



## Today's work experience: Precursors of both how I feel and how I think about my job?

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### ABSTRACT

Antecedents of affective versus cognitive components of daily job satisfaction were compared. According to the affective events theory, the affective component should relate more strongly to state affect and affective work experiences than the cognitive component. In multilevel regression analyses of 280 daily reports from 40 participants, within-person variation was lower in the cognitive component (24%) than in the affective component (54%). Beyond state affect and trait affectivity, positive valence of work experiences had an incremental value only in the prediction of the affective component. The affective component is more reactive to daily work experiences than the cognitive component. Whenever the link between work and daily job satisfaction is reviewed, the components of job satisfaction measures should be considered as a moderator.

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## La experiencia laboral hoy: ¿precusores de cómo me siento y de lo que pienso acerca de mi trabajo?

### RESUMEN

Se comparan los antecedentes de los componentes afectivos frente a los cognitivos de la satisfacción laboral cotidiana. Según la teoría de los acontecimientos afectivos, el componente afectivo debería guardar una mayor relación con el afecto de estado y las experiencias laborales que el componente cognitivo. En los análisis de regresión multinivel de 280 informes diarios de 40 participantes, la variación intrasujeto era menor en el componente cognitivo (24%) que en el afectivo (54%). Más allá del afecto de estado y la afectividad de rasgo, la valencia positiva de las experiencias laborales tenía un valor incremental solo en la predicción del componente afectivo. Este es más reactivo a las experiencias laborales diarias que el componente cognitivo. Siempre que se revisa el vínculo entre trabajo y satisfacción laboral cotidiana deberían considerarse las medidas de satisfacción laboral como moderadoras.

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#### Palabras clave:

Satisfacción laboral

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Despite a long history of debate, job satisfaction (JS) is a central construct in work and organizational psychology, both as a consequence of work design and organisational change and as a

precursor of health and work behaviour including work performance and turnover (Elfering, Kälén, & Semmer, 2000; Semmer, Elfering, Bailod, Berset, & Beehr, 2014). Although individual differences have an influence, work conditions and work experiences most strongly relate to JS (Elfering, Semmer, Tschann, Kälén, & Bucher, 2007). Most researchers agree that JS is an attitude, as “job satisfaction . . . can be considered a cluster of attitudes concerning various aspects of a job” (Spector & Wimalasiri, 1986, p. 147). JS attitude includes cognitive, affective, and behavioural

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components (Katz & Stotland, 1959). The cognitive component includes employee's evaluation of work facets with reference to an expected standard. For many years research on job satisfaction focused on the cognitive component of job satisfaction and analysed interindividual differences that were rather stable. The Affective Events Theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) drew attention to the affective component of job satisfaction and intraindividual variations: "Things happen to people in work settings and people often react emotionally to these events. These affective experiences have direct influences on behaviours and attitudes" (p. 11). In the last two decades AET was tested in various event sampling studies and confirmed with respect to attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Ilies, Aw, & Pluut, 2015). In AET, personality traits are thought to partially determine reactions to events: stable positive affectivity is expected to increase event-related positive mood induction and stable negative affectivity is expected to increase event-related negative mood induction (Cropanzano & Dasborough, 2015). Hence, [interindividual differences in] personality traits are supposed to influence the intraindividual rhythm of employee's job satisfaction fluctuation over time (Cropanzano & Dasborough, 2015). While AET refers to the affective component of job satisfaction, the ratio of affective versus cognitive component in assessment of JS has not accordingly been addressed: "job satisfaction is generally construed in affective terms, but typically only its cognitive aspects are measured" (Brief & Weiss, 2002, p. 283). There is some research that compares the cognitive and affective component of JS and their respective associations with antecedents and consequences of JS across individuals (Kaplan, Warren, Barsky, & Thoresen, 2009), but investigation of the components based on within-person variation in job satisfaction including experience sampling in real work context is lacking. This current daily event recording study examines current cognitive and affective JS and compares these components with respect to positive and negative state affect at work, work experiences, and dispositional affectivity as antecedents.

### Comparison of Cognitive and Affective Job Satisfaction Components

An intriguing finding is that relations between trait affectivity, state affect, and JS seem to depend on the JS questionnaire that was used, especially if the questionnaire focused more on the cognitive or affective component of JS (Kaplan et al., 2009). Associations were stronger with the use of Kunin Faces Scale (KFS) of JS (1955)—a mono-item measure of overall satisfaction that focuses primarily on the affective component of JS—compared to other scales. One explanation for this moderating effect might be the relation and weight of the affective and cognitive components of JS in questionnaires. Thus, comparing the affective and cognitive JS components of different scales is interesting (Fisher, 2000; Moorman, 1993; Organ & Near, 1985). Brief and Roberson (1989) studied the relation of three different scales of JS with affective experiences. In contrast to the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967), KFS (Kunin, 1955) was correlated with cognitions and retrospectively measured affect at work (state affect during the past week; Job Affect Scale, JAS) (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, & Webster, 1988). JDI and MSQ were related to cognitions about the job only. Therefore, Brief and Roberson concluded that in terms of affect and cognition, the KFS is "the most balanced of the JS scales" (p. 723). Niklas and Dormann (2005) also showed that state affect had comparably the largest impact on JS measured with KFS. Niklas and Dormann (2005) suggested that state affect influences KFS at the time when it is measured. We expect, therefore, the association between state affectivity and current JS to depend on the

type of JS measure used. Thus, the first study hypothesis postulates that the association between state affectivity and current JS is stronger when the latter is measured by KFS compared to measurement with a more cognitive scale, such as the one by Wegge and Neuhaus (2002) that asks for evaluation facets of JS (hypothesis 1). In addition, the association between positive and negative work experiences and current JS should be stronger when the latter is measured by KFS compared to measurement with a more cognitive scale (hypothesis 2).

### Controlling for Components of Job Satisfaction

For a long time, research on JS focussed on the cognitive evaluation of various job conditions, like satisfaction with salary, supervisors, colleagues, and work conditions. It was a central benefit from the Affective Events Theory (AET) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) to shed light on the affective component of JS by demonstrating that affective experiences in the workplace have an impact on global JS and its consequences. Therefore, during the last decade, attention increased on the effects of emotions at work (Weiss, 2002). Job conditions underlying cognitive evaluation and affective experiences triggering affective parts of JS lead to the idea of partly independent processing pathways for affective and cognitive JS. There should be some overlap, because for instance emotional experiences at work correspond to events that elicit emotions, and these are more likely to appear in the background of unfavourable job characteristics, e.g., low autonomy (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to AET, controlling for the cognitive component of current JS increases the associations of the affective component of JS with state affect and trait affectivity, while controlling for current affective JS component should certainly reduce these associations. This is the second primary focus of this study. The second hypothesis of the study therefore postulates that control of the cognitive component of JS by controlling (Wegge & Neuhaus, 2002) job facets scale in predicting KFS will increase associations between KFS and previous experience, while control of KFS in predicting satisfaction with job facets components will decrease association between satisfaction with job facets and previous experience (hypothesis 3).

### Method

#### Sample

The authors addressed participants from four small companies. All employees, i.e., fifty-seven individuals, were asked to participate. Ten participants did not fill out the questionnaires (participation rate was 82%). Two individuals did not finish the study because of illness. Thus, the response rate was 79%. Five participants filled out the general questionnaire but no daily booklets. Finally, the sample consisted of 40 participants who filled out the general questionnaires and the booklets. The sample was rather balanced in sex (22 men, 18 women). Mean age was 39 years ( $SD = 8.7$ ). Half of the sample held a university degree. Tenure was between 0.3 and 16 years. All except three participants worked full time. Leadership function was more frequent in men (36%) compared to women (22%). The study was performed in consensus with the requirements concerning participants defined by the Swiss Society of Psychology. Study participants were provided with information about their rights and guarantee of anonymity. Informed consent of participants was obtained.

#### Measures

**Trait affectivity.** Trait affectivity was assessed by the instrument of Warr (1990). Participants were asked how they felt in

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