

# Confidence in the Church and its Impact on the Quality of Life

<sup>1</sup>Jessica M. Avenido, <sup>2</sup>Sandy V. Chua and <sup>3</sup>Roberto M. Cabardo

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## **Abstract**

*The study examines the effects of the confidence level in the church, along with other factors, on the quality of life of the citizens of a country. These factors include confidence in the Church, contraception prevalence, corruption index, life satisfaction, population, and gross domestic product. Quality of life is an individual's perception of his/her position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which he/she lives and in relation to his/her goals. This lends credence also to the Quality of Life Theory (Frisch, 2005). The results of the study show that countries with higher income have a higher level of confidence in the Church and higher life satisfaction. The results also manifest that countries with high population also have higher contraception prevalence but the lowest corruption index. These results only tell that religion has relatively positive effects on the quality of life of a country's citizens.*

*Keywords: Religion, Quality of Life, Life Satisfaction*

## **1.0 Introduction**

To many, religion gives meaning to human life. It gives them answers or prescriptions to deal with many aspects that make them feel good and satisfied with the quality of life. According to the World Health Organization, quality of life is an individual's perception of his/her position in life in the context of the culture and value systems, in which he/she lives and in relation to his/her goals.

The Quality of Life theory (Frisch, 2005) states that a person's satisfaction with a particular area of life is made up of parts such as (1) the objective characteristics or circumstances of an area (2) how a person perceives and interprets as area's circumstances, and the (3) person's evaluation of fulfillment in an area based on the application of standards.

For a more enhanced discussion, the philosophical and psychological perspectives supporting the Quality of Life theory are presented hereunder:

Joel Feinberg (1992) emphasized that people are born with "latent potentials and unique dispositions that can be perfected as we grow into useful skills and talents. When used to the fullest, these skills bring satisfaction and happiness." This tells the importance of really doing the best to develop one's potential. For instance, if a person likes to be good in dancing, then he/she has to develop his/her motor coordination and musical skills for the realization of his/her goal, otherwise, failure to do it will redound to feeling of dissatisfaction which may result to other problems.

In addition, Richard Coan (ctd in Frisch, 2005)

<sup>1</sup>Faculty, Center for Religious Education

<sup>2</sup>Faculty, Department of Psychology and Library Information Science, College of Arts and Sciences

<sup>3</sup>Faculty, Department of Communication, Languages and Literature, College of Arts and Sciences  
University of San Jose-Recoletos

suggests that the happiness in life comes in five basic ways (1) Efficiency, or competence in basic life skills so that one can focus on work or causes outside the self such as basic intellectual and relationship skills (2) Creativity which characterizes the degree as to which people make original contributions (3) Inner Harmony, which includes deep self-understanding and acceptance (4) Relatedness which comprises deep empathy and sensitivity to the people we care for in our lives and for humanity as a whole (5) Transcendence is when people no longer experience oneself as separate from the world or the universe and which there is an experience of a mystical sense of unity with a larger whole whether it can be considered as God, the whole of nature, ultimate beauty or love. If a person is efficient, he/she will be able to find his/her true self worth because people will trust him/her on matters that are within her interest. Creativity takes place when one is able to provide her share in making original contributions to the company. For example, if one is able to invent a new gadget that can eradicate cancer cells in humans, he/she will be getting praises from those who benefit from the invention. Inner harmony is for one to live a life that allows more time for reflection and understanding the inner self while at the same time make it in synchrony with the other aspects of factors outside the self. Relatedness tells of feeling the pain of others, caring for those close to them and humanity. So, from the self, the focus now shifts to those a person may hold dear and then it shifts further to the whole of humanity. Transcendence has completely communed with the universe.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, "transcendence" means the mystical union with the Divine and it usually requires an inward journey that de-emphasizes the physical world and material possessions. Pre-occupation with selfish concerns is reduced, and there is a focus

on increased spiritual knowledge and capacity for love." To examine oneself from within and to detest the pleasures of the world is the focus of transcendence. Catholicism which is from Judeo-Christian tradition shares this belief.

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud viewed man's purpose in life to be that of adherence to the pleasure principle. For him, man strives to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. If there are constraints of a civilized society, man adapts through the use of defense mechanism.

Man, by nature, loves pleasure and hates pain. For instance, during noontime, a person may avoid the scorching heat of the sun and run to the shade for cover. Another is between going hungry and eating recycled food, one may choose to eat the latter than starving to death. Should the same man be prevented from access to it, this may lead him to kill anyone who gets in the way just to preserve himself.

When conflict arises in the belief system, it results to tension as advanced in the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957). Tension must be eliminated. Festinger believed that people want balance in their lives and that any form of inconsistency is uncomfortable. People going through cognitive dissonance will find some rationale for whatever is causing the conflict, or they may choose to ignore the event in question altogether. No individual can completely avoid dissonance and the desire to reduce the dissonance will depend on the individual. The importance of elements involved as well as the rewards are significant enough, to overlook the dissonance experienced.

B.F. Skinner, who had an experiment on operant conditioning using rats, espouses the use of reward to reinforce positive behavior, and punishment to discourage negative behavior, which relates to the concept of heaven, and hell among Christians and Catholics. For both religions,

heaven is for those who obey the laws of God and those who are defiant of God's commandments will be consumed by the fires of hell. It is similar also to parental approval when a child performs well in his/her class and disapproval when the child gives a dismal performance in his/her class.

A study by Alex Michalos (1991) found a strong-cross cultural evidence for the key assumption of quality of life theory. Happiness is closely tied to how we think about our lives, especially life satisfaction or the gap we perceive between what we have and what we want out of life.

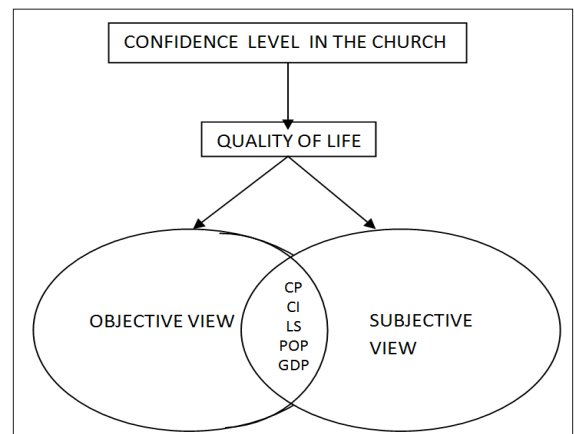
Life Satisfaction Approach Theory states that cognitive judgmental process is dependent upon a comparison of one's circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard (Deiner, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985 ctd in Frisch, 2005). A person may have different life situations compared to what is considered to be ideal so that it is possible that one may have entirely different source of satisfaction than the others. Some find satisfaction in shopping. Others find satisfaction by engaging in an eating binge. Still others feel satisfaction helping people in distress. There are also those who find satisfaction in just doing nothing. Another example is a woman who is living in a subdivision and considers her life as satisfactory while another woman who lives in a famous residential area may think of her life as miserable. For example, those informal settlers who feel satisfied being on the street or in places not considered by civilized society to be ideal residential area but these people have chosen to remain.

A study by Frey and Stutzer (2002a; 2002b) emphasized that any point in time, people with more income, declare themselves happier or more satisfied. Ellison (1991) finds that religious affiliations increase life satisfaction. Belief in divine intervention increases life satisfaction. If a person with religion faces a problem, he/she seeks comfort

through prayer for a supreme being. For such a person, the act of praying lightens the problem regardless of gravity and thus makes the world in his perspective more livable.

Having known all these, the researchers inquire on a wider scope the effects religion, specifically as regards the level of confidence in the church that one belongs to, has on the quality of life of the citizens of a country.

## 2.0 Conceptual Framework



Legend:

- CP - Contraceptive Prevalence
- CI - Corruption Index
- LS - Life Satisfaction
- POP - Population
- GDP - Gross Domestic Product

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study took into consideration the effects of the confidence level of the church on the citizen's quality of life. The indicators of the quality of life which can be viewed either objectively or subjectively include contraceptive prevalence, corruption index, life satisfaction, population and gross domestic product. This is substantiated from the Quality of Life Theory, which posits that, a person's satisfaction with a particular area of life is made up

of parts such as (1) the objective characteristics or circumstances of an area which entails population and gross domestic product as variables of the study (2) how a person perceives and interprets as area's circumstances that can be looked into through life satisfaction level and the (3) person's evaluation of fulfillment in an area based on the application of standards such as contraception prevalence and corruption index variables gleaned in the study.

Together these components will be investigated to ascertain correlation on the citizen's confidence level in the church towards the quality of life.

### 3.0 Objective

In its entirety, the study aims to explore the effects of the country's level of confidence on the church to the quality of life of its citizenry based on factors that include contraception prevalence, corruption index, life satisfaction, population, and gross domestic product.

### 4.0 Design and Methods

This study utilizes the descriptive correlation method. It looks into the variables that will help establish the correlation of the country's confidence level in the church to the quality of life of its citizenry. Table 1 reflects the top 16 countries with the highest confidence level in the church which are considered in the study.

Other variables that are taken into account in the study are the religious denominations, contraceptive prevalence, corruption index, life satisfaction level, population and GDP. Researchers checked from online sources as data mining is the methodology applied in the study and reviewed related literature to know what has been known regarding the topic.

**Table 1. Countries and Confidence Level in the Church**

Countries	Confidence Level in the Church
1. Ireland	72.0
2. United States	72.0
3. Canada	63.0
4. Italy	60.0
5. Philippines	51.4
6. Belgium	51.0
7. Austria	50.0
8. France	49.0
9. Norway	49.0
10. Denmark	47.0
11. Finland	47.0
12. United Kingdom	45.0
13. Sweden	43.0
14. Australia	43.0
15. Switzerland	42.0
16. Germany	38.0

Data mining, or knowledge discovery, according to Doug Alexander (<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/~anorman/BUS.FOR/course.mat/Alex/>), is the computer-assisted process of digging through and analyzing enormous sets of data and then extracting the meaning of the data...researchers scour databases for hidden patterns, finding predictive information that experts may miss because it lies outside their expectations. By using pattern recognition technologies and statistical and mathematical techniques to sift through warehoused information, data mining helps analysts recognize significant facts, relationships, trends, patterns, exceptions and anomalies that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Religious denominations are categorized into four namely Catholic, Non Catholic, Others and None. The categories are arrived at after having a glimpse of the composition of religious denominations of the countries involved. The Catholics are grouped as one category for their distinctive doctrinal teachings and worship rubrics. All Christian denominations and sects are lumped together and labeled as Non Catholic while the rest of the other religious denominations is placed as Others. For those who claimed that they do not have any religious affiliations and those who answered None as regards religion, all these are recorded as None. Table 2 shows the religious denomination under the four categories given.

Data on the corruption index, contraception prevalence, population, GDP, confidence level in the church life, religion, and life satisfaction level data were sourced from Nation Master (NationMaster, 2004).

GDP or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is understood as the monetary value of all the

finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific period. This is chosen to look into the role of income to the quality of life. This is important for, as an economic indicator, this is used by economists and planners in analyzing and interpreting data, With the data on GDP, the researchers are able to examine other economic data being presented.

Corruption index refers to the score a country gets on how corrupt their public sectors are seen to be. This is considered because if a country is corrupt there is a greater chance for the quality of life of its citizens to be affected. If there is a high incidence of corruption, there is a greater likelihood for it to impact on the delivery of basic services to people like health care, basic education, and infrastructure. If the government loses so much money due to corruption, this means less money for medicines that could have been used to treat those who are poor and ill and fewer hospitals to be built. If there is corruption, there will be less money for public schools to be built and teachers to be paid. If there

**Table 2. Category of Religious Denominations**

Catholic	Non-Catholic	Others	None
Roman Catholic			
	Church of Ireland	Jewish	None
	Other Christians	Muslim	Unaffiliated
	Protestant	Other	
	Mormons	Greek Orthodox	
	Anglican	Hindu	
	Church of Norway	Buddhism	
	Pentecost		
	Evangelical Lutheran		
	Presbyterian		
	Methodist		
	Baptist		
	Evangelical		
	IglesianiKristo		
Aglipayan			

is high corruption index, there can also be less money for the programs of government for food production, which could mean less food on the table, fewer farm-to-market roads and less post-harvest facilities for farmers to benefit. This could also mean less money for the training of farmers. Corruption index and contraception prevalence were explored so as to assess whether the citizen's level of confidence in the church is parallel to the application of moral precepts.

Contraception prevalence refers to the percentage of individuals using contraception among those of reproductive age who are married or in union. This is also considered by the researchers because the use of contraception has a direct impact on the population of the country. Contraception prevalence could mean an increase or decrease of the people in a country.

Population refers to all people in the country (Population Census Handbook, 2007). The population of a country is one variable that

can enlighten the researchers since the study is about religion and people's quality of life. With the population data, the researchers will be able to know the qualitative and quantitative aspects of population. Population data may include age, gender, mortality, birth, maternal health, ethnicity, malnutrition, literacy rate, maternal death and other relevant data.

Life satisfaction is the way a person perceives how his or her life has been and how they feel about where it is going in the future; it is a measure of well-being. This data is important in establishing the measures of the quality of life.

The data gathered were subjected to statistical treatment using the Cluster analysis. Then, the results were interpreted and discussed.

## 5.0 Results

This section reveals the results of the cluster observations.

**Table 3. Influence of Religion on Citizen's Quality of Life**

Variables	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Confidence Level	50.8857	72.0000	38.0000
Catholic (Religion)	44.7693	24.0000	34.0000
Non Catholic Christian (Religion)	40.4336	54.0000	34.0000
Others (Religion)	7.3543	12.0000	3.7000
None (Religion)	7.4429	10.0000	28.3000
Contraception Prevalence	72.2500	78.6000	70.1000
Corruption Index	8.1321	7.2000	7.8000
Life Satisfaction Level	7.3429	7.4000	7.1000
Population	2.842785E+07	3.115919E+08	8.172600E+07
GDP (income)	1.013043E+12	1.499130E+13	3.600830E+12

## 6.0 Discussions

As reflected in Table 1, Cluster 2 shows the highest confidence level in the church among the clusters composed mostly of Christians (Non Catholics). Christians posted the highest prevalence of contraception use and the lowest corruption index. Christians have high confidence level in the church because of their close knit relationship. This is so because Christian denominations are smaller in number and thus affords greater degree of intimacy among church members.

Christians have low corruption index because they accept the primacy of the Sacred Scripture as the Word of God, so they felt bound by the gospel imperatives like justice, honesty and peace which they often read and quote. For them, it is *Sola Scriptura*, which means they acknowledge the Bible, the Word of God as the only source of tradition. They have, however, high prevalence of contraception use because unlike the Catholic Church that has one interpretation on the start of life, which is conception, Christians have different interpretations. Some sectors of the Non-Catholic Christians accept conception as the start of life, but other sectors do not recognize it. The division is felt since, unlike the Catholic church, through her Magisterium, the gospel imperatives do not give specific directives regarding present day realities like contraceptive use. Furthermore, the interpretation of church groups and their pastor differ in social and cognitive constructs.

In relation to this, if the population rate is high, there is also a higher chance that the citizens will also consider the use of contraception which is shown in Cluster 2. However, use of contraception does not guarantee that it would curb population growth. Women resort to the use of contraception either by hormonal method (pill usage, injectables, implantables) and intra-uterine devices. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these methods varies depending upon the consistency and

correctness of usage. On the other hand, the use of condoms among men is subject to the percentage of slippage, storage and breakage of the material.

The same cluster shows high income and high life satisfaction. This gives credence to the work of Frey and Stutzer (2002a; 2002b) that states that at any point in time, people with more income, declare themselves happier or more satisfied. For after all, financial capability answers a person's physiological needs and helps materialize higher needs. Life Satisfaction Approach Theory states that cognitive judgmental process is dependent upon a comparison of one's circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard (Deiner, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985 ctd in Frisch, 2005).

From the presented data, Roman Catholics show the highest tendency to indulge in corruption. This shows that people's unique cognitive judgment of the doctrines contributes to a large extent to its obedience and disobedience to the law of God. The need for self-preservation explains the high incidence of corruption among Catholic countries.

Christians (Non Catholics) have familiarity with the Scriptures. Their constant encounter with the word of God reminds them how to conduct themselves morally. Their way of life is patterned after the very person and teachings of Jesus Christ whom they accept as Lord and Savior on a daily basis. Christians say yes through cognition (head knowledge) and concretize it into action.

Catholic countries have higher corruption index because even if the Church preaches a particular doctrine against corruption, they do not have as much regular contact with the church. Their contact only happens during Sunday masses and during the reading of the word of God and the homily of the priest. Catholicism is highly hierarchical in nature so that it is difficult to get directly to the Pope; instead the laity and even the

clergy have to go through the bureaucracy of the structure of the Catholic Church itself.

As a result, it takes time for problems to be solved because of so many processes that frustrate the faithful who eventually decide to solve a problem by themselves that could have been addressed properly by the Church if only there is an absence of bureaucracy.

For example, a priest who wants to marry cannot obtain dispensation easily for the purpose. Oftentimes, the process takes years so that a priest who likes to marry but has yet to obtain dispensation will either marry through civil marriage or live with his beloved as common law couple. This situation validates the observation that Catholicism has a patriarchal structure where the ultimate power emanates from the Pope in Rome.

The results clearly display the prevalence of cognitive dissonance amongst Christians and Catholics. Cognitive dissonance is aroused when people are confronted with information that is inconsistent with their belief. As in these cases although Christians and Catholics surged in having the highest confidence level in the church, they, however, are indulging in the guilty pleasures of life such as the use of contraception and involvement in corruption respectively. The element and reward that people found significance with arouse the tendency to overlook the dissonance.

Hence, the matter at hand, supports B.F. Skinner's concept of reward to reinforce positive behavior and punishment to discourage negative behavior. Among Christian and Catholics, the concept of heaven is for those who obey the laws of God and hell is for those who are defiant of God's commandments.

Festinger's findings show that people going through cognitive dissonance will find some rationale for whatever is causing the conflict, or they may choose to ignore the event in question.

Both religions, however, have shown the tendency to choose the latter.

Cluster 3 posted the highest number of non-religious affiliations, the lowest confidence level in the church and manifested lowest life satisfaction rate. This exhibits the universal need to belong. Further, it shows that man's interior dynamics and external experiences affect the quality of his life. This can be attributed to the fact that man needs to be loved and accepted by those close to him alone but also by members of society. Stories of patients who recovered because of compassion and love from those who cared for them are not new.

## 7.0 Conclusion

Economically advantaged countries flaunted high level of confidence in the church. In the same manner, these countries experienced the highest level of life satisfaction, which is, therefore, adherent to Clayton Alderfer's ERG Motivation Theory on the interplay of man's need for existence (physiological/physical and safety needs), relatedness (social needs) and growth needs (self-development and personal growth). As the existence needs of the citizens of wealthy countries are continuously met, relatedness and growth needs are also given attention and responded to. Consequently, prevalence on high contraception use among Non-Catholics, and high corruption index among Catholics are manifested thus displaying dissonance.

While it is true that luxurious living leads to high confidence in the church, and to high level of life satisfaction, man's cognitive and subjective nature plays as much vital role to these dynamics.

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