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Seeing a More Complete Worker: Religiosity, Income, & Job Satisfaction

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Seeing A More Complete Worker:
Religiosity, Income, and Job Satisfaction

Introduction

- Can activities unrelated with work affect how people feel about their jobs?
- A test: How can frequency of religious attendance affect job satisfaction?

Job satisfaction is typically considered to be the outcome of employer-level decisions such as paid time off, meaningful job tasks, and high wages (Kalleberg 1977). Virtually all prior studies of job satisfaction have similarly been focused on the within-organization context. However, a more holistic approach to job satisfaction may be warranted. The purpose of this study is to begin to examine how extra-organizational activities, such as religious attendance, which has been shown to be associated with higher job satisfaction (Zullig, 2006; Ham 2006) may also have an impact on how satisfied employees are with their jobs. Though it may seem counterintuitive, my hypothesis centers around the concept that factors external to the organization may in fact play an important role in how employees feel about their work within the organization. Specifically, I hypothesize that employees who attend religious services more frequently will be more satisfied with even low paying jobs. It is proposed that such a finding, if supported, could be the result of the availability of an external source of valuation, separate from wages, possibly acting as a “buffering” mechanism limiting the negative affective response to otherwise less satisfying pay and work.

Data/Methods

- 7200 Respondents from 2000 NLSY79 Survey.
- Focus on religious attendance, job satisfaction, and total income.

The data used in this study is from the NLSY79 data base, a national longitudinal survey of American individuals who were in their late teens to early 20s in 1979. The variables used will include job satisfaction as the dependent variable, and frequency of religious attendance and current income as the primarily independent variables and will be drawn from the survey questions, in the survey administered in 2000, the last year the relevant questions were asked. Only respondents (7240) who had jobs and reported job satisfaction will be included in the analysis. There will also be controls for the socioeconomic demographics of the respondents original family (parents), age of the respondent, employment status of the spouse, and sex. I will analyze the data using both graphing techniques for three-way interactions and linear least squares regression analysis. Missing data was accounted for through imputation, using regression substitution in all cases except for the dichotomous variable of spouse employment where I used mean substitution, which would not bias the results because the missing data is a because of a legitimate skip.

Conclusion

- External factors do impact how people report job satisfaction.
- A more holistic approach to studying phenomena is in order.
- Potential Explanations of the Relationship:
  - Cognitive Dissonance theory suggest that those with less external sources of valuation, such as religion, would place greater importance on their job quality, and have a higher stake in reporting more positive job satisfaction (Testinger 1962).
  - Religiosity affects how employees feel about the ethical implications of their work (Weaver & Agle, 2002).
- Future study of richer data is necessary to shed light on the mechanisms, but this study supports the relationship.

My results provided significant evidence that external factors such as religiosity do in fact impact the relationships between people and their jobs, at least as measured by job satisfaction. Interestingly, that relationship was found to be negative. This would also indicate that the proposed potential mechanisms are unlikely to have validity. As a large majority of the respondents recorded attending church once a month or less, it is unlikely that the job satisfaction decline is due to the time demands of church attendance. Instead, it seems more likely that questions of identity and sensemaking are at play, perhaps actually working counter to the first proposed mechanism by decreasing the importance of finding great satisfaction with one’s job because of another, external, source of validation. However, this study can only provide evidence for a negative relationship. Further studies of richer data are necessary to continue to discover how factors such as religiosity affect peoples satisfaction with their work.

Results

- Outside influences do affect job satisfaction.
- Religiosity has a negative association with job satisfaction.
- The effect is uniform across all income brackets.

The results indicated that there was support for the broader hypothesis that outside factors, in this case religiosity, do in fact exert a significant impact on the job satisfaction of employees. Though however found evidence to support the direct opposite of the specific hypothesis that those exhibiting greater religiosity would be found to have higher job satisfaction. In fact, the results suggest the exact opposite, that religious attendance is actually negatively associated with job satisfaction, with the results being statistically significant beyond the .001 level. When the results were tested for interaction effects between income, religiosity, and job satisfaction, there were found to be none. The relationship was uniformly negative.

References