magnitude of individuals' relationships with creation as well as its creator. Because individuals live in a contingent world, a universe which is dependent on the non-contingent creator, it is likely that the ultimate presence of the divine creator is unavoidable theologically, scientifically or metaphysically. As such, it is reasonable to assume that the divine relationship is not limited to the religious individuals (theistic), but also extends to non-religious individuals (atheistic or agnostic). Because the divine relationship applies to human beings, regardless of their faith and belief in a particular religion, the newly proposed transcendence measure must include cognitive-theological dimensions that are equipped to

understand and assess human transcendence that would be likely to reveal some religious and cultural sensitivities based on the three Abrahamic traditions.

### 5.1.3 The contents

The rationale behind proposing a new transcendence measure is that the existing tools (ST<sub>a</sub>, ST<sub>b</sub>) as discussed in chapter two are inadequate in determining transcendence and how this affects well-being. The purpose of the newly proposed measure is to understand transcendence in a way, so that allows the divine relationship of an individual to be assessed and measured regardless of their religious faith or traditions. The contents of such a measure must reflect the contexts and dimensions of transcendence, as outlined above. It is also necessary that the items of the newly proposed transcendence measure take into consideration the dimensions discussed above to determine ability to transcend applicable to all individuals. An essential aspect of any psychometric tool is that it should present a breakdown of the information required and that the obtained data should be measurable. The contents of the existing transcendence tools, as outlined in chapter two, do not accommodate information that can enable the satisfactory measurement of ability to transcend. For instance, the *'Helping others in some way'* item presented in the STS<sub>a</sub> does not provide any scope to measure the relationship with the divine. In other words, helping others does not necessarily provide an individual with any information about his or her relationship beyond physical reality. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that each item of the newly proposed transcendence measure is dedicated to obtaining information about individuals' relationships with the creation, the creator or both. Inevitably, information about an individual's relationship with nature and anything beyond physical reality is also likely to indicate their relationship with the creator. This is

because, as discussed above, creation without the creator is meaningless to an individual regardless of their religiousness. Information about individuals' relationships with nature and the creator must be understood by using cognitive elements (ideas, thoughts and beliefs), behavioural elements (intrinsic motivation) and emotional elements (basic, universal and sacred). In summary, the contents of the new transcendence measure would provide cognitive, behavioural (intrinsic) and emotional information about individuals' relationships with beyond physical reality, the creation and the creator. The author of this thesis recommends the following items with each respondent to declare the extent to which they agree with each given statement using a four-point Likert scale ('Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree') (Likert 1932).

*i. I think I am part of everything that is within and beyond physical existence*

This item is intended to identify the extent to which an individual relates himself/herself to both within and beyond physical reality. The word 'nature' here means everything that has a physical existence as well as anything beyond physical reality, such as the divine. The individual's answer would indicate the extent to which he/she relates himself/herself to the external world, including the world beyond physical reality. As such, this item would provide information about the connection a person perceives himself/herself both with the physical world and beyond physical reality. It is likely that the stronger a person's agreement with this item, the more likely it is that this person believes to have a connection with the divine. The core requirement for any item to be considered for transcendence is that the answer should provide information about the person's relationship with the divine. As this item offers an indication of how a person feels about his/her

relationship with nature, including everything within and beyond physical existence, this item is likely to be valid for a transcendence measure.

*ii. I think my knowledge is limited in understanding nature, including everything within and beyond physical reality*

This item acknowledges that human beings have limited intellectual capacity. This item progresses on from the previous item in the sense that an individual, being part of nature, is in a position to acknowledge the limitations of human intelligence and knowledge about the creation and the creator. Inevitably, in comparison with planet Earth and the universe, human beings are tiny and insignificant. However, being insignificant in comparison to the entire universe does not mean that human beings are unimportant to each other. This item is designed to get information about the person's awareness that there is a limit to human knowledge and understanding, especially when it comes to the vast cosmic reality and its origin. The more a person agrees with this item, the more self-aware he/she will be about the vastness of creation, including anything beyond physical reality. As this item provides information about a person's perceptions about his/her understanding of the existence beyond physical reality, it is likely to be a valid item for the transcendence measure.

*iii. I support the view that the divine creator created everything from nothing*

Although the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine tells that the universe was created from nothing, the creation was inevitably caused by something, which most believe to have been the divine creator. The previous two items were dedicated to understanding the way individuals can relate to nature (within and beyond

physical reality), and acknowledging the limitations of human capability. This item takes a step further by seeking to understand whether or not an individual has any ideas or thoughts about the creator. The popular understanding is that the universe came from nothing is also supported by modern cosmology (Vilenkin 1982, 1988). However, there is a difference between modern cosmology and the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine in terms of how they view how the creation came from nothing. Modern cosmology is unable to offer evidence of a creator (God) creating the universe from nothing, whereas the doctrine states that the omnipotent God did not need something with which to create the universe and that there is nothing that does not belong to the divine. Therefore, as far as the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine is concerned, it is perfectly plausible for God to have created the universe from nothing. Therefore, it is a popular understanding that the universe came from nothing and that the divine creator (God) created the universe from nothing at all. As such, this item is intended to gather an understanding of the extent to which a person views the origin of everything around, the creation (universe). The stronger the person's agreement, the more likely it is that he or she will relate to something beyond physical reality, the divine creator.

*iv. If it were the case that nothing comes from nothing, then the world/universe would have to have a non-contingent creator*

The previous item was an attempt to elicit an individual's ideas and thoughts about the divine creator. The current item examines the level of belief a person holds about the existence of the creator (God). In other words, this item uses a person's advanced internal working mechanisms (cognition) such as assumptions (thoughts) about the creation and the creator. Assumptions are not deterministic statements (beliefs); they are rather individuals' hypotheses to derive

a conclusion about a particular thing and usually contain 'If.....then' statements. As such, this item provides an opportunity to understand an individual's reasoning behind their decision regarding the creation and the creator. In other words, this item is intended to identify and measure an individual's intermediary beliefs and the progression of their cognitive understanding of the divine. The stronger a person's agreement with this item, the more likely it is that the person believes in the creator (God). Consequently, the answers to this item provide information about the person's belief in divine creation as well as the creator. Therefore, this item appears to be essential for a transcendence measure.

*v. The world/universe was given a beginning by its creator*

This item is based on the popular understanding that the divine creator is the efficient cause ('the unmoved mover'<sup>49</sup>) of the universe, including everything around us. The efficient cause clarifies why there is something rather than nothing. It is now a commonly held belief that the universe, including time itself, had a beginning with the standard big bang model<sup>50</sup>. The expansion of the universe provides sufficient evidence that the universe did have a beginning. However, the ultimate quest is to ascertain *how* it began and what caused its origin. The answers to such a question have been based on ontological, metaphysical understanding rather than scientific evidence. Physicist Paul Davies claims (Davies and Davies 1993: p. 189) that God is a necessary being and this claim is consistent with physicist John Polkinghorne who stated: "God is the origin of all that exists and the divine will alone is the source of created beings" (Polkinghorne 1994: p. 73-74). As such, this item provides information about an individual's beliefs relating to the creation and its creator. While the previous item

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<sup>49</sup> (Merlan 1946).

<sup>50</sup> (Hawking and Penrose 2010)

assesses intermediary faith and beliefs, this item proceeds further in identifying an individual's deterministic belief in the divine. The more a person agrees with this statement, the more likely it is that the person relates himself/herself to the divine creator. This item provides information about a person's core beliefs about creation and the creator, which is fundamental in connecting to the divine.

*vi. The creator is uncaused, all-powerful and all-knowing*

The divine relationship is based on the popular understanding that the divine creator is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing) and is totally uncaused. This item represents a progression from the previous item in the sense that the presence of a deterministic belief about the divine (covered in the previous item) is likely to be helpful for an individual to be able to recognise the presence of his/her thoughts about an omnipotent, omniscient God. The more a person agrees with this item, the more likely it is that the person has some belief in the creator.

*vii. The ultimate purpose of my life belongs to the all-powerful creator*

This item seeks to detect a person's firm belief in the divine. The *purpose* of life differs significantly from the *meaning* of life. Human beings are likely to control the meaning of their life by helping, loving and caring. However, the ultimate purpose is all about destiny and what happens at the end of human life. In a practical sense, it is not possible for human beings to know and control the ultimate purpose. For instance, individuals cannot see what happens after death. All human lives will likely end in time and the ultimate purpose of everything, including human beings, is up to the divine creator, who knows their destiny. As such, human beings can't understand what the ultimate future or purpose of life is.

The most likely reason for this is that it remains unknown why the universe came into existence, although particular faiths, such as Christianity, hold that God created the world out of love. The reason for and the purpose of the creation, including human beings inevitably rest with the ultimate creator, the divine. All human lives are part of the contingent universe that is dependent on the non-contingent creator. In the contingent world, it is impossible for human beings to know and control the purpose of life. However, as far as the creation (universe) is concerned, based on '*creatio ex nihilo*', the purpose of the universe is to strive for perfection, which means entering into the life of God.

*viii. I feel that the creator exists transcendentally, beyond physical reality*

This item aims to understand an individual's emotions about the existence of the divine creator. The creation (universe) was preceded by the will of the divine creator who is beyond physical reality. This item (eliciting emotion) represents a progression from all of the previous items that were aimed at eliciting cognition (thoughts, faith and beliefs) to the idea that emotion proceeds in line with the presence of thoughts, faith and beliefs. The more a person agrees with this item, which reveals his/her feelings about the divine existence, the more likely it is that sacred emotions (gratitude, love) will be present in him or her both towards the creator and for the divine relationship.

*ix. I appreciate what I have and where I belong*

This item is designed to reveal the sophistication and beauty of the human mind, specifically when it comes to the divine relationship. Eventually, any of the sacred emotions such as awe, gratitude, or love are an indication of a sense of connection to the divine creator. This item examines the extent to which an

individual values his or her life and belongingness. According to the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine, "the creation (universe) is a purely free, completely unique, totally gratuitous and wholly unnecessary act" (Oliver 2017: p.37). This indicates that the existence of everything around, including human beings, is a gift from the divine. As such, regardless of the circumstances human lives, their belongingness is invaluable in sensing that the whole creation (universe), including human beings, could not have existed without the creator. An individual's expression of appreciation for his or her existence is a crucial ingredient in a person's gratitude towards God. It is very likely that this item will provide emotional information about a person's devotion towards the divine creator.

*x. I feel a sense of the meaning in my life in helping, caring and loving*

The meaning of life is likely to be directed and controlled by human beings. Every individual has the potential to gain a satisfactory sense and meaning to his/her life. Collectively, meaning for all human beings rests on helping, caring and loving as all of these can provide a greater sense of satisfaction than any other goals or achievements. Supporting, caring and loving could well be the expression of an individual's gratitude towards the divine creator. As this item provides information about an individual's behaviours, acts, or feelings in relation to the divine creator, it is likely that it can verify the individual's divine relationship.

*xi. I seek help and support from the creator, the supernatural being*

This item is included to understand the extent to which a person acts or behaves either to connect to the divine creator or to maintain the divine relationship. It is likely that a person who has faith in the divine or feels a sense of connection with the creator acts in a way that reflects his or her faith or beliefs.

For instance, a person who has faith in God is likely to undertake specific rituals or prayers whether or not they attend religious congregations. An important aspect of attachment or bond, according to Bowlby's attachment theory discussed in chapter one, is that in distressing situations, human beings turn to something or someone with which/whom they are emotionally connected. A person is likely to seek help from the divine only after feeling a sense of bond or attachment with the divine creator. As such, this item (eliciting behaviour) represents a progression from the previous items (eliciting the level of emotions) in determining the divine relationship. The more a person agrees with this item, the stronger their attachment in the divine relationship.

*xii. I feel a sense of closeness to the divine creator during prayer*

The purpose of this item is to understand whether or not an individual maintains an emotional bond towards a sacred attachment figure. As discussed above, prayer could be performed with or without attending a place of religious worship to relate to, or connect with, beyond physical reality. Feeling a sense of closeness to the divine creator is likely to generate some form of act or performance towards the divine. As such, this item provides information about the person's feelings and behaviour concerning the divine relationship. The more a person agrees with this item, the more likely it is that they will have the ability to transcend.

The above items are designed to elicit and assess individuals' thoughts, faith and belief, feelings and behaviours towards the divine in a systemic way. They are based on the contexts and dimensions for the newly proposed transcendence measure, as outlined above. For a new transcendence measure to be applicable,

content analysis and verification of the validity and reliability of the above items need to be carried out. Some of the words or terms in the above-proposed items may need to be reviewed. For example, the word 'creation' may not be easily understood by all to mean the world or universe. The purpose of the research was to investigate the relationship between transcendence and well-being by using a cognitive-theological analysis. The proposed items are derived from this analysis, as shown in the above chapters. The cognitive-theological study reveals that transcendence is better understood via a cognitive-theological construct. It is evident from the shortcomings in the existing literature that a new transcendence measure is necessary. The proposed items for a new transcendence measure based on the cognitive-theological construct is likely to be a promising development in understanding, measuring and promoting transcendence as an element of a person's well-being.

### 5.2.0 Conclusion

The research was intended to understand and explore transcendence and its relationship with well-being. The exploration involved a cognitive-theological analysis of the divine relationship to establish the existence of a relationship between transcendence and well-being. It used a cognitive-psychological process (ideas, thoughts, faith and beliefs) and a theological doctrine (*'creatio ex nihilo'*) in understanding transcendence and its relationship with a person's well-being. It is evident that transcendence can be achieved through spiritual and religious practices as they are popular ways of searching for the sacred. However, such acts do not necessarily confirm the divine relationship. The presence of transcendence, or the ability to relate to the divine, could be latent in the human

mind. As such, this research study proposes a cognitive-theological framework so that transcendence is better understood in a person with or without religiousness. In other words, this study highlights the importance of a cognitive-theological construct in determining and measuring the ability to transcend in both religious and non-religious context. The proposed cognitive-theological analysis generated some research questions such as: 'Is the doctrine of creation (*'creatio ex nihilo'*) necessary for transcendence?' and 'Does a cognitive-theological analysis enhance our understanding of transcendence and well-being?' It is evident that transcendence is better understood by using the proposed cognitive-psychological process and the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine.

Inevitably, the critical elements of a person's well-being are the meaning and purpose of his/her life, and these are embedded in the meaning and purpose of the creation (universe) itself as outlined in the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine. The ultimate purpose of human beings, including all baryonic and non-baryonic matter, is to attain perfection by entering the life of the divine creator. In other words, it is likely that transcendence, as well as well-being, depends on finding the ultimate meaning and purpose of life by connecting to the divine. The nature of reality and the need for meaning and purpose in everything around indicate the reasonableness, or even the ultimate necessity, of many individuals relating to the divine to enhance their well-being. It is essential that the divine relationship is identified via a comprehensive assessment of the human mind. Such examination requires an integration of the '*creatio ex nihilo*' doctrine to detect the cognitive-psychological processes of the divine relationship. The key ingredients of transcendence appear to be faith and belief in the divine creator to give human beings a sense of meaning and purpose in life. It is not necessary to find evidence

of the presence of the divine creator to establish the presence of transcendence. What is important here is that it is not unreasonable for many individuals to believe in the divine. It is also essential to consider the possibility that individuals who do not undertake religious rituals can have the potential to establish a relationship with the divine creator. By relating to the divine, it is possible to attain a sense of meaning and purpose in human existence as well as to enhance well-being.

It is evident that transcendence is significant in relation to a person's well-being. This research analysed transcendence concerning spirituality and religion and well-being. Current evaluations of the relationship between transcendence and well-being are based on the existing transcendence measures (STSa, STSb). Transcendence is only understood and measured by using terrestrial, spiritual dimensions. Arguably, these tools do not take into account the aspects and contents that are necessary to measure the divine relationship in a person with or without religiousness. The lack of a comprehensive psychometric tool for transcendence leaves a significant gap in the research in terms of establishing the relationship between transcendence and well-being. This study provides a platform on which the divine relationship can be understood and measured in a person with or without religiousness. It has outlined recommendations for the contents of a newly proposed transcendence measure. These contents, or items, are derived from a cognitive-theological construct of transcendence. It is likely that the recommendations based on the contexts, dimensions, and contents provide an opportunity for future research to address the gap that exists in establishing the relationship between transcendence and well-being. Ultimately, the cognitive-

theological analysis of transcendence is likely to enhance understanding of the relationship between transcendence and well-being.

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