The Satisfaction Congruency Theory: The Case of Sexual Satisfaction

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Abstract

The culture of putting primacy to pleasure and satisfaction is gaining headway not only in the Philippines but in the world as well. It is slowly building a counter culture to the Catholic beliefs that the missionary friars propagated. Religion taught the people that sex is sacred, and rendered it as taboo in this culture. In this paper, the dynamics of satisfaction congruency in human behavior is delved into using the axiomatic approach to theory development. Self evident truths are explored to form the base of the theory building process. The developed theory states that congruent satisfaction is dependent on whether or not there is satisfaction in each of the three phases of an act. Congruent satisfaction occurs when the individual is satisfied in all these three phases: antecedent/planning phase, concurrent/execution phase, and the consequent/evaluation phase. Dissatisfaction in any of the phases results in incongruency. This, in turn, will influence the quality of life of the individual.

Keywords: congruent satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, satisfaction,

1.0 Introduction

In the 16th century, the Spanish friars brought Christianity to the Philippine islands and propagate the Catholic beliefs. The Philippines was educated by this Catholic hierarchy (David, 2011). Religion taught the people that sex is sacred, and rendered it as taboo in this culture. It teaches that each marriage act (act of sexual intercourse) must not disregard procreation as God designed it for that purpose. Hence, the act of using contraceptives, such as wearing of condoms, is believed to be sinful and an act that is against God. Western practices proved otherwise and have even changed some of the Filipino's views on sexual practices and behaviors. At present, Filipino youths, who are becoming more adventurous, curious and westernized, are slowly ignoring the catholic teachings on sex and sexuality introduced by the Spanish friars. This implies a deteriorating moral ascendancy which impacts Filipino culture and norms. This is possible since the culture of putting primacy to pleasure and satisfaction is gaining a headway not only in the Philippines but in the world as well.

Theoretical and empirical research studies on sexual satisfaction and on sexual relationships vary from different perspectives of cultures, age, and religion. It has also been noted that self-image functions as an eye in which it perceive, classify, and infer self-relevant information (Edward, 2012). Hence, a person's self concept, self image or schema has an impact on how that person processes and responds to relevant cues. Further, these are significant regulators of sexual cognition, behavior and effect (Anderson & Cyranowski, 1994).

Hull (2008) postulated that sexual relationships is accompanied with feelings of enjoyment or shame and frustrations that works

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on a person's psyche. Societal norms enforce limits on sexual expressiveness and may add to the shame or frustration that the individual felt. The unhappiness that is felt by the individual when he/she is unfaithful, helps protect individuals and their partners. The idea of moral ascendancy and the cultural influences of the West heightened the push-pull feedback loop of man's sexual behavior. With these, the ambivalence experienced from pleasure and self limits imposed by society on the individual may give rise to many sexual health issues. Thus, the sexual satisfaction of an individual may differ over time depending on the person's preferred options.

Moreover, Hull asserted that identification and promotion of sexual pleasure as an essential component of wellbeing is one of the complex elements on the sexual health agenda. The vagueness of sexual satisfaction crafted man's relationship dissatisfaction that impinged on relationship instability. As cited by Koneke (2005), the article of Harvey, Wenzel & Sprecher, argued that sexual satisfaction contributes to overall relationship quality, it is also likely to contribute, directly or indirectly, to relationship stability. This stand is supported by Sprecher (2010) that claimed sexual satisfaction is associated with relationship stability.

Litzinger & Gordon (2007) also presented that communication and sexual satisfaction independently predict marital contentment. However, there is a significant correlation between communication and sexual satisfaction. In a relationship where couples have poor communication ties, these couples tend to compensate this for a satisfying sexual relationship between them.

The study of Lawrance & Byers (1995), strongly supports that in long term relationships: (a) sexual satisfaction is persuaded by the history of sexual rewards and costs rather than by benefits at a particular point in time; (b) dissatisfaction is associated with sexual exchanges becoming less favorable; and (c) contentment is influenced by interactive factors for both men and women. DeLamater, Hyde, & Fong (2008) identified variables associated with sexual behavior and satisfaction to include: (1) physical health; (2) sexual functioning, (3) psychological distress; and (4) satisfaction of the relationship. The number of sexual activity to the partners was significantly link to martial relationship satisfaction. Sexual expression remains a significant aspect of intimate relationships in the seventh decade of life. Chao and company (2011) hypothesized that sexual satisfaction and desire would in some way affect quality of life. This is evident among elderly wherein sexual satisfaction decreases as age increases. Findings will show that sexual desire has a direct effect on sexual satisfaction and affects indirectly a person's quality of life. This finding is also supported by Fulbright (2008) that sexual satisfaction is a strong predictor of a higher quality of life and health.

This paper attempts to look into the dynamics of sexual satisfaction in particular but hopes to develop a theory that supports the dynamics of human satisfaction in general.

2.0 The Base Theory of Congruent Satisfaction

This section pertains to the formulation of theory about satisfaction. The minimal set of axioms or self evident truths will be used to generate the propositions, then the main theory of the study.

AXIOM 1: Man is a biological and rational being.

Man is a living organism; a composite of the bodily (physical/material) and the spiritual reality in him. As a body person, he experiences sensations, bodily appetites, biological processes and the like. As an embodied spirit, humans are considered

as the highest form of animals capable of abstract reasoning, symbolic communication and introspection (Ahmed, 2012). As cited by Hodgson (2012), Aristotle distinguishes man's capability to reason out to such actions and perceptions in a highly complicated world. In his day to day transactions, man's rationality is made evident and realized through his materiality. That is, his thoughts are expressed through words, that are a product of his voice box, esophagus, teeth, lips, and the like. Hence, bodily and biological realities give way to desires and involve self interests such as security and pleasure. In all these, it is noticeable that:

AXIOM 2: Man strives to satisfy needs.

Maslow's pyramid describes human motivations from the most fundamental to the most advanced. He developed and presented a hierarchy of human motives, with those at the bottom taking precedence over those in the higher rank. At the base of Maslow's pyramid are physiological needs – hunger, thirst and sexual desire. At the top of it is the need for self-actualization. The fundamental and basic four layers are called the deficiency needs or d-needs: esteem, friendship and love, security, and physical needs. However, if unmet– with the exception of the physiological needs – and without physical warning, a person will experience tensions. Usually, a person achieves first the lower order needs before proceeding to the higher level needs. However, there are instances when people do not settle for basic needs alone but strive for constant prosperity as well. They coined this term as metamotivation. Various levels of needs may occur at the same time or overlap one another and co-exist, instead of being sequential(Hull, 1943; Nauert, 2010). According to the study of Yates (2011), joyful people, mostly have achieved those needs in most of those areas. It was also presented that persons who viewed life as positive, are well accomplished in their basic needs. The higher

needs, autonomy, respect, and social support, were linked to a feeling of joy. Thus, evident here is the connection between life satisfaction and the individual's attitude to life.

Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, articulates that drives are genetically determined & seeks pleasure. Wishes & urges are in conflict with other forces of the mind. Drive or motivation is necessary in life. Its absence is like having no life at all. Yet, the satisfaction of one's drives is also subjected to other people's opinions and views in life. This leads us to the fact that;

AXIOM 3: Moral norms influence a person's philosophy.

An individual has inherent set of personal values, beliefs, convictions, and philosophy. However, as individuals in the community, human beings need norms to guide their actions and interactions. The moral principles that underlie these norms are ultimately derived from a society's system of values. Undeniably, as an individual in the community, one cannot help but be influenced or challenged by what the society holds as important, true, and correct. The individual will be influenced to a great extent if he or she also acknowledges the role of this society in relation to himself. On the other hand, the individual will be challenged by the norms of the society if his or her philosophy in life is not in agreement with that of the society. Yet, systems of values change over time. With the advent of moral relativism, more and more individuals assert that there is no universal, certain law that applies to all, in all settings. Instead of an objective moral law, moral relativity supports a qualified analysis where morals are its focus, especially in the areas of individual moral practice wherein experiential encounters dictates and corrects moral position (Schumacher, n.d).

However, for most people, norms give stability to human transactions. Indeed, there are also those

who claim that all can be ascertained currently (and forever), and that there is no absolute fixed certainty in the area of morality (Schumacher, n.d). With this mental frame, one is not expected to adhere forcefully to morality (Lee, 2012). Thus, when moral dilemma occurs, there can be any number of components which ultimately lead to a more ethical, or immoral judgment. With these thoughts, we claim that:

Proposition 1: There is satisfaction in the Antecedent/Planning Phase if what is desired to be done conforms to his norms, values, beliefs and philosophy

As a thinking being, man is capable of assimilating information and ultimately, to plan and decide. With his rationality, choice cannot be far behind. The choices are directed to the satisfaction of his needs, first and foremost. Thus, when he has set his mind on doing a thing, he looks forward to it. The individual becomes expectant and excited over it, especially if this is of interest or importance to him/her. It is interesting to note that norms, values, and philosophies determine the drive/inclination to do something. Therefore, if the planned action conforms to the individual's norms, beliefs and philosophy, then satisfaction occurs. Then again, the individual's norms, beliefs and philosophy are very much shaped by what he comes in contact with. For this reason, we believe that:

AXIOM 4: The environment plays a significant role in developing one's belief and behavior.

Environmental factors in which the individual is exposed to (from conception to death), influence human development. These includes: physical environment and society. The social cognitive theory supports this claim that people acquire and maintain certain behavior and changes based on their social dealings (Bandura, 1997).

Learning is seen as an event that occurs from observation of others' practices and stresses on 3 concepts: observation, assimilation and learning. The development is a continuous process from birth to death and can be discussed by different stages (Driscoll, 1994; Hausfather,1996). Recent researches suggest that technology has become a powerful and potent tool in changing a person's attitude (Crawford, 1996).   On a wider scale, the theory of mass society will tell us that people converge as a society and have their beliefs and ideologies and media help create a society who has similar practices (Boyd-Barrett, & Newbold, 1995). People, environment and behavior are constantly synergistically influencing each other. Behavior is not simply the result of the environment and the person, just as the environment is not simply the result of the person and behavior (Glanz et al, 2002). Here we see that beliefs and ideologies that are shaped by social and other factors are precursors to plans and practices. Thus,

Proposition 2: There is satisfaction in the concurrent/execution phase if what is being done actually, or at least closely, conforms to what was desired or being planned.

A human being's progress is dependent on social interaction. His interaction with other people helps shape his thoughts, plans and desires. Hence, social learning, indeed, will lead to cognitive development. Satisfaction, then, is experienced when what has been thought of or conceptualized is made into a reality. The mere construction of an idea or a blueprint is no longer enough. On the other hand, his being a social creature, an individual in the community, cannot help but be confronted with norms. Therefore, to a certain extent,

AXIOM 5: Religious and social norms impose limits on sexual expressiveness.

Norms may impact people differently in relation to how they regard the objective moral norms. A person who has low regard of objective norms may be less bothered by these norms compared to someone who has a high regard for the same norms. Taboos and moral stand based on religious convictions, may limit self-expression especially those that are sexual in nature. Then again, those who have a high regard for such moral norms may be affected more than those having a low regard for these moral standards. Kohlberg (1973) & Wong (2000) proposed that moral behavior is more reliable, conventional, and accountable at the higher stages because they are increasingly employing more constant and general standards. The problem arises when norms run counter to what one plans to do or say. Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning is a stage theory. Movement through these stages are not natural, meaning individual will not jump off from other stages without passing lower stages as they become mature. In stage progression, movement is influence by cognitive dissonance, it occurs when person notices inadequacies of present coping with a given moral situation. Hence,

AXIOM 6: Distress arises when internal thought is incongruent with a person's action.

The cognitive dissonance theory of Festinger proposes that the inner drive must be in unison and harmonious with our own belief system to avoid stress encounter. The conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors produce feeling of discomfort. This develops into a psychological dissonance that leads to unpleasant tension. However, this can be reduced through changing cognitions, adding cognitions, and altering importance of various cognitions since this involves behavior it is not measurable (Fritz, 1958; Macleod 2008). A special cognitive case that may develop in an induced compliance to dissonance arousal called

hypocrisy. This usually occur when one chooses to promote a behavior that they do not themselves practice (APA,n.d). Research found out that attitudes are likely to vary to restore consistency between attitudes and behavior. McLeod (2008) also posits that forced compliance is experienced when socializing with people. However, the action, which is inconsistent with the person's belief would not change the person's behavior. People tend to achieve it through consistency to stabilize tensions. With this, we claim:

Proposition 3: There is satisfaction in the consequent/evaluation phase if what has been done actually conforms to the norms, values, beliefs and philosophy.

As man strives to satisfy his needs (axiom 2), he recognizes the fact that Moral norms influence a person's philosophy (axiom 3). He experiences distress when his thoughts are incongruent with his action (axiom 6) but he gains a sense of fulfillment or satisfaction when actions and words are in accordance with established and accepted norms.

3.0 The General Theory of Congruent Satisfaction

Man's decisions and actions involve three phases: the antecedent/planning phase, concurrent/execution phase, and the consequent/ evaluation phase. Considerations must be taken into account to determine man's satisfaction in relation to the three phases.

Man is a biological and a rational being who strives to satisfy his needs. But moral norms influence his philosophy. Man attains satisfaction in the antecedent/planning phase if what is desired to be done conforms to his norms, values, beliefs and philosophy.

But, the environment also plays a significant role in developing ones belief and behavior. And

so, man attains satisfaction in the concurrent/ execution phase, if what is being done actually, or at least closely, conforms to what is being desired or being planned.

Finally, the religious and social norms enforce limits on man's behavioral expressiveness. Thus, distress arises when internal thought is incongruent with the person's actions. Consequently, there is satisfaction in the consequent/evaluation phase if what has been done actually conforms to the norms, beliefs and philosophy.

Since man is an integrated whole, the three phases are connected though separated by the time element. Therefore, congruent satisfaction is dependent on whether or not there is satisfaction in each of the three phases of an act. Congruent satisfaction occurs when the individual is satisfied in all these three phases, which in turn influence the quality of life of the individual.

Conclusion

Satisfaction is what every individual strives for in life. Yet, for congruent satisfaction to be achieved, it must be experienced in all the three phases: antecedent/planning phase, concurrent/ execution phase, and the consequent/evaluation phase. Incongruent satisfaction is attributable to (a) distress in the planning phase; (b) fear, anger and frustration in the execution phase; or (c) regrets in the consequent phase. For individuals to maximize satisfaction in life, one has to accept the challenge that the satisfaction one experiences is congruent in all phases

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