

A Multi-Dimensional Study on the Influence of Christian Beliefs on the Mental Health of Believers

Qianyi Ye*

London College of Fashion, London, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

*Corresponding author: 2331314953@qq.com

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Abstract: This paper discusses the influence of Christian belief on the mental health of believers from multiple dimensions. It examines its fundamental roles through doctrinal guidance, community support, ritual governance, and the interplay between belief and reality. The research results indicate that the influence of Christian belief on the mental health of believers is dual: The positive influence is reflected in reducing negative emotions, boosting self-worth, fostering community connections, and enhancing stress response abilities. The negative effects may include anxiety, conflicting beliefs, excessive self-denial, social alienation, and passive responses. They are closely related to the way Christians understand beliefs, the intensity of practice, and the mode of interaction with reality, revealing the complexity of the relationship between beliefs and mental health.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, the relationship between religious beliefs and mental health has gradually become the focus of research in the fields of psychology and sociology. The Christian belief system, with its vast global following, exerts a considerable influence on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns of adherents. In the rapidly changing modern society, individuals are facing increasing psychological pressure. Christian belief serves as a form of spiritual nourishment, playing a complex and diverse role in the mental health of its believers. Most of the existing research focuses on the influence of one dimension, and there is a lack of a systematic review of the mechanism of action. Therefore, exploring how Christian belief influences the mental health of its followers is both theoretically and practically important. This investigation will not only enhance the field of religious psychology but also offer valuable insights for understanding the connection between belief and psychological well-being.

1.2 Definition of Core Concepts

1.2.1 Christian Beliefs

Christian belief is a religious system with the Bible as the core and the doctrine of "Trinity" and "Jesus' Redemption" as the core, including belief in God, following Jesus Christ, and values such as "loving God and loving others", "forgiveness", and "redemption". Practical expressions of faith include prayer, worship, Bible reading, and involvement in church community activities. These elements—along with the guidance of doctrine, ritual practices, and community connections—help shape the spiritual lives and lifestyles of believers. They create a community of faith that provides spiritual nourishment, shared values, and a sense of belonging [1].

1.2.2 Mental Health

Mental health refers to an individual's well-adapted state in emotion, cognition, interpersonal relationships, etc. It is not just "no psychological problems", but a multi-dimensional feature of dynamic balance: emotionally, individuals can effectively adjust negative emotions such as anxiety and depression and maintain a positive attitude. In self-cognition, individuals have a clear sense of

self-worth and acknowledge the meaning of life. In interpersonal relationships, individuals can establish stable connections. Under pressure, individuals exhibit resilience, a psychological characteristic characterized by harmonious interaction between themselves, others, and their environment.

2. The Fundamental Path of Christian Belief Affecting Believers' Mental Health

2.1 Guidance of Doctrine and Values

The core doctrine of Christianity is to indirectly influence the psychological state of believers by shaping their cognitive framework. For example, the doctrine of "God loves the world" makes believers believe that they are in transcendental care, which will be transformed into affirmation of self-worth and reduce self-doubt caused by secular evaluation. The doctrine of "forgiveness" guides believers to let go of resentment and alleviate the negative emotions accumulated due to interpersonal conflicts. In addition, values such as "eternal life" and "promise of redemption" provide believers with a framework for understanding life, death, and suffering. When encountering setbacks, the cognition that "suffering is a trial" can help diminish feelings of helplessness. Simultaneously, the belief that "redemption will be attained in the end" bolsters their hope for the future [2]. This value system, shaped by their beliefs, provides a sense of cognitive stability in chaotic situations, which positively influences their emotional adjustment and stress coping strategies.

2.2 The Role of Community and Interpersonal Support

As the practical carrier of the Christian faith, the church provides a unique community support network for believers. In the church, the identity of "brothers and sisters" transcends the secular utilitarian relationship and forms an emotional connection based on common beliefs. When they face challenges, the prayer support and assistance from church members—such as visits and material help—directly alleviate their loneliness and stress. In addition, daily worship and fellowship activities build a stable social circle through regular interaction to meet individual psychological needs for a sense of belonging. Moreover, the role model effect within the community, such as the witness of other believers, strengthens their faith and indirectly boosts their determination to face difficulties. In summary, community support has become an important way to affect the mental health of believers through emotional resonance and practical assistance [3].

2.3 Psychological Adjustment by Ritual and Practice

Christian rituals and daily practice serve as the immediate and long-term psychological adjustment functions. As a direct way of communication between believers and God, prayer has an immediate effect similar to "talking". When individuals express their anxiety and confusion through prayer, they can relieve emotional tension and attain peace through psychological catharsis. During the worship ceremony, Christians sing together, listen to the sermon, and through music, language, and group harmony, create a solemn and warm environment. This experience temporarily isolates secular pressures and provides emotional comfort for believers [4]. In the long run, consistent belief practices like daily reading and regular reflection contribute to the development of stable psychological habits. Through reading the Bible, believers internalize lessons like "gratitude" and "patience," which in turn shape their thinking patterns, making it easier for them to focus on life's positive aspects. Regular participation in the ceremonies like Eucharist will gradually consolidate their sense of security by repeatedly reinforcing the experience of "being loved" and "being accepted". In conclusion, the psychological inertia cultivated by rituals and practice will constantly affect the emotional state and coping ways of believers.

2.4 The Interaction between Faith and Reality

Christian belief does not exist in isolation, and its interaction with believers' real lives directly affects their mental health. When the reality meets the expectation of belief (such as "prayer is answered" and "predicament is improved"), believers will strengthen their cognition of "belief is effective", thus enhancing their psychological certainty and happiness; When faith provides an

explanation for the dilemma (such as treating disease as "soul purification"), it can help believers accept the unchangeable facts and reduce the pain caused by resistance. However, these interactions may also lead to tension. When reality conflicts with faith, such as the misfortunes faced by good believers, they may fall into confusion over why God allows suffering. Consequently, cognitive contradictions can lead to anxiety or fluctuations in belief. In addition, the difference between beliefs and secular norms (such as the restrictions of some doctrines on marriage and occupation) may also cause psychological conflicts among believers in social adaptation [5]. The dynamic interaction between belief and reality presents a mode of "fit-reinforcement" or "conflict-tension", which directly affects the psychological state of believers.

3. The Positive Influence of Christian Belief on the Mental Health of Believers

3.1 Emotion Regulation

The positive influence of Christian faith on emotional regulation is primarily seen in reducing negative emotions and enhancing positive emotions. For dealing with anxiety and fear, believers classify the uncertainty in life as "God's care" through the doctrines of "God is in control" and "Never forsake". This transcendental sense of security can weaken the worry about the unknown. For example, in the face of illness or unemployment, the belief that "God's grace is sufficient" can reduce the sense of loss of control and relieve anxiety. At the same time, the core concepts such as "redemption promise" and "grace comes" in faith can directly stimulate positive emotions: followers can often feel the warmth of "being loved" from their daily lives because they believe that God has chosen them and have eternal hope, thus generating a stable sense of happiness [6]. The concept of "gratitude" encourages appreciation for essentials like food, clothing, peace, and security. This perspective helps individuals focus on positive aspects of life, diminish the tendency to dwell on negativity, and create a more balanced emotional state.

3.2 Self-cognition

On the level of self-cognition, Christian belief helps believers to establish more positive self-cognition by constructing a unique value system. On the one hand, the doctrines of "man is God's creation" and "God loves every unique individual" directly strengthen believers' sense of self-worth. Regardless of their achievements, they believe that they have irreplaceable value because they are "loved by God". Therefore, beyond the affirmation of secular evaluation, it reduces the inferiority caused by comparison and enhances self-acceptance [7]. On the other hand, faith provides a clear answer to the meaning of life: By pursuing the life goal of "glorifying God and loving others as oneself" and understanding that "this life is a preparation for eternity," believers can eliminate the confusion surrounding "why people live." Having a clear understanding of life's purpose can prevent individuals from falling into the emptiness of "meaningless efforts" when they encounter setbacks. Instead, it can provide deeper value to their daily actions through the lens of faith and strengthen their sense of direction in life.

3.3 Interpersonal Relationship

The positive influence of Christian faith on interpersonal relationships is mainly to alleviate loneliness and enhance a sense of belonging through community connection. The church serves as a central space for believers to engage in their faith. It offers a high-frequency, dynamic, and interactive environment for Christians through worship, greetings, fellowship, sharing, and collaborative public welfare activities. These experiences help believers forge strong emotional connections as they relate to one another as "brothers and sisters." This connection differs from the utilitarianism of secular social interaction, as it is more rooted in the spiritual resonance of "common belief", which can effectively fill emotional voids and reduce loneliness. Additionally, the inclusiveness of faith groups fosters an environment of mutual love and acceptance, allowing believers to navigate their experiences more comfortably. Even when they face rejection in the secular world, the support from their church community helps them feel less isolated. This ongoing sense of belonging enhances their

psychological security and provides a strong foundation for building healthy interpersonal relationships.

3.4 Pressure Response

In the face of pressure, Christianity enhances the ability of believers to cope by providing a cognitive framework and psychological resources. On the cognitive level, beliefs such as "suffering is God's trial" and "grace is hidden in pressure" turn pressure into a meaningful challenge, not just a disaster. This way of attribution helps believers to maintain their motivation in difficult times. For example, in the face of career failure, they believe that "trials can refine faith", thus reducing escape psychology and enhancing coping resilience. On the resource level, prayer and bible reading become immediate psychological support. For example, pouring out prayers can help relieve stress, and the teaching that "enduring to the end will surely win victory" found in Bible readings provides spiritual strength. The practical help of the church community (such as financial support and assistance in affairs) greatly reduces the actual impact of stress. The combination of "spiritual support and group support" effectively reduces helplessness among Christians when facing pressure and enhances their abilities to cope with it.

4. The Negative Influence of Christian Beliefs on Believers' Mental Health

4.1 Emotion Regulation

The negative influence of Christian faith on emotional regulation often stems from the conflict between belief, cognition, and practical experience, as well as the excessive negative elements in doctrine. On the one hand, when reality contradicts God's plan and promise, believers often experience anxiety due to faith conflict. For instance, unanswered prayers, misfortune affecting relatives and friends, or ongoing troubles despite their efforts can cause anxiety. These situations will impact the core belief that "God will surely care for" and cause self-doubt about "whether he is not pious enough" and "whether God has abandoned me". If this cognitive contradiction is not resolved for a long time, it will turn into persistent tension, irritability, and even cause chronic anxiety. On the other hand, if the concepts of "original sin" and "confession" in the doctrine are overemphasized, it may strengthen their sense of guilt. As a result, believers may view daily minor mistakes, like occasional selfishness and emotional loss of control, as signs of "deviating from God," leading them to fall into self-condemnation and feelings of being "unworthy of being loved." Even in the absence of substantive faults, individuals may criticize themselves for not being holy, leading to negative emotions such as depression and shame. Over time, this internal emotional friction can gradually erode psychological balance.

4.2 Self-cognition

The negative impact of Christian belief on self-cognition is mostly due to the excessive self-denial and the collapse of meaning caused by belief. First, the extreme interpretation of "the finiteness of human beings" and "perfection of God" in the doctrine may lead to excessive self-denial among believers: When facing failures like career setbacks or broken relationships, individuals often attribute the reasons to a lack of faith or spiritual weakness rather than considering objective circumstances. It gradually diminishes self-efficacy, fosters feelings of inferiority that one is never perfect, and can lead to the belief that one does not deserve happiness. Second, when belief fails to explain suffering, it can diminish meaning. For example, in the face of the tragic deaths of innocent people, many struggle to cope with the long-term pain that follows. When explanations such as the "God's good pleasure" or the "obtain the crown through trials" fail to resonate, believers may begin to doubt the meaning of life and God's justice. This uncertainty can shake their original value systems, leading to a profound sense of emptiness and questioning the purpose of existence. Loss of meaning is more destructive than frustration, which may make believers completely doubt the value of self-existence and potentially lead to a crisis of self-identity.

4.3 Interpersonal Relationship

The adverse effects of Christian faith on personal relationships often manifest in the rejection of faith communities and alienation from secular connections. On the one hand, religious differences or circle differentiation within the church community may lead believers to be excluded. Some groups emphasize "sound doctrine" and label believers with different understandings (such as different views on "redemption" and "church system") as "heresy" and "weakness". In addition, pressure is exerted through isolation and accusation. The rejection from "brothers and sisters" is more hurtful than the conflict in social interaction, because believers once regarded the church as a "spiritual harbor". Once marginalized, individuals may feel abandoned and question their worthiness to join the faith group, which exacerbates social fear. On the other hand, if believers focus too much on "spiritual life" and regard secular relations as worldly entanglements, they may actively alienate their relatives and friends. They will reduce their daily interaction with non-believers and refuse to participate in secular social activities, such as parties and entertainment, because they think these activities are "off the path of God". Suppose this situation persists for an extended period. In that case, it will not only gradually weaken affection and friendship but also lead to a decline in social skills due to a lack of regular social interaction. This can result in the uncomfortable feeling of wanting to participate in social activities but being unable to do so, ultimately worsening the sense of loneliness.

4.4 Pressure Response

The negative impact of Christian faith on stress coping is primarily seen in the despair that arises from faith failure and passive coping due to excessive dependence. First, when faith cannot relieve stress, believers can easily fall into despair over their faith. For example, a long-term illness that has not been cured, a broken family that cannot be redeemed, or a major trauma (such as an earthquake or war) that God cannot save, will subvert the belief that "faith will lead to victory" and make them feel disillusioned, believing that faith is false or that God does not exist at all. The disillusionment is more destructive than the pressure itself. After the collapse of faith, which once served as a spiritual pillar, believers may lose their psychological support for coping with stress. It can lead to a feeling of having "no one to rely on and no direction," potentially resulting in depression and self-destructive behavior. Second, if the doctrine of "waiting for God's arrangement" is misunderstood as "giving up the proactive action", it may lead to excessive dependence and passivity. In the face of pressure (such as work problems and interpersonal conflicts), believers will equate "praying for God's solution" with no effort and ignoring the role of practical actions. "Coping by waiting" will continuously accumulate problems, and the pressure will gradually escalate. As problems worsen, they are often attributed to a lack of earnest prayer, creating a vicious cycle of passivity, failure, and self-blame that further weakens motivation and the ability to cope with pressure.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the impact of Christian faith on the mental health of believers is complex and multifaceted. It is not merely a straightforward positive influence nor an entirely negative one. The effects of faith on mental health are closely linked to how believers understand their faith, how they practice it, and how they interact with the realities of their lives.

On the positive side, religious belief plays a supporting role in emotional appeasement, self-worth affirmation, interpersonal relationship development, and stress response through doctrine guidance, community support, and rituals, which provide believers with a transcendental sense of security, clear life meaning, and stable emotional connection, which constitute important psychological resources for mental health.

On the negative side, when there is a violent conflict between cognition and reality, when teachings are interpreted extremely or rejected in community interaction, some problems may be caused, including anxiety, self-denial, social alienation, and passive coping. Most of these negative effects come from the imbalance between the belief framework, individual experience, and the secular environment.

Therefore, the influence of Christian belief on mental health is essentially the product of "the interaction between belief and individual and environment". Understanding its complexity helps to avoid one-sided cognition of it. People should avoid exaggerating its "universal healing" effects, while also not dismissing its value as a spiritual resource. Instead, they should focus on guiding belief practices in a way that fosters positive interactions with real life. This approach can help maximize its benefits and minimize any negative impacts. The conclusion of the study also provides a direction for the follow-up study: it is necessary to further explore the differential influence of different belief practices on mental health, and provide more targeted references for believers' beliefs and psychological adaptation.

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