

**Christianity and Job Satisfaction:
The Moderating Effects of a Christian Belief System**

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Job satisfaction has been defined in terms of the pleasurable emotional state resulting from one's evaluation of one's job or job experience (Locke, 1976). In the past, the prevailing view of job satisfaction was a situational one. In other words, task characteristics, pay, working conditions, supervision, etc. were considered to be the key determinants of job satisfaction. More recently, a second perspective of job satisfaction has emerged. Citing evidence of consistency in job attitudes over time (Pulakos & Schmitt, 1983), Staw and Ross (1985) argued in support of a dispositional view of job satisfaction. This view suggests that individuals tend to interpret their job context in accordance with their own relatively stable affective dispositions. That is to say, individuals who are predisposed to be generally happy or satisfied with life tend to be more happy and satisfied with their jobs, over and above the influence of specific positive or negative contextual job factors. Although the dispositional approach has been subject to criticism (Gerhart, 1987), empirical evidence has been advanced to further support this perspective.

More specifically, Judge and his colleagues (Judge, 1993; Judge & Hulin, 1993; Judge & Locke, 1993) have developed and tested a complex dispositional model of job satisfaction. At the heart of this model is the concept that subjective well-being is a key determinant of job satisfaction. Subjective well-being is defined as a state of psychological wellness (Diener, 1984). Dysfunctional thought processes (e.g., Beck, 1987), in turn, were found to be the strongest negative determinant of subjective well-being (Judge & Locke, 1993). Dysfunctional thought processes such as overgeneralization, perfectionism, dependence on others, or the desire for social approval tend to undermine self-worth (e.g., Kuiper, Olinger, & Swallow, 1987) and

lead to perceptions of failure and unhappiness (Judge & Locke, 1993). Because job satisfaction is essentially an evaluative process and because dysfunctional thinking processes cause individuals to evaluate information inappropriately (e.g., Keller, 1983), the examination of dysfunctional thought processes in relationship to job satisfaction seems particularly appropriate (Judge & Locke, 1993).

Although the dispositional view seems to have emerged as the dominant view of job satisfaction (e.g., Judge, 2001; Steel & Rentsch, 1997), this view largely ignores the potential moderating influences of individual values and belief systems on job satisfaction. Indeed, some theorists and researchers (e.g., Knotts, 2000; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Spillane & Sanata, 2001) have suggested significant relationships between spirituality, religious involvement and Christian belief systems and job satisfaction. Furthermore, other researchers (e.g., Gazieli & Maslovaty, 1998; Wright, 1989) have found the effects of religiosity on job satisfaction to be especially pronounced in religious organizations. Nevertheless, few empirical studies have specifically examined the effects a Christian belief system on individual job satisfaction.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the potential moderating role of a Christian belief system on job satisfaction in the context of the dispositional view. More exactly, we hypothesize that Christian beliefs and values will moderate the relationships between subjective well-being and job satisfaction and between dysfunctional thinking processes and job satisfaction. Figure 1 portrays a basic version of Judge and Locke's (1993) dispositional model of job satisfaction. Figure 2 demonstrates the hypothesized moderating influence of a Christian belief system. We further suggest that in an organizational setting that is largely non-Christian with no particular Christian focus or mission, dispositional factors such as dysfunctional thinking

and subjective well-being will be significantly related to job satisfaction, as shown in Figure 1. In contrast, we assert that in an organizational setting that is largely Christian with a Christian focus and mission, Christian beliefs and values will moderate the relationships between dysfunctional thinking and job satisfaction and subjective well-being and job satisfaction rendering these relationships less significant, as shown in Figure 2. In short, we suggest that an overtly Christian organizational setting with significant Christian beliefs among its members will tend to dampen or partially nullify the effects of these dispositional factors on job satisfaction. Biblical teachings such as contentedness, selflessness, service, love for one another, etc., form the foundation of the Christian belief system and provide theoretical justification for our hypothesis.

Method

Samples. Our analysis involved comparing two distinct samples from two distinct populations. The first data set was reported by Judge and Locke (1993) and consists of a sample of 231 employees of a large northeastern secular university with no particular Christian mission or concentration of Christian beliefs among its members. The second data set consists of a sample of 263 employees of a medium-sized southwestern university with a distinct Christian mission and strong concentration of Christian beliefs among its members.

Analysis. We used structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques to compare the fit of the model shown in Figure 1 for each sample. A significant overall better fit for the secular data set relative to the Christian data set would provide support for our hypothesis. In addition, significant parameter estimates for the secular data set along with non-significant parameter estimates for the Christian data set for the paths between dysfunctional thought processes and job satisfaction and subjective well-being and job satisfaction would lend additional support for our

hypothesis. Finally, we examined differences in means across the two samples for the composite indicators of each of the three constructs shown in Figure 1. Key mean differences across the two samples would provide further evidence for our hypothesis.

Results

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among variables are presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively for each data set. In order to facilitate comparisons, all mean and standard deviation values were transformed to the item level in both data sets. Fit indexes for the basic dispositional model shown in Figure 1 are presented in Table 3 for each data set. Neither data set fit the basic model particularly well, but the Christian data set ($\chi^2 [19, N = 263] = 140.09$, NNFI = .42, IFI = .62, CFI = .61) demonstrated substantially worse fit than the secular data set ($\chi^2 [19, N = 231] = 137.83$, NNFI = .63, IFI = .75, CFI = .75), thus providing support for our hypothesis that Christian beliefs and values will attenuate the effects of dispositional factors on job satisfaction.

Standardized parameter estimates for the basic dispositional model are shown for both data sets in Figure 3. As anticipated, the parameter estimates for the path from dysfunctional thought processes to subjective well-being were virtually identical for both data sets. In contrast, there was a substantial discrepancy in the parameter estimates between subjective well-being and job satisfaction for the two data sets, with the secular data set demonstrating a significant relationship between the two constructs and the Christian data set indicating no such relationship. This provides additional support for our hypothesis. Likewise, the parameter estimate for the path from dysfunctional thought process to job satisfaction was small and non-significant for the Christian data set. Unexpectedly however, the parameter estimate, though of a greater magnitude in the correct direction, was also non-significant for the secular data set. This result

may be partially explained by the fact that Judge and Locke (1993) included a separate construct, *job* dysfunctional thought processes, as a mediator between these constructs in their comprehensive model. We chose not to include this mediator in our basic model, assuming partial mediation and sufficient residual direct effects to allow us to assess our hypothesis. However, based on these data, it now appears that the effects of dysfunctional thought processes on job satisfaction are indeed fully mediated by job dysfunctional thought processes. Thus, we were unable to accurately assess the direct effects of dysfunctional thought processes on job satisfaction for each data set. Nevertheless, the greater magnitude of the parameter estimate for the secular data lends some additional support for our hypothesis.

Finally, an examination of mean values reveals important differences across the two samples that may provide some additional evidence in support of our hypothesis. As portrayed in Tables 1 and 2, subjects in the Christian sample demonstrated higher mean values in their appraisal of their satisfaction with their coworkers, supervisors, and work than subjects in the secular sample. In addition, on average, subjects in the Christian sample reported being happier a greater percentage of the time (74%) than subjects in the secular sample (70%). Subjects in the Christian work environment also reflected lower mean levels of dysfunctional thought processes as represented by the Dysfunctional Attitude Survey than subjects in the secular work environment.

Discussion and Future Research

The present study examined the role of Christian values and beliefs in the context of a dispositional view of job satisfaction. The results presented here provide support for the hypothesis that in the context of an overtly Christian organization with a Christian mission, Christian beliefs and values may moderate the relationship between subjective well-being and

job satisfaction, effectively dampening the effects of such dispositional factors on job satisfaction. Thus, one possible explanation of these findings is that certain aspects of job satisfaction for individuals with Christian beliefs and values who work in a Christian environment with other Christians may be shaped more by their Christian ideals than by their general predisposition to be satisfied. For instance, workers with Christian values such as loving one another and serving others may be more likely to rate their supervisors and co-workers more highly than someone without such Christian mores. The mean differences between the two samples in the present study appear to lend additional support for this explanation. In short, taken together, the findings of this study suggest that Christian workers in Christian work environments may be more satisfied with certain aspects of their work regardless of general dispositions relative to their peers in secular work environments.

Despite these initial insights into the role of Christian beliefs and values in the context of a dispositional view of job satisfaction, the findings presented here are nevertheless hampered by certain limitations. First, the two data sets analyzed in this study were collected under substantially different circumstances by two different sets of investigators separated by significant amounts of both time and geographical distance. Therefore, despite the fact that both samples consisted of university employees, important unknown systematic differences beyond a Christian worldview may exist that could be affecting the results of the present study. Second, the present study substituted an overtly Christian workplace as a proxy for individual level Christian values and beliefs. Our methodology assumed that subjects in the Christian sample generally hold and are motivated by Christian values and beliefs while subjects in the secular sample generally do not hold and are not influenced by such value and belief systems. This assumption may be somewhat too simplistic. It is certainly possible, and perhaps even likely,

that some people in the Christian work environment may neither hold nor subscribe to Christian values, while many in the secular workplace may in fact possess strong Christian values and beliefs that influence their behaviors and attitudes in important ways. To the extent that our samples are “cross-pollinated,” the results and interpretations presented here are weakened. Third, our inability to fully examine the effects of Christian values and beliefs on the relationship between dysfunctional thought processes and job satisfaction weakens the strength of our findings. Had we been able to show the hypothesized results on these two dimensions, our argument would have been substantially bolstered.

Despite these concerns, our findings make an important contribution to our understanding the role of Christian values and beliefs in the workplace. Future research should continue to investigate the role of Christianity in shaping important workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction. In particular, a study could be designed to further validate the results presented here while eliminating some of the weaknesses of the current research. Data could be gathered from two organizations, one with an overtly Christian mission and homogenous Christian workforce and the other with a more secular mission and mixed workforce. The data would be gathered during approximately the same time period and in approximately the same geographical area. Additional data would be gathered to facilitate the full examination of the moderating effects of Christian beliefs and values on the relationship between dysfunctional thinking processes and job satisfaction. Finally, subjects would self-report on the extent to which they hold and are influenced by Christian values and beliefs. In this manner, the organizational effects of an overtly Christian or overtly secular organization could be separated from the individual effects of holding and being motivated by Christian beliefs. Through empirical studies such as the one

suggested, our knowledge of the role and influence of Christian values in the workplace may be enhanced.

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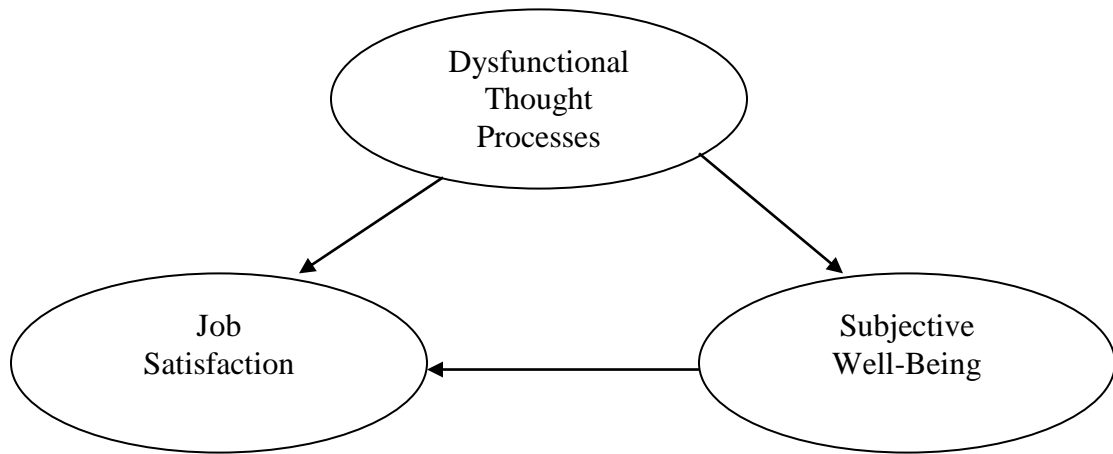


Figure 1. Basic Dispositional Model of Job Satisfaction

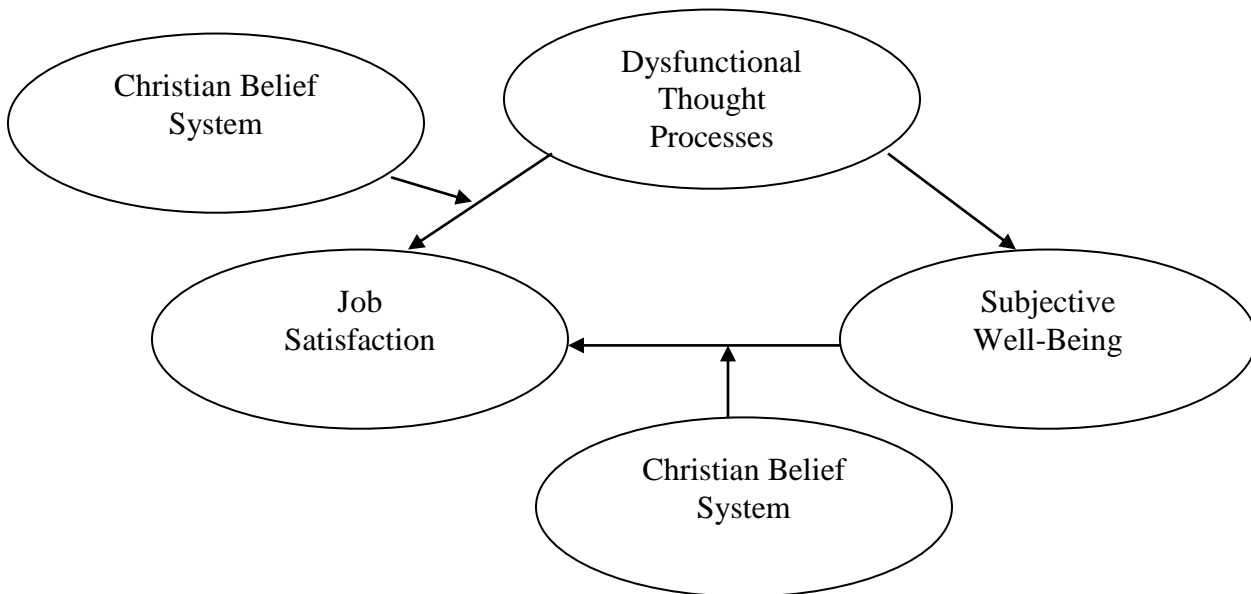


Figure 2. Hypothesized Moderating Influence of a Christian Belief System

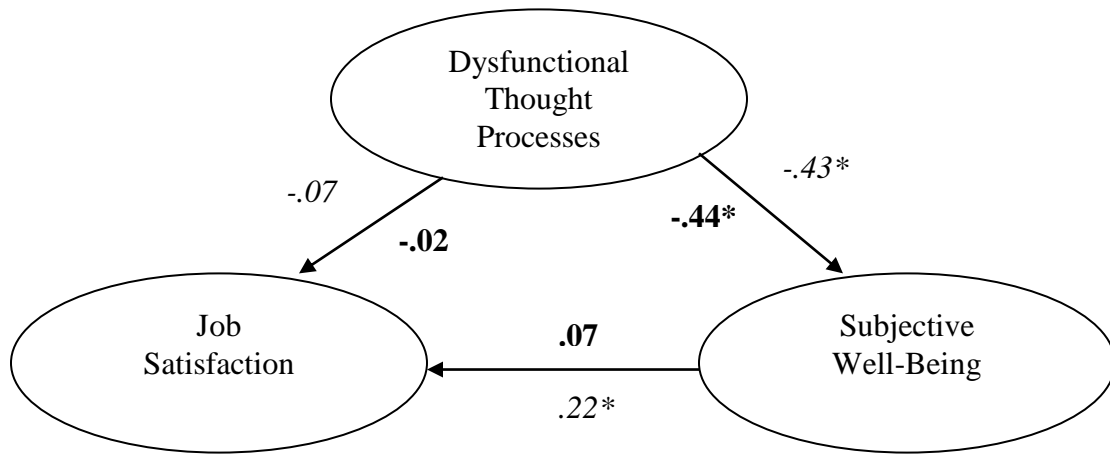


Figure 3. Basic Dispositional Model of Job Satisfaction with Standardized Parameter Estimates. Note. Estimates for the secular sample are shown in italics. Estimates for the Christian sample are shown in bold. * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Indicator Variables – Secular Data Set

Indicator Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. COWO	3.82	1.13	----							
2. PROM	2.29	2.67	.14	----						
3. PAY	4.64	3.18	.16	.30	----					
4. SUPE	3.85	1.15	.20	.25	.27	----				
5. WORK	3.17	1.18	.30	.34	.33	.42	----			
6. FOR	3.52	1.09	.20	.21	.27	.24	.33	----		
7. UF	5.07	1.16	.21	.24	.29	.20	.24	.83	----	
8. DAS	2.96	.516	-.15	-.14	-.16	-.10	-.19	-.38	.14	----

Note. *N* = 231. COWO = Job Descriptive Index Coworkers Subscale Composite, PROM = Job Descriptive Index Promotions Subscale – Composite, PAY = Job Descriptive Index Pay Subscale Composite, SUPE = Job Descriptive Index Supervision Subscale Composite, WORK = Job Descriptive Index Work Subscale Composite, FOR = Fordyce Percent Time Happy, UF = Underwood & Froming Mood Survey Level Subscale Composite, DAS = Dysfunctional Attitude Survey Composite. All descriptive statistics are presented based on a five-point scale except UF, which is presented based on a seven-point scale.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Indicator Variables – Christian Data Set

Indicator Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. COWO	4.46	.716	----							
2. PROM	1.63	1.49	.144	----						
3. PAY	2.91	1.26	.229	.330	----					
4. SUPE	4.27	.915	.326	.278	.228	----				
5. WORK	4.07	.839	.278	.330	.271	.357	----			
6. FOR	3.97	.562	.031	.082	-.016	.176	.266	----		
7. UF	4.96	.900	.084	.176	.031	.235	.274	.527	----	
8. DAS	2.72	.733	-.049	-.052	-.005	-.154	-.286	-.319	.314	----

Note. *N* = 263. COWO = Job Descriptive Index Coworkers Subscale Composite, PROM = Job Descriptive Index Promotions Subscale – Composite, PAY = Job Descriptive Index Pay Subscale Composite, SUPE = Job Descriptive Index Supervision Subscale Composite, WORK = Job Descriptive Index Work Subscale Composite, FOR = Fordyce Percent Time Happy, UF = Underwood & Froming Mood Survey Level Subscale Composite, DAS = Dysfunctional Attitude Survey Composite. All descriptive statistics are presented based on a five-point scale except UF, which is presented based on a seven-point scale.

Table 3

Fit Indexes for Covariance Structure Analyses

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	NNFI	IFI	CFI
1. Secular Data Set (<i>N</i> = 231)					
Basic Dispositional Model	137.83	19	.63	.75	.75
Null Model	503.66	28			
2. Christian Data Set (<i>N</i> = 263)					
Basic Dispositional Model	140.09	19	.42	.62	.61
Null Model	333.63	28			

Note. NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index, IFI = Incremental Fit Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index.