

# THE INFLUENCE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE TIME PERSPECTIVE ON JOB SATISFACTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Academic literature and the popular press suggest that individuals' time perspective influences a variety of important life situations. As such, in this research I posit that a present and a future time perspective could also affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Results obtained from the analysis of a sample of Mexican MBA students suggest that while a present time perspective has a negative but insignificant effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, a future time perspective has a positive and significant effect on both attitudes. Results of the investigation are discussed and conclusions are drawn regarding the importance of time perspective in job settings.

## INTRODUCTION

Philip Zimbardo asserts that time perspective is a factor that could influence human life deeply, and in many ways. Zimbardo, Keough and Boyd (1997) conceive time perspective as the manner in which individuals partition their experience into different temporal categories: past, present and future. Time perspective is a human trait that has been found to influence individuals' risky driving (Zimbardo et al., 1997), drugs consumption (Keough, Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), self-selection biases (Harber, Zimbardo & Boyd, 2003), and social relationships quality (Holman & Zimbardo, 2009). As a human trait, time perspective, therefore, could affect a variety of important work-related behaviors and attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two popular constructs in management research. Several investigations suggest that a variety of personality traits such as the big five, and locus of control affect both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Silva, 2006). However, the way in which time perspective affects these two work-related attitudes remains unexplored, for the most part. To close the void in the relevant literature, this study focuses around the question of: *What is the effect of time perspective on job satisfaction and organizational commitment?* In this investigation I follow common practice on time perspective

research that focuses exclusive attention on the effect of present and future time perspective on a variety of factors (e.g., *Zimbardo et al., 1997; Harber, et al., 2003*).

This study's arguments and findings contribute to the body of knowledge on time perspective and work-related attitudes in several ways. First, this study is among the very first to explore the effects of time perspective, as conceptualized by *Zimbardo* and his colleagues, on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Second, and perhaps more importantly, is the fact that this study informs the current knowledge on job satisfaction and organizational commitment by addressing the influence of unexplored, but relevant, trait-like factors such as time perspective on them. Specifically, this research's findings suggest that whereas a present time perspective has a negative but non-significant influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, a future time perspective has a positive and significant effect on both attitudes. Because job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been found to influence employee absenteeism and turnover (*Clugston, 2000*), revealing the possible effects of time perspective on these attitudes is worthwhile.

The rest of this paper is as follows. First, I provide a quick review of the pertinent literature and elaborate on a series of hypotheses concerning the way in which time perspective might affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Second, I describe the research methods that were followed in order to test the proposed hypotheses. Data analysis and results are presented next. Finally, I discuss the research findings and conclude.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

Ever since the ancient Greek philosophers, the way time affects human behavior has been an enduring preoccupation. More recently, *Zimbardo* and his colleagues posit that all individuals possess a time perspective that affects their lives. Concretely, *Zimbardo and Boyd (1999; p. 1271)* define time perspective as: "the often nonconscious process whereby the continual flows of personal and social experiences are assigned to temporal categories, or time frames, that help to give order, coherence, and meaning to those events". Time perspective research usually assumes that people differ in their temporal orientations in such a way that differences are enduring and difficult to change, at least in the short run (e.g. *Karniol & Ross, 1999*). In other words, time perspective is usually regarded as a trait-like characteristic (a disposition) that may affect a variety of psychological states and behaviors. Among these states and behaviors, the propensity of people to drive riskily (*Zimbardo et al., 1997*), to consume drugs (*Keough, et al., 1999*) and to self-select in groups (*Harber et al., 2003*).

Existing literature suggests that people differ in the way they focus on the past, present, and future. *Zimbardo and Boyd (1999)* identify five time perspectives that individuals could exhibit at varying degrees: past negative, past positive, present hedonistic, present fatalistic, and future. Each of these time perspectives are supposed to affect differently the way people feel (emotions),

think (cognitions), and behave. For instance, while past negative and present fatalistic oriented people may be prone to depression and aggression, past positive and present hedonistic people are more likely to have friends and hold frequent and meaningful interaction with their families (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). It is worth noting that if attitudes have an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral component (Brief, 1998), then it is fair to hold that time perspective could affect a variety of attitudes.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two work related attitudes that could be affected by an individual's time perspective. According to Robbins and Judge (2009), job satisfaction refers to a positive feeling about a person's job resulting from an evaluation of the job's characteristics. Robbins and Judge refer to organizational commitment as the degree to which an employee identifies with his organization and wishes to maintain membership in it. Because job satisfaction and organizational commitment are commonly regarded as attitudes, dispositional research indicates that several trait-like characteristics such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and/or positive affectivity affect them. Individuals who are high in positive affectivity are intrinsically happier, and thus, more prone to experience satisfaction in their jobs than people with negative affectivity (Wright & Staw, 1999). High positive affectivity individuals are also more prone to develop affective feelings toward their organizations, and thus organizational commitment (Lee & Allen, 2002). As positive affectivity does, time perspective could also affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. As mentioned earlier, this study focuses only on the effect of present hedonistic and future time perspective on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

A present hedonistic time perspective is characterized by an orientation toward present enjoyment: pleasure and excitement without sacrifices today for rewards tomorrow (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Given their nature, present hedonistic people might likely be unpunctual and not very dedicated to their jobs, as a job usually requires the sacrifice of present enjoyment in order to obtain future rewards. Given that it is precisely the rewards that people obtain in the job what could make them satisfied with it (Judge et al., 2000), the more present hedonistic people is, the less likely they might be to experience job satisfaction. Additionally, and also by their nature, present hedonistic people might be reluctant to do personal sacrifices for their organizations, or engage in discretionary behaviors beyond their formal roles that might enhance the organization's welfare. If highly committed employees care for the organization and are willing to make sacrifices for it (Allen & Meyer, 1990), then the more present hedonistic individuals are, the less committed they might be to the organizations that they work for. A synthesis of the above arguments suggests the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1. There is a negative association between present hedonistic time perspective and job satisfaction.*

*Hypothesis 2. There is a negative association between present hedonistic time perspective and organizational commitment.*

Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) suggest that, unlike present hedonistic individuals, future oriented persons are highly organized, ambitious goal seekers and are willing to sacrifice present enjoyment in order to achieve their career objectives. By their very nature, future oriented individuals are likely to display the kind of behaviors that are rewarded in a job (e.g., punctuality and dedication), and thus are likely to experience high job satisfaction as a result of the rewards that they could get. In addition, given that future oriented individuals care about goal achievement and might be willing to sacrifice present enjoyment making sacrifices for the organization to which their professional goals are tied to, the more future oriented individuals are the more committed they might be to their organizations. Synthesizing the above arguments I formally postulate the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 3. There is a positive association between future time perspective and job satisfaction.*

*Hypothesis 4. There is a positive association between future time perspective and organizational commitment.*

## **METHODS**

Data for this investigation were collected in a major university in central Mexico during the fall 2009. 115 MBA students were surveyed by means of a paper and pencil self-administered questionnaire. Participation was voluntary. Due to incomplete information 3 observations were dropped from the original sample, thus leaving 112 observations as a final sample. The final sample comprises 49 men and 63 women with an average age of 32.8 and 28.96 years respectively. 78.5 % of the sampled individuals were employed full time, 9.8% were employed part time, 6 % were self- employed, and 2.6% were currently unemployed.

The data collection instrument consisted of 41 items. 13 items measured future time perspective. 15 items measured present hedonistic time perspective. 5 items measured job satisfaction, and 8 items measured organizational commitment. All measurement scales were taken from existing research. Future and present time perspective were measured by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) scale. Job satisfaction was measured by Andrews and Whitney (1976) scale, and organizational commitment was measured by means of Allen and Meyer (1990) affective commitment items. All scale items were measured in a Likert-type format. While the time perspective items had verbal anchors in 1 (not at all characteristic of me) and 5 (very characteristic of me), the job satisfaction and organizational commitment items were verbally anchored in 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).

Using back-translation procedures, all scales were translated from American English to Mexican Spanish. Initially, all scales were translated from English to Spanish by an individual fluent in both languages. Next, a second individual fluent in both languages translated the scales back from Spanish to English to check the accuracy of the initial translation. All the items that showed

an inaccurate translation were re-translated from English to Spanish and then from Spanish to English until an appropriate translation of all the items was reached. Only two iterations were needed to complete the translation process.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analyses were carried out on this research's data by means of Structural Equation Modeling techniques (SEM) in LISREL. Unfortunately, the fit indices for the original measurement model that included all the items in the questionnaire were below the proper thresholds and many of them exhibited factor loadings below the .50 level. Given the poor fit of the original data to their respective latent constructs and a lack of convergent and discriminant validity, several items were dropped from the future (eight items), present hedonistic (eleven items), and organizational commitment scales (two items). After the adjustment, fit indices for the measurement model were deemed as appropriate ( $\chi^2 = 225.37$ ,  $df = 164$ ,  $p = 0.0073$ , CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.051) and all items in the reduced scales reached factor loadings above the .50 level. Although it is acknowledged that the reduction in the scales is a limitation of this study, this was necessary to ensure the unidimensionality, as well as the validity of the constructs involved in this research. All the following analysis and conclusions are based on the reduced scales.

Table 1 shows reliabilities, descriptive statistics and correlations among this study's variables. Table 1 shows that all construct reliabilities are above the .70 threshold, thus indicating a proper degree of internal consistency for all scales. Table 1 also shows that while a future time perspective has significant correlations with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, a present hedonistic time perspective does not. At first glance, these correlations suggest some support for hypotheses 3 and 4, but not so for hypothesis 1 and 2. Finally on preliminary analyses, Table 1 shows that, in accordance with current research on work attitudes (see Harrison, Newman & Roth, 2006), job satisfaction and organizational commitment have a strong positive association.

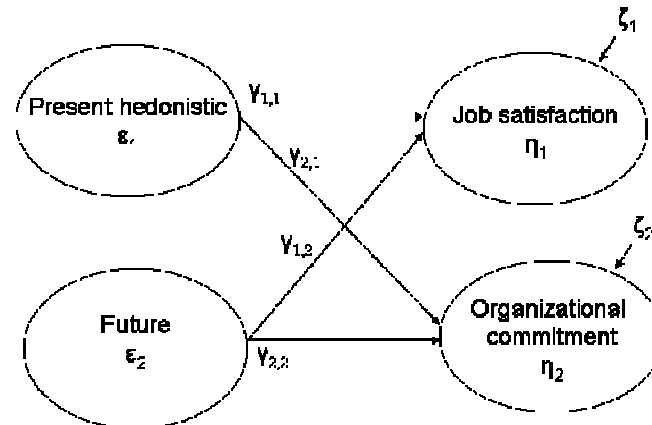
Table 1: Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations

Variables	Mean	Std	1	2	3
1 Preent Hedonistic	3.429	0.801	0.720		
2 Future	3.925	0.693	0.712	0.215*	
3 Job Satisfaction	5.189	1.316	0.903	0.007	0.322**
4 Organizational Commitment	4.625	1.250	0.760	-0.034	0.298**

\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$

SEM techniques were also employed to test this study's hypotheses. An examination of fit indices for the structural model shown in Figure 1 suggests that the data fits well to the hypothesized model ( $\chi^2 = 241.13$ ,  $df = 165$ ,  $p = 0.00010$ , CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.064).

Figure 1: Structural model of time perspective (future and present hedonistic) and work attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment)\*



\* For the sake of simplicity of illustration, this model does not show latent variable error terms

Concerning the hypotheses that involve the effect of a present hedonistic time perspective on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the SEM analysis on Figure 1 does not support them. Hypothesis 1 suggests that there is a negative association between a present hedonistic time perspective and job satisfaction. Given that path  $\gamma_{1,1}$  is negative but non-significant ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $t = -1.43$ ), hypothesis 1 is not supported, although it is on the predicted direction. Hypothesis 2 suggests that there is a negative association between a present hedonistic time perspective and organizational commitment. This hypothesis is not supported either because path  $\gamma_{2,1}$ , although negative as expected, is non significant ( $\beta = -0.24$ ,  $t = -1.55$ ).

Concerning the hypotheses which predict positive effects of a future time perspective on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the SEM analysis on Figure 1 supports them. Hypothesis 3 predicts a positive association between a future time perspective and job satisfaction. Because path  $\gamma_{1,2}$  is positive and significant ( $\beta = 1.42$ ,  $t = 4.96$ ), this hypothesis is supported. Hypothesis 4 predicts that there is a positive association between a future time perspective and organizational commitment. Because path  $\gamma_{2,2}$  is positive and significant ( $\beta = 1.13$ ,  $t = 3.84$ ), it provides support for hypothesis 4.

## DISCUSSION

As suggested by Zimbardo's works, time perspective is a pervasive factor that affects human life in many ways. In this investigation, I extend the study of time perspective to examine the influence of a present and future time perspective on the work-related attitudes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Previous research on time perspective has found negative effects of a present time perspective on people's welfare (e.g., it increases the propensity of driving riskily). Although this study's

findings suggests that a present time perspective could negatively affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, this affect might not be significant enough to jeopardize a worker's level of satisfaction with his/her job and his/her levels of organizational commitment. The findings of this research, thus, suggest that although the negative effects of a present time perspective could be pervasive in a variety of life important settings, it might not be that relevant in work settings, just as the critics to dispositional research might suggests (e.g., Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1989).

Unlike a present time perspective, this study's findings indicate that a future time perspective is likely to have a positive effect on an individual's levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These findings, thus, echo past research on time perspective that has found that a future time perspective has a positive influence on a variety of factors that relate to an individual's welfare (e.g., it decreases the probability of drugs consumption). Nevertheless, the evidence suggesting that a future time perspective may have a positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment runs contrary to the criticisms made to dispositional research. Such criticisms to dispositional research contend that dispositions (e.g., personality traits) might be irrelevant in work settings because these are strong situations that provide little latitude for dispositions to affect attitudes and behaviors.

Because a present and a future time perspective do not seem to affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the same way, results of this investigation neither support nor negate the importance of dispositions in the job place. Results of these investigation, however, do indicate that time perspective could affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and since these attitudes have been found to have an influence on employee absenteeism and turnover, then managers should pay attention to time perspective in the selection of candidates for vacant positions. After all, let us not forget that time perspective, as a human trait, is likely to be an enduring and persistent personal characteristic that could be very difficult to change, at least in the short run.

This research findings, and implications, however, should be taken with care. First of all, this study sample is small and comes from a country that differs culturally from other nations; thus, this research's results could be country specific. Additionally, and as noted previously, this study's data had some problems with the unidimensionality and validity of the measures. Problems like these set a limitation to the generalizability of results and call for further research aimed to uncover the effects of time perspective on work-related attitudes and behaviors.

## **CONCLUSION**

Time perspective can affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Nonetheless, this effect is likely to differ between a present and a future time perspective, being the latter more likely to significantly affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment than the former. In

the end, and given the importance of job satisfaction and organizational commitment for an organization's effectiveness, time perspective is a factor that should be taken into consideration in order to manage employees' attitudes toward their jobs and organizations.

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