

# Analysis of the Film “The Doctor” in the Context of Self Transcendence Theory

## Öz Aşkınlık Kuramı Bağlamında “The Doctor” Filminin Analizi

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The Self-Transcendence Theory, developed by Pamela Reed, posits that individuals can enhance their well-being by transcending self-boundaries when facing life-threatening health challenges. The film *The Doctor* (1991) portrays a surgeon's transformation through a cancer diagnosis, offering a narrative to explore this theory. This study aims to analyze the film *The Doctor* within the framework of the Self-Transcendence Theory, focusing on its core concepts: vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being.

**Method:** A qualitative descriptive analysis was conducted. The film was viewed twice—first for general notes and second to identify scenes related to the theory's concepts. Eight scenes were selected and categorized under the themes of vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being. Data were analyzed by establishing cause-effect relationships and interpreted in the context of the theory.

**Results:** The analysis revealed that life-threatening crises, such as a cancer diagnosis, trigger vulnerability, prompting self-transcendence. Key scenes depicted the protagonist's growing awareness of mortality, expansion of personal and professional boundaries, and improved well-being through enhanced empathy and relationships.

**Conclusion:** The film *The Doctor* effectively illustrates the Self-Transcendence Theory's concepts, demonstrating how health-related crises can foster personal growth and well-being. This analysis supports the use of film as an educational tool to deepen understanding of nursing theories.

**Keywords:** Self-transcendence theory, *The Doctor* film, psychoncology, mental health

### ÖZ

**Amaç:** Pamela Reed tarafından geliştirilen Öz Aşkınlık Kuramı, bireylerin yaşamı tehdit eden sağlık sorunlarıyla karşılaştıklarında benlik sınırlarını aşarak iyi oluşlarını artırabileceğini öne sürer. 1991 yapımı *The Doctor* filmi, kanser teşhisiyle dönüşüm geçiren bir cerrahın hikayesini anlatarak bu kuramı keşfetmek için bir anlatı sunar. Bu çalışma, *The Doctor* filmini Öz Aşkınlık Kuramı çerçevesinde analiz etmeyi ve kuramın temel kavramları olan incinebilirlik, öz aşkınlık ve iyi oluşu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Yöntem:** Nitel betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanıldı. Film iki kez izlendi: ilk izlemede genel notlar alındı, ikinci izlemede ise kuramın kavramlarıyla ilişkili sahneler belirlendi. Sekiz sahne seçildi ve incinebilirlik, öz aşkınlık ve iyi oluş temaları altında kategorize edildi. Veriler, neden-sonuç ilişkileri kurularak analiz edildi ve kuram bağlamında yorumlandı.

**Bulgular:** Analiz, kanser teşhisi gibi yaşamı tehdit eden krizlerin incinebilirliği tetiklediğini ve bu durumun öz aşkınlık sürecini başlattığını ortaya koydu. Ana karakterin ölüm farkındalığının artması, kişisel ve profesyonel sınırlarının genişlemesi ve empati ile ilişkilerdeki iyileşme yoluyla iyi oluşunun arttığı sahneler belirlendi.

**Sonuç:** *The Doctor* filmi, Öz Aşkınlık Kuramı'nın kavramlarını etkili bir şekilde somutlaştırarak, sağlıkla ilgili krizlerin kişisel gelişimi ve iyi oluşu nasıl teşvik edebileceğini göstermektedir. Bu analiz, filmlerin hemşirelik teorilerini anlamada eğitici bir araç olarak kullanılmasını destekler.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Öz Aşkınlık Kuramı, *The Doctor* filmi, psiko-onkoloji, ruh sağlığı

## Introduction

There are numerous nursing theories that have contributed to the foundation of nursing science. As in other health disciplines, theories shape the theoretical and practical framework of nursing, guiding the development of professional values, approaches, and the implementation of the profession (Alligood 2017). Nursing theories provide explanations regarding the person, health, environment, and nursing, shaping both the essence and the delivery of nursing care (Meleis 2011). In this context, nursing theories play a significant role in understanding the individual, who is at the center of nursing, and in the process of providing care. To date, numerous nursing theories have been developed. One of these is the Self-Transcendence Theory, developed by Pamela Reed. According to this theory, individuals' potential for self-transcendence is activated when they face life-threatening illness or experience health-related changes that heighten their awareness of mortality (Reed 1991). An increase in self-transcendence is reflected in the expansion of self-boundaries in a way that promotes well-being. Individuals have the capacity to expand these boundaries in line with their own potential; however, during serious illness or other health-related life crises, nurses and other healthcare professionals assist in facilitating

this process of self-transcendence. According to the theory, self-transcendence is an important resource for maintaining well-being throughout the lifespan (Smith 2019).

The Self-Transcendence Theory is based on two fundamental assumptions. The first assumption defines self-transcendence, in terms of self-differentiation and shifting boundaries, as a self-organizing process that supports well-being during significant health and life events by managing the boundaries of the self. The second assumption emphasizes that the defining feature of open systems is their continuous interaction with the environment, which leads to increasing complexity. However, this increasing complexity is also accompanied by a capacity for organization. The process of self-transcendence relies on the ability to manage this growing complexity through self-organizing capabilities (Abu Khait et al. 2020, Reed and Haugan 2021). The Self-Transcendence Theory suggests that health-related events contribute to increasing complexity in life, and that individuals' capacity for self-organization facilitates well-being throughout these experiences (Reed and Haugan 2021).

The theory proposes three core concepts: self-transcendence, vulnerability, and well-being. Self-transcendence refers to an individual's capacity to expand their personal boundaries in various ways that enhance well-being (Reed 1991). It involves moving beyond limited perspectives of the self and the world, resulting in broadened perceptions and increased flexibility. The boundaries of the self are multidimensional and can expand inward (toward greater awareness of one's beliefs, values, and aspirations), outward (to connect with others, nature, and the environment), transpersonally (to relate to dimensions beyond the observable world), and temporally (to integrate and make meaning of one's past, present, and future) (Reed 2014). Without the capacity for self-transcendence, supporting health and well-being in the face of challenging health conditions may not be possible. In this context, self-transcendence is one of the key processes that explains how well-being can be achieved even in life-threatening circumstances (Reed and Haugan 2021, Worth and Smith 2021).

Another key concept of the theory, vulnerability, refers to heightened awareness of mortality (Reed 1991). While various experiences can increase this awareness, health-related events that involve life-threatening conditions or loss are particularly prominent within the context of vulnerability. Chronic illnesses, disability, aging, grief, traumatic events, confronting the end of life, and experiences that intensify awareness of mortality are all situations in which vulnerability emerges (Reed 2014).

Well-being is the third core concept of the theory. It is defined as a subjective sense of health or wholeness, based on an individual's own criteria at a given point in time (Reed 1991). Well-being involves existential judgment and is influenced by biopsychosocial factors such as culture, values, family, and other significant relationships. Strongly associated with self-transcendence, indicators of well-being include life satisfaction, happiness, high morale in aging, self-care agency in chronic illness, a sense of meaning in life, absence of depression, and reduction in anxiety, which are considered specific indicators of mental health (Reed 2014).

The Self-Transcendence Theory makes a significant contribution to nursing knowledge and practice by explaining how individuals transcend their boundaries and achieve well-being. A review of the literature reveals that studies utilizing the Self-Transcendence Theory have found it effective in reducing issues such as anxiety and depression in cancer patients, enhancing the mental health of older adults with neurocognitive problems, and positively influencing the caregiving behaviors of nursing students (Haugan and Innstrand 2012, Hwang et al. 2013, Cui et al. 2022). Therefore, the theory can be considered effective in empowering both nurses and those receiving care. In this context, understanding this theory in the nursing profession may play an important role in strengthening nurses' perspectives on the individuals they care for, enhancing the quality of care they provide, and supporting both patients and nurses in transcending their own boundaries.

Various techniques are used to facilitate the understanding and concretization of theories, one of which is film analysis. Films help students grasp and learn nursing-related concepts and theories more effectively (Conti et al. 2019, Hyangjin and Haeryun 2021). It is known that students can achieve both cognitive and emotional gains by analyzing film scenes through the theories and concepts they learn in class (Yesildag and Bostan 2023). Desai et al. (2018) noted that watching, analyzing, and discussing films is a low-cost and active learning method. A review of the literature shows that films have been used in educational settings for nurses and nursing students and that they serve as effective teaching tools (Abebe et al. 2023, Mert-Karadas and Yucel-Ozcirpan 2023, Arkan and Bostanlı 2024). The Self-Transcendence Theory is one of the theories for which film analysis can be effectively used to better understand the experiences involved in coping with difficult life events such as illness or loss. In a study by Altun and Ay Kaatsız (2024), this theory was applied in the analysis of the film "Soul Surfer", which tells the story of a young swimmer who loses his arm in an accident. The study emphasized that this approach contributed to a deeper understanding of the process following loss and the efforts to cope with it, while also facilitating the internalization of the theory's core concepts. In this context, it is believed that

analyzing the film *The Doctor* within the framework of the Self-Transcendence Theory, given its focus on themes such as illness, loss, death, and personal and professional growth, could provide a valuable contribution to the literature.

"The Doctor" is a 1991 drama film starring William Hurt (IMDB 1991). The film tells the story of Dr. Jack McKee, a successful yet emotionally detached surgeon, whose life changes after he is diagnosed with cancer. As Jack experiences the healthcare system from the perspective of a patient, he begins to realize how impersonal and mechanical doctors and hospital environments can be. During his treatment, he forms a friendship with June Ellis, a fellow patient being treated for a brain tumor in the same hospital. June's sharing of her illness-related experiences contributes to Jack's process of making sense of his own condition. The challenges he faces throughout his illness and treatment lead him to learn empathy, not only as a physician but also as a human being. Ultimately, Jack undergoes a profound transformation in his professional life, adopting a more empathetic approach toward his patients and attempting to pass this perspective on to his medical trainees. The film centers on Jack's journey of personal and professional transformation. A review of existing analyses of "The Doctor" shows that the film has mostly been examined in the context of critiques of the healthcare system and ethical issues (Şenses 2019, Coşkun 2020). From the moment Jack receives his diagnosis, the experiences he goes through, such as becoming aware of human mortality, expanding the boundaries of the self, and maintaining a sense of well-being, are closely related to the assumptions of the Self-Transcendence Theory. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to enhance the understanding of the Self-Transcendence Theory by concretizing its core concepts through the film "The Doctor" and to contribute to the literature by considering the film as a resource that may support the understanding of patients' experiences of transcending their self-boundaries. In line with this aim, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How are the core concepts of the Self-Transcendence Theory, namely vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being, represented in the film "The Doctor"? (2) How can the experiences of the characters in "The Doctor" be associated with the Self-Transcendence Theory?

## Method

In this study, the film "The Doctor" was examined using the descriptive analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, within the framework of the concepts of vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being as proposed in Reed's Self-Transcendence Theory. As this study involves the analysis of a film, it does not require approval from an ethics committee.

## Procedure

The film was watched twice. During the first viewing, general notes about the film were taken. In the second viewing, scenes related to the theory, including their content, dialogue, and time codes, were documented in detail. To increase familiarity with the data, all notes were reviewed again by the researchers. Following these readings, the data collection process was concluded, and the analysis phase began.

**Table 1. Stages of descriptive analysis**

Creating a framework for descriptive analysis	In this stage, a framework is created for data analysis and the themes under which the data will be examined are determined (Yıldırım ve Şimşek 2021). For the data of this study, the themes were identified as the core concepts of the Self-Transcendence Theory: vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being.
Processing data according to the thematic framework	Previously obtained data are read, organized, and meaningfully compiled and processed according to the relevant theme (Yıldırım ve Şimşek 2021). Data obtained from the film were examined in detail and related to the predetermined themes in a contextually appropriate manner.
Identification of findings	At this stage, the organized data are described and supported with direct quotations (Yıldırım ve Şimşek 2021). Data associated with the themes were described and explained using quotes from dialogues in the film.
Interpretation of findings	In the final stage, the identified findings are explained and examined and interpreted within the context of cause-and-effect relationships (Yıldırım ve Şimşek 2021). Findings obtained from the film were interpreted and discussed in light of information from the literature.

## Data Analysis

In the descriptive analysis method used in this study, the data were classified, summarized, and interpreted according to pre-determined themes. Comparisons were made by establishing cause-effect relationships among

the data. The method consists of four stages: creating a framework for descriptive analysis, processing the data according to the thematic framework, identifying the findings, and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2021). Explanations regarding the analyses conducted at each stage are presented in Table 1.

### Validity and Reliability

In this study, five criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994) were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. Credibility was achieved by clearly defining the thematic analysis process and thoroughly examining the film characters in line with the Self-Transcendence Theory. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the events and character transformations in the film, taking their context into account, thereby enhancing the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. Dependability was ensured by conducting the analysis systematically and reporting the process transparently. The coding was carried out independently by two researchers, and then codes and themes were compared to establish a common framework. This strengthened the consistency of the analytical process. Confirmability was ensured through detailed observational and reflexive notes taken by the researchers during the analysis of the film, the development of data-based justifications, and the collaborative evaluation of codes to create a shared interpretive framework. Authenticity was achieved by interpreting the characters' experiences in depth and with sensitivity to context, in line with the Self-Transcendence Theory. By addressing the characters' internal transformation processes, the significance and theoretical contribution of the study were strengthened.

<b>Table 2. Themes and related scenes</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Scene</b>	<b>Minute</b>
Vulnerability	Scene 1: Jack learns about his laryngeal tumor and freezes	20:25-24:06
	Scene 2: When Jack shares his illness with his wife and she says "We'll beat it." he responds, "We? 'We' don't have it! It's not a team game!"	25:45-27:26
	Scene 3: When the doctor shares the treatment plan, Jack says, "Well, what time tomorrow? I have a... Open heart scheduled tomorrow..."	37:20-38:10
	Scene 4: June describes her diagnosis process: "I came up here when they finally diagnosed my tumor. I thought I'd throw myself over the edge. I felt like my skin was coming off, you know? I screamed and I screamed..."	1:09:40-1:11:30
	Scene 5: June's statement: "It's the time. It's rushing past me. I don't wanna rush past this."	1:14:11-1:14:30
	Scene 6: Jack's reaction upon learning that his tumor has grown despite treatment: "No! No!" followed by expressing his disappointment	1:23:34-1:25:21
Self-Transcendence	Scene 7: After his illness experience, Jack listens to a patient waiting for a heart transplant, asks if they have any questions, answers them, and inquires about their priorities for future plans	1:07:12-1:08:40
	Scene 8: June's statement, "My tumor, I see it giving me certain freedoms I never allowed myself."	1:00:03-1:00:12
	Scene 9: Jack's attempt to support June by trying to take her to an event she wants to attend but is unable to go	1:11:34-1:18:34
	Scene 10: Jack, upset with his doctor's approach, says, "I think you ought to brush up your act, Dr. Abbott. Because today I'm sick, tomorrow or the day after or 30 years from now, you'll be sick. Every doctor becomes a patient somewhere down the line, And then... It'll hit you as hard as it's hit me."	1:29:14-1:31:05
Well-being	Scene 11: Jack trying to communicate in order to resolve problems caused by communication breakdown with his spouse	1:45:55-1:50:54
	Scene 12: When Jack returns to work, he explains to his assistants how patients should be approached to feel whole and healthy professionally according to his own standards, saying, "Patients have their own name. They feel frightened, embarrassed and vulnerable. And they feel sick. Most of all, they want to get better. Because of that... They put their lives in our hands. I can try to explain what that means until I'm blue in the face. But you know something, it wouldn't mean a thing. And sure as hell never did to me."	1:55:20-1:57:23

## Results

Within the framework of the Self-Transcendence Theory, a total of 12 scenes were associated with the selected themes of vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being (Table 2). As shown in Table 2, scenes in the film were associated with the theme of vulnerability through moments in which individuals' awareness of personal mortality and susceptibility became prominent. In situations such as the loss of health and threats to life, as seen in chronic illnesses, individuals become aware of these realities, and this awareness serves as a step toward transcending their self-boundaries (Reed 2014). In the film, Jack's cancer diagnosis represents a life-threatening crisis. His stunned reaction upon first learning about the tumor (Scene 1), his anger in response to his wife's comment about the illness (Scene 2), his attempt to delay treatment (Scene 3), and his reaction upon learning that the tumor has grown (Scene 6) are all examples of Jack's recognition of his mortality and his grief responses related to the loss of health. Scene 1 and Scene 6 reflect the shock/denial stage of the grieving process; Scene 2 represents the anger stage; and Scene 3 illustrates the bargaining stage. These scenes show that Jack, through his awareness of health loss and mortality, is undergoing a grieving process and thus experiencing vulnerability. Similarly, June's sharing of how she felt when she received her diagnosis (Scene 4) and her statement that time is passing and she does not want to miss anything (Scene 5) exemplify her awareness of mortality. These scenes indicate that Jack and June experience vulnerability in different ways, highlighting that such experiences are unique to each individual.

Self-transcendence is associated with an individual's potential to surpass their existing boundaries and to expand these limits. This transcendence is reflected in all perceptions and experiences related to the self and the surrounding environment (Reed 2014). Before his diagnosis, Jack held the belief that *"a surgeon's job is to cut,"* reflecting a detached professional stance. However, through the experiences he undergoes during his illness, he begins to approach his patients with greater compassion. In Scene 7, his empathetic interaction with a patient awaiting a heart transplant, and in Scene 10, his advice to another physician to empathize with him and with other patients, exemplify Jack's growing awareness and his transcendence of professional boundaries. Additionally, as shown in Scene 9, Jack—previously characterized by egocentric behavior—forms a deep friendship with June and supports her throughout her illness until the moment of her death. This illustrates Jack's expansion of personal boundaries. Another example of self-transcendence is found in Scene 8, where June says, and Jack later adopts, the phrase: *"My tumor, I see it giving me certain freedoms I never allowed myself."* This statement reflects their process of deriving meaning from illness and integrating that meaning into their lives, such as engaging in long-postponed activities, forming deep connections, advocating for patients, or guiding interns in communication. These are all signs of the self-transcendence experienced by both Jack and June.

Self-transcendence is seen not only as an outcome, such as a way out of significant life events and a progression of the self, but also as a pathway, mediator, and facilitator toward well-being. (Kublay and Hallaç 2022). Well-being, in turn, is defined as the individual's sense of wholeness and health according to their own criteria (Reed 2014). Jack has recovered from his illness and, as part of his self-transcendence experience, has regained functionality in both his daily life and professional role. During his illness, Jack had reduced communication with his family; however, in the recovery process, he began to take steps to resolve issues with them. In Scene 11, he persistently tries to talk to his angry wife. Unable to speak due to surgery, he attempts to express himself in writing, apologizes, and tells her he loves her. Following this scene, the tension between them lessens and their relationship improves. Furthermore, as seen in Scene 12, Jack has learned to show an empathic approach toward his patients and has even begun to teach this to his assistants: *"Patients have their own name. They feel frightened, embarrassed and vulnerable. And they feel sick. Most of all, they want to get better. Because of that... They put their lives in our hands. I can try to explain what that means until I'm blue in the face. But you know something, it wouldn't mean a thing. And sure as hell never did to me."* These scenes illustrate that Jack, by transcending his personal boundaries, has begun to feel healthy and whole in all aspects of his life once again, indicating that he is in a process of well-being.

## Discussion

Self-Transcendence Theory, which offers an in-depth understanding of the process by which individuals transcend their limits to maintain well-being, holds an important place among nursing theories. The theory's applicability in nursing practice and its potential to help individuals surpass themselves in the face of crises have been emphasized in studies within the literature (Reed 2021, Eraydın et al. 2023) as well as in another film analysis addressing the theory (Altun and Ay Kaatsız 2024). This study aimed to analyze the film *"The Doctor"* within the context of Pamela Reed's Self-Transcendence Theory and demonstrated that the scenes in the film could be related to the concepts of vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being. The findings reflect, in

alignment with Reed's theoretical framework, the process by which individuals expand their self-boundaries, find meaning, and achieve well-being following challenging experiences, as depicted through the film "The Doctor".

**Vulnerability:** Reed (1991) defines vulnerability as a process that emerges with an increased awareness of mortality or susceptibility to harm. Chronic illnesses, traumatic events, and experiences of loss may trigger this awareness (Kim et al. 2014). Such events, for example the loss of health due to a serious illness like cancer, may initiate a grief process in the individual along with accompanying grief reactions (Fennell et al. 2021). When the literature is examined, it is seen that vulnerability is a component of the grieving process and is closely associated with it (Sim et al. 2014). It is known that grief reactions include the stages of shock/denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kubler-Ross and Kessler 2005). In the film, Jack displays shock/denial in Scenes 1 and 6, anger in Scene 2, and bargaining in Scene 3, indicating that he exhibits grief reactions stemming from his confrontation with mortality. Accordingly, it can be said that Jack's cancer diagnosis led him to experience the role of a patient and made him aware of his own vulnerability. Similarly, June's statement *"It's the time. It's rushing past me. I don't wanna rush past this."* reflects her awareness of the finiteness of life. These scenes in the film align with the literature suggesting that vulnerability prompts individuals to re-evaluate their lives (Reischer et al. 2021, Wang et al. 2023). In a study conducted by Michael et al. (2022) with cancer patients, it was found that death anxiety and emotional contradictions arising from vulnerability occurred simultaneously with a process in which patients experientially accepted the reality of death. During this process, despite their conflicting emotions, patients were found to strive to make sense of their experiences and to display both vulnerability and resilience at the same time (Michael et al. 2022). In line with these findings, it can be said that the emotional and behavioral reactions of Jack and June to their cancer diagnoses also stemmed from their experience of vulnerability.

In a study conducted with cancer patients, Williams (2012) found that self-transcendence is a process triggered through vulnerability. Other studies have also shown that vulnerability has the potential to enhance individuals' spiritual growth and inner awareness, and by influencing psychosocial adjustment, it lays the groundwork for the process of self-transcendence (Reed 2021, Er et al. 2022). Similar to the findings in the literature, the scenes in "The Doctor" illustrate that through their experiences of vulnerability, individuals re-evaluate both their professional and personal perspectives, and that confronting the reality of death leads them toward a deeper awareness of the meaning of life, ultimately enabling the experience of self-transcendence.

**Self-Transcendence:** Reed (2014) states that self-transcendence is a process that develops following loss and crisis and supports well-being. Self-transcendence refers to the expansion of a person's internal, interpersonal, and temporal boundaries (Reed 2014). In a study conducted by Sode and Chenji (2024), self-transcendence was found to be associated with positive experiences in work life and to positively influence professional behaviors. Another study also found that self-transcendence played a mediating role in leading to a more meaningful work life (Widodo and Suryosukmono 2021). Similar to these findings, Jack, who initially portrays an authoritarian, distant, and mechanical physician before his illness, transforms during his illness into a doctor who approaches patients with greater compassion, establishes deeper connections with them, and advises other doctors to do the same. This indicates that Jack has achieved positive gains in his professional life through the process of self-transcendence.

In a study conducted with breast cancer patients, the ability of individuals to use their own illness experiences to help others and to develop mutual support mechanisms with their surroundings was identified as a component of self-transcendence (Aoki and Fujita 2021). Jack's support of his friend June during her illness, in addition to caring for his own patients, and his willingness to accept help from June in return, suggest that he developed a reciprocal support mechanism with those around him. This transformation in Jack can also be seen as an indication that he was able to use his experiences for the benefit of others and thus experienced self-transcendence. Additionally, June's statement in the film, *"My tumor, I see it giving me certain freedoms I never allowed myself,"* demonstrates that June experienced personal gains due to her illness and expanded her own boundaries. In parallel with June's expression, a study with cancer patients found that participants, within the context of self-transcendence, reported that cancer offered them a new perspective and led them to review and change their lives (Abdallah et al. 2023). A similar study conducted with lung cancer patients showed that the illness process enabled individuals to discover themselves, surpass their limits, and create new meanings, resulting in self-transcendence (He et al. 2025). In this context, the scenes in "The Doctor" can be said to align with Reed's concept of self-transcendence, as they demonstrate the characters surpassing their boundaries in many areas.

Well-being: According to Reed (2014), well-being is defined as the individual's feeling of wholeness and health according to their own criteria. The literature shows that self-transcendence can play an important role in supporting and sustaining well-being (Arslan et al. 2024). The well-being process is related not only to the physical recovery of the individual but also to their reconstruction in psychological and social terms (Reed 2014). Studies have demonstrated a strong connection between self-transcendence and well-being in individuals who have undergone life-threatening processes, and this connection leads to transformation at both the individual and interpersonal levels (Runquist and Reed 2007, Reed 2014, Pena-Gayo et al. 2018). A study with patients diagnosed with breast cancer revealed a strong relationship between family functioning and self-transcendence (He et al. 2022). In a study by Abdalrahim et al. (2023), patients newly diagnosed with cancer reported establishing stronger relationships with their environment within the context of self-transcendence. In parallel with these findings, the film shows Jack's efforts to improve communication and relationships with his family after his illness, indicating an important development at the interpersonal level of the well-being process.

Additionally, the literature reports that self-transcendence and well-being also contribute to professional well-being (Abdullah et al. 2021, Sode and Chenji 2024). Jack's empathetic approach to his patients and his role in educating his assistants on how to treat patients are indicators of his well-being process. Jack's experience of self-transcendence during his illness led to positive changes in many areas of his life and enabled him to maintain his well-being at the highest possible level. In this regard, the scenes in the film and studies in the literature show similarities in emphasizing that self-transcendence positively affects well-being in individuals' personal, familial, and professional lives.

This study has some limitations. Since a film analysis method was used, the findings are limited to the examination of film scenes only and clinical observations or primary data related to patients' experiences could not be utilized. This may have restricted a deeper and more multidimensional discussion of the Self-Transcendence Theory. Additionally, the limited cultural and individual diversity of the characters in the film may have resulted in addressing only certain aspects of the unique and variable nature of the self-transcendence experience.

## Conclusion

The Self-Transcendence Theory is a nursing theory that addresses how individuals move beyond their personal boundaries and achieve well-being in the face of life-threatening events. Understanding this theory by nurses and nursing students is important for recognizing patients' experiences of vulnerability and for supporting their self-transcendence in order to enhance their well-being. Based on the view that nursing theories and concepts can be effectively discussed and understood through visual materials such as films, this study analyzed the film "The Doctor" within the framework of the Self-Transcendence Theory and demonstrated that the theory's core concepts can be concretized through film scenes. The findings of the study suggest that crises such as illness can trigger the process of self-transcendence in individuals and that experiencing self-transcendence may positively influence their level of well-being.

In conclusion, "The Doctor" can be considered a valuable educational tool, as it visually illustrates how health-related crises can contribute to personal and professional transformation and closely aligns with the Self-Transcendence Theory. In this context, viewing "The Doctor" and associating its scenes with the concepts of the Self-Transcendence Theory may be proposed as an effective method for teaching the theory. Additionally, the film may be used to emphasize the importance of understanding patients' experiences of vulnerability, self-transcendence, and well-being during the course of illness, and of reflecting these experiences in healthcare delivery. Accordingly, showing "The Doctor" to students in nursing and other health-related fields may help strengthen theoretical understanding and increase the sensitivity of future healthcare professionals.

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