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## **A Time-Strapped Reality: Christian Faculty Perceptions on Research Expectations and Job Satisfaction**

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**Abstract**

There are many factors related to faculty perceptions of expectations and demands to conduct research that can significantly impact their job satisfaction. While much research has been done on the relationship between a faculty member's ability to perform research and their job satisfaction, limited research on this relationship exists in the context of Christian higher education.

To address this problem, this study asks the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty regarding research?
2. How do Christian higher education faculty's perceptions of these research expectations affect their job satisfaction?

Data were collected from six faculty from a southeastern Christian institution of higher education. Each participated in interviews, journal entries, and written group discussion threads. Researchers categorized the data into four major themes that contributed to faculty perceptions about research: 1) external resources, 2) motivational factors, 3) Biblical worldview, and 4) satisfaction. Results suggest that factors such as time, lack of institutional resources to conduct research, and competing job demands negatively impact faculty perceptions, while ease of access and opportunities for collaboration in research positively inform those perceptions. Additionally, the Biblical worldview of faculty was shown to significantly influence their engagement with research. Subsequently, those faculty who were engaged in research noted greater satisfaction with their job. Practical implications of this study suggest the need for increased supportive resources for faculty in Christian institutions of higher learning.

*Keywords:* satisfaction, biblical worldview, motivation, time constraints

**Introduction**

Throughout the history of higher education, there has been a focus on improving the knowledge base of both the teacher and the student. To develop the knowledge base of the teacher, research into the history, status, and

future possibilities of a particular topic is required.

Research conducted in and about higher education has become increasingly important since the 1970s as it increases knowledge and skills while contributing to existing literature. Some of the essential features impacting faculty members' ability to perform

research and scholarship is their capacity to do so within their institution. Therefore, identifying which external factors impact faculty's ability to produce research, particularly those aimed at available resources within the context of a teaching institution, is essential.

Faculty in higher education have various roles related to the institution, their job, and students. These roles center around the pedagogical component but also include the expectation of research and scholarship. Although participation in research and scholarship can enhance faculty job satisfaction and student engagement, it can also create stress for faculty related to time commitment and job performance.

The relationship between faculty and research has been recognized as a love-hate relationship, often seen as a necessary evil for promotion and tenure. While "publish or perish" is still a part of the academic's career path, that path is changing as technology changes and academic journals proliferate.

To determine if the perceptions of expectations of research and scholarship by higher education faculty in Christian academic institutions affect factors of job satisfaction, a literature review was conducted to determine prior research and identify gaps that this study might help fill.

The perspective of Christian faculty is lacking in the current literature, so this study was guided by two research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty regarding research expectations?

2. How do Christian higher education faculty's perceptions of these research expectations affect their job satisfaction?

### **Literature Review**

Education has existed since the beginning of history. However, education passed down orally, is quite informal by today's standards. The structure for higher education that more closely resembles the prevailing model of today came about in Europe during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The primary purpose "was the education of professionals who could pursue religious, governmental, administrative, or legal careers" (Haskins, 2017, pp. xii-xiii).

The founding of higher education institutions in America was wrought largely by religious groups eager to train future ministers in their spiritual belief systems for service to new congregations in the modern world. Early institutional curricula consisted of classical languages and liberal arts. A guiding principle of these early universities was to provide an environment where "students could develop into virtuous leaders that would put the public good before personal passion" (Sorber, 2021, p. 2).

Today, faculty in higher education have unique expectations for their roles and responsibilities. These expectations include research, scholarship, and student mentorship in addition to their normal teaching duties. According to Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, two spheres exist in the workplace: discomfort and personal development of the employee (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Faculty place themselves on this continuum regarding expectations and performance

of research and related activities. Many faculty perceive research and publication to be determining factors for positive performance reviews and promotions (Niles et al., 2020). This can create a source of dissatisfaction if not fulfilled, which can create stress for faculty (Xu & Wang, 2023). Successful completion of research activities can help faculty achieve personal fulfillment in occupational goals.

Another expectation of faculty in higher education involves the mentorship of students. Studies indicate relationships between faculty and students are strong contributors to future academic and occupational success for those students (Raposa et al., 2021). In addition, this support is more pronounced if related to research activities (Raposa et al., 2021). Due to faculty perceptions of requirements for research, publication, and student mentorship, increased stress and burnout in faculty can result in diminished job satisfaction (Cerci & Dumladag, 2019; Szromek & Wolniak, 2020; Xu & Wang, 2023).

Publication is considered a significant factor of internalizing the mission and values within institutions of higher education, thus contributing to an individual's self-efficacy (Romani-Dias et al., 2018). The concept of self-efficacy has been linked to satisfaction and commitment in the workplace as well as satisfactory student relationships (Mokhtar et al., 2023). This supports the perception of faculty in institutions of higher education that research and publications are linked to positive performance reviews and promotions (Niles et al., 2020).

Research and scholarship started to emerge as a necessity in the 1960s and 1970s. Silverman (1987) explained

several years later that the number of journals focusing on higher education research and the increasing number of doctoral programs contributed to the rise in research and published scholarship. Since then, faculty, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students alike have contributed greatly to a variety of disciplines. Much of the research assists with furthering higher education through new and productive practices (Hamann & Kosmützky, 2021).

Students, faculty, staff, and industry benefit from research conducted within higher education. Participating in research and scholarship allows faculty to improve and refine their knowledge or skillset. Faculty research is often completed in collaboration with other faculty, resulting in productive mentoring relationships (Quarchioni et al., 2022; Scutelnicu Todoran, 2023). Similarly, when students and faculty collaborate on research, student success and institutional success increase because of the connection to mentorship and increased knowledge (Burger & Naude, 2020).

University and college faculty face enormous challenges to pursue excellence in their classroom teaching as well as their scholarly research outside the classroom. For many, scholarly research is measured by publication in peer-reviewed journals. As noted by Niles et al. (2020), faculty pursuing promotion and tenure desire the prestige of publication as highly important. Therefore, personal factors have been acknowledged as essential in their research engagement and productivity (Heng et al., 2020).

A factor that influences faculty engagement in research and scholarship is the demand of "publish or perish" (Burbules, 2020; Heng et al., 2020).

While that factor is not new, some aspects of academic scholarship are changing the landscape. As cited in Burbules (2020), faculty are “on the treadmill of publishing more and more” (p. 655). As a result, the number of academic journals is increasing, meaning that fewer of the articles by faculty are being read. Dolyes (2019) posits the somewhat embarrassing question, “*Is anyone listening?* Are faculty reading this scholarship? More importantly, are faculty using insights from the research to enhance teaching and promote student learning?” (p. 541). This is not to suggest that faculty will abandon research and scholarship, but that engagement may look different in the future.

The many factors shown to influence faculty’s research and scholarship productivity can be generally identified as internal or external factors. Many of these external factors in previous studies have been linked to concerns over tenure, salary, and promotion (Barney et al., 2021). The Bland model (Bland et al., 2005) identifies two major categories of external factors that influence faculty research productivity—institutional and leadership. While faculty can individually pursue research opportunities, variables such as workload and institutional support will heavily impact faculty capacity for research. Critical research resources available to faculty will vary heavily depending on the institution and its teaching demands (Barney et al., 2021). A study using the Bland model has shown that even in an institution where individual faculty members’ research productivity is a goal, “nothing substitutes for recruiting faculty with a passion for research, providing them

with formal mentoring programs, facilitating their networks, and providing time for them to do research” (Bland et al., 2005, p. 236). The findings indicate that external factors within the institutional and leadership categories show a high correlation with many of the institutional features that are primarily in the hands of administrators (Bland et al., 2005).

While faculty cannot control external factors, studies have shown that a need for intentionality at the institutional leadership level is necessary for faculty to thrive in publishing research. The ability to be productive in publishing is “among the most imperative metrics for researcher’s performance in the academic world” (Wahid et al., 2020, p. 22). Since institutional leadership is a significant element among many institutional factors, it is important also to identify other external factors which contribute to positively affecting research productivity.

One study on factors that influence researchers’ publication productivity found that funding is the most influential factor (Wahid et al.). It was also discovered that “collaboration, time, academic rank, and qualification affect positively the research productivity of individuals of natural and medical sciences,” while the number of publications is less affected by researchers’ faculty rank, training, and mentoring (Wahid et al., 2020, p. 31). Additionally, this study observed that “factors such as funding, electronic information resources, university-industry relationships, provision of books, professional journals affect positively the publication output of institutes” (Wahid et al., 2020, p. 31). Therefore, these factors are significant in

considering and evaluating how external factors may impact the job satisfaction of faculty at an institution based on their ability and the institutional resources available to participate in research and scholarship.

To determine if the perceptions of faculty in Christian academic institutions affect internal factors of job satisfaction, including motivation, burnout, and work-life balance, a literature review was conducted. In a study conducted at George Fox University, the researcher surveyed the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty related to job demands and stress as predictors of occupational burnout, including exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy, organizational support, workload, resources, advancement, and job security (Shelton, 2020). The subjects were chosen due to the perceived additional demands for them to stay more “biblically grounded” as faculty in Christian higher education. This study determined the potential toll on the faculty experience, such as a decline in physical resources, emotional resources, enthusiasm for teaching, and meeting deadlines. Other factors included lower self-esteem and poor work performance. The findings suggested academic leaders consider providing changed environments to support individual faculty in reducing academic burnout.

Another study examined internal factors of job satisfaction and aimed to explore the views of professors whose main duties included instruction, research, service, and advising (Chen, 2023). Findings suggested that universities may have the ability to improve job satisfaction for their faculty by improving their work environment, providing equipment and support and

flexibility in regulations, and improving the mechanism used for teacher grievances along with reward systems to meet professor needs.

A study published in 2021 used a questionnaire to collect quantitative data from 164 online higher education lecturers in Eastern countries to discover the relationships between work-family balance, work engagement, and job and life satisfaction (Žnidaršič & Marič, 2021). The researchers found that an increase in work-life balance positively relates to life and work satisfaction, which leads to more work engagement. This strengthened engagement among lecturers allows them to feel respected in other facets, such as work-family balance, which improves overall teacher productivity.

Previous research efforts on the topic of faculty job satisfaction include the link between job satisfaction and work commitment, job satisfaction and motivation, permanent versus recurring contracts, academic identity tensions, relationships with colleagues, work hours, and academics’ relationships with their supervisor. However, according to Chen (2023), few research projects have focused on traditional instructional responsibilities such as instruction, research, and service. Additionally, a review of the literature shows a dearth of research on faculty job satisfaction within the Christian college environment.

### **Methodology**

A phenomenological qualitative study sought to understand faculty perceptions of research expectations and how those perceptions affect their job satisfaction. Phenomenology explores and understands the lived experiences of

a group of people. The research questions led the researchers to conduct a phenomenological study. The constructivist worldview, which suggests that individuals construct meaning through their interactions with the world around them, allows the experiences and perceptions of faculty to be worth exploring (Moustakas, 1994). Since the experiences of faculty in Christian higher education institutions were being explored, the study participants included six full-time faculty, some of whom carried administrative duties, at a Christian university in the southeastern United States. These faculty were experts in various disciplines and instructors for residential and online programs.

Institutional Review Board approval was received prior to the data collection. The six participants were chosen in person with each signing a consent form upon arriving at the research site. Each participant provided a well-rounded view with saturation of the lived experiences of faculty. Pseudonyms were used for the six participants; the pseudonym list was password-protected.

To explore the lived experience of the faculty, the study was steered by two research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty regarding research expectations?
2. How do Christian higher education faculty's perceptions of these research expectations affect their job satisfaction?

Data were collected through focus group discussion boards, live in-person interviews, and journal entries, ensuring

triangulation. The focus group discussions were conducted through Canvas, an online learning management system, where the six participants posted their thoughts and perceptions on the research topic and then replied to at least one of the other participants.

The six researchers separated into two interview teams of three members with each team conducting in-person interviews with one participant at a time. The interviews were recorded on Microsoft Teams, which provided both a video recording and a transcription of the interview. The six participants wrote a journal entry and submitted the entry in Canvas. All recordings, transcriptions, discussions, and journal articles were password-protected to ensure confidentiality and security. An audit trail was used to organize the wealth of information pertaining to the study.

After collecting all data, the researchers listened to the interviews and read the transcripts to understand the lived experiences of the participants more accurately, increasing the trustworthiness of the data analysis. Each researcher used reflexive journaling to bracket their biases, assumptions, and experiences. This process ensured that the lived experiences of the participants were prioritized.

Next, a step-by-step process was used to analyze the data. The researchers collaborated to determine codes for each of the interviews. Additionally, the researchers independently read the focus group discussions and journal entries and collaborated to determine codes from each of these sources. After coding each data collection method, categories were created from the codes. Emerging themes were then determined based on the code categories. All codes and

categories were thoroughly reviewed, debated, and discussed by the researchers, contributing to the trustworthiness of the data analysis. The data, codes, and emerging themes were reviewed by the participants, also called member checking, to contribute to the validity of the findings.

**Findings**

Analysis of the qualitative data produced codes, code categories, and four emerging themes. The Findings section outlines the findings and emerging themes organized in support of the two research questions. Table 1 includes the Codes and Themes Table.

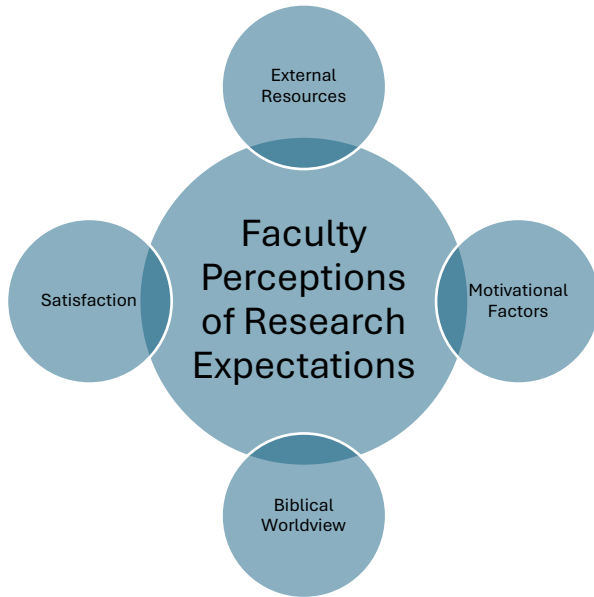
**Table 1**

*Coding and Themes Table*

Code	Number of Occurrences	Emerging Themes	Example Quotes
Time, Training, Job Demands, Development, Balance, Opportunity, Ease of Access, Administrative Tasks, Process	164	External resources	“If research is going to be an expectation of the job we have been assigned, the adequate time, money, and resources must be allocated to support the work.”
Motivation, Expectations, Excellence, Intentionality, Confidence, Planning, Mentorship, Communication, Student Engagement, Collaboration	123	Motivational factors	“Working with a team of fellow researchers is best to motivate me to complete research assignments and editing roles.”
Ministry, Worldview, Service, Worship	36	Biblical worldview	“It’s important that the Christian worldview be represented in all disciplines, and research, and scholarship, and publication is an ideal way to do this.”
Job satisfaction	27	Satisfaction	“Being able to conduct research as part of my job would be very satisfying as it allows not only further subject mastery but also the ability to enhance and contribute to [My field of study].”

**Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty regarding research expectations?**

Four emerging themes, as seen in Figure 1, were identified related to faculty perceptions of research expectations.



**Figure 1**

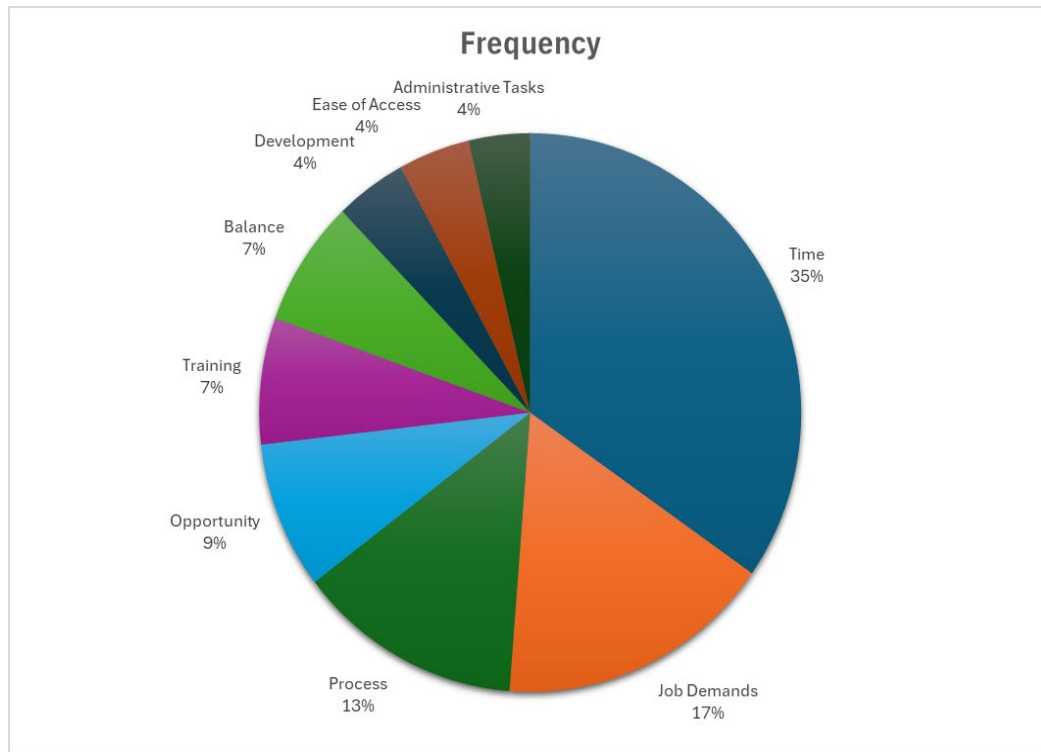
*Faculty Perceptions of Expectations*

***External Resources***

As shown in Figure 2 visualizing the emerging theme with the highest frequency of codes, comments about “time” were at the top of mind for many of the participants. Comments focused primarily on the lack of time to include research “time” were at the top of mind for many of the participants. Comments focused primarily on the lack of time to include research in the traditional workday/school year.

**Figure 2**

*Codes in the External Resources Emerging Theme*



Comments about time often dovetailed into the related topics of job demands and balance. Charlotte stated, “Unfortunately, due to time demands, I currently do not complete research and scholarship. Though I truly do wish I could, my job demands do not allow me to participate in such ventures.” Nia made a similar connection by stating, “As a faculty, it’s been very challenging just juggling research and scholarship with other demands such as being subject matter expert, looking at the curriculum, leadership work, and all the things that we are expected to do, and also involvement in the university as a whole.”

John was the primary driver of the relatively high percentage of “process” comments. He teaches in the arts and believes this area is nontraditional regarding research, speaking repeatedly about several process-related challenges: the lack of established understanding of what constitutes artistic research within the broad arts teaching community, the lack of understanding from new faculty about how to plan research, and the lack of understanding by university leadership about what constitutes research within the broader arts community. John recommended corrective action in each of these areas to promote both the advancement of research in the arts and the recognition of this research by decision-makers outside the arts community. He stated that “traditionally, while research has always been a part of the academic process, it was never a formalized process.”

While most comments about resources reflected a lack thereof, other comments provided a more neutral or positive angle. Several of the comments in the “opportunity” category centered

on faculty chances to perform research as a function of their routine teaching duties. Zuri, who teaches in the sciences, noted, “This past semester I found smart ways to meet the demands of research and scholarship by incorporating it into my teaching.”

Another focus within the “opportunity” grouping was directed to the spiritual aspect of academic work. Charlotte linked opportunity and ministry by stating, “When research and scholarship opportunities present themselves and time availability coincides, I believe God has worked it all for His favor.” Responses in the “ease of access” classification were also directly connected to teaching responsibilities, highlighting the positive feelings about research opportunities made available by or through their academic departments.

### *Motivational Factors*

Participants noted that they were motivated to engage in research and scholarship if they had been mentored, had the opportunity to collaborate with others, and were intentional about it. In relation to mentorship, Zuri, who was actively researching with students, confidently noted, “I got to experience professors that mentored me when I was an undergraduate and graduate student... The success on this is attributed to the mentoring, and so we can’t give away or take out the fact that research does have its place [and] benefits our undergraduate and graduate students.”

Over half of the participants noted that conducting research was easier when they collaborated with other individuals. Two of the participants explained how they conducted research with other professionals. Aria said, “We

each had assigned roles, and it was a really pretty cool collaboration, but somebody had to initiate it because I was, I think, at a loss of what to do next.” Two of the participants indicated they partner with students to conduct research. Zuri briefly explained how working with students has expedited the research process by training other students. “My students are now training the next batch of students, so I do not have to put in the same level of time commitment the following semester.”

Similarly, John explained how difficult it can be when there is a lack of process or intentionality for research in certain disciplines. “We all decided to be artists and designers. None of us had plans on being formal researchers, so how can we make that as painless a process as possible for them.”

Another participant clearly articulated that their lack of confidence influenced their involvement in research. Even after completing a dissertation, Charlotte said, “Personally, I feel like I’m not worthy to share [my research], like I’m not as smart as everyone else . . . so the feeling of no one wants to listen to you is definitely something I struggle with.”

### ***Biblical Worldview***

As Christian faculty, it was evident that the participants’ Biblical worldview influenced their view on research. They felt that their voice needed to be heard and that their Biblical worldview prompted them to do research. John explained that “it is incumbent upon us by requirement that we need to keep improving that craftsmanship and skill so finding a way to kind of balance and do both of these things, and the time constraint is

formidable.” Charlotte noted calmly that “God is in complete control of everything I do, and so if He wants it to happen, He’s going to make it happen.”

In relation to the scholarship, Aria explained, “It’s important for Christians to be published because I feel like we’re being shut out of the marketplace. The Christian worldview isn’t being represented.” Furthermore, Nia noted, “It’s worth the effort and if [there’s] anything that I can do to bring in the Christian worldview to my discipline, I think it is important and worth my time.”

Lastly, John noted how the lack of research and craft development impacts them spiritually. “When I don’t engage in the arts, it really affects me spiritually. I’m not able to worship in the way that I feel God has called me to worship, and so that is very difficult.”

### ***Satisfaction***

Yet another recurring perspective was connected to job satisfaction. Participants want to be satisfied with their work, their contributions to the field, and their research. Participants noted high satisfaction when they did conduct research and scholarship. Aria, who collaborated with colleagues on a publication, noted, “It was a learning process, but it was both a success and a challenge and very satisfying.”

### **Research Question 2: How do Christian higher education faculty’s perceptions of these research expectations affect their job satisfaction?**

Four emerging themes, as seen in Figure 3, were identified related to faculty perceptions of research expectations.

**Figure 3**

*Job Satisfaction*



***External Resources***

Faculty perceive research expectations related to job satisfaction according to several factors. Time was viewed negatively by multiple respondents regarding the conduct and completion of research activities. For example, John reported, “Time constraints end up being the biggest struggle that we have to deal with.” Moreover, multiple members discussed the immense time commitment for research, whether independently, in the community, or with students. John reported, “While assisting students in conducting their research is gratifying at an instructional level, it is also a cold reminder of how little time I must engage in my own research and craft.” John also stated, “It highlights the disparity and serves as a frequent reminder that I am not able to practice my craft/research but must spend the majority of my time helping others conduct theirs.”

A different area noted by faculty regarding time for research is related to schedule and load. For example, Nia responded, “I do a lot of my research in the summertime because I know that the regular semester is very packed.” Greg claimed, “As such, my perception is that I have not had much time or any credit release to be able to pursue research or scholarship.”

Job demands are an additional factor that affects faculty perceptions of research and scholarship. Most respondents reported various aspects of responsibilities and tasks related to their faculty role that inhibit them from completing research activities. For instance, Greg stated, “The only ways I currently complete research fall more under the umbrella of professional development, trying to stay current on industry trends in virtual conferences and articles. I find that the current constructs and responsibilities that I have do not allow time for time to have the ability to pursue research or scholarship.” Faculty expressed a significant desire to complete research despite busy job demands. Charlotte stated, “I wish I could participate more in research and scholarship, but my job demands and my responsibilities provide participation challenges.” When asked about the completion of research and scholarship, Charlotte also responded, “Given my job, it’s very hard with the full-time job that I have in addition to doing extra research on the side.”

***Motivational Factors***

Intentionality is yet another factor in faculty perception of research and scholarship expectations relative to job satisfaction. Most faculty reported the need for planning and scheduling to

get research-related tasks accomplished. For example, Charlotte stated, “I recommend setting a realistic yearly goal of accomplishing research and scholarship. Start small allowing yourself livable and attainable expectations.” Similarly, Nia reported, “I advise new faculty to intentionally plan research and scholarship into their schedule annually.” Several participants also reported aligning specific time for research activities. Aria stated, “I complete research by using every spare hour of my day, often reading sources in the evening hours.” Greg found that focusing on an area of interest and passion can help with scheduling. “Best advice would be to find an area of research related to your field that can be applicable and make time to do it by scheduling it.”

Another concept shared by participants related to perceptions of expectations of research and scholarship was collaboration. Most of the study participants found working with others to be a positive aspect of the research process. Greg stated, “A team concept to work towards research is a great way to focus on developing a research topic and making headway into actually researching it.” Nia stated, “Collaboration with my fellow faculty members and just knowing that from a different angle when you work together, you will know that you could draw from their strength and knowledge and build yours.” Furthermore, motivation was demonstrated to occur within a collaborative approach. Aria said, “Working with a team of fellow researchers is best to motivate me to complete research assignments and editing roles.”

### ***Biblical Worldview***

In this study, participants prioritized Biblical worldview and ministry as part of the commitment to their roles as faculty. One respondent, Aria, on the topic of ministry, posited, “You know, I see it as a ministry and also serving. So, if I am required to do something that the institution needs and you know things that will also benefit the students and the university, then I stepped in.” Charlotte articulated the priority of family as a ministry, declaring, “I do not disagree that research is a worthy personal sacrifice, but I think for the stage in my family life right now, the sacrifice of family life is not worth research and scholarship for my personal gain.”

As Christian faculty, those responding to questions in this study saw the value of a Biblical worldview incorporated into the platform of research. Aria stated, “It’s important that the Christian worldview be represented in all disciplines, and research and scholarship and publication is an ideal way to do this.” Furthermore, she also stated, “Scholarly work is worth the effort, and if there is anything that I can do to bring in the Christian worldview to my discipline, I think is important and worthy of the time.”

### ***Satisfaction***

A number of those who responded to the study voiced the desire to have the ability to conduct research as a contribution to job satisfaction. Greg said, “Being able to conduct research as part of my job would be very satisfying as it allows not only further subject mastery but also the ability to enhance and contribute to my field of study.” Others expressed frustration due to a

lack of resources. John said, “There is a lack of alignment between expectations, time and resource allocation, rewards, and clear communication, which greatly diminishes job satisfaction.” Related to university expectations of conducting research, he asserted, “It is unethical to expect people to use their personal time or work out of contract to complete work required of their job.” Additionally, John said, “The frustrations that we are facing right now include not being able to engage in research. To be able to engage in that process is really important to me as it is to those above me. But logistically, we have not figured out how to do that properly, and so in that way it is very negative.” Finally, Greg summarized several respondents regarding job satisfaction and the connection to lack of time. “I think job satisfaction would increase by being able to have the ability to do some research and scholarship. So, I think it is an integral part of being a faculty member. But again, it just comes back to time and resources.”

### Discussion

Based on the findings, the perspective of Christian faculty on research and scholarship is greatly influenced by a variety of motivational and external factors. External factors that include lack of training, lack of time, work-life balance, laborious processes, and heavy job demands negatively impact whether faculty participate in research alone or with others. The negative impact of these factors can influence the internal motivation and confidence of faculty, which could hinder their engagement in research.

Other factors, like mentorship, easy access to research participants, and

collaboration with others positively impact whether faculty engage in research. Often, the negative factors outweigh positive ones resulting in faculty disengaging from research.

Another consideration is how different disciplines view and conduct research, as that may influence faculty engagement in research. In this study, science disciplines were more active in research, whether conducted individually or collaboratively. On the other hand, other departments had a more difficult time conducting research.

Lastly, it must be acknowledged in this study that a Biblical worldview positively impacts faculty perceptions and engagement for research and scholarship. Christian faculty view their engagement in research as an extension of their faith and their craft. They also believe they have an important role to play in creating rich content in a world of faith-centric literature.

The findings of this study, confirming prior research, show the elements impacting faculty’s ability to research at an institution of Christian higher education are generally represented as internal and external factors. The external factors of time, job demand, and difficulties or limitations with the research process (which varied by discipline) were the top three factors identified by participants in this study that generally hindered their ability to meet perceived research expectations. These findings align with Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory.

While external resources were generally the dominant element of how they perceive research expectations and their ability to produce research, there were many internal factors listed as well. At times, elements of both were represented. This coincides with the

findings of the Bland model that “a highly research productive organization is indeed a function of the integration and interplay of the individual and institutional features. Furthermore, the successful synthesis of these features is heavily dependent on effective leaders” (Bland et al., 2005, p. 236).

A study that builds on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model shows that “research-critical resources available to faculty are likely to vary depending on the degree of teaching demands at their school” (Barney et al., 2021, p. 179). Time constraints to engage in research, often due to job demands and a lack of opportunity for collaboration, increase strain on research productivity. To lessen the strain on faculty seeking research opportunities, institutions can strategically increase the number of resources and time made available to faculty to conduct their research. This study demonstrated that faculty are willing to conduct more research but often lack the capacity or built-in structure within their role to motivate them to initiate it. This coincides with findings correlated with the JD-R model.

The data from this study noted that a lack of training on a systematic approach to research, and opportunity for collaboration to conduct research, along with lack of time, were significant concerns for participants. This could be remedied by an increase in intentional funding and structure built in by the administration to aid in facilitating this. This correlates with the Bland study which indicates that intentionality in administrative leadership to provide necessary resources would help meet the needs and expectations of faculty to produce research in their field (Bland et al., 2005). The hope is that, in turn,

intentional planning and financial resources committed to these efforts by administrators would contribute to their faculty experiencing increased job satisfaction.

Given these findings, there are several areas in which higher education institutions (HEI) can contribute to faculty to fully support research endeavors. One of the major repetitive connotations expressed by the participants of this study was the overarching theme of resource availability. Of these resources, several factors stood out in relative importance to the feasibility of completion of the research process. The primary concept was time. All participants reported a perceived lack of time to complete research and scholarship activities. One way that HEIs can alleviate this potential barrier is to provide release time for faculty to complete research outside of daily teaching responsibilities. In addition, a lack of training and knowledge of the research process was also voiced by participants. HEIs can allocate workshops, seminars, and other training modalities to accommodate faculty engagement in the research process. Faculty voiced that participation in research about a subject of interest can increase their motivation, which will also benefit the institution.

Another concept discovered during the study was the perceived gap between the desire to and ability to accomplish research. HEIs can use student engagement during the pedagogical process, funded conference attendance and presentations, and compensated, non-contracted time to provide research opportunities. Since the literature has demonstrated positive student benefits from engagement with faculty research, and faculty has voiced

positive impacts of professional collaboration, one idea to encourage research and scholarship is to design an institutional research job board. This would enable faculty and students to be part of a research group with a mutual interest.

Overall, HEIs can contribute to faculty research and scholarship in multiple ways. Support regarding time, training, mentorship, and funding of opportunities can provide research engagement for faculty. This provides an enriching environment for growth of faculty and their various represented disciplines. The organization receives recognition and gains prestige by having its name circulated among professional journals. Additionally, faculty perceptions of research expectations may demonstrate the job satisfaction they strongly desire.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand the perspectives of Christian faculty members in relation to research and scholarship. The study contained multiple expected limitations, including the following:

- The sample size was relatively small, with six participants.
- Researchers were split into two interview teams, resulting in each half of the researchers interviewing one half of the participants.
- Participants and researchers were from the same institution, which created an environment where some

researchers were known to the participants.

- As this research was conducted at a faith-based institution, there is a possible worldview bias at the faculty and institutional levels.
- There was one instance of supervisor/subordinate interaction during the interview process.

Researchers in this study propose adjustments for future studies to draw from a larger sample size at the same academic institution, including a variety of full-time, part-time, online, residential, undergraduate, and graduate faculty. Additionally, the expansion of research to multiple institutions is a suggested platform for this topic. As the study used a qualitative research design, in the future, a quantitative examination of faculty perceptions could be adopted. Lastly, the need to explore higher education best practice research to determine current processes of engaging faculty in research is a probable future research project.

### **Conclusion**

This phenomenological study examined the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty on research and development and how those perceptions affect their job satisfaction. As research is generally expected of university faculty for advancement and tenure, this topic is significant for the many faculty working in Christian higher education. Key results suggest that factors such as time, lack of training, and competing job demands negatively impact faculty perceptions, while ease of access and collaboration positively impact those perceptions. Among Christian faculty,

their Biblical worldview helps drive their engagement with research, and faculty engaged in research note more satisfaction with their job. Practical implications of this study suggest the need for increased supportive resources for faculty in Christian institutions of higher learning. Relevant future research may explore how increased resources might improve the perceptions of Christian higher education faculty toward research, scholarship, and job satisfaction.

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