

Antecedents and Consequences of Negative Affective States at Work

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Abstract

This study tested the propositions of the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), aiming to explore the antecedents and consequences of affective states employees experience at work. Core self-evaluations and core external-evaluations were tested as the trait antecedents of the negative emotions people experience in the work setting. On the other hand, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior were tested as the consequences of these negative affective states. Results of the structural equation modeling analysis provided support for an extended model where only core self-evaluations were predictive of negative affective states at work, which in turn contributed to increased job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior. Addition of a path from job satisfaction to organizational citizenship behavior improved model fit, suggesting that organizational citizenship behavior would be better predicted by consideration of affective states at work and job satisfaction simultaneously. Findings of the study are discussed in relation to the Affective Events Theory and the practical implications for managers in terms of maintaining an affectively positive organizational climate in the work setting.

Introduction

The Affective Events Theory (AET) proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) provides a theoretical framework for the study of the antecedents and consequences of affective states and emotions in the work setting. According to AET, job satisfaction is an evaluative judgment made about one's job and affective experiences on the job may influence that judgment. The authors of the AET argue that affective work events and affective dispositions of the individual constitute the antecedents of affective states and emotions experienced by the employees in the work setting. On the other hand, work attitudes and behaviors of employees constitute the consequences of the workplace affective states. Until now, only a few published studies have focused on the propositions of the AET (e.g., Bash & Fisher, 2000; Grandey, Tam, & Brauburger, 2002). These studies have provided partial support for the subsections of the theoretical model. This study aims to make a contribution to the literature by testing the predictions proposed by AET. Our study focuses on the influence of affective dispositions of employees on the negative affective states they experience in the workplace and the influence of negative affective states on work attitudes and behaviors including job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). As the affective dispositions, the constructs of core self-evaluations and core external evaluations (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997) are used in this study. Judge et al. (1997) defined core evaluations as the fundamental, subconscious conclusions individuals reach about themselves (core self-

evaluations), other people, and the world (core external-evaluations). Judge, Bono, Erez, and Locke (2005) have found significant associations between the two core evaluations constructs and the traditional affect measures of Positive Affect and Negative Affect (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Our study empirically tested the predictive influence of core self-evaluations versus core external-evaluations on negative affective states of employees, and the influence of negative emotions on the organizational outcomes of job satisfaction and OCB.

Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual and theoretical linkages between the constructs of affective dispositions, affective states at work, and the consequential job attitudes and behaviors, this study investigated a model derived from the AET framework. Accordingly, core self-evaluations and core external-evaluations were conceptualized as antecedents of negative affective states at work. On the other hand, job satisfaction and OCB were conceptualized as consequences of negative affective states experienced by the employees. In other words, affective states were proposed as mediators of the relationship between the trait measures of core-evaluations and the organizational outcome variables of job satisfaction and OCB. The specific hypotheses based on these arguments are briefly presented below:

***Hypothesis 1:** Core self-evaluations will be negatively associated with negative affective states at work.*

***Hypothesis 2:** Core external-evaluations will be negatively associated with negative affective states at work.*

***Hypothesis 3:** Negative affective states will be negatively associated with job satisfaction.*

***Hypothesis 4:** Negative affective states will be negatively associated with OCB.*

Procedures

Participants of the study were employed students of the Psychology Department of a university at the southeastern region of the United States. One-hundred-ninety-seven students voluntarily participated in our survey study in return for partial course credit. Of the participants, 87% were women and the average age of the sample was 21.9 years. Data were collected through an on-line survey and the survey items were assessed by Likert-type scales. The measures included in the survey are briefly described below.

Core self-evaluations. The 12-item scale developed by Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen (2003) was used for measuring core self-evaluations. The subjects were asked to indicate their degree of agreement to each statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples for the items included are “I determine what will happen in my life” and “Overall, I am satisfied with myself.” Judge et al. (2003) have reported an original test-retest reliability of .81 for the scale.

Core external-evaluations. 14 items of the 15-item scale developed by Judge, Locke, Durham, and Kluger (1998) were used for measuring core external-evaluations. The scale consisted of items such as “Most people tell a lie if they can gain by it” and “Basically, the world is a just place.” Internal consistency reliability of the scale has been reported to be .81, .78, and .66 for three different samples (Judge et al., 1998). One item (“I am strong enough to overcome life’s struggles”) of the original scale was omitted due to concerns for face-validity, since the item was found to be more likely to represent self-evaluations.

Negative affective states at work. Items from Watson, Clark, and Tellegen’s (1988) Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) were used for assessing negative affective states. In order to keep the survey short, out of the original 20 items, 5 items were used to assess NA

(upset, angry, afraid, guilty, and nervous). Participants made ratings on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Very slightly or not at all, 5 = Very much), for indicating the extent to which they experienced each of the 5 affect descriptor in the last work week.

Overall job satisfaction. Overall job satisfaction was measured with the one-item (7-point) faces scale (Kunin, 1955).

Organizational citizenship behaviors. OCB towards the organization was assessed by 8 items suggested by Lee and Allen (2002). An example item followed as “Offer ideas to improve functioning of the organization”. Participants indicated how often they engaged in each behavior in the last work week using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never; 5 = often).

Results

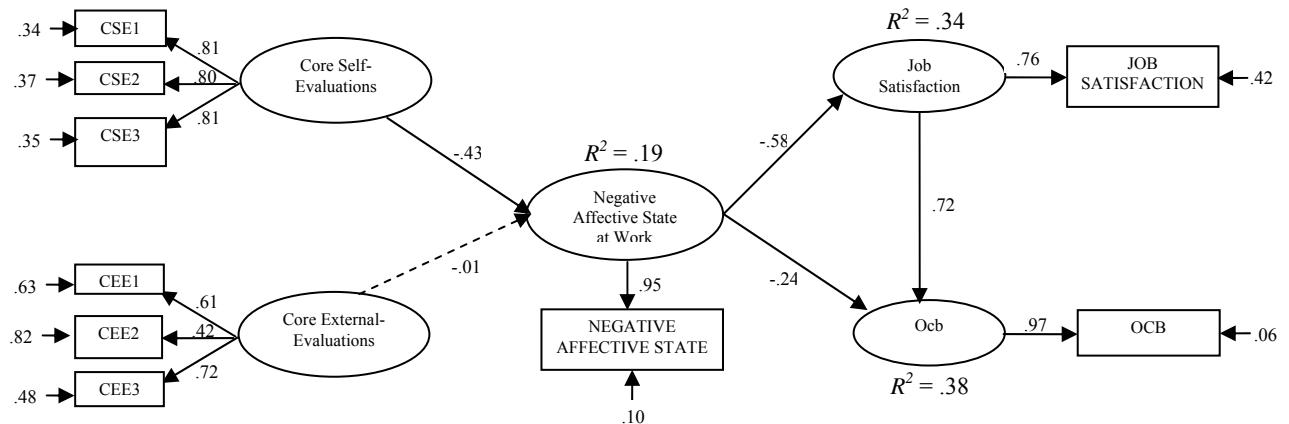
The hypothesized relationships between perceived core self-evaluations, core external-evaluations, negative affective states at work, job satisfaction, and OCB were tested using LISREL 8.80 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2006). The correlation matrix was entered as input to the LISREL 8.80 program for testing the model and maximum likelihood estimation was used. The measurement model resulted in good fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 37.6$; df = 20; p < .001; GFI = .96; AGFI = .91; and RMSEA = .06). The relevant structural model included the hypothesized paths between the variables. The fit statistics for the structural model with negative affective state as mediator proved that the hypothesized model reasonably fits the data ($\chi^2 = 79.20$; df = 25; p < .001; $\chi^2 / df = 3.17$; GFI = .92; AGFI = .86; and RMSEA = .10). Examination of the modification indices revealed that addition of a path from job satisfaction to OCB would increase model fit statistics. Since, there is empirical support for the relationship between job satisfaction and OCB (Illes, Scott, & Judge, 2006), a second model was run with this additional link. Results for this second model proved an improvement in the model fit ($\chi^2 = 45.79$; df = 24; p < .001; $\chi^2 / df = 1.91$; GFI = .95; AGFI = .91; and RMSEA = .06). The first model was statistically compared to the extended model with the use of chi-square difference test. The results suggested that the extended model had a better fit than the first model, χ^2_{change} (1, N = 197) = 33.41, p < .001. The model AIC indices also suggested that the model fit for the first model (AIC = 115.27) was worse than the extended model (AIC = 84.85). Core self-evaluations were significantly predictive of negative affective states of employees; however, core external-evaluations did not have any significant influence. Negative affective states were significantly predictive of job satisfaction and OCB. Job satisfaction also contributed to the prediction of OCB. The standardized path loadings for the extended model are presented in Figure 1.

Conclusions and Managerial Implications

Findings of the study provided support for the propositions of the AET framework and proved that the construct of core self-evaluations can be used as a dispositional predictor of the affective states and emotions employees experience in the workplace. Employees that had positive beliefs about their own competencies and coping resources were less likely to experience negative affective states at work. In turn, those individuals that experienced negative emotions in the work setting were more likely to have lower levels of job satisfaction, and they exhibited less helping and supportive behaviors at work. Our study demonstrated that the propositions of AET constitute a fruitful ground for the study of affect and emotions in an organizational context. This line of research integrates social psychology, clinical psychology and organizational psychology findings, and provides us a useful framework to understand the psychological processes employees go through in the workplace.

In terms of practical implications, our study proves that managers need to pay more attention to facilitate an environmental setting with an emotionally positive climate. An atmosphere of positive emotions in a work unit is likely to promote cooperation among employees and result in a satisfied work force.

Figure 1. Path Loadings for the Extended AET Model



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