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SPIRITUALITY BELIEFS AND SENSE OF LIFE REALIZATION: A SOCIAL COGNITION RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The studies of Social Cognition are the background of the present research, particularly the concept of Beliefs. The research question is: which relationships can we establish between Beliefs in Spirituality and the realization of a Sense of Life in a sample of 1298 Brazilian college students? This research aims to correlate beliefs in spirituality with the meaning in life realization. The specific objectives are: within the scope of social cognition studies, to base the beliefs in spirituality; based on studies of Logotherapy, to understand the relationship between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life; and empirically, to investigate the connection of concepts in the lives of college students. It is an empirical, quantitative, descriptive, correlational research *ex post facto*. The results showed that most of the sample attained high realization levels of the meaning in life and beliefs in spirituality. Statistical analyzes confirmed a strong correlation between these same variables. Beliefs in spirituality are predictors for the realization of the meaning in life in this sample.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on sociological, anthropological, and social psychology studies, supported and disseminated by the media, we live in an era of accelerated changes, interpersonal – and even collective – relationships characterized by turbulence, absence of superior ideals to inspire life, difficulties in establishing bonds, and decreased influence of moral, ethical values and traditions. Thus, we assume that young people may experience a lack of solid criteria to direct their lives and fulfill themselves as human beings. We chose to research college students because, when these youngsters enter this phase, there are profound transformations – from the beginning until the end. Analyzing college students through an anthropological-social bias shows that their transition into adulthood consists of closings and openings of cycles: ending school, entering college, graduating, getting a job, dating, marriage, among others. Even though many of these events occur during college, in the past the beginning and end of cycles were better defined. Strictly speaking, when students enter college, they have several expectations: they wonder about the institution to which they belong; how teachers perceive them; if other

students accept them or not, if the course will fulfill them personally, or is college just a way for being qualified for the job market. Among the heterogeneity of thoughts and expectations, we perceive that each student seeks this stage of their lives to be represented in a unique way possible. They know that it is a period of discoveries, changes, and strengthening of their values and ideals of life. Currently, the young college student profile has been the target of many types of research. Many point out that despite being concerned about financial stability and search for paid internships and positions in the labor market for not depending on their parents. Compared to previous generations, the maturation process is developing more slowly (Ramos, 2006; INPR, 2005; Singly, 2007). Such a finding directly reflects on their relationships and also with their teachers. In general, these data arise precisely from the social requirements imposed on them and personal insecurities to maintain their autonomy in this new phase of their life. New college students suffer from many possible changes. From family distancing, a new network of friendships, new entertainment alternatives, to sober posture requirements to fulfill their academic responsibilities. On the one hand, the college environment offers growth on a personal and professional level. On

the other hand, we perceive aspects that can influence their health, whether through medication abuse. Additionally, we perceive the presence of several stressors (e.g., increased responsibility charge, imposed competitions, freshman hoax, difficulty in evaluations, shortage of time for old friendships) (Soares, Baldez, & Mello, 2011). According to Costa and Leal (2008), a significant number of researchers found that spirituality can act as an excellent psychosocial resource when looking for techniques and strategies to optimize and improve the style and quality of life of college students. Spirituality is a predictor of health and a protector against stressful factors. It generates better psychological and emotional states and brings higher balance for the challenges imposed on them. Thus, spirituality contributes positively by combating these stressors and helping a considerable number of depressed students. Spirituality is a subject that arouses and sharpens the curiosity of the academic environment - as the possible expression of what transcends the human. It is true particularly about Psychology, given that this dimension interacts, in many moments, with cognitive, affective psychic processes, reflecting on the conduct and behavior of people in different contexts of individual and collective life. There are scientific studies involving beliefs in spirituality as an expressively influential factor in people's lives, psychic health, and disease prevention when these beliefs are constructive, in logical proportion, and promote the improvement of human conditions (Santana & Zanatta, 2021a). Thus, we assume that the research is relevant for students and professionals in the areas of humanities, social sciences, and health. It is also pertinent under the theology scope as a reflection based on a literature review of psychology field studies. It is a topic that transcends this area of knowledge at a time of a society characterized by relativism, individualism, a low perspective of the future, and a fast pace that interferes in personal and interpersonal relationships in a negative way. All of this, contributing to an existential void and less probability of realizing the meaning in life.

Spirituality Beliefs from the Social Cognition Studies Perspective

Based on (Santana, et al, 2021c):

The relationships established by the man inside and outside the family environment, in the most diverse social contexts, and the experiences lived throughout life resulting from the performances of the different social roles configure the socialization process of each individual. When in contact with the other - the one who is different from himself - establishes interpersonal, intergroup, and even collective relationships that produce new knowledge and experiences that interfere with his cognitive and affective processes - most of the time, altering the sense of existence. It is precisely there where knowledge exchange takes place. Where inferences of others and oneself are made; where experiences are exchanged; where one influences and is influenced; and where social cognition studies are contextualized - the research field of this tangle of realities.

Given what has been stated, we consider that, historically, both Cognitive Psychology and Social Psychology bring in their core the elementary foundations of Social Cognition. Concerning Cognitive Psychology, his theory "allows to identify, describe, relate and explain cognitive processes and contents, linked to motivation, affectivity, learning, decision making, and behaviors" (Krüger, 2018, p.14a). These topics are of interest to the studies of social cognition when they result from social interactions. Therefore, we understand social cognition as a method of psychologically studying the human experience, directing the focus to mental processes and contents expressed in behavior in social interaction.

Since the 1980s, these fields of knowledge: Social Psychology and Cognitive Psychology, have been a solid base on which to explain the pivotal relationships "between the human mind, its processes, contents and representations and social behavior in its various forms of relationships: interpersonal, personal, intra and intergroup, and collective" (Zanatta, 2018, p.30a). Still considering the position of the same author, some concepts interact with these two disciplines that

are the object of study of social cognition, such as "affectivity, beliefs, empathy, values, attitude formation, individual's perception, construction of identity and self among so many others" (Zanatta, 2018, p.30a). We perceive that, according to Krüger (2018, p.17b), social cognition "is a controlled and unconscious process of obtaining, retaining, recovering, processing and expressing information, which people perform in the course of social interactions". Taylor, Peplau, and Sears (2006) claim that social cognition "is the study of how people form inferences based on social information, provided by the environment" (Taylor, Peplau & Sears, 2006, p. 65). It is of utmost importance to emphasize that social cognition happens only when two or more people can truly interact. It is a process that occurs as people establish contact with others and become aware of them, perceiving themselves and the other. This reality occurs through simple everyday things, for example, when: looking, listening, talking, learning, helping, and loving. In other words, social cognition is concerned with studying the mental representations of social events and seeks to understand how individuals perceive themselves, how they evaluate, how they can form an opinion about other people (Santana, 2021b) and themselves, and how they make decisions. In short: the way they interact with the environment and with others.

Strictly speaking, there are several psychological processes involved in social interaction (e.g., attention, motivation, memory, perception). Among all these, without a doubt, perception is the most important. When one individual establishes contact with another person, the perception enables the existence of the interaction relationship. Only when one person becomes conscious of to whom the relationship is established, is it considered an interaction, a communion of two or more individuals. Perception is the process that connects us to reality and, thus, informs and enables man to make more assertive decisions. It makes it possible to get impressions about other people, and these results influencing social evaluations, choices, and future decision-making. In the meantime, social cognition is considered a permanent process encompassing several kinds of exchanges, which concern the formation of personality, thus enabling changes or substitutions of beliefs throughout the entire interaction process. Knowledge apprehension, the result of interpersonal interaction, does not occur exclusively through the perception of the other and reality. It is also influenced by the individual interest, originated from his motivations. We could understand motivation as "a kind of internal force that emerges, regulates, and sustains all of our most important actions. However, it is evident that motivation is an internal experience that cannot be studied directly" (Vernon, 1973, p.11). Therefore, such responses can reveal contrasting motivations of an ambitious or egocentric character and, on the other hand, of charitable or philanthropic nature.

One of the psychological processes that constitute the foundation of social cognition is attention. It can be considered a cognitive state. It is a quality of perception that serves to filter the various stimuli of reality. It classifies and gives them a degree of importance and priority. Attention also controls and helps to regulate all cognitive processes. It is considered a skill that can be acquired and developed. When used correctly, it increases the interaction and the ability to obtain the valid and correct information. Another fundamental process is memory, which is essential for the social interaction process. It is the cognitive component that facilitates the consolidation and recovery of information that human beings learn throughout their life. Memory is a mental function providing lucidity and conduct orientation during an individual's interaction with another. That means that its manifestation, whether long-term (older experiences), short-term (more recent experiences), or operational experiences, is continuously intertwined with perception, thought, and language. It is essential to emphasize that the social cognition field inevitably focuses on understanding how "mental structures, processes, and contents in psychosocial phenomena; the systematic use of self-observation, self-regulation, formulation of explanations, investigations, quantifications, and applications" etc. (Zanatta, 2018, p.31b). Social cognition is understood as a psychological study. The empirical investigation of how human beings act and react in their

social relationships encompasses many themes. Among them, we can highlight the relationship of man with his spiritual dimension. Spirituality is an innate attribute of man, which promotes well-being, health, and stability, being directly connected to the essence of life and associated with spiritual issues and has as a product, altruistic behaviors, feelings of hope that strengthen the bonds of the meaning in life (Ross, 2006). Geertz (1989) clarifies that, in all cultures, religion has a significant role in life, capable of generating in him the ability to provide meanings, interpret his existence and organize his conduct. That happens because of the influence of sacred symbols, based on spiritual values, expressing in them (devotees or believers) a new world view, a spiritual reinterpretation of day-to-day events, and a new way of behavior. Spirituality is an eminently human dimension that provides it with an interpretive nature, relative to his experiences, since every man aims to know and make contact with the meaning of his life and answer the internal questions that give value and color to its existence (Caldeira, Gomes & Frederico, 2011). Spirituality “is a universal experience that encompasses the existential domain and the essence of what the human being is, it is not synonymous with a religious doctrine, but it can be considered the philosophy of the individual, of values and meaning in life” (Nascimento et al., 2013, p. 53).

Thus, it suggests that the studies on social cognition and particularly on beliefs are basic themes to understand the relationship between spirituality and the meaning in life. A subject that we will discuss in the next chapter. Understanding how we can integrate spirituality into the individual and collective system of beliefs and how these enable a way of understanding oneself and the world in the context of social interactions allows studying the subject in the scope of the psychological sciences. This research provides the path to establish the relation of spirituality as an element that favors the meaning in life realization. (Santana & Zanatta, 2021a). Spirituality seeks to translate the individual experience of the one who believes and desires the completeness of a relationship with the Sacred. In this sense, each religious culture postulates its measure to this concept and about the experience itself. It is evidenced in several ways, either individually or collectively, not necessarily including an ecclesial reality. It is noteworthy that spirituality differs from religiousness. The former concerns an openness to the transcendent whose scope connects to inner realities; the latter expresses how the person dedicates himself to that same practice within an institutionalized religious environment (Santana & Zanatta, 2021a). In short, the spiritual dimension is part of every human being and drives him in the search for the transcendent; of the experience with the Sacred in an attempt to give meaning and answer to the fundamental aspects of life. “It is important to affirm that spirituality is not a monopoly of religions or any particular spiritual movement; rather, it is inherent to the human being” (Santana & Zanatta, 2021a, p. 16). Thus, spirituality can elevate each person who experiences it beyond their universe and poses them in the face of deeper issues, such as searching for the Meaning in Life.

Logotherapy and Meaning in Life: In this part, we decided to address some theoretical considerations on the meaning in life under the aegis of Logotherapy, a theory created by Frankl, a researcher, neurologist, and philosopher born in Vienna in 1905. Logotherapy is a psychotherapeutic approach, developed after Freud's psychoanalyst school and Adler's Individual Psychology. On the one hand, this approach deals with searching for meaning in life and the sense of life realization as the primary motivator of the human being. On the other hand, with the possibilities of psychic maladjustments due to existential frustration, when is not achieved. The theory was created in the first half of the 20th century, with solid philosophical bases and clinical experiences with young people from Vienna in risky situations (Frankl, 1989). The belief that the purpose of men is finding and realizing meanings in their lives is the foundation of Frankl's system (1989). His experience as a prisoner of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II made him strengthen his personal beliefs in the sense of life, by analyzing his own existence, which allowed him to know better who the man is. As he well asks: “What, then, is a human being? It is the being that always decides

what he is. It is not only the being who invented the gas chambers, but also who entered the gas chambers, erect, with a prayer on his lips” (Frankl, 1989, p.113). In the theoretical body of Psychology, meaning in life is the principal concept of Logotherapy. It is considered an existential-humanistic psychological theory. Since the search for meaning is the main task of the individual, this meaning is specific and particular to each person and can be fulfilled by him, assuming the importance that will satisfy his own will to meaning.

Self-realization is not the ultimate pursuit of the human being. It is not even its primary intention. Self-realization, if transformed into an end in itself, contradicts the self-transcendent character of human existence. Like happiness, self-realization appears as an effect, that is, the realization effect of a sense. Only to the extent, that man fills a sense out there, in the world, will he realize himself. If he decides to accomplish himself, instead of filling in a sense, self-realization immediately loses its *raison d'être* (Frankl, 2017, p. 38).

Frankl's (2005) approach has an existential bias, and it is a proposal to re-humanize psychological theories based on a three-dimensional anthropological-philosophical view of the human being. Man is a bio-psycho-spiritual being, being the spiritual dimension called noetics. For Frankl (2005), the biological and psychological dimensions constitute the psychophysical, subordinated to the noetic feature. This aspect represents an ontological reality that characterizes the essence of what is human. That is, the locus of the meaning in life, conscience, freedom, responsibility, sense of humor, creativity, spirituality, religiousness. Thus, when the psychophysical dimension gets sick or weakens, man seeks life and strength in the noetic feature because it does not get sick (Zanatta, 2018a), and it plays a protective role. Another philosophical assumption of Frankl's theory is its three pillars: the freedom of will, the will to meaning, and the meaning in life. According to the theory, the *freedom-of-will* states that man is not entirely subject to his conditionings; he has the condition to decide in the face of internal (psychological) and external (biological and social) issues. According to Frankl (2018), freedom is presented as the “space of someone's life within the limits of the possibilities given”. In other words, although he cannot change the circumstances, the individual can decide how to respond in the face of these events (Frankl, 2018, p.39). Strictly speaking, Frankl (2006) suggests that the same being is conditioned both by the biological dimension and by the psychic and social dimensions. However, he can decide in the face of such conditions. Frankl (2017) declares that the *will to meaning* is one of the primary motivations of every man. According to him, the human being not only aims for freedom, but he also wants to be free for something (g e., his goals or purposes). The search for meaning is a primordial claim of the human being. When a man cannot ascend his “desire for meaning”, his life can contact an abyss. Finally, *the meaning in life* is constituted as a philosophical axiom. It conceives that if there is a search for meaning by the human being, there is also a meaning to be unveiled, and the same would be latent in his living realities (Frankl, 2008).

The Frankl School believes that human beings are called to offer the best they have of themselves in the world right now. It understands that the individual seeks meaning in everything he lives, in his experiences, whether good or not. In this way, Logotherapy does not teach that there is only one general meaning in life because “each instant contains a specific meaning in itself, it is up to the person living that moment to discover what it means, to be able to have a healthy, happy and fulfilled life” (Frankl, 2006, p.72). It is essential to emphasize that the individual will find meaning in life through his relationship with the world since man is constituted as a “being in the world”. From this premise, Frankl (1989) assures that the human being can realize the senses in three ways. Namely: experiential values (where the individual would realize the meaning by experiencing something special or with someone by his side); creative values (where the individual would make sense by creating something, for example, scientific or artistic, etc.); attitudinal values (where the individual would make sense by taking action, in the face of situations that he cannot transform: a tragedy, for example).

Concerning personal fulfillment, Frankl assures that the human being “fulfills himself, not worrying about the fulfillment, but forgetting himself and giving himself, disregarding himself and concentrating his thoughts beyond himself” (Frankl, 2005, p. 29). About its etymology, the word derives from the Latin “*ek-sistere*”, primarily regarded as “getting out of oneself”. In this way, Logotherapy states the concept of self-transcendence as a human capacity to overcome itself and its needs, abdicating from itself, to find meaning. In all of his writings, Frankl dismisses the notion of “self-realization” when it comes to personal searches, leaving the realization of the meaning in life in the background.

Frankl (1988) affirms that the excessive concern with self-realization takes the human being to an existential vacuum since he misses the target by searching in things and situations for something that can occupy or satisfy his worries and desires. Strictly speaking, logotherapy presents the man's view, who needs to be conceived as an integral being capable of finding meaning. When understanding the human being in only one dimension, be it biological, psychological, social, or even spiritual, we camouflage their differences, being a risk of massification and a reductionist vision of the individual. Questioned long after his release regarding the human's physiological limitations, he replied:

It is true. As a neurophysiology professor and psychiatrist, I understand very well the physiological limitations of the human being. However, as a concentration camp survivor, I also know everything that a human being can do despite extreme circumstances (Frankl, 2006, p. 125).

We should remark that the assumptions established by Logotherapy have their foundations because man is the only animal to think about this reality of life satisfaction. Since he has a spiritual dimension – called a noological dimension – from where proceed all the phenomena eminently proper to homo sapiens. Because of this reality, man can overcome all conditions and develop strategies for realizing the meaning in life. According to Frankl (2005), when man seeks meaning in life always generates tension. It is a prerequisite for mental health: “mental health is based on a certain degree of tension, the tension between what has already been achieved and what should be achieved, or the gap between what is, and what should be” (Frankl, 2011, p.61). Finally, in his book “In Search of Meaning”, Frankl (1989) narrates a fact that occurred in Dachau when he met a young man who said he would kill himself, justifying that he no longer supported such a condition. Frankl questioned if he had any reason to be alive. As the conversation progressed, the boy reported that, before being arrested by the Nazis and sent to the concentration camp, he taught geography, started writing some books, and would very much like to finish them. It was through this purpose that Frankl encouraged him to resist and fight for his survival. In short: Frankl's proposal permeates the daily experience of each one, whose motivational basis is in making him discover the meaning. Such a human experience presents the struggle (capable of transcending suffering) that each one must fight to find the realization of meanings in the reading of reality (Santana & Zanatta, 2021a).

Research: The sample collected was of 1298 college students, with ages that varied between 18 and 68 years. The participants that constituted the sample represented all the States of the Brazilian Federation, with a predominance of Rio de Janeiro (67.8%), Amazonas (5.5%), São Paulo (5.1%), Paraíba (3.7%), and Ceará (2.5%). All other states had values individually lower than 2.4% of the respondents. About sex, the survey comprised 66.1% females and 33.9% males. As for the category related to religiousness, 70.5% declare themselves religious, 17.3% declare themselves as spiritualists, and 12.2% reported themselves as atheists and agnostics. Regarding marital status, there was a predominance of singles in the sample (77.8%), few married individuals (19%), and very few divorced (2.8%). The sample consisted of college students from different courses, among them Psychology (29%), Administration (5.4%), Philosophy (4.8%), Medicine (4.7%), and Theology (4.2%). All other courses had less than 4.2% of respondents in the sample.

We used two scales, namely: Belief in Spirituality WHOQOL-SRPB (Spirituality, Religiousness, and Personal Beliefs) (2010), created by the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Steger Sense of Life Scale (2006). The WHOQOL-SRPB in Brazilian Portuguese showed satisfactory psychometric qualities, such as precision and construct validity. It also showed discriminative, convergent, convergent/discriminant validity. It also was related to the concurrent criterion in a large sample of healthy and sick men and women of varying ages, beliefs, schooling, and socioeconomic classes. The Sense of Life Questionnaire - (QSV), built by Steger (2006), was translated from English into Portuguese and validated in Brazil in 2015 by Tiago Antônio Avellar de Aquino, Valdiney Veloso, Andrei Aguiar, Gylmara Pereira and Ana Fernandes. We used the analysis of the hypotheses to observe the results related to the relationship between the research variables (Sense of life and Beliefs in spirituality through its factors Search and Presence of Meaning; Connection to be or Spiritual Strength and Faith). We used inferential statistics to evaluate the hypotheses: H1, H2, H3, and H4, which concern the behavior of the sample regarding the possible relationship between the results obtained through these same instruments used (QSV and WHOQOL_SRPB and their factors). The hypotheses were presented in sequence to facilitate the understanding of the analysis. The comments regarding the analysis are accompanied by a table demonstrating the results of non-parametric correlations (Table 1).

When evaluating Hypothesis 1: “There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students”. The correlation between Presence of Sense of Life and Connection to Be Spiritual and Faith was significant ($p < 0.01$) and moderately positive ($r = 0.547$). Supposedly, the results may show a relationship between presence (or Realization of the meaning) and Spirituality, as according to Frankl, there is a set of aspects in the noetic dimension that identifies the human being in his nature. Among them, spirituality, ethical values (virtues if we admit a more theological orientation), freedom, responsibility, creativity, and humor. These human characteristics interact dynamically, strengthening and favoring the realization or presence of a sense of life, as long as the person becomes aware of this strength and has a free and deliberate option to follow it. The correlation between the search for meaning in life and Connection to be, or spiritual strength and Faith, was significant ($p < 0.01$) and weak positive ($r = 0.151$ and 0.124). Similarly, we observed a significant, weak, and positive correlation between the two factors. It is probably explained by the fact that as there is a more expressive intensity of presence, there tends to be a decrease in the search. The correlation between Connection to Be Spiritual and Faith was significant ($p < 0.01$) and strongly positive ($r = 0.759$). This correlation was strong and positive, probably corroborating for the identification of the sociodemographic characteristics present in the sample, revealing an expressive number of people who identify themselves as religious (sample's 71%), and allowing to infer a significant index verified in the Connection factor to be spiritual and Faith.

Concerning Hypothesis 2: “There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students when considering sex as a differentiating factor”, aiming to find out if there was a statistically significant difference for the psychological variables (Presence of meaning in life, Search for the meaning in life, Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith) between men and women in the sample. The tests showed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between men and women for the variables Presence of meaning in life and Connection to be or spiritual strength. It is possible to conclude that, in the studied sample, the group of men presented higher values for the Presence of meaning in life ($M = 22.2$ and $DP = 5.43$) and Connection to be or spiritual strength ($M = 16.45$ and $DP = 4.73$), than the group of women for the same variables (Presence of meaning in life - $M = 20.83$ and $DP = 5.84$ / Connection to be or spiritual strength - $M = 15.98$ and $SD = 4, 40$). In summary, data that specifically compared the Presence of meaning and Connection to be, or spiritual strength, revealed significant differences regarding the sex variable. The male average was higher than the female, both about the Presence of

meaning in life and the Connection to be, or spiritual strength. However, when comparing the groups of men and women for the features "Searching for the meaning in life" and "Faith", there were no significant differences. For such results, the researcher did not find, in any literature, a solid and convincing basis to explain why there is a higher presence of Sense of life in men than in women, which may, eventually, be a characteristic of the specific public that responded to the survey.

integrate the dimension of the human being - noetic. It contains spirituality as a characteristic of human nature, which can be understood as a type of deep consciousness that allows man to transcend towards the Absolute, particularly when faced with finitude (Santana, 2021b). It depicts that age could explain approximately 3 to 4% of the variance (r^2) of the investigated psychological variables (Rosenthal, 1991; Field, 2009). Thus, the calculations revealed a significant difference, with a more robust result about the factors

Table 1. Non-Parametric Correlations

Spearman's Rho		QSV Presence	QSV Search	CONNECTION	FAITH
QSV_Presence	Coefficient correlations	1,000	-,080**	,546**	,548**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		0,002	0,000	0,000
QSV_Search	Coefficient correlations	-,080**	1,000	,151**	,124**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0,002		0,000	0,000
CONNECTION	Coefficient correlations	,546**	,151**	1,000	,759**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0,000	0,000		0,000
FAITH	Coefficient correlations	,548**	,124**	,759**	1,000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	

**The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). Source: Elaborated by the author

Table 2. ANOVA

		Sums of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
QSV_Presence	Between Groups	6383,859	2	3191,929	113,607	0,000
	In groups	36384,561	1295	28,096		
	Total	42768,42	1297			
QSV_Search	Between Groups	1122,814	2	561,407	8,173	0,000
	In groups	88956,25	1295	68,692		
	Total	90079,064	1297			
CONNECTION	Between Groups	12072,093	2	6036,047	542,17	0,000
	In groups	14417,387	1295	11,133		
	Total	26489,48	1297			
FAITH	Between Groups	12708,459	2	6354,229	520,095	0,000
	In groups	15821,597	1295	12,217		
	Total	28530,056	1297			

Source: Elaborated by the author

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

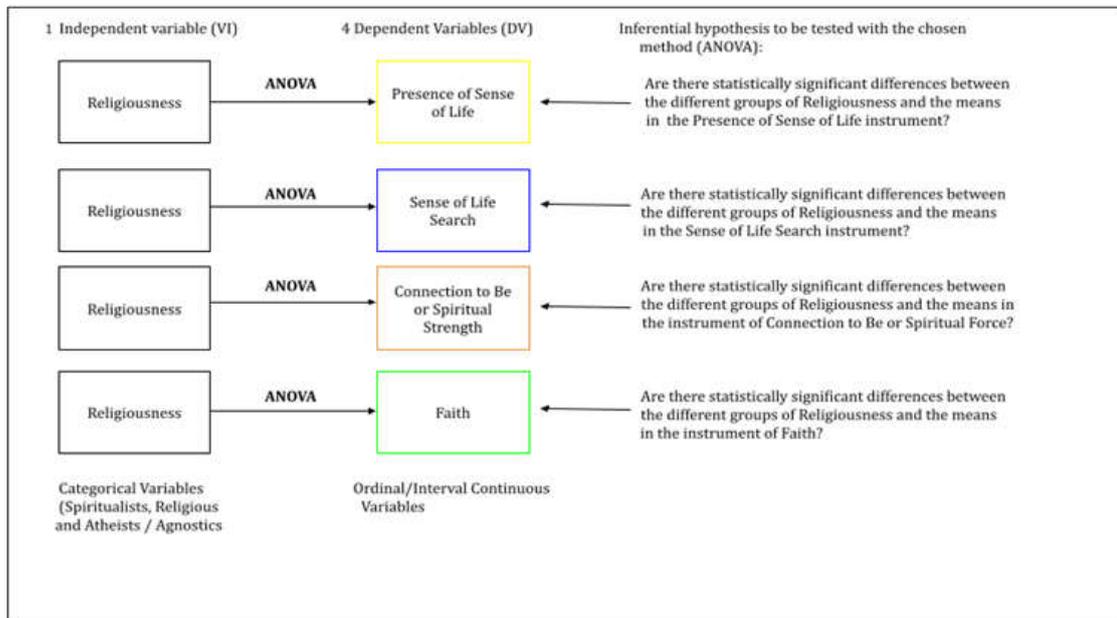
		N	Mean	St. Dev.	St. model	95% confidence interval for mean		Min	Max
						Inferior limit	Upper limit		
QSV-Presence	Spiritualists	224	20,661	5,4535	0,3644	19,943	21,379	4,0	28,0
	Religious	915	22,440	5,1362	0,1698	22,107	22,774	4,0	28,0
	Atheists and Agnostics	159	15,635	5,9751	0,4739	14,699	16,571	4,0	28,0
	Total	1298	21,300	5,7424	0,1594	20,987	21,612	4,0	28,0
QSV-Search	Spiritualists	224	25,433	7,3652	0,4921	24,463	26,403	5,0	35,0
	Religious	915	24,887	8,5492	0,2826	24,333	25,442	5,0	35,0
	Atheists and Agnostics	159	22,226	7,9778	0,6327	20,977	23,476	5,0	35,0
	Total	1298	24,656	8,3338	0,2313	24,202	25,109	5,0	35,0
CONNECTION	Spiritualists	224	15,987	3,6952	0,2469	15,5	16,473	4,0	20,0
	Religious	915	17,576	3,0509	0,1009	17,378	17,774	4,0	20,0
	Atheists and Agnostics	159	8,138	4,2582	0,3377	7,471	8,805	4,0	20,0
	Total	1298	16,146	4,5193	0,1254	15,9	16,392	4,0	20,0
FAITH	Spiritualists	224	16,326	4,278	0,2858	15,763	16,889	4,0	20,0
	Religious	915	17,948	3,0311	0,1002	17,751	18,144	4,0	20,0
	Atheists and Agnostics	159	8,264	4,5997	0,3648	7,544	8,985	4,0	20,0
	Total	1298	16,482	4,6901	0,1302	16,226	16,737	4,0	20,0

Source: Elaborated by the author

About Hypothesis 3: "There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students when considering age group as a differentiating factor". Given the non-normality of the data, we chose to use Spearman's non-parametric correlation to ascertain whether there was a relationship between the participant's age and the psychological variables investigated (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011). Age was significantly correlated ($p < 0.01$) and in a positively weak way with the Presence of Sense of Life ($r = 0.199$) and Beliefs in Spirituality (assessed through the factors Connection to be or spiritual strength ($r = 0.135$) and Faith ($r = 0.190$)). According to logotherapy's contributions, the beliefs in spirituality (evaluated in this research through the factors Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith) correlate with the Presence of meaning in life, not in the causal sense, but as aspects that

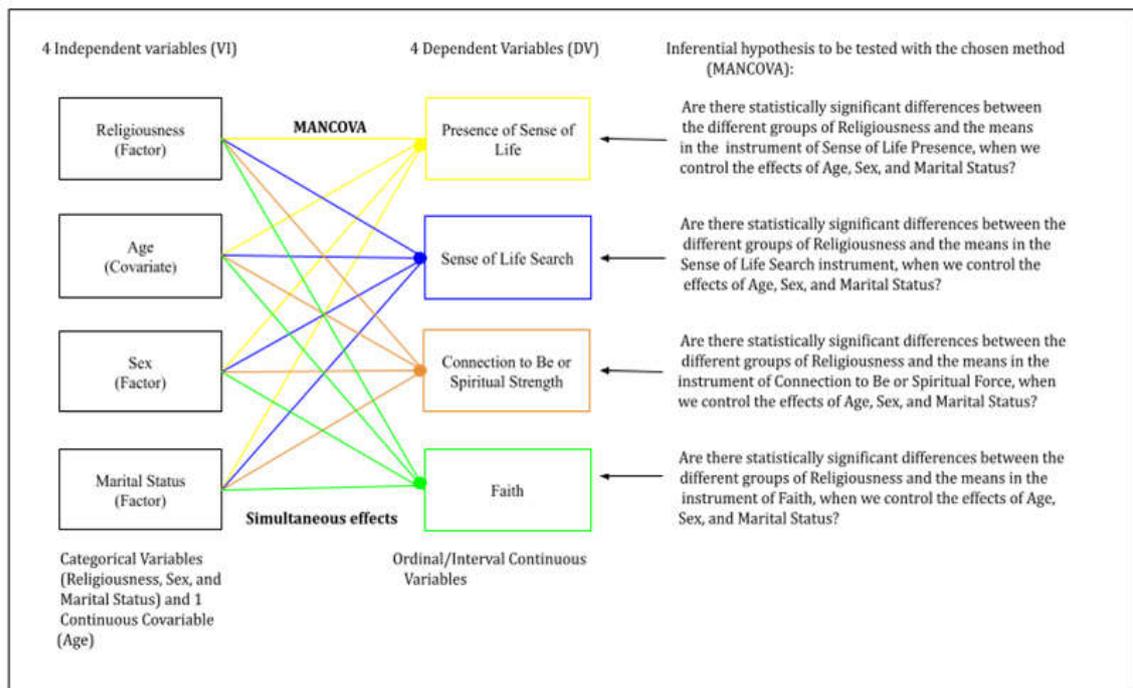
Presence of meaning in life, Connection to be or spiritual strength, and Faith in older people, when compared to younger people.

As for Hypothesis 4: "There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students when considering the categories: religious, atheist, agnostic, spiritualist as a differentiating factor". It is noticed that the number of atheists is quite different from the number of participants in other groups in the religious category. Due to this discrepant number of atheists, we decided to join Atheists and Agnostics in a group and analyze them together to increase the robustness of the studies since the results of the two groups showed similar response patterns and, statistically speaking, they showed no disparities. Hence, we decided to use a resampling technique (bootstrapping; Mooney, Mooney,



Source: Elaborated by the author

Figure 1. Research Design for an ANOVA



Source: Elaborated by the author

Figure 2. Research Design for a MANCOVA

Mooney, Duval & Duvall, 1993) and maintaining the parametric ANOVA techniques for the reliability of the analysis. ANOVA is performed when the researcher intends to investigate whether there are statistically significant differences between three groups or more for a dependent variable. In this case, we investigated whether the different groups (Spiritualists, Religious and Atheists, and Agnostics) presented statistically significant differences for the psychological variables of interest (Presence of Meaning in Life, Search for Meaning in Life, Connection to be, or Spiritual Strength and Faith). As it was possible to identify in Table 2, there were statistically significant differences between the different religious groups for all psychological variables ($p < 0.01$). As a complement to an ANOVA, it is recommended to use robust post hoc tests to identify the difference between groups. For this purpose, we used the Tukey (Abdi & Williams, 2010) and Bonferroni (Castañeda, Levin & Dunham, 1993) post hoc tests.

It is possible to identify a statistically significant difference between all groups (Spiritualists, Religious and Atheists, and Agnostics) for all variables (Presence of Meaning in Life, Search for Meaning in Life, Connection to Be or Higher Force, and Faith). Except for Spiritualists and Religious for the Search for Meaning in Life that was not statistically significant. The "Presence of the Meaning in Life" shows that the Religious and Spiritualists group present higher values than the Atheists and Agnostics. The score of religious being even higher than that of Spiritualists. The "Search for Meaning" has almost the same profile, emphasizing that Spiritualists search more than Religious. Thus, the Religious group had higher mean values than the Spiritualists in all variables. The exception is the Search for the meaning in life, where there was no statistically significant difference between religious and spiritualists. About "Connection to be or spiritual strength" and "Faith", it confirmed what was expected: the low result for Atheists and Agnostics and a high for Religious and

Spiritualists, with the group of Religious being the most relevant. It is essential to emphasize that, regarding these results, we observed low atheists and agnostics mean scores. In the most detailed investigation, we found that it corresponds to a group of younger people, which may be characteristic of this age group as are still experiencing the identity crisis typical of adolescence and youth. We show in Table 3 more information between the Mean and Standard Deviations found in each group for each variable, with color notations for each group: Spiritualists, Religious and Atheists, and Agnostics. Finally, to determine whether different groups of "Religiosity" (Spiritualists, Religious and Atheists/Agnostics) presented statistically significant differences for the psychological variables (Presence of Meaning in Life, Search for Meaning in Life, Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith), even if in the presence of other sociodemographic variables (Age, Marital Status and Sex), we sought to use a Multivariate Covariance Analysis technique (MANCOVA; Garson, 2005). Unlike the methodological design used in an ANOVA (Figure 1) with one Dependent Variable and one Independent Categorical Variable) in a MANCOVA, there is an interest in evaluating the effect of several covariates and Factors (Figure 2; Categorical and Continuous Independent Variables) in several Dependent Continuous Variables; simultaneously, trying to understand if, when evaluated together, the effect remains statistically significant. As previously evidenced, the significance levels for the effect of the independent variables on the selected dependent variables, when evaluated together, only Age ($F = 6.074$ and $p < 0.01$) and Religiousness ($F = 27.420$ and $p < 0.01$) presented significant effects for the Dependent Variables. As in ANOVA, MANCOVA needs post hoc tests that could detect between which groups and dependent variables the effect was statistically significant. It was possible to identify a statistically significant difference in Age in the Presence of a Sense of Life and Faith, even when we control the effects of Religiousness, Sex, and Marital Status. We also found statistically significant differences between religious groups (spiritualists, religious, agnostics, and atheists) and the Presence of Sense of Life, Connection to Be, or Spiritual Strength and Faith, even when we control the effects of Age, Sex, and Marital Status

CONCLUSION

The research proposed to carry out an empirical investigation to relate Beliefs in spirituality and realization of Sense of life in a sample of college students from the Brazilian Federation. Regarding the sample of 1298 college students, they represented all the Brazilian Federation States. Mainly, from Rio de Janeiro (67.8% $N = 880$), Amazonas (5.5% $N = 71$), São Paulo (5.1% $N = 66$), Paraíba (3.7% $N = 48$), and Ceará (2.5% $N = 33$). The other states had values individually lower than 2.4% of the respondents. We defined some sociodemographic indicators to enrich the analysis of this sample: in this case, sex, age, marital status, and religiousness categories (spiritualists, religious, atheists, and agnostics). We analyzed these sociodemographic data according to the variables defined in the research (QSV and its factors – Search and Presence of the meaning in life – and WHOQOL_SRPB and its factors – Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith). Regarding the variables of the research Sense of life (Search and Presence), and Beliefs in spirituality (Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith) we found that, regarding the presence factor, most of the sample showed very high scores (75 % of people) for the Presence of meaning in life. Regarding the Sense of Life Search, similarly, the sample presented high values – (Mean value of the sample 24.66, with a maximum value of 35 and a minimum of 5). Concerning Beliefs in spirituality – from the perspective of spiritual connection – the sample worked with high mean values ($M = 16.15$ and $DP = 4.51$). As for the Faith factor, the sample presented $M = 16.48$ and $DP = 4.69$, which means that most of the sample showed high mean values of faith. With regard to the conclusions obtained, given the research hypotheses, we found that:

Hypothesis 1: (There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students). The results showed that the correlation between the Presence of a Sense of

life and Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith were significant ($p < 0.01$) and moderately positive ($r = 0.547$). The correlation between the Search for the meaning in life and Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith was significant ($p < 0.01$) and weak positive ($r = 0.151$ and 0.124). The correlation between Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith was significant ($p < 0.01$) and strongly positive ($r = 0.759$). We found that when the factors of the variables are correlated, the results showed – in most of the sample – a strong correlation between Beliefs in spirituality and Presence and Search for the meaning in life. It is possible to conclude that the greater the belief in spirituality, the more realization of the meaning in life.

Hypothesis 2: (There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students when considering sex as a differentiating factor). The tests showed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between men and women for the variables Presence of meaning in life and Beliefs in Spirituality (assessed through the factor Connection to be or spiritual strength). It is possible to conclude that, in the sample investigated, the group of men presented values for the Presence of meaning in life ($M = 22.2$ and $DP = 5.43$) and the Connection to be or spiritual strength ($M = 16.45$ and $DP = 4.73$) higher than the group of women for the same variables (Presence of meaning in life – $M = 20.83$ and $DP = 5.84$ / Connection to be or spiritual strength – $M = 15.98$ and $DP = 4.40$).

Hypothesis 3: (There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students when considering age group as a differentiating factor). We noticed that age was significantly correlated ($p < 0.01$) and in a positively weak way with the Presence of Sense of Life ($r = 0.199$) and Beliefs in Spirituality (assessed through the factors Connection to be or spiritual strength ($r = 0.135$) and Faith ($r = 0.190$)). Thus, the calculations revealed that there was a significant difference, with a more robust result about the factors Presence of meaning in life, Connection to be or spiritual strength and Faith in older people, when compared to younger people. The perception of the sample distribution by age group is found in histogram 2.

Hypothesis 4: (There are significant relationships between beliefs in spirituality and the meaning in life in Brazilian college students when considering the categories: religious, spiritualists, atheists, and agnostics, as a differentiating factor). We obtained statistically significant differences using an ANOVA, between the different religiousness groups for all psychological variables ($p < 0.01$), with high rates of presence and meaning in life for Spiritualists and Religious groups and a low rate for Atheists and Agnostics. And finally, as a statistical refinement, using MANCOVA, we identified a statistically significant difference in Age in the Presence of Meaning in Life and Faith, even when we control the effects of Religiousness, Sex, and Marital Status. We also found statistically significant differences between the different religiousness groups (spiritualists, religious, agnostics, and atheists) and Presence of Sense of Life, Connection to be, or Spiritual Strength and Faith, even when we control the effects of Age, Sex, and Marital Status.

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