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Analyzing the Impact of Work Events on Emotions: Exploring Dimensional Influences

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ABSTRACT

Acknowledging the pivotal role of emotions in the workplace and their profound influence on job satisfaction, performance, and overall well-being, this study addresses a significant gap in research by exploring the specific dimensions of work events and their distinct impact on emotions. Focusing on the unique context of Malaysian public universities, the article examines the intricate dynamics between workplace events and emotional responses among employees. Grounded in the Affective Events Theory, this research contends that specific work occurrences trigger emotional reactions, shaping employees' attitudes toward their work environment. Conducted with 537 administrative staff members, the study employs linear regression analysis in SPSS version 27 to comprehensively evaluate how various dimensions of work events influence emotional responses. The findings reveal that negative interpersonal interactions, infrastructure challenges, career development issues, and organizational policies are positively linked to negative emotions. Conversely, positive interpersonal interactions were associated with positive emotions, and positive career development events were found to positively influence negative emotions. Notably, negative task-related events were found to have an adverse impact on positive emotions. Emphasizing the significance of considering diverse dimensions of work events, this study provides actionable insights for the nuanced understanding and effective management of employees' emotions in the workplace.

1. Introduction

In the dynamic realm of the workplace, emotions wield a significant influence over employee attitudes and behaviors [1]. Navigating the impact of job-related events on these emotional experiences is vital for effective organizational management. Positive instances like recognition and career development foster job satisfaction and a positive organizational culture, while negative events, including conflicts and excessive workload, breed dissatisfaction, stress, and turnover [2-3]. The emotional resonance from these work events reverberates through interpersonal relationships, organizational climate, and individual performance, shaping overall productivity and organizational

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success [4]. Consequently, adeptly recognizing and managing the emotional dimensions of work events is imperative for cultivating a positive work environment and nurturing lasting employee satisfaction.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of emotions in the workplace, there is a need to further explore the specific dimensions of work events that contribute to the elicitation of different emotions among employees. While existing research, such as Matta *et al.*, [5] and Junça-Silva *et al.*, [6], has shed light on the relationship between work events and employees' emotional experiences, there is a lack of in-depth investigation into how distinct dimensions of work events, such as interpersonal relations, task-related events, infrastructure-related events, organizational policies, and career development impact employees' positive and negative emotions. Additionally, the intricate cross-effects between negative events and positive emotions, as well as positive events and negative emotions, warrant thorough investigation.

Navigating the intricacies of the contemporary higher education landscape necessitates exploring avenues that contribute to both academic excellence and the holistic well-being of individuals within these institutions. In the complex realm of higher education, administrative staff transcend their conventional roles, emerging as integral components essential for shaping the emotional well-being that forms the bedrock of academic institutions [7]. Their steadfast dedication serves as the cornerstone of robust institutional practices within academic settings. Functioning as often-overlooked pillars supporting university functionality, administrative staff tirelessly provide indispensable services to a diverse community of students and lecturers [8-9]. Furthermore, they are reported to encounter negative experiences leading to depression, anxiety, and stress, with over one-quarter of the participants in the respective research exhibiting symptoms of two or more mental disorders [10]. This underscores the need for further investigation into the well-being of this cohort.

This study is dedicated to filling a critical literature gap by thoroughly exploring the influence of diverse dimensions of work events on the emotions experienced by higher education administrative staff. The research focuses on the nuanced effects of interpersonal relations, task-related events, infrastructure-related occurrences, organizational policies, and career development on both positive and negative emotions. The anticipated findings hold substantial promise for advancing our understanding of affective states in the workplace, providing valuable and practical insights for organizational management strategies, and ultimately fostering the well-being of employees.

2. Literature Review

The Affective Events Theory (AET), established by Weiss and Cropanzano [1], posits that specific work events elicit affective reactions, shaping employees' work attitudes and behaviors. This theory illuminates the intricate linkages between internal influences, such as cognitions, emotions, and mental states, and employees' responses to incidents within their work environment, ultimately impacting organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Empirically supported and practically applicable, the AET has redefined discussions surrounding the work environment, employee satisfaction, and productivity. For example, in the comprehensive meta-analysis on the impact of customer mistreatment on service employees, Wu *et al.*, [11] highlighted the widespread utilization of the AET. Specifically, AET served as a valuable framework to explore the profound influence of emotions on critical outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention among service employees. This meta-analysis underscores the versatility and applicability of AET in understanding the complex interplay between emotional experiences and key work-related attitudes and behaviors in the service industry. Furthermore, Mignonac and Herrbach [12] conducted an empirical study employing AET to examine the impact of work events on managers' emotions and

attitudes. Their findings reinforced the theory, emphasizing that specific work events lead to affective reactions, subsequently influencing work attitudes. This underscores the critical role of work events dimensions in shaping employees' emotions and, consequently, their overall work attitudes.

In a broader context, Basch and Fisher [13] enrich the field of emotions in the workplace, introducing the Affective Events-Emotions Matrix. This matrix classifies work events and their associated emotions, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding emotional dynamics in various organizational contexts. Expanding on this, Matta *et al.*, [5] explored employees' emotional reactions to significant work events, highlighting the impact of fairness perceptions on emotions and the role of emotion regulation strategies in influencing subsequent behavior. Moreover, Junça-Silva *et al.*, [6] conducted a study on micro-daily events, unveiling diverse emotional reactions to work events across different professions. This research underscores the necessity of considering the dimensionality of work events in comprehending and managing employees' emotions at work. Collectively, these studies contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the nuanced relationship between work events, emotions, and work attitudes, emphasizing the significance of contextual factors and individual experiences in shaping the emotional landscape within organizations.

The exploration of work events, distinguished by positive and negative valence, encompasses a broad spectrum of emotional experiences within the workplace [14]. Positive events, intricately tied to accomplishments, job satisfaction, and overall well-being, are known to evoke positive emotions, thereby fostering motivation and enhancing job performance. In contrast, negative events exert adverse effects on employees, triggering negative emotions that may manifest as undesirable behaviors [3]. Despite methodological disparities, research consistently identifies key categories of affective work events, including interpersonal, task-related, organizational policies, and infrastructure. Interpersonal events involve subjective experiences through interactions, where various instances contribute to varied emotional responses among employees [5]. Task-related events encompass challenges associated with job responsibilities, achievements, and issue resolution [14-15]. Notably, organizational policies play a significant role in shaping the work environment, influencing employees' emotional experiences either positively or negatively based on their nature and perceptions [5, 12]. Furthermore, infrastructure, representing the physical facilities for task execution, encompasses well-maintained IT, comfortable workspaces, and essential amenities. The quality of infrastructure serves as a predictor of workplace well-being, impacting both employee happiness and performance [16]. The body of literature collectively contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between work events, emotions, and work attitudes. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1. Positive interpersonal events positively influence positive emotions.
- H2. Positive task-related events positively influence positive emotions.
- H3. Positive infrastructure events positively influence positive emotions.
- H4. Positive career development events positively influence positive emotions.
- H5. Positive organizational policy events positively influence positive emotions.
- H6. Negative interpersonal events positively influence negative emotions.
- H7. Negative task-related events positively influence negative emotions.
- H8. Negative infrastructure events positively influence negative emotions.
- H9. Negative career development events positively influence negative emotions.
- H10. Negative organizational policy events positively influence negative emotions.

Based on the literature review and relevant theory to develop hypotheses, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study.

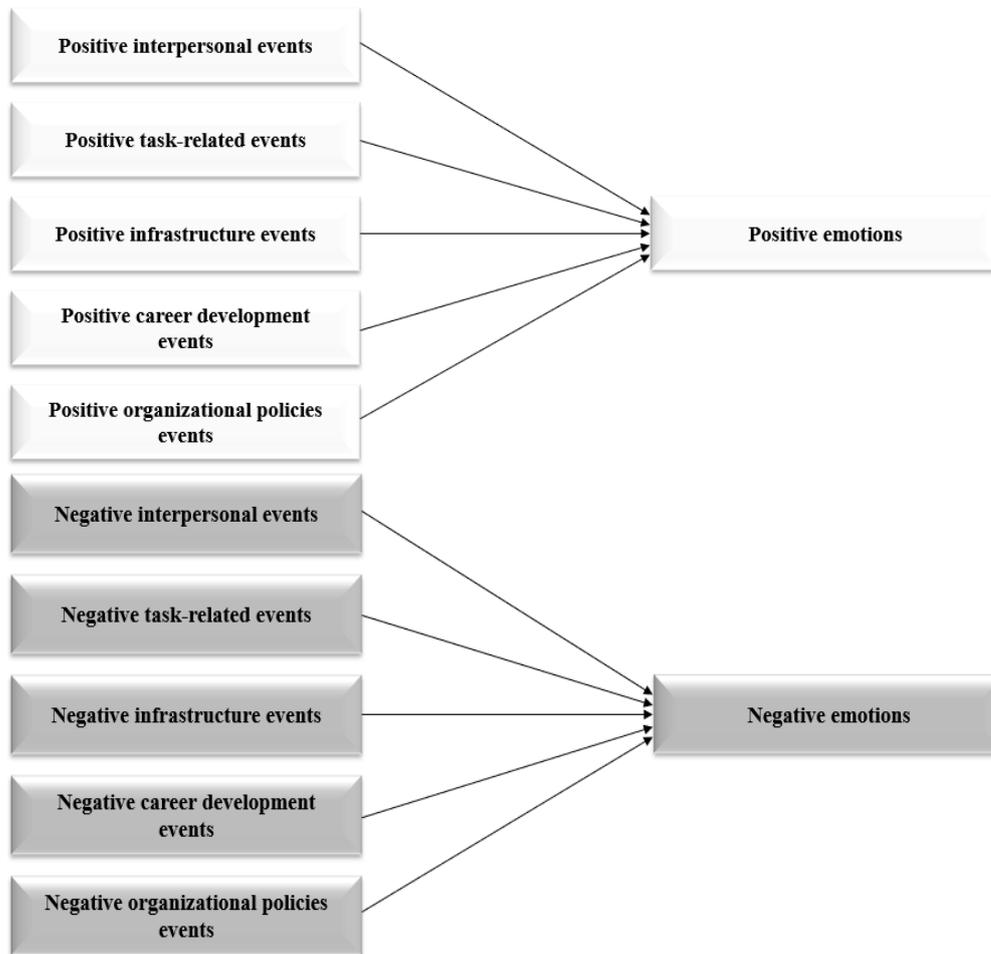


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

The study enlisted 537 administrative staff members from Malaysian public universities, employing a random stratified sampling method for selection. Positive and negative work events were evaluated using Ibrahim *et al.*, [17] scale, encompassing 22 items for positive events (e.g., “Successfully completed important tasks”) and 21 items for negative events (e.g., “Did not get support from coworkers”). Participants rated their responses on a five-point Likert scale (1 “never” to 5 “always”). Affect was further gauged using the 10-item Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) by Watson and Clark [18], featuring five items for positive affect (e.g., “Happy”) and five for negative affect (e.g., “Anger”). Participants used the same Likert scale for responses. Subsequently, data analysis was executed through multiple linear regression using SPSS version 27.

4. Results

Before exploring the relationships between the study variables, the measurement items’ validity and reliability were assessed. The findings reveal that the Correct Item-Total Correlation values for

all items in each variable exceed the critical value of the r table, which is greater than 0.088 at a 5% significance level [19]. This suggests that the measurement items in the questionnaire are deemed valid for use in research, as established by previous studies [20]. Additionally, Cronbach Alpha values for all variables surpass 0.70, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability [21].

On the other hand, the R-squared (R^2) values are pivotal metrics, indicating the proportion of variance in endogenous latent variables explained by exogenous latent variables. As per Hair *et al.*, [22], an R^2 value of 0.25 is deemed weak, 0.50 is moderate, and 0.75 is substantial. In the analysis, the R^2 value for positive emotions is weak, as positive work events explain around 5.1% of the variance. In contrast, the R^2 value for negative emotions falls into the moderate category, with 61% of the variance elucidated by negative work events. Subsequent analysis reveals that positive work events contribute weakly, explaining about 1.7% of the variance in negative emotions. Similarly, negative work events have a weak impact, explaining about 8.7% of the variance in positive emotions. These nuanced findings underscore the differential effects of positive and negative work events on emotional outcomes, highlighting the imperative for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing workplace emotions.

4.1 Hypothesis Relationships Assessment

Table 1 provides insightful information on the correlation between positive events in various dimensions and the level of positive emotions. Notably, positive events in the interpersonal dimension exhibit a significant positive association ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that an increase in interpersonal positive events is linked to an elevation in positive emotions. Conversely, task-related and infrastructure show non-significant associations with positive emotions ($\beta = -0.089$, $p = 0.158$; $\beta = -0.106$, $p = 0.052$, respectively). Similarly, career development and organizational policy reveal non-significant relationships with positive emotions ($\beta = 0.040$, $p = 0.428$; $\beta = 0.000$, $p = 0.993$, respectively). These results suggest that while positive events in the interpersonal dimension significantly contribute to heightened positive emotions, other dimensions do not have statistically significant impacts on positive emotional outcomes. Consequently, H1 is supported, while H2, H3, H4, and H5 are rejected.

Table 1
 Regression coefficients for positive event dimensions and positive emotions

Positive events	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	t	Sig.
Interpersonal	.299	4.506	.000**
Task-related	-.089	-1.414	.158
Infrastructure	-.106	-1.950	.052
Career development	.040	.793	.428
Organizational policy	.000	-.009	.993

a. Dependent Variable: Positive emotions

Table 2 reveals associations between dimensions of negative events and negative emotions. Interpersonal events demonstrate a notable positive relationship ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.001$), while task-related events show no substantial connection ($\beta = 0.015$, $p = 0.694$). Infrastructure events exhibit a significant positive association ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.000$), indicating a link to increased negative emotions. Similarly, career development events ($\beta = 0.135$, $p = 0.045$) and organizational policy events ($\beta = 0.180$, $p = 0.039$) significantly correlate with elevated negative emotions. This concise analysis

underscores the nuanced impact of negative event dimensions on negative emotions, supporting H6, H8, H9, and H10 while rejecting H7.

Table 2
 Regression coefficients for negative event dimensions and negative emotions

Negative events	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	t	Sig.
Interpersonal	.213	3.325	.001**
Task-related	.015	.394	.694
Infrastructure	.281	4.004	.000**
Career development	.135	2.011	.045**
Organizational policy	.180	2.074	.039**

a. Dependent Variable: Negative emotions

4.2 Additional Analysis

Table 3 displays regression coefficients detailing the associations between positive event dimensions and negative emotions. The interpersonal and task-related dimensions exhibit non-significant relationships ($\beta = -0.060$, $p = 0.376$; $\beta = 0.084$, $p = 0.189$, respectively), indicating no significant impact on negative emotions. Infrastructure events also show a non-significant association ($\beta = 0.016$, $p = 0.779$). Conversely, the career development dimension reveals a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.119$, $p = 0.022$), signifying a notable increase in negative emotions. Organizational policy events exhibit a non-significant negative association ($\beta = -0.081$, $p = 0.126$). These findings emphasize the nuanced impact of positive events on negative emotions, with the career development dimension standing out as a significant predictor.

Table 3
 Regression coefficients for positive event dimensions and negative emotions

Positive events	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	t	Sig.
Interpersonal	-.060	-.887	.376
Task-related	.084	1.315	.189
Infrastructure	.016	.280	.779
Career development	.119	2.305	.022**
Organizational policy	-.081	-1.531	.126

a. Dependent Variable: Negative emotions

Table 4 presents regression coefficients examining the relationships between negative event dimensions and positive emotions. Notably, the interpersonal and infrastructure dimensions show non-significant associations ($\beta = 0.006$, $p = 0.948$; $\beta = 0.050$, $p = 0.642$, respectively), indicating no substantial impact on positive emotions. However, the task-related dimension reveals a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.134$, $p = 0.020$), signifying that an increase in negative events related to tasks corresponds to a notable decrease in positive emotions. Additionally, career development and organizational policy events exhibit non-significant negative associations ($\beta = -0.099$, $p = 0.334$; $\beta = -0.145$, $p = 0.275$, respectively). These results underscore the differentiated impact of negative events on positive emotions, with the task-related dimension emerging as a significant predictor of reduced positive emotions.

Table 4
 Regression coefficients for negative event dimensions and positive emotions

Negative events	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	t	Sig.
Interpersonal	.006	.065	.948
Task-related	-.134	-2.340	.020**
Infrastructure	.050	.465	.642
Career development	-.099	-.967	.334
Organizational policy	-.145	-1.093	.275

a. Dependent Variable: Positive emotions

5. Discussion

This study provides a nuanced exploration of the relationships between work events and employee emotions within the context of higher education. The findings offer valuable insights into distinct patterns of associations within positive and negative event dimensions, contributing to the existing body of research in the field. The observed positive association between interpersonal positive events and elevated positive emotions aligns with prior studies emphasizing the significance of positive social interactions in fostering a positive emotional climate [2]. This consistency underscores the robustness of the link between interpersonal dimensions and positive emotions, emphasizing its relevance across various workplace settings. Contrary to some expectations, the non-significant impacts of task-related and infrastructure-positive events on positive emotions deviate from certain previous studies, suggesting a broader positive influence of work-related events on emotional well-being [16]. These nuanced differences may be attributed to the unique characteristics of the higher education setting, highlighting the importance of considering contextual factors in understanding the impact of positive work events on emotional outcomes. Nevertheless, the absence of statistically significant relationships between career development and organizational policy positive events with positive emotions aligns with the findings of Mignonac and Herrbach [12]. Similar non-significant associations were observed in their study, indicating a consistency in the current results with prior research.

Examining negative events, the significant positive relationship between interpersonal negative events and negative emotions echoes previous research emphasizing the adverse impact of negative social interactions on employee well-being [23]. This alignment strengthens the evidence supporting the detrimental effects of negative interpersonal dynamics on emotional outcomes. The absence of a significant connection between task-related negative events and negative emotions contradicts some earlier studies highlighting the role of workload in influencing stress levels and job satisfaction [2]. This incongruity may stem from the distinct nature of tasks in higher education, suggesting the need for context-specific investigations into the impact of task-related negative events on emotional well-being. The significant associations between infrastructure, career development, and organizational policy negative events with elevated negative emotions resonate with research emphasizing the impact of organizational factors on emotional experiences [12, 16]. These findings underscore the importance of organizational context in shaping employees' negative emotional responses.

The nuanced associations identified in the additional analysis of positive event dimensions and negative emotions align with AET propositions, suggesting that individual disposition, such as affective traits, might lead to biased perceptions of events [12]. Additionally, the significance of the career development dimension as a predictor of increased negative emotions adds a novel dimension to the existing literature, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions in specific areas of

professional growth. For instance, negative attitudes toward training, in certain scenarios, may indeed play a contributory role in fostering unfavorable feelings or perceptions regarding one's job proficiency [24]. This underscores the importance of tailored strategies to address negative sentiments in specific facets of career development. On the other hand, when comparing negative event dimensions with positive emotions, the outcomes of the current study align seamlessly with existing research, reinforcing the understanding that negative task-related events exert a detrimental effect on positive emotions. This echoes the findings of prior studies that underscore the significance of the workload factor as a dominant contributor to stress, subsequently influencing job satisfaction, particularly among employees in higher education [2].

6. Conclusion

This study delves deeply into the intricate relationship between work event dimensions and the emotional well-being of higher education administrative staff. The findings highlight the critical need to address negative interpersonal interactions, infrastructure challenges, career development issues, and organizational policies to effectively mitigate negative emotions among staff members. It is equally imperative to proactively tackle negative task-related events to prevent any detrimental effects on positive emotions. Concurrently, providing sustained support for positive interpersonal interactions is recommended to bolster positive emotions among staff. However, careful consideration is advised for the potential negative impacts that positive career development events may inadvertently carry. Recognizing the profound influence of work events on emotions, institutions can strategically implement tailored and relevant strategies to cultivate a more supportive, harmonious, and productive work environment while minimizing unnecessary costs. Despite offering valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations, such as its exclusive focus on higher education, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. Future research endeavors spanning diverse industries and more representative samples could offer more robust and comprehensive insights. Moreover, the incorporation of longitudinal data would contribute to a nuanced understanding of the enduring impact of positive work events and emotions over time. Additionally, future research could explore specific interventions or strategies aimed at mitigating the impact of work events on emotions, particularly those with a negative connotation. Such targeted investigations could provide practical recommendations for organizational improvement and enhance the overall well-being of employees in diverse professional settings.

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