

## A Conceptual Framework on Factors Influencing Nurses' Job Performance

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**Abstract:** The nurses' job performance can be regarded as a reflection of healthcare organizations, given that they comprise the largest group of human resource professionals who are responsible for providing high-quality care to patients. However, previous studies have emphasized that nurses in Malaysia are underperformed because of shortages in the workforce and excessive workload. Hence, understanding factors influencing the job performance of nurses will empower decision-makers to develop effective strategies aimed at enhancing nurses' performance. In Malaysia, only a few research have been performed on job performance, especially among nurses. Furthermore, limited research has delved into the specific factors influencing nurses' job performance in Malaysia's public hospital system. This study contributes to the existing knowledge by investigating the impact of spirituality at work and HRM practices on the nurses' job performance in Malaysian public hospitals. This study employs a quantitative survey method using self-administered questionnaires, and the data collected will be analyzed using SPSS software Version 26. A total of 375 nurses from a population of 12, 514 nurses who worked at public hospitals in Malaysia will be selected as a sample of the study. This study offers potential benefits to authorities in Malaysian healthcare organizations by providing valuable insights for the development of compelling effective spirituality at work values and human resource management strategies aimed at enhancing the job performance of nurses.

**Keywords:** *HRM practices, Nurses' Job Performance, Spirituality at work, Social Exchange Theory, public hospitals.*

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### 1. Introduction and Background

The healthcare sector, especially within the public sphere, plays a central function in safeguarding the overall welfare of the nation's populace. In Malaysia, public healthcare is a key factor in Malaysia's healthcare landscape, and the performance of nurses is paramount to its success in delivering services. The public healthcare system in Malaysia is widely acknowledged for its ability to provide essential medical services to the diverse population of the country. In fact, according to the data reported by the Malaysian Ministry of Health (MOH) in 2021, the number of patients admitted to public hospitals reached 2,284,303 during the year 2020, while private hospitals recorded 916,294 patients admitted during the same year (Ministry of Health, 2021). As a result, this has created a substantial burden on nurses in public hospitals, which is reflected in increased workloads and extended working hours (Zakaria, et al., 2021). Additionally, a study by Manogaran and Muthuveloo (2019) revealed a significant decline in the performance of nurses within the healthcare sector in Malaysia. The poor performance of nurses has a direct impact on the effectiveness of healthcare provision and the standard of patient care (Russeng, et al., 2020). In Malaysia's context, several researchers are actively investigating factors affecting nurses' job performance in Malaysia's private healthcare sector. For instance, a study by Nasurdin et al. (2020) explored this among 639 nurses working in private hospitals.

Similarly, Nasurdin et al. (2018) investigated factors affecting nurses' performance in nine privately owned hospitals. In addition, Mahat, et al. (2018) conducted a study at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre. Meanwhile, research by Arshad et al. (2016) and Hee et al. (2016) focused on nurses in Mawar Renal Medical Centre and health tourism facilities respectively. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the research has exclusively been conducted inside the confines of privately owned healthcare facilities. According to Johari et al. (2019), there remains a dearth of studies on job performance among public service employees, despite the scholarly consensus regarding the importance of studying job performance within the public service sector (Garg & Rastogi, 2006), particularly for nurses. At the same time, while research has explored various factors that influence employee performance, specific gaps exist in understanding the factors affecting nurses' job performance remain limited (Mousa, 2020). Furthermore, prior research on job performance within the nursing profession has mostly concentrated on several variables, including human

resource practices (El-Gazar & Zoromba, 2021; Nasurdin et al., 2020), psychological capital (Nasurdin et al., 2018), motivation (Gunawan, Hariyati, & Gayatri, 2019), job satisfaction (Safarpour, Sabzevari, & Delpisheh, 2018), job characteristics (Mahat, et al., 2018), leadership (Trichandhara, Somrongthong, & Rinthaisong, 2019), and working condition (Cho & Han, 2018) as factors influencing job performance among nurses. Garg and Rastogi (2006) assert that the enhancement of the job performance of employees is influenced significantly by two internal aspects: spirituality at work and HRM practices. Several studies point towards the potential benefits of spirituality at work and effective HRM practices in organizations. Hisam and Sanyal (2021) and Wagner, Brooks and Urban (2018) suggested considering spirituality at work as a crucial factor in cultivating a healthcare environment that is conducive to well-being and productivity, leading to positive outcomes such as improved job performance among employees. Additionally, Nasurdin et al., (2020) and Vivek (2019) claimed that the implementation of HRM practices has the potential to enhance employee job performance by increasing motivation and providing more performance opportunities. Hence, this study employs a comprehensive approach and examines the impact of spirituality at work and HRM practices on the nurses' job performance in public hospitals in Malaysia. Furthermore, the presence of spirituality at work becomes evident as a coping strategy that can aid employees, especially nurses, in dealing with stress.

Spirituality in this context can function as a personalized approach for regulating individual conduct within the professional setting (James, Miles, & Mullins, 2011). According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), the integration of spirituality at work provides nurses with an opportunity to cultivate a sense of purpose in their professional roles by fostering a supportive community atmosphere where they can align their inner selves. In fact, the studies conducted by Kouhdasht et al. (2019) as well as Reutter and Bigatti (2014) have revealed a significant correlation between increased workplace spirituality, and a decrease in perceived occupational stress and improved psychological well-being. Nevertheless, there are limited studies exploring spirituality in healthcare settings and among nurses (Wagner et al., 2018). Consequently, researchers such as Hisam and Sanyal (2021) and Belwalkar, Vohra, and Pandey (2018) have reached the consensus that there is a need for empirical research on spirituality at work and to ascertain its potential association with employee behaviors. In the same line, the effective administration of human resources plays a pivotal role in exceptional patient care.

The HRM practices have a crucial role in fostering employee engagement (Ooi, Ng, Heng, Chua, & Lim, 2022), cultivating job satisfaction (Mohd Noor, Wan Razali, & Mutalib, 2022), and strengthening employee retention (Halid, Kee, & Rahim, 2020). Consistent with this viewpoint, Wright, McMahan, and McWilliams, (1994) have argued that organizations utilize HRM practices to shape employee perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, all with the ultimate objective of enhancing performance. In fact, according to Pamungkas and Wulandari (2021), employees are more inclined to exert their utmost efforts and passion towards improving the quality of service rendered when they believe that their organization appreciates them and implements efficient HRM practices. However, research specifically investigating the influence of HRM practices on job performance within the healthcare sector remains scarce (Kusu & Gowtham, 2020) even though previous researchers such as Alghnimi, Habeeb, and Kadhim (2020) and Vivek (2019) acknowledge the influence of HRM practices on job performance is certainly influenced by certain HRM practices. In summary, the scarcity of research conducted in developing countries, particularly in Malaysia, relating to the interaction between spirituality at work, HRM practices, and job performance, provides an interesting foundation for performing this study. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the link between spirituality at work and HRM practices on nurses' job performance in public hospitals in Malaysia.

## 2. Literature Review

**Job Performance:** In the contemporary business landscape, job performance works as a cornerstone in organizational psychology and management, playing an important role in contributing to the overall performance of the organization. The existing body of literature has presented a wide range of characterizations of the concept of job performance. Historically, researchers such as Rotundo and Sackett (2002) have evaluated job performance by considering both the quantity and quality of effort. Unlike previous theories, Campbell (1990) and Murphy (1990) believe that employee performance encompasses behaviors and activities that directly contribute to an organization's goals. Mahmoud and El-Sayed (2016) support this view, suggesting that job performance can be used to develop employee traits like behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics that improve organizational output and adherence to established criteria. In addition, the job performance of nurses holds substantial significance within the healthcare sector. As stated by Greenslade and Jimmieson (2007), the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by nurses have a pivotal

role in influencing the overall quality of healthcare service delivered to patients. Within this particular work, the evaluation of nurses' job performance is predicated upon their ability to proficiently execute their assigned duties and obligations, which have a direct influence on the attainment of optimal patient care standards (Abu AlRub, 2004; Asiamah, Mensah, & Ocra, 2019).

Nonetheless, previous scholars have made valuable contributions to the understanding of job performance by broadening its definition to encompass behaviors that facilitate the completion of essential professional tasks. Campbell (1990) made a significant contribution by proposing a classification of job performance that includes eight discrete elements. These elements consist of non-job-specific task proficiency, job-specific task proficiency, personal discipline maintenance, written and oral communication skills, demonstration of effort, facilitation of peer and team performance, administration, and leadership. Expanding upon the existing paradigm, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) introduced an additional categorization within job performance, distinguishing between two distinct theoretical domains: task performance and contextual performance. The viewpoint presented, which is backed by prior scholars like Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994) and Rana, Pant, and Chopra (2019), argues that job performance is a multifaceted concept that requires evaluation using task and contextual performance. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1997), the inclusion of both components of performance is essential for attaining organizational goals. Task performance is viewed as specific behaviors that are required for the successful completion of job tasks or the technical core of an organization. Conversely, contextual performance plays a pivotal role in establishing the organizational, social, and psychological context inside an organization. Meanwhile, within the nursing profession, the evaluation of nurses' performance includes the consideration of both task performance and contextual performance. The use of a holistic approach is crucial due to the wide array of behaviors that are inherent in nursing positions (Tong, 2018; Greenslade & Jimmieson, 2007).

**Spirituality at Work:** In current years, there has been a notable surge in interest surrounding the notion of spirituality at work. Organizations are giving more importance to taking care of their employees' overall well-being. Nowadays, employees want more than just a paycheck. They also want to feel like their work is meaningful and fulfilling (Sony & Mekoth, 2019). According to Bharadwaj and Jamal (2020), when employees find jobs that match their spiritual values, they feel a deeper connection with themselves and a sense of purpose. This can help them do their jobs better and reach the organization's goals. Spirituality at work, as described by Mitroff and Denton (1999), involves finding purpose in one's work, building positive work connections, and aligning personal values with organizational values. Similarly, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) define spirituality at work as a sense of purpose, valuing one's work, and feeling connected to the workplace community. Therefore, spirituality at work typically revolves around meaningful work, a sense of community, and inner life (Belwalkar et al., 2018).

Furthermore, previous research has consistently revealed that spirituality at work has positive outcomes. Studies have indicated that spirituality promotes organizational commitment (Hisam & Sanyal, 2021; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). Similarly, previous studies have demonstrated that spirituality significantly influences employee engagement (Almotawa & Shaari, 2020), intention to stay (Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018), and reduced turnover intention (Fitriasari, 2020). Furthermore, Garcia-Zamor (2003) has emphasized the positive influence of spirituality at work on overall organizational performance. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that most previous research has primarily investigated the associations between spirituality with various variables, with less emphasis on its relationship with job performance, particularly within the context of nursing. James et al. (2011) have pointed out that only a small number of studies have studied spirituality as a variable influencing job performance. According to Van Wingerden and Van der Stoep (2017), when nurses perceive their work as meaningful, they become more engaged in their jobs or tasks and more committed to providing high-quality care, indirectly leading to improved job performance.

**HRM Practices:** Within the dynamic and ever-changing landscape of modern organizations, the effective management of human resources has emerged as a crucial component for achieving long-term success and maintaining a competitive advantage. Delery and Doty (1996) propose a conceptualization of HRM practices as a carefully constructed and regularly executed system to promote the active contribution of employees to the attainment of business goals. Similarly, Ivancevish (2010) defines HRM practices as a strategic function implemented within organizations to optimize the efficient utilization of human resources in achieving the goals of both employees and the organization. As such, HRM practices include practices like recruitment, career development, employee participation, performance appraisal, occupational safety and health, compensation, and training and development. Moreover, studies like

Huselid's (1995) have shown that certain HRM practices can lead to better job performance and make employees more motivated. Furthermore, Sasongko (2018) found that effective HRM practices are very important in healthcare settings because they encourage employees to provide patient-centered care. Therefore, it is evident that effective HRM practices directly impact job performance, serving as a valuable tool for organizations seeking to boost employee output.

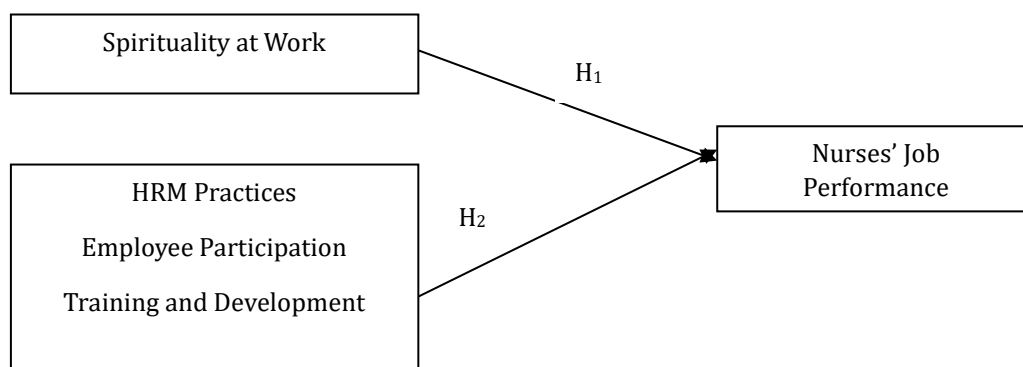
The study by Nasurdin et al. (2020) found that when nurses are involved in decision-making and receive training, their attitudes and behaviors at work will improve. Beh and Loo (2012) suggest that nurses who actively participate in making decisions have less stress and challenges at work. It is because they can voice their concerns and make suggestions for improvements, resulting in better work arrangements (Beh & Loo, 2012) that can increase their engagement and willingness to go above and beyond job description (Lepak, Liao, Chung, & Harden, 2006). Additionally, Ma'arof, Rashid, and Nasuredin (2023) report that training and development programs, along with employee participation, play a significant role in boosting nurse engagement in Malaysia. Simultaneously, El-Gazar and Zoromba (2021) argued that HRM practices such as training and development possess the capacity to enhance nursing performance and make a valuable contribution to the overall excellence of a healthcare organization. This is because in-service training equips nurses and other healthcare providers with exposure to the latest methods, technologies, patient-care standards, and relevant skills (Asiamah et al., 2019), which can increase employee motivation to perform their tasks (Lepak et al., 2006).

**Social Exchange Theory:** The theory that underpinned the framework in this study is the Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964) which posits the presence of a reciprocal obligation within the employer-employee relationship. This theory is founded on the idea that social interactions are influenced by behaviors that are dependent on the responses and benefits acquired by each participant. The nature and duration of these encounters and relationships are fundamentally influenced by the reciprocal gratification obtained from this exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to Saks (2006), employees determine how often they are involved and perform in their jobs based on resources provided by their respective organizations. Therefore, considering that the Social Exchange Theory is a mutually beneficial relationship between employer and employee, nurses are likely to perceive that healthcare organizations support them in HRM practices through employee participation and training and development practices and offer them opportunities to discover their purpose and find meaning in their roles. So, in return, nurses may respond by exhibiting positive attitudes and behavior, thereby ultimately enhancing their nurse performance.

**Research Framework:** Drawing on the literature review and underpinning theories, this study proposes a research framework illustrated in Figure 1. The framework examines the potential influence of two independent variables: spirituality at work and HRM practices (employee participation and training and development) on the dependent variable nurses' job performance. It is hypothesized that these independent variables will have significant relationships with the dependent variable. To satisfy the objectives of this study, the following hypothesis may be summarized based on prior discussion and proposed framework:

- Objective 1: To examine the relationship between spirituality at work and nurses' job performance.  
Hypothesis 1, H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between spirituality at work and nurses' job performance.  
Objective 2: To determine the relationship between HRM practices and nurses' job performance.  
H<sub>2a</sub>: There is a significant relationship between employee participation and nurses' job performance.  
H<sub>2b</sub>: There is a significant relationship between training and development and nurses' job performance.

**Figure 1: Research Framework**





### 3. Methodology for Research Direction

This research will employ a quantitative method to gather data from a selected group of respondents. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), the quantitative approach is preferable because it allows for hypothesis testing, which may be used to investigate the impact of spirituality at work and HRM practices on nurses' job performance in public hospitals. Additionally, Cavana, Delahaye, and Sekaran (2001) proposed that the quantitative study can be applied to confirm the hypotheses and provide strong reliability and validity.

**Research Design:** This study will employ two sets of well-structured questionnaires: Set A will be filled out by nurses and Set B will be answered by sisters as tools to gather primary data. The instrument tools will be based on previously published scales in the literature. For example, the job performance instrument will be adapted from the work of Greenslade and Jimmieson (2007). Meanwhile, the spirituality at work instrument will be based on the scale created by Ashmos and Duchon (2000). The instrument developed by Delery and Doty (1996) will be adapted for measuring HRM practices. Respondents in this study will be asked to answer a questionnaire using a 7-point Likert Scale. All items in the questionnaires have been validated. The study proposes possible research that will look at the relationship between Spirituality at Work (IV1) and HRM Practices: Employee Participation (IV2) and Training and Development (IV3) on Job Performance (DV) among nurses in Malaysian Public Hospitals.

**Population and Sampling:** Respondents for this study will be drawn from nurses and their sisters who are working in public hospitals throughout Malaysia. The reason for selecting public hospitals is that most Malaysians utilize them, which are less expensive and dependent on a taxation system (Ahmad, 2019). The study's unit analysis is a nurse and their sister from all departments. Nurses will be chosen because they are the biggest healthcare workers group (Russeng et al., 2020), and their pivotal role in providing direct patient care. Since the target population is approximately 12,514 nurses across ten general hospitals in Malaysia, a sample size of 375 participants is appropriate based on Sekaran and Bougie's (2010) recommendations and the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table.

The researcher will employ a purposive sampling technique as a sampling procedure due to the inaccessibility of the sampling frame. Purposive sampling, as defined by Cooper and Schindler (2014), is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are chosen based on their unique features, experiences, attitudes, or views. Although purposive sampling is a method that does not allow generalization, the main purpose is to select a specific target group of respondents who can offer the most relevant information and want to participate, aligning with the study's purpose (Kumar, 2011). Therefore, in this proposed study, nurses and sisters are deemed the most suitable individuals to provide the necessary information. This is mostly due to their firsthand experiences, attitudes, and involvement in the relevant procedures, which enable them to offer valuable data and insights to the researcher.

**Data Analysis Tools:** This study will utilize the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0 for data analysis. Frequency and percentage will be utilized to analyze the respondents' backgrounds. To test the dependability of each variable in the generation of data, analyses such as demographics, reliability, descriptive statistics, normality tests, correlation, and regression will be conducted. Checking for missing values will also be conducted to ensure the quality of the result is maintained. The demographic information will be analyzed using frequencies and descriptive analysis techniques. The study will employ multiple regression analysis to investigate the link between spirituality at work and HRM practices (employee participation and training and development) on job performance among nurses. Additionally, the study will also employ multiple regression analysis to determine the primary factor that influences nurses' job performance in Malaysian public hospitals.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study will identify factors influencing the nurses' job performance in public hospitals in Malaysia. In other words, the incorporation of spirituality at work and HRM practices, namely employee participation and training and development has the potential influence to improve the overall work environment and support the performance of nurses. Nurses may perform better in the workplace when they possess the ability to openly express their spirituality at work values within the work environment. This integration of spirituality into the nursing profession serves as evidence of the holistic nature of healthcare. Furthermore, when HRM practices such as employee participation and training and

development align with the spiritual beliefs and requirements of nurses, the result will show that nurses are not only engaged with their work but satisfied and will constantly deliver a higher standard of care. It is because the way the organization manages its human resources activities establishes a sense of fairness and mutual obligation between the employee and employer relationship, which is in line with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). According to this theory, nurses tend to display good views toward positive behavior when they receive sufficient support and care from the organization. Therefore, this underscores the need to provide support and nurturing for nurses, so that both healthcare organizations and healthcare professionals such as nurses have equitable advantages in the long run. In other words, integrating spirituality at work and HRM practices has the potential to not only improve the job performance of nurses but also enhance the overall quality of patient care.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The nurses' performance has a direct impact on the quality of patient care and is impacted by several factors. Understanding the nurses' job performance is vital for public hospitals in Malaysia since most of the Malaysian population gets medical services from public hospitals. Therefore, healthcare organizations should understand what factors that can motivate their nurses to excel in their profession. Based on previous literature, spirituality at work and HRM practices, namely employee participation and training and development, are influential variables in nurses' job performance, particularly in public hospitals. The decision-makers and authorities of healthcare organizations in Malaysia should integrate spirituality at work values into nurses' daily routines and modify human resource policy to continuously support and facilitate in enhancing the performance of nurses. Nursing management could incorporate spirituality in nursing education by encouraging open dialogues and providing spaces for reflection in a more spiritually nurturing workplace. Feedback mechanism for nurses to share their experience with the integration of spirituality and HRM practices should be established with continuous improvement should be made based on nurse input. Therefore, the proposed framework will provide a better solution for improving the nurses' job performance in Malaysia's public hospitals.

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