

LINKING WORK EVENTS, AFFECTIVE STATES, AND ATTITUDES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF MANAGERS' EMOTIONS

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the paper is to contribute to knowledge on the causes and consequences of affective states at work by identifying several job-related events likely to produce affective states and then studying the impact of the latter on work attitudes. Affective Events Theory was the theoretical framework used for the study and two main hypotheses were stated: experiencing certain work events leads to affective reactions, which in turn influence work attitudes. An empirical study based on 203 questionnaires was performed on a sample of French managers. The results support both research hypotheses, although the impact of affective states on work attitudes appeared larger than the impact of work events on affective states. The mediating effect of affective events with respect to the impact of work events was also tested, but only partially supported.

KEY WORDS: affective states at work; Affective Events Theory; work attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Work often has an affective dimension: anxiety due to the threat of redundancy, happiness after the successful completion of a project, anger or resentment towards one's supervisor, jealousy of a promoted coworker, pressure-related stress are but a few of the affective states that can be experienced at work. However, despite the potential impact of affective states on managers' psychological balance and performance (George & Brief, 1992, 1996; Stewart & Barling, 1996; Wright & Staw, 1999), the importance of affect in organizational life has long been underestimated by management theories (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Recent popular books inspired by the "hard sciences" (e.g., Damasio, 1994) have given some

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credibility to emotional aspects, though, and the affective dimension is now of more and more interest to management practitioners and researchers alike (Fineman, 2000). The reasons for this renewed interest are varied, but they mostly pertain to the socio-economic and technological changes that have impacted both the content of work and the nature of employment relationships (Rousseau & Schalk, 2000). A better understanding of work attitudes and organizational behavior now requires taking into account the affective dimension (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Hochschild, 1983). This is especially true for managers, because managerial work is getting more complex, more abstract and harder to grasp. The blurring of organizational boundaries, the increased flexibility, the move from impersonal bureaucratic controls to influence-based management, as well as the extension of teamwork, are all evidence of the changing nature of managerial work (Osterman, 1996). These changes generate a more challenging and affect-generating workplace for managers, which requires that they recognize and handle their own and other people's emotions (e.g., Kelly & Barsade, 2001).

Organizational research has traditionally focused on the evaluation of specific features of one's job such as the tasks to be performed, supervisors and coworkers as predictors of organizational behavior, but has largely ignored emotion and affective experiences at work. Although it is widely acknowledged that satisfaction and well-being are correlated to work events, it is still necessary to develop a better understanding of what types of events are most likely to produce positive or negative affects or attitudes. While some studies have addressed the impact of life events in general (e.g., Suh, Diener, & Fujita, 1996), research on work events is still scarce. Besides, research has often focused on negative affective states only and not on positive emotional experiences (Langston, 1994).

The aim of this paper is first to identify the impact of both negative and positive work events on affective states in a sample of French managers. Next, an attempt is made to link these affective states with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, both in terms of the magnitude of the overall effect and of the specific impact of each affective state. Last, the mediating effect of affective states with respect to the impact of work events on attitudes is tested.

EVENTS, AFFECT, AND AFFECTIVE EVENTS THEORY

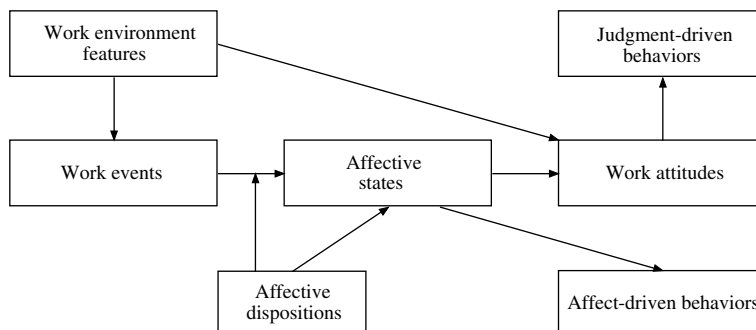
Events at work are both context-driven and subjective phenomena. Basch & Fisher (2000) define an affective work event as "an incident that stimulates appraisal of and emotional reaction to a transitory or ongoing job-related agent, object or event." For instance, when some employees say they are worried because their company is planning lay-offs, it is the

appraisal of this incident that leads to a state of uncertainty or even distress. Affects may arise from various events and can be characterized according to their specific type, intensity and duration as emotions, moods and individual dispositions (Gray & Watson, 2001). While moods are generally considered as relatively slow-changing, weak or moderate in intensity, and not necessarily responses to specific events, emotions are rapidly changing, stronger in intensity, and are always experienced in response to specific events. Dispositions refer to the stable personality traits that predispose individuals to some affective responses. All kinds of affect may impact attitudes and behaviors at work.

Weiss & Cropanzano (1996) have developed Affective Events Theory (AET) in order to simultaneously take into account affective states and the work events that cause them. They propose a guiding theoretical framework for the study of emotions in the workplace that focuses on the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. The complete AET framework is shown in Figure 1.

According to AET, stable work environment features influence the occurrence of positive or negative affective events. Experiencing these events leads to affective states, a process which may be influenced by individual dispositions. Affective states may in turn both directly lead to proximal “affect-driven behaviors” and contribute to the formation of work attitudes, the latter also being influenced by the stable work environment features. Last, work attitudes influence “judgment-driven behaviors.” For instance, a stressful position (environment feature) can lead to an employee being publicly criticized by her boss (event). This generates anger or frustration (affective state) that can contribute to job dissatisfaction (attitude) and perhaps even lead to an open argument (affect-driven behavior). Ultimately, job dissatisfaction reduces the willingness of the employee to remain with the company (judgment-driven behavior).

Figure 1
The Affective Events Theory Framework



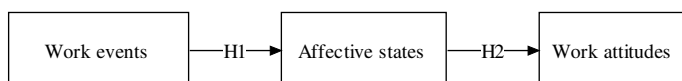
AET is important in the study of work settings for two major reasons. First, it underscores that affective events and responses in the workplace are not to be ignored both theoretically and empirically, even if they were long neglected or even denied. Second, it provides a framework of how emotions can be an essential link between workplace features and employee behavior. As stated by Ashkanasy, Härtel and Daus (2002), "AET is thus unique in explicating what happens inside the 'black box' between the work environment and subsequent employee attitudes and behaviors."

AET is still at a relatively early stage of development and is wide encompassing. Therefore, although most of its individual elements have received empirical support, to our knowledge no single research has ever studied the entire model simultaneously. For instance, Fisher (2002) did not include affective events in her study, Grandey, Tam, and Brauburger (2002) did not include behaviors, while Paterson and Cary (2002) omitted both individual dispositions and behavioral consequences. In this paper, likewise, only the central part of the model dealing with the impact of events on affects and then of affective states on attitudes will be studied (Figure 2).

We chose to focus on this part of the framework for three reasons. First, from a theoretical perspective, we feel that it constitutes the core of the AET approach. Second, from a methodological perspective, it is doubtful that the environmental and behavioral parts of the model can be meaningfully grasped by a cross-sectional survey. Third, from a managerial perspective, we consider it to be important because it may highlight what types of events are most likely to produce positive or negative emotions, so that the incidence of the former can be enhanced and the latter reduced.

AET was developed in the continuity of cognitively-oriented research on emotion (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 31). Many theories agree that affective reactions are at least in part the outcome of the cognitive appraisal of a situation. Among them, the cognitive, motivational and relational theory of Lazarus (1991) is the one that most clearly enables to link the occurrence of events at work and affective states. This theory—that was also influential in the stress literature, which therefore bears some similarity to AET—states that every person-environment interaction has a potential emotional significance, but only those interactions that are likely to impact the individual's well-being generate emotions. Positive emotions arise from interactions that favor the individuals' goals and interests. Conversely, negative emotions arise when

Figure 2
Research Model



an interaction is an obstacle to the individual's goals, needs or values (Zohar, 1999). Cognitive appraisal theories generally agree about the existence of two phases: first, some primary appraisal evaluates the situation in terms of the consequences for the individual's well-being (an irrelevant situation can be ignored; positive appraisal occurs if the situation is beneficial or desirable; negative appraisal is generated if the situation is evaluated as stressful, threatening or dangerous). Then, a secondary appraisal process evaluates the resources the individual can depend on to cope with the situation. This is an interpretive phase during which emotions are expressed. Affective states are thus proximal or distal consequences of events and we stated the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Affective states at work are significantly linked to work events.

The study of affect in organizations has traditionally dealt with job satisfaction and not affective states (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Both constructs have only recently been studied as distinct dimensions, under the influence of research that both highlighted the autonomy of affective states and revisited the notion of attitude (Brief, 1998; Weiss, 2002). Although psychologists generally agree that attitudes are hypothetical multidimensional constructs (Allport, 1935; Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960), the number and nature of the components is still a major theoretical issue. Researchers are still trying to better define and understand the interaction between affective responses, beliefs and appraisals (Crites, Fabrigar, & Petty, 1994; Olson & Zanna, 1993; Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997). Recent work on attitudes has generated consensus on two major issues, though. First, attitudes are considered as global positive or negative evaluative judgments of an object—be it the self, another individual, a situation, etc. (Petty et al., 1997; Zanna & Rempel, 1998). Although some researchers did not acknowledge it, this evaluation is conceptually distinct from affect (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Besides, the components of the classical tripartite model (which considers that attitude is a multi-component construct composed of three classes of evaluative responses: affective, cognitive, and conative) are now perceived as causes and consequences of the evaluation (Olson & Zanna, 1993). Affective Events Theory endorses this view and postulates that attitudes are influenced both by cognitive appraisals of the work environment features and by affective states at work. We thus stated the following hypothesis concerning specifically affective states:

Hypothesis 2: Work attitudes are significantly linked to affective states.

Affective Events Theory gives a central role to the emotions that are experienced following work events. In particular, it hypothesizes that

relations between the work environment and attitudes and behaviors are mediated by specific events and affective reactions to these events. This, indeed, is AET's "basic premise that affect mediates the effect of organizational variables on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes" (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). In order to check whether the "hassles and uplifts" experienced by employees in organizational are indeed mediated by emotions, the following hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 3: Affective states mediate the relationship between work events and work attitudes.

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

A survey of 350 managers employed in fourteen different organizations in Southern France was performed using anonymous questionnaires. The names were obtained from a university alumni directory, by selecting business graduates working for private sector companies with a workforce larger than one hundred. The response rate was 58%, leading to a sample of 203 individuals. Table 1 presents a summary of the main demographic characteristics of the sample.

A comparison with the demographics of the entire French managerial population (APEC, 2001) showed that our sample is characterized by a lower mean age (37 years), a larger proportion of women (34% instead of 25%) and a higher level of education. This is coherent, in that the younger manager-level workforce in France tends to be both more educated and feminized.

Affective Events

Based on prior work by Suh et al. (1996) and Donovan (1999), we used a scale that included nineteen work events. Eight events corresponded to positive situations (example: praise from supervisor), nine events corresponded to negative situations (example: benefits were reduced) and two were considered neutral (example: change in work hours or conditions). Respondents were asked whether or not they had experienced each of these events in the past month. If so, they were asked to rate the impact that the event had on them (1: very negative impact; 3: no impact; 5: very positive impact). Respondents rated all events in a way that was consistent with our categorization, with the exception that being "Assigned an undesired work or project" was rated as positive for seven people out of the forty-eight who experienced this event (which was therefore treated as positive for these

Table 1
Main Sample Characteristics (n = 203)

Gender	
Male	66.0%
Female	34.0%
Age	
<25	1.5%
25–29	20.5%
30–34	20.5%
35–49	46.0%
50+	11.5%
Marital Status	
Single	20.2%
Married or Cohabiting	79.8%
Organizational Tenure	
<2 years	14.8%
2–4 years	28.5%
5–10 years	23.7%
11–15 years	10.8%
16 + years	22.2%
Job Tenure	
2 years	59.2%
3–6 years	29.9%
7+	10.9%
Initial Training	Graduate degree (34%); undergraduate degree (36%); associate degree (24%); no college (6%)

individuals). The reported frequencies for every event are presented in Table 2.

The one-month delay was chosen because of the retrospection problems that arise when using longer time frames. Besides, longitudinal studies about life events have shown that only recent events (<3 months) have a significant influence on current affective states (Suh et al., 1996). The one-month interval is also a large enough amount of time to allow events to occur. Respondents were asked to rate the events' valence because their impact is likely to be heavily influenced by it (Gable, Reis, & Elliott, 2000).

Two types of scales were computed. The first scales counted the number of positive events that were experienced on the one hand and the number of negative events on the other hand. Neutral events were included in one or the other scale according to the impact rated by each respondent (positive or negative). A second type of scales was obtained by multiplying every positive event by its perceived impact (1 for a neutral impact, 2 for a positive and 3 for a very positive impact); likewise, the same principle was used for negative events. The almost perfect corre-

Table 2
Frequency of Affective Events in the Last Month (n = 203)

	Yes (%)	No (%)			
Positive events					
Successfully completed a project or task	51.2	48.8			
Received praise from your supervisor	44.3	55.7			
Received praise from a coworker	26.6	73.4			
Went on a vacation	22.2	77.8			
Received a raise	9.9	90.1			
Improvement in benefits	7.4	92.6			
Received a promotion	6.9	93.1			
Received an award or acknowledgment of achievement at work	6.4	93.6			
An unpleasant coworker left your work unit	4.9	95.1			
Negative events					
Assigned undesired work or project	23.6	76.4			
A well-liked coworker left your work unit	23.6	76.4			
Problems getting along with a supervisor	18.2	81.8			
Problems getting along with a coworker	16.7	83.3			
Personal problems interfered with work	14.3	85.7			
Benefits were reduced	8.4	91.6			
Denied a promotion	7.9	92.1			
Received a negative performance evaluation	7.4	92.6			
Denied a raise	3.4	96.6			
Neutral events					
Change in work hours or conditions	18.7	81.3			
Change in quality of working space	15.8	84.2			
Scales					
	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD
Positive events	0	10	2	1.96	1.67
Negative events	0	7	1	1.33	1.48

lation between the weighted and unweighted scales ($r > .90$) implies that occurrence seems to be as important as valence. Besides, in contrast with life events in the study by Suh et al. (1996), there seemed to be no correlation between the number of positive work events that were experienced during the past month and the number of negative events ($r = .05$). The scales used in the regression analyses were the weighted positive and negative events scales.

Affective States at Work

We used an instrument made of a set of adjectives representing a wide array of affective states that can be experienced at work. This set was taken from Daniels (2000), who developed and validated a five-factor

comprehensive assessment of affective well-being. The adjectives in the French language included in the questionnaire were taken from the list validated by the Geneva Emotion Research Group (Scherer, 1988). This list was specifically developed for intercultural research on emotions to ensure correct denotational and connotational meanings in different languages (Scherer, Walbott, & Summerfield, 1986). Respondents were asked to rate the frequency by which they had felt every emotion in the past week (1: never; 2: occasionally; 3: some of the time; 4: much of the time; 5: most of the time; 6: all the time). The one-week period was selected because of the potential retrospection difficulties when using longer time frames. Besides, the evaluation of affective states over a larger period can lead to strong correlation with close, but distinct constructs such as temperament or personality traits (Payne, 2001).

Principal component analysis and confirmatory factor analysis enabled us to classify fifteen affective states into five coherent emotional factors: pleasure (happy, pleased, cheerful, enthusiastic), comfort (relaxed, comfortable, at ease, at rest), anger (annoyed, angry), anxiety (anxious, worried, tense) and tiredness (fatigued, tired). Adjustment indexes for this model were satisfactory both intrinsically ($\chi^2 / df < 3$; NNFI = .918; CFI = .936; SRMR = .059) and in comparison with several one, two, three or four-factor models. The internal reliability of each scale was above the 0.70 threshold proposed by Nunnally (1978). These results confirm other studies that showed that detailed multi-dimensional measurement of affects is justified (e.g., Burke, Brief, George, Roberson, & Webster, 1989).

Work Attitudes

In this research, two work attitudes were linked to affective states: job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These two attitudes are the ones most used in organizational behavior research—both as independent and dependent variables—and their measurement scales have been validated in the French language by several researchers. Commitment was conceptualized in the usual way as an individual's attitude towards the organization consisting of “a strong belief in, and acceptance of, an organization's goals, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization” (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1979). Job satisfaction was conceptualized as “a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes with regard to one's job or job situation” (Weiss, 2002)—and therefore as an attitude and not as affect, in coherence with the more recent approaches of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction was measured using items taken from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist,

1977). We used the short form of this instrument, which is recognized for its validity and widely used in international research. This scale evaluates satisfaction with respect to twenty job aspects using five-point scales. Factor analysis enabled to distinguish between intrinsic satisfaction ($\alpha = .90$) and extrinsic satisfaction ($\alpha = .80$). Intrinsic satisfaction is an appraisal of one's actual work experience and its ability to generate accomplishment, self-actualization, and identity with the tasks performed. Extrinsic satisfaction is an evaluation of the rewards bestowed upon the individual by peers, superiors, or the organization, and derives from recognition, compensation, advancement, and so forth.

Organizational commitment was assessed with the instrument developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). This instrument has been widely used in academic research and is taking the lead over the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) of Mowday et al. (1979). Two of the three dimensions of organizational commitment were used in this study: affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization) and continuance commitment (the costs that an employee relates to leaving the organization). Both scales were measured by six items; their internal reliability coefficients were .87 and .82, respectively.

RESULTS

Regression analyses were performed to test our hypotheses. Age, gender, family status, and number of children were used as control variables in addition to the variables in the research model because of

Table 3
Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Affective States (n = 203)

	Pleasure	Comfort	Anxiety	Anger	Tiredness
<i>Step 1: control variables</i>					
Age	.019	.029	.041	-.030	-.137
Gender ¹	-.128	-.240**	.061	.188*	-.071
Marital status ²	-.010	-.042	.109	.084	-.002
Number of children	.036	.011	-.156	-.024	-.055
R ² change	.030	.065*	.034	.045	.033
<i>Step 2: affective states</i>					
Positive events	.338***	.146*	-.105	.040	.162*
Negative events	-.355***	-.346***	.152*	.273***	.166**
R ² change	.217***	.131***	.031*	.077***	.056**
R ²	.247	.196	.065	.122	.089
Adjusted R ²	.224	.171	.036	.094	.061
F-value	10.456***	7.791***	2.234*	4.403***	3.119**

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Coefficients are standardized betas.

¹Coding: 0: male; 1: female. ²Coding: 0: single; 1: married or cohabiting.

their potential impact on individual attitudinal and emotional outcomes (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). The results presented in Table 3 show that affective work events were significantly linked to affective states at work, which provides some support for Hypothesis 1. It first appears that the occurrence of negative events was significantly linked to all affective responses. The sign of the effects is also coherent: negative with respect to pleasure and comfort, and positive with respect to anxiety, anger, and tiredness. On the other hand, anxiety and anger were not significantly linked to positive events, and comfort and tiredness were only weakly related to them. Positive events therefore seem to impact mostly the pleasure dimension. It also appeared that the percentage of variance explained by work events was larger for pleasure (21.7%) and comfort (13.1%) than for anxiety, anger and tiredness that were only weakly explained by work events. Both R^2 for pleasure and comfort were not very large, however. Although significant, it appears that work events are only one cause of affective states among other determinants: individual dispositions, life events or the more general work environment. Moreover, as our list of work events was not meant to be exhaustive, other events not captured in the survey could have generated some of the respondents' affective states.

Table 4
Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Satisfaction and Commitment from Affective States

	Intrinsic Satisfaction	Extrinsic Satisfaction	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment
<i>Step 1: control variables</i>				
Age	-.113	-.073	.053	.408***
Gender ¹	.134*	-.031	-.182*	-.094
Marital status ²	-.091	-.128	.089	-.045
Number of children	.073	-.093	-.222*	-.131
R^2 change	.027	.041	.037	.157***
<i>Step 2: affective states</i>				
Pleasure	.602***	.506***	.544***	.041
Comfort	.022	-.099	-.161	.130
Anxiety	.070	.033	.083	.277**
Anger	-.055	-.185*	-.108	.083
Tiredness	-.153*	-.159*	-.078	-.087
R^2 change	.385***	.291***	.233***	.054*
R^2	.412	.332	.233	.211
Adjusted R^2	.384	.300	.196	.173
F -value	14.557***	10.331***	6.302***	5.559***

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Coefficients are standardized betas.

¹Coding: 0: male; 1: female. ²Coding: 0: single; 1: married or cohabiting.

Table 4 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses predicting work attitudes using affective states as independent variables. For every attitude, control variables were first entered into the model (step one), then affective states (step two). The overall percentages of variance explained ranged from 21.1% to 41.2% and all regression models were significant. Therefore, in accordance with Hypothesis 2, it appeared that work attitudes were significantly related to affective states. However, the strength of this link depends on both the affect and the attitude: the increment in percentage of variance explained due to affective states varied from 5.4% to 38.5%.

It is noteworthy that pleasure significantly contributed to explaining every attitude, except continuance commitment. Among all affective states, it is also the variable that had the larger impact. This highlights the importance of experiencing pleasant affects when determining attitudes such as job satisfaction. Tiredness was negatively related to both intrinsic satisfaction ($\beta = -.179$) and extrinsic satisfaction ($\beta = -.159$), but had no impact on any of the commitment variables. Anger was only linked to extrinsic satisfaction ($\beta = .180$), while anxiety was positively related to continuance commitment only ($\beta = .261$). Last, comfort was linked to none of the work attitudes. Overall, it appears that the contribution of affective states to work attitudes was particularly strong for both satisfaction variables. The impact on affective commitment—the attitude that has been shown to be the best predictor of intention to turnover—was also significant, but lower. Continuance commitment, on the other hand, is almost not related to affective states, except for a positive link with anxiety. This attitude was also strongly related to age, and clearly implies a more cognitive evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with maintaining membership in the organization.

In order to test the mediating effect of affective states with respect to work events, four conditions have to be met (Baron & Kenny, 1986): (1) the initial variables (events) are correlated with the mediators (affective states); (2) the mediators affect the outcome variables (attitudes); (3) the initial variables are correlated with the outcomes; (4) the effect of the initial variables on the outcome variables controlling for the mediators should be reduced to zero. The regression analyses presented in Table 3 have already provided support for condition (1): work events are correlated to affective states. Likewise, the results presented in Table 4 support condition (2): affective states are related to attitudes. In order to test condition (3), Table 5 next provides regression analyses of work events on attitudes.

It appears that work events were related to all attitudes, except continuance commitment. The study of any mediation effect is therefore only relevant for the three other attitudes. Table 6 provides the final test of mediation by checking condition (4). Both affective states and events

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Satisfaction and Commitment from Work Events

	Intrinsic Satisfaction	Extrinsic Satisfaction	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment
<i>Step 1: control variables</i>				
Age	-.075	-.062	.069	.421***
Gender ¹	.048	-.114	-.191	-.102
Marital status ²	-.034	-.086	.187	-.002
Number of children	.061	-.094	-.256	-.169
R ² change	.027	.041	.037	.157***
<i>Step 2: work events</i>				
Positive events	.305***	.207***	.357***	-.010
Negative events	-.319***	-.477***	-.197**	-.097
R ² change	.181***	.258***	.152***	.009
R ²	.207	.298	.190	.166
Adjusted R ²	.182	.276	.164	.140
F-value	8.274***	13.470***	7.426***	6.322***

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Coefficients are standardized betas.

¹Coding: 0: male; 1: female. ²Coding: 0: single; 1: married or cohabiting.

Table 6
Multiple Regression Analyses Examining the Mediation Effect of Affective States (n = 203)

	Intrinsic Satisfaction	Extrinsic Satisfaction	Affective Commitment
<i>Step 1: control variables</i>			
Age	-.118	-.094	.048
Gender ¹	.111	-.088	-.209**
Marital status ²	-.038	-.073	.161*
Number of children	.048	-.117	-.256**
R ² change	.027	.041	.037
<i>Step 2: events and affects</i>			
Positive events	.193**	.153*	.273***
Negative events	-.118	-.346***	-.130
Pleasure	.519***	.387***	.434
Comfort	-.001	-.175	-.186
Anxiety	.088	.009	.114
Anger	-.082	-.180*	.065
Tiredness	-.179**	-.159*	-.119
R ² change	.422***	.401***	.263***
R ²	.449	.442	.300
Adjusted R ²	.416	.409	.258
F-value	13.713***	13.308***	7.198***

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Coefficients are standardized betas.

¹Coding: 0: male; 1: female. ²Coding: 0: single; 1: married or cohabiting.

are entered into the equation in order to see whether the coefficients of the events are affected by introducing the affective states.

The results provide only limited support for Hypothesis 3. While all regression coefficients of events were lower when controlling for affective states, only the effect of negative events on intrinsic satisfaction and affective commitment was no longer significant. The mediating effect of affective states is therefore only partial: the effect of work events on attitudes goes beyond and above their impact on affective states.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to contribute to knowledge about the causes and consequences of affective states at work. We proceeded to measure the occurrence of a variety of work events and link them to affective states and, subsequently, to several work attitudes. The empirical research consisted in a quantitative survey of 203 French managers. The results showed that affective events explain a modest, but significant proportion of affective states and then that affective states contribute to work attitudes. The hypothesized mediating effect of affective states with respect to work events was, on the other hand, only partially validated.

Several limits of the study are to be mentioned, however. First, common variance problems cannot be ruled out since data on both independent and dependent variables were collected at the same time and using the same questionnaire. This potential bias—a frequent shortcoming in event studies (Dohrenwend & Shrout, 1985; Lazarus, De Longis, Folkman, & Gruen, 1985)—could be prevented by the use of longitudinal approaches. Another limit pertains to the method that we used to measure the occurrence of events and affective states. Namely, we used declarative instruments that rely on the respondents' memory. While this "light" research design has some advantages (guaranteed anonymity, no bias due to face-to-face interactions with researcher, cost), other designs could be more precise or insightful. Next, our research was based on a sample of managers working for medium-to-large corporations in Southern France, which would require replications in different settings to ensure proper generalizability.

The direction of the "event \rightarrow affect" relationship can also be questioned. In accordance with Affective Events Theory, we postulated that events at work influence affective states, but the reverse could also be argued (i.e., negative moods may cause conflicts with coworkers or lead to bad performance evaluations from supervisors). Although a recent study analyzed both possibilities and concluded that the data seemed to favor the "event \rightarrow affect" relation rather than the reverse (Gable et al., 2000), this possibility cannot be ruled out. Likewise, the

direction of the relation between affective states and work attitudes could be questioned.

Last, we did not include personality variables in the model, even though they are part of the AET framework. Individual dispositions may have biased perceptions of events, affective states, and job attitudes, or may have impacted the relationships between the variables in the model. In particular, negative affectivity (NA)—i.e., the dispositional tendency to experience negative emotions across situations and time—has been under researchers' scrutiny. This notion of NA as a possible "nuisance variable" that should be controlled is, however, debated or even denied (see Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000 for a recent overview). As for the larger issue of the role played by disposition and situation, respectively, it is likely to remain an inescapable problem, mostly because up to now "how attributes of the workplace might interact with personality to affect feelings has been approached too narrowly, theoretically and empirically" (Brief & Weiss, 2002).

Despite the limitations of this research, we feel that the study made several contributions. The results first showed that positive work events were linked to positive affect (i.e., pleasure), while negative events impacted both positive and negative affects. Although in opposition to studies that have linked life events only to affects with the same valence (Reich & Zautra, 1981; Vinokur & Selzer, 1975), this partial crossover effect is comparable to the findings of Gable et al. (2000). A possible explanation for this is that the positive and negative affect systems, although separable, are not totally independent from one another (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Bernston, 1999) and, moreover, that the effects of positive and negative events are not symmetrical (e.g., Taylor, 1991). The workplace implications of this differentiated impact are that events that are perceived as negative by managers have more far-reaching consequences, so management practices could take this into account by striving to minimize negative events as much as possible.

That the correlation of the positive and negative work events scales was found to be insignificant in this study is also an interesting result. As this correlation is not negative, it seems *not* to be the case that some people experience mostly positive events at work, while other individuals mostly experience negative events. This counterintuitive finding was unexpected, as it runs against lay beliefs suggesting that some people experience most of the good events in life in general—and at work in particular. However, at least in the case of managers mostly in their thirties and forties, this appears not to be true. A more diversified sample in terms of age group and/or socio-economic status could, obviously, have yielded different results. Moreover, unlike life events that have been shown to occur mostly in transitional periods leading to both positive and

negative events (Suh et al., 1996), positive and negative events at work were also not positively correlated.

Among all affective states, the pleasure dimension is the one that was most explained by the model. It is also the affective state that had the largest impact on attitudes. From a managerial viewpoint, it therefore seems relevant to favor the occurrence of events leading to pleasure at work (such as positive feedback from other individuals). Job design could be helpful in that respect, as research has shown that some job characteristics (such as task autonomy) are related to experiencing pleasant affect (Saavedra & Kwun, 2000). The main impact, though, is likely to be due to the quality of individual interactions within the company. In that respect, supervisors are very important because they both have to deal with their subordinates' affective states and play a causal role in them (due to their role in coordination, motivation, evaluation and career management). Studies frequently highlight this critical aspect and suggest that supervisors strongly influence the organizational climate and that subordinate-supervisor relations could

Table 7
Significant Bivariate Correlations between Affective States and Work Events
(n = 203)

	Pleasure	Comfort	Anxiety	Anger	Tiredness
Successfully completed a project or task	.333**				
Received praise from your supervisor	.260**				
Received praise from a coworker	.278**				
Went on a vacation					
Received a raise					
Improvement in benefits					
Received a promotion					
Received an award or acknowledgment of achievement at work					
Unpleasant coworker left work unit		.191**		-.185**	
Assigned undesirable work or project	-.283**	-.244**			
Well-liked coworker left work unit					
Problems getting along with a supervisor	-.173*	-.249**		.256**	.151*
Problems getting along with a coworker			.146*	.249**	.148*
Personal problems interfered with work					
Benefits were reduced					
Denied a promotion	-.249**	-.179*	.145*	.279**	.168*
Received negative performance evaluation	-.187**				
Denied a raise	-.203**			.156*	

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

have a stronger impact than relations with coworkers on employees' well-being (Hopkins, 1997; Repetti, 1987). This is confirmed by Table 7, which presents the most significant correlations between affective states and work events that were found in the study.

It appears that those events with the most impact were those linked to relations with coworkers and supervisors. These events mostly impacted pleasure when they are positive and anger when they are negative, but also tiredness to some extent. Other negative events mostly affected the pleasure dimension. An interesting exception was the significant relationship of denial of a promotion with all affective states. The impact of this variable also appeared to be larger than denial of a raise. Given the cognitive motivational approach's focus on how the goal-relevance of an event is important in determining emotional outcomes, this result is noteworthy. It seems to imply that career goals are more relevant to our sample than financial rewards. In a context where the nature of careers is rapidly changing (Peiperl, Arthur, Goffee, & Morris, 2000), and the ability of employers to provide managers with long-term career paths is doubtful, this finding could be evidence that managers still have high expectations in that regard.

Contrary to the predictions of Affective Events Theory, the mediating effect of affective states was found to be only partial in this study, and mostly supported for negative events. Research, indeed, has yet to fully validate the causal links of the AET model empirically. To our knowledge, only the laboratory study by O'Shea, Ashkanasy, Gallois, and Härtel (2000) has attempted to test the full mediating effect of affective states. Interestingly, their research showed that this effect was supported for negative events, but less so for positive ones. This differentiated impact of positive and negative events matches our own results and is evidence that positive and negative affect could trigger different mechanisms. As for the remaining direct link between events and attitudes, it could be evidence of a cognitive effect of events, above and beyond their affective consequences: attitudes may be influenced not only by the stable work environment features (as specified in AET), but also by some appraisal of the events in themselves. All this clearly calls for additional work to confirm or refine the AET framework.

On the whole, our results plead for the integration of emotional aspects in organizational studies. The scientific management approach rested on the hypothesis that it is possible to design jobs so as to ensure maximal productivity and that the satisfaction of workers' economic needs could make them accept their work environment. Emotions were considered as a negative phenomenon that should be removed from the workplace—or at least repressed. Our study endorses the opposite perspective and suggests the possibility of emotion management in the workplace so as to satisfy both individual and organizational needs. In

contrast to the earlier denial of affect, emotional aspects could now be valued in many instances of corporate life. For example, emotional dynamics is considered to be as important as the content of change for successful organizational change (Huy, 1999). More generally, our findings about the beneficial impact of pleasure at work on managers' attitudes imply that organizations should perhaps explicitly seek to generate positive affective events and favor positive affective states among their workforce. Multiple ways to generate positive emotions are indeed possible: informal or formal support, training, coaching, team-building, etc.

Much remains to be done in the field of emotions at work, though. Future research could take into account individual dispositions in order to evaluate to what extent affective states are influenced by work events above and beyond individual dispositions. It could also be relevant to take cognitive styles into account, as different people may evaluate the same event differently (Gable et al., 2000). Also, the event lists used in research could be augmented by including interactions with customers or personal events outside work. Last, research most often uses an individual perspective, while emotions also have a significant social and organizational component (Averill, 1980). Taking into account the affective tone of work groups and corporate culture could open up interesting research avenues.

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