Understanding the "Personological" Basis of Employee Withdrawal: The Influence of Affective Disposition on Employee Tardiness, Early Departure, and Absenteeism

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This study investigated the impact of positive affectivity (PA) and negative affectivity (NA) on employee tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism, controlling for demographic, job-related, and environmental variables. The 3 temporary withdrawal measures were collected from organizational records in the 12 months following the survey. The LISREL analysis was based on a sample of 362 blue-collar employees from a multinational automotive manufacturer. The results indicate that individuals high in PA were associated with increased tardiness and early departure but decreased absenteeism. Individuals high in NA were associated with increased early departure. In terms of moderator effects, job satisfaction had a significant negative impact for individuals low in PA in predicting tardiness and early departure, whereas job satisfaction displayed a significant negative relationship with early departure for individuals high in NA. Implications of the findings are discussed.

Relatively little is known about the different causes of tardiness (lateness for work; G. Blau, 1994), early departure (leaving work early; G. Blau, 1994), and absenteeism (nonattendance of employees for scheduled work; Chadwick-Jones, Nicholson, & Brown, 1982) despite the major financial costs they impose on organizations (G. Blau, 1994; Harrison & Martocchio, 1998; Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997; Kossowsky, Sagie, Krausz, & Singer, 1997). For nearly three decades, researchers have used concepts such as absence proneness (Froggatt, 1970; Garrison & Muchinsky, 1977) and emotional instability (Porter & Steers, 1973) to explain these types of temporary withdrawal behavior. Building on this tradition, more recent explanations have been framed in terms of the "personological" basis of absence (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). What is surprising is the lack of research that considers the role of dispositional factors such as positive affectivity (PA; the extent to which an individual feels enthusiastic over time and across situations) and negative affectivity (NA; the extent to which an individual experiences aversive emotional states over time and across situations; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) in explaining absence behavior (George, 1989; Hackett & Bycio, 1996; Iverson, Olekalns, & Erwin, 1998). Researchers have reported significant effects of PA and NA on other organizational outcomes such as turnover and performance (e.g., Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993; Judge, 1993; Staw & Barsade, 1993; Wright & Staw, 1999). The aim of this study was to examine the main effects of PA and NA on employee tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. We also investigated the moderator effects of these two affective dispositions on the relationship between job satisfaction and the three forms of temporary withdrawal behavior.

Dispositional Research

In recent years, there has been considerable attention paid to the Big Five factors of personality: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1997). McCrae and Costa (1997), for example, observed the stability of the Big Five factor structure across six countries, whereas Barrick and Mount (1991) reported the factor of Extraversion to be associated with performance in managerial jobs. Two other personality factors that have received significant attention in the literature are PA and NA. It is generally agreed that these traits are related to the respective Big Five personality dimensions of Extraversion and Neuroticism (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Watson et al., 1988; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). In this article, we provide an overview of the theoretical and empirical literature surrounding PA and NA.

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1 Although there is some debate regarding the measurement of PA and NA (see Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, for a review), there is an abundance of evidence to affirm the construct (i.e., convergent and discriminant) validity of the two factors (e.g., Agbo, Mueller, & Price, 1992; George, 1992; Iverson et al., 1998; Watson et al., 1988). Research has reported relatively low correlations (ranging from −.09 to −.31) between PA and NA (e.g., Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997; Munz, Huelisman, Konold, & McKinney, 1996; Watson et al., 1988). A comprehensive discussion of these types of issues is beyond the scope of this article and is not fundamental to our argument.
On the basis of this literature, we formulated hypotheses that predicted their differential effects on shorter term (tardiness and early departure) and longer term (noncertified 1- and 2-day avoidable absence) withdrawal behavior.

Hypotheses

Positive Affectivity

There are a number of personal characteristics such as extraversion, sociability, impulsiveness, inhibition, and conditionability that have been found in individuals high in PA (Cooper & Payne, 1967; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Heubeck, Wilkinson, & Cologon, 1998; Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). They provide an important basis for the predictive effect of PA on withdrawal behavior. Judge, Martocchio, and Thoresen identified extraversion as a predictor of absence behavior (measured from personnel records) in a sample of nonacademic employees from a large midwestern university even controlling for employees' past absence. This finding was explained in terms of sociability. It was postulated that extraverted individuals viewed "work as an obstacle to spending more time with family and friends and to their involvement in other leisure activities" (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997, p. 747). In earlier research, Porter and Steers (1973) advanced the notion that impulsiveness may explain the spontaneity of withdrawal behavior.

Other concepts such as inhibition and conditionability have also been suggested in the absence literature. Cooper and Payne (1967) argued that extraverts are less tolerant of repetitive types of work than introverts. Inhibition can be more quickly induced when work tasks are simple, monotonous, and machine-paced. Being tardy, leaving work early, or being absent allows for the dissipation of these types of inhibition-inducing work situations. In their study of a sample of female packers from a tobacco factory, Cooper and Payne observed extraversion to be significantly associated with lateness (Kendall's $\tau = .19$) and frequency of absence (Kendall's $\tau = .16$). Recent evidence also supports the inhibition hypothesis. Furnham and Miller (1997) reported that PA had a positive influence on absenteeism ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$). They suggested that individuals high in PA in responding to boring and routinized work (e.g., a car assembly line) "may 'take the odd day off' to do other things" (Furnham & Miller, 1997, p. 706). In terms of the conditionability hypothesis, Cooper and Payne postulated that because extraverts are socialized less readily, they are less likely to be influenced by social and institutional codes of conduct (e.g., policy). Although Cooper and Payne did not predict differential effects for their-inhibition and conditionability hypotheses for tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism, their basic contention was that extraverts would be more likely to engage in withdrawal behavior. We therefore proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals high in PA will be associated with more tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism.

Negative Affectivity

We also anticipated that individuals high in NA will demonstrate greater tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. These individuals may be characterized by neuroticism and impulsiveness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Porter and Steers (1973) observed that employees "who are fairly unstable emotionally or exhibit high anxiety tend to withdraw" (p. 166). In a study of punctuality style and personality, Richard and Slane (1990) reported that tardy individuals scored higher on trait anxiety than did individuals who arrived early or on time to participate in an experiment. This finding has been affirmed in earlier research. In a study of female flight attendants, Ferris, Youngblood, and Yates (1985) reported the anxiety dimension of Cattell's 16 Personality Factor to be positively associated with absenteeism ($r = .34$). A similar result was observed by Bernardin (1977), who found anxiety to have respective positive correlations of .25 and .21 with the frequency of absence in two samples of salesmen ($N_1 = 57, N_2 = 52$). Sinha (1963) and Cooper and Payne (1967) also reported significant correlations between anxiety and absence ($r = .39$) and between neuroticism and frequency of absence (Kendall's $\tau = .19$) and total days absent (Kendall's $\tau = .16$). As we noted earlier, withdrawal behavior has also been associated with impulsivity (Porter & Steers, 1973). Using the Frygier spontaneous scale (which measured impulsiveness, changeability, spontaneity, speed of reaction, and emotional expressiveness), Pettit (1969) reported an inverse correlation ($r = -.32, p < .05$) with a self-reported time awareness scale. For the reasons outlined above, we predicted that individuals high in NA would also engage in both shorter and longer term withdrawal behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals high in NA will be associated with more tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism.

Moderating Effects

We also examined the interaction effects between these affectivity dispositions and job satisfaction in predicting tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. Proponents of dispositional models focus on traits such as PA and NA in influencing employees' job satisfaction independent of their job and work situation (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Job satisfaction is considered to be a positive or negative evaluative judgment of the job, which has both affective and belief components (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Staw, Bell, and Clausen (1986) provided support for this position. In a longitudinal study, these researchers observed dispositional affect (i.e., PA) to influence job satisfaction over a person's lifetime. In reviewing the literature, Judge, Locke, and Durham concluded that there was overwhelming evidence to indicate that individuals differ in the way they see themselves, their jobs, and their lives.

The bipolar nature of PA has received considerable attention in the literature. For example, individuals high in PA tend to display a sense of well-being, self-efficacy, and positive affective states, whereas those low in PA tend to be characterized in terms of sadness and lethargy (George, 1992; Watson et al., 1988). Low PA is best seen as the absence of PA rather than the existence of NA (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Current research affirms the moderating role of PA between job satisfaction and voluntary turnover (i.e., permanent withdrawal). Drawing primarily from the research of Weitz (1952), Judge (1993) found that "for those with a positive disposition, job satisfaction and turnover were significantly related" (p. 398), whereas a nonsignificant relationship was observed for employees with a negative disposition. Judge argued that job dissatisfaction may be
of more importance to those employees who are generally happy in life, leading to the need to change jobs as a possible remedy to this situation. Accordingly, this finding suggests that an individual high in PA who reports the same level of job dissatisfaction as an individual low in PA will react more negatively (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991). This maintenance explanation may be extended to temporary withdrawal behavior such as absenteeism (Bycio, 1992; Staw & Oldham, 1978). An early study by Staw and Oldham argued that employees engage in absence behavior as a way of coping with a mismatch between themselves and their jobs. Consistent with this perspective, we expected that individuals high in PA—in contrast to those low in PA—would be more likely to react to job dissatisfaction by temporarily withdrawing from work. We proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction will have a stronger negative relationship with tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism for individuals high in PA than those low in PA.

Analogous to PA, individuals can also be characterized as being either high or low in NA. Individuals high in NA tend to be subjectively distressed, unpleasantly engaged, and experience negative affective states, whereas individuals low in NA are calm and perceive situations as not stressful or upsetting (George, 1992; Watson et al., 1988). Low NA involves the absence of NA rather than the existence of PA (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

We also anticipated a similar relationship between job satisfaction and the three forms of withdrawal behavior for individuals low in NA. Individuals high in NA are generally predisposed to be more dissatisfied with their lives and jobs than individuals low in NA (Watson & Clark, 1984). The maintenance hypothesis can also be applied to NA. Weitz (1952) hypothesized that individuals who have high general dissatisfaction and job dissatisfaction are less likely to withdraw than individuals who have low general dissatisfaction and high job dissatisfaction. This hypothesis implies that job dissatisfaction should be less salient for individuals who are generally unhappy because “dissatisfaction is due less to the characteristics of the job than to affective dispositions” (Judge, 1993, p. 395). Hochwart, Perrewé, Ferris, and Brymer’s (1999) explanation of the interaction between value attainment, dispositions, and performance on job satisfaction provides support for this perspective. They concluded that the “job satisfaction of low NAs is less likely to be governed by their constitutional predisposition” (Hochwarter et al., 1999, p. 307). This explanation also suggests a dispositional interaction (Gerhart, 1987). That is, individuals low in NA are more likely to act on their job dissatisfaction and engage in shorter and longer term withdrawal (Fisher & Locke, 1992). We posited the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction will have a stronger negative relationship with tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism for individuals low in NA than for individuals high in NA.

In our analysis, we also controlled for variables that we expected to be linked to the three forms of withdrawal (see Figure 1). Although the literature on tardiness and early departure is not as well developed as that for absenteeism, we formulated a number of specific hypotheses. The controls comprised the demographic variables of sex, tenure, and alcohol involvement (the extent to which individuals use alcohol as a coping mechanism; Brooke & Price, 1989). Research evidence indicates that women display lower shorter term (Gupta & Jenkins, 1983; Koslowsky et al., 1997) but higher longer term withdrawal behavior than men (Côté & Haccoun, 1991; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Employees with fewer years of organizational service and those who may have alcohol-related problems are more likely to engage in the three types of behavior.

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**Figure 1.** Causal model of employee tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism.
AFFECTIVE DISPOSITION AND EMPLOYEE WITHDRAWAL

(Brooke & Price, 1989; Gupta & Jenkins, 1983; Johns, 1997; Koslowsky et al., 1997; Leigh & Lust, 1988). In relation to the job-related variables, we expected that the greater the perceived routinization (degree to which employees' jobs are repetitive; Price & Mueller, 1981), job hazards (degree to which employees are exposed to harmful working conditions), and work overload (extent to which the job performance required in a job is excessive) the more likely that employees will be tardy, will leave work early, and will be absent (Allen, 1981; Brooke & Price, 1989; Erwin & Iverson, 1994; Johns, 1997; Price & Mueller, 1986). Conversely, the greater the perceived coworker support (degree of consideration expressed by coworkers; P. M. Blau, 1960), distributive justice (degree to which an organization treats employees fairly), and job satisfaction (overall degree to which an individual likes his or her job; Price & Mueller, 1981) the less likely that employees will temporarily withdraw from work (Brooke & Price, 1989; Iverson et al., 1998; Koslowsky et al., 1997). We also expected that the environmental variables (relating to the nonwork setting) of perceived job opportunity (availability of alternative jobs outside the organization; Price & Mueller, 1986), external responsibilities (extent to which an individual has responsibilities outside of work; Erwin & Iverson, 1994), absence culture (work group belief in the legitimacy of absence taking; Chadwick-Jones et al., 1982), and absence permisiveness (degree to which absenteeism is tolerated by the organization; Brooke & Price, 1989) would be associated with both shorter and longer term withdrawal (G. Blau, 1994; Brooke & Price, 1989; Erwin & Iverson, 1994; Iverson, Deery, & Erwin, 1995). Controlling for these types of situational variables addresses misspecification problems generally displayed in dispositional research (Agbe et al., 1992).

Tardiness, Early Departure, and Absenteeism

It is possible to identify a number of different relationships between various forms of individual withdrawal behavior from work. Researchers have proposed four likely alternatives: independence, compensation, spillover, and progression (Koslowsky et al., 1997). The independence perspective suggests that tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism are mutually exclusive (i.e., little or no correlation between behaviors) and that employees may engage in one form or another (e.g., March & Simon, 1958). In terms of the compensatory hypothesis, a negative relationship is expected, whereby employees may be high on one withdrawal behavior and low on another (e.g., Hill & Trist, 1955). According to the spillover perspective, the same set of antecedents may predict different withdrawal behaviors (e.g., Beehr & Gupta, 1978), whereas the progression model implies that there is a temporal and positive causal ordering between tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism (e.g., Rosse & Miller, 1984). On the basis of empirical evidence, we expected the three withdrawal behaviors to be correlated positively (e.g., spillover), although we did not predict a causal ordering between the behaviors. This was because we had incomplete data on the timing of these events from personnel records (i.e., frequency of tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism during year), which made it impossible to hypothesize their temporal relationship.

The present study provides a rigorous test of the effects of PA and NA on tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism by controlling for other demographic, job-related, and environmental variables. Because the three temporary withdrawal variables were collected from personnel records over the 12 months following the survey, we limited the problems created by common method variance, retrospective designs, and self-report data (e.g., G. Blau, 1994; Koslowsky et al., 1997; Krausz, Koslowsky, & Esher, 1998).

Method

Research Setting and Sample

The setting for this research was a multinational automotive manufacturer located in Australia that employed approximately 14,000 employees. The plant from which this sample was drawn employed some 2,000 production and assembly line workers. The sample consisted of 362 blue-collar, unionized employees who were predominantly male (82%). Male and female employees performed similar duties in the plant. The average age, education, and tenure of employees were 32.83 years (SD = 9.72 years), 9.68 years (SD = 3.22 years), and 7.73 years (SD = 6.74 years), respectively.

Data Collection

A multiple-item survey measure (requesting identifying information on the individual) was administered during working hours to a random sample of 600 employees at the plant. Survey instructions stressed that participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. Five hundred and twenty-five surveys were returned, representing a response rate of 88%. Of these, 85 surveys were removed from the analysis because of those respondents declining to provide identifying information, with an additional 78 being deleted from the listwise missing-data procedure of PRELIS (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996b). The final sample consisted of 362 employees. Although the plant had undergone a program of restructuring before the survey, the industrial relations climate between the company and the employees was harmonious. Joint working parties had been formed to oversee the implementation of new work practices (e.g., work teams) as well as the introduction of new technology. Early retirement and natural attrition were used to reduce the production workforce. Despite this cooperative approach to the management of change, the program of restructuring may have been a reason why some employees were unwilling to supply identifying information and for the amount of missing data obtained. The representativeness of the final sample (N = 362) with those respondents who failed to provide identifying information and those who were deleted as missing data (n = 163) was evaluated by mean difference (i.e., t-test) and chi-square analyses. The results found no differences in the demographic characteristics of age, t(523) = 1.84, p > .05; sex, χ²(1, N = 362) = 0.51, p > .05; education, r(523) = 1.58, p > .05; or tenure, r(523) = 1.09, p > .05.

Tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism data for a period of 12 months following the survey were obtained from personnel records and matched to the questionnaires. The records indicated that 179 or 49% of employees were tardy at least once, 63 or 17% had left work early at least once, and 306 or 85% were absent at least once during the year. In relation to male and female employees, there were no significant differences in the types of behaviors observed. Male and female employees were similarly tardy, r(360) = 0.44, p > .05; departed work early, r(360) = 0.29, p > .05; and were absent, r(360) = 0.37, p > .05, during the year.

Measurement

A 5-point Likert-type scale format was used to measure employees' perception of each item, except for the dependent variables of tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. Employees in the organization were required to punch a time clock for the start and end of their shift. For the
company, tardiness was defined as an event when an employee commenced work after the scheduled start time, early departure was defined as a situation when an employee clocked off work prior to the scheduled departure time, and absenteeism was defined as the nonattendance (in days) of employees for scheduled work. Employees were classified as either tardy or leaving work early on the basis of their transgressions from exact start and finish times. Because shorter term withdrawal is extremely disruptive to the production line, employees generally sought permission from their supervisors prior to their early departure from work. To measure absence, we used noncertified (without medical certificate) 1- and 2-day absences. There is general agreement that this measure provides the best estimate of "voluntary" or "avoidable" absences from work (Chadwick-Jones et al., 1982; Price & Mueller, 1986; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). The three withdrawal variables were measured as frequencies during a period of 12 months following the questionnaire (G. Blau, 1994; Brooke & Price, 1989). The dispositional variables of PA and NA were operationalized by an adaptation of the Multidimensional Personality Index obtained from David Watson (see Agho et al., 1992). Six items from the original 25 items were used to assess the degree to which an individual was predisposed to be happy across time and situations (PA) and the degree to which an individual was predisposed to experience discomfort across time and situations (NA). Researchers have reported both scales to be valid and reliable (Iverson & Kuruvilla, 1995; Iverson et al., 1998).

In relation to the control variables, the personal variables with the exception of alcohol involvement (modication of scale by Mufford & Miller, 1963) were measured by single items (e.g., sex: 1 = male, 0 = female; tenure: years). The job-related variable of routinization was operationalized by Price and Mueller's (1981, 1986) scale, whereas job hazards were measured using a single item: "My job always exposes me to hazardous work" (Iverson et al., 1995). The job stress variable of work overload and the social support variable of coworker support were assessed by measures of Price and Mueller (1981) and House (1981), respectively. Distributive justice was operationalized using Price and Mueller's (1981, 1986) scale, and job satisfaction was assessed by six items from Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) scale.

The environmental variables of job opportunity and external responsibilities were measured by scales of Price and Mueller (1981, 1986) and Erwin and Iverson (1994), respectively. Absence culture was assessed by a single item: "My coworkers do not care if others are absent from work," and absence permissiveness was assessed by the item "When you're scheduled to work, management really expects you to be there" (reverse scored).

The reliability of the multiple-item measures was computed by estimating Cronbach's (1951) alpha. As indicated in Table 1, all of the scales showed acceptable reliability. The descriptive statistics and correlations (LISREL) among measures are also presented in Table 1.

### Analysis

The statistical program of LISREL 8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996a) was used to estimate the causal model. Because of the problems associated with the nonnormal sample distributions of these three withdrawal measures (i.e., skewed and truncated), we first used the program of PRELIS (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996b) to "censor" the variables. The PRELIS correlation matrix was then used as the input to LISREL. The convergent validity (i.e., the degree of association between measures of a construct) of the model was supported because the hypothesized model was found to significantly better fit the data than both the null, Δχ²(145, N = 362) = 3,206.29, p < .001, and one-factor, Δχ²(39, N = 362) = 1,312.63, p < .001, models. In terms of the discriminant validity (i.e., the degree to which measures of constructs are distinct), we calculated the difference between one model, which allowed the correlations between the constructs (with multiple items) to be constrained to unity (i.e., perfectly correlated), and the other, which allowed the correlations between the constructs to be free. For example, in testing PA and NA, the chi-square difference test between the two models, Δχ²(4, N = 362) = 198.69, p < .001, affirmed the discriminant validity of the constructs. The measurement model was found to have a goodness-of-fit index of .90, a normed comparative fit index of .94 (Bentler, 1990), and a root-mean-square error of approximation of .05 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Because the convergent and discriminant validity were supported and the measurement model displayed acceptable fit, the structural model was then estimated. The results of the structural model are contained in the following section.

### Table 1

**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (LISREL)**

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<th>Determinant</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>2. Early departure</td>
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<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>- .23</td>
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<td>4. Positive affectivity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<td>- .07</td>
<td>- .71</td>
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<td>5. Negative affectivity</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<td>6. Sex</td>
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<td>.05</td>
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<td>.04</td>
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<td>- .12</td>
<td>- .08</td>
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<td>- .22</td>
<td>- .18</td>
<td>.17</td>
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<td>15. Job opportunity</td>
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<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>- .02</td>
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<td>.08</td>
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<td>17. Absence culture</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1.16</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>- .02</td>
<td>- .05</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>- .05</td>
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<td>- .16</td>
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*Note.* N = 362. Reliabilities are reported in parentheses along the diagonal. Correlations greater than .09 are significant at p < .05, one-tailed.
Results

Bivariate Data

The zero-order correlation (LISREL) matrix is presented in Table 1. As we expected, both PA \( r = .18, p < .05; r = .13, p < .05 \) and NA \( r = .12, p < .05; r = .28, p < .05 \) were significantly associated with tardiness and early departure, respectively. The control variables of alcohol involvement \( r = .12, p < .05; r = .12, p < .05 \), distributive justice \( r = -.20, p < .05; r = -.12, p < .05 \), job satisfaction \( r = -.15, p < .05; r = -.22, p < .05 \), and external responsibilities \( r = .21, p < .05; r = .16, p < .05 \) also displayed significant relationships with these two temporary withdrawal behaviors. Job satisfaction was further found to be negatively correlated with absenteeism \( r = -.18, p < .05 \). In addition, the job-related variables of routinization \( r = .15, p < .05 \), work overload \( r = .16, p < .05 \), and coworker support \( r = .12, p < .05 \) and the environmental variable of absence culture \( r = .20, p < .05 \) were associated with departing work early. The three withdrawal behaviors were positively correlated, with tardiness displaying the strongest relationship with the other two behaviors (i.e., absenteeism: \( r = .30, p < .05 \); early departure: \( r = .23, p < .05 \)), closely followed by early departure and absenteeism \( r = .17, p < .05 \).

Multivariate Data

Using the SAS program by MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996), we calculated the statistical power of the model (i.e., probability of rejecting a false null hypothesis—Type II \( \beta \) error). Inputting the null and alternative values of the root-mean-square error of approximation \( (\hat{\rho} \text{ and } \hat{\rho} \alpha); \text{see Browne & Cudeck, 1993} \), the alpha level, degrees of freedom, and sample size, the power estimate exceeded Cohen’s (1988) recommended criterion of .80. Accordingly, the model was observed to have sufficient power to detect effect sizes (i.e., parameter estimates). We first begin with a discussion of tardiness, followed by early departure, and then absenteeism.

Tardiness. The LISREL results are shown in Table 2. Fifteen percent of the variance in tardiness was explained by the variables in the model. Of the significant variables, PA \( \hat{\beta} = .21, p < .001 \) had the greatest influence, followed by distributive justice \( \hat{\beta} = -.19, p < .01 \), job satisfaction \( \hat{\beta} = -.13, p < .05 \), absence permissiveness \( \hat{\beta} = .13, p < .05 \), coworker support \( \hat{\beta} = .12, p < .05 \), and external responsibilities \( \hat{\beta} = .11, p < .05 \). Employees were more likely to be late for work when they exhibited higher PA, felt they were not treated fairly, disliked their jobs, perceived that management tolerated absenteeism, had considerate coworkers, and had personal obligations outside of work. In addition, PA and NA contributed significant explanatory power to tardiness (i.e., 4%) beyond the demographic, job-related, and environmental variables, \( F(2, 346) = 8.16, p < .05 \), with PA being a significantly better predictor than NA, \( t(346) = 2.60, p < .05 \).

Early departure. Similar to tardiness, PA \( \hat{\beta} = .13, p < .001 \), coworker support \( \hat{\beta} = .23, p < .001 \), job satisfaction \( \hat{\beta} = -.26, p < .001 \), and absence permissiveness \( \hat{\beta} = .08, p < .05 \) had significant effects on employees leaving work early (see Table 2). In addition, absence culture \( \hat{\beta} = .20, p < .001 \), NA \( \hat{\beta} = .17, p < .01 \), work overload \( \hat{\beta} = .17, p < .001 \), and alcohol involvement \( \hat{\beta} = .10, p < .05 \) were significant predictors. Twenty-two percent of the variance in early departure was explained by these variables. Hence, employees were more likely to leave work early when there was a belief in the legitimacy of absence taking, when they displayed higher NA, when the required job performance was regarded as excessive, and when alcohol was used as a coping mechanism. Again, the dispositions of PA and NA added significant variance to the model beyond the control variables (i.e., 5%).
### Table 2
**LISREL (Standardized) Results for Employee Tardiness, Early Departure, and Absenteeism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Tardiness</th>
<th></th>
<th>Early departure</th>
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<th>Absenteeism</th>
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<td></td>
<td>β</td>
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<td>β</td>
<td>Unique R²</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Unique R²</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.10*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.06</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.26***</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
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<td>.08*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.13***</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative affectivity</td>
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<td>.04*</td>
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<td>.05*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>.06</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05, one-tailed.  ** p < .01, one-tailed.  *** p < .001, one-tailed.

$F(2, 346) = 11.09, p < .05$, with little difference being observed between PA and NA, $r(346) = .53, p > .05$.

**Absenteeism.** The three variables of job satisfaction (β = -.16, p < .05), PA (β = -.10, p < .05), and sex (i.e., men; β = .10, p < .05) explained 6% of the variance in absenteeism (see Table 2). Thus, when employees liked their jobs, exhibited higher PA, and were female, avoidable absence was reduced. In contrast to tardiness and early departure, PA and NA as a block did not provide a significant improvement in the explanatory power of absenteeism above the demographic, job-related, and environmental variables (i.e., 1%), $F(2, 346) = 1.93, p > .05$. Nevertheless, PA (without NA being entered) did contribute significant explanatory power beyond the control variables, $F(1, 347) = 3.88, p < .05$. We found no significant differences between the coefficients of PA and NA in predicting absenteeism, $r(346) = .52, p > .05$.

**Interaction Effects**

Consistent with the extant literature on employee withdrawal (e.g., George, 1989; Hackett & Bycio, 1996; Judge, 1993; Koslowsky et al., 1997), we expected that affective disposition would interact with job satisfaction in predicting tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. We used the procedures as recommended by Jaccard and Wan (1996) in testing for interaction effects in latent-variable models. This approach involves a nested goodness-of-fit strategy with a multiple-group solution. In the first step, the fit of the model is calculated by means of a chi-square test. In this test, LISREL estimates parameters for the respective high and low PA and NA groups, for which no across-group constraints are imposed. In the second step, the same procedure is followed, except that across-group constraints are imposed. Specifically, the regression coefficients for the two high and low (PA and NA) groups are constrained to be equal, reflecting an interaction effect. The fit of the model for the first step (i.e., unconstrained) is then subtracted from the fit of the model for the second step (i.e., constrained). If the resulting chi-square change is significant, then this indicates the presence of an interaction effect.

Interaction effects were observed for PA on tardiness, $\chi^2(1, N = 362) = 11.87, p < .05$, and early departure, $\chi^2(1, N = 362) = 47.17, p < .05$, and for NA on early departure, $\chi^2(1, N = 362) = 14.27, p < .05$. With respect to tardiness, job satisfaction had a significant negative effect for individuals low in PA ($B = -.57, SE = .14, p < .05$) and a nonsignificant effect for those high in PA ($B = .00, SE = .10, p > .05$). A similar pattern was observed for early departure, for which job satisfaction had a significant impact for individuals low in PA ($B = -.16, SE = .07, p < .05$) but not for individuals high in PA ($B = -.10, SE = .09, p > .05$). In relation to NA, job satisfaction displayed a significant inverse relationship with early departure for individuals high in NA ($B = -.39, SE = .09, p < .05$) and a nonsignificant relationship for those low in NA ($B = .14, SE = .11, p > .05$). The implications of these findings are outlined in the following section.

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2 In a comparative analysis, general support for this estimation technique has been provided by Ping (1998).
Discussion

This study provides support for both the main and moderator effects of PA and NA on tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. Individuals high in PA displayed differential (i.e., respective positive and negative) relationships with shorter term (tardiness and early departure) and longer term withdrawal behavior (non-certified 1- and 2-day absences), whereas individuals high in NA were associated with early departure (controlling for demographic, job-related, and environmental variables). Moreover, the relationship between job satisfaction and both tardiness and early departure was moderated by PA, whereas NA was found to moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and early departure. We begin with a discussion of the main effects, followed by the moderator effects of PA and NA based on the LISREL results.

We found partial support for Hypothesis 1. Employees high in PA were found to be more tardy and to leave work early. It is plausible that employees sought to ameliorate the boredom of production line work by engaging in shorter term withdrawal (Cooper & Payne, 1967). It has been suggested that because individuals high in PA are impulsive and sociable, they see work as an obstacle to more exciting and rewarding situations and experiences (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). One such instance may be their involvement in nonwork activities. To better understand this process, we undertook additional analyses to examine whether external responsibilities (i.e., nonwork commitments) mediated the effect of PA on employee withdrawal. The results provide support for this mechanism in that PA had significant indirect effects on tardiness ($\beta = .08, p < .01$) and early departure ($\beta = .10, p < .01$) via external responsibilities. Another possible explanation for the behavior of individuals high in PA is that they engage in shorter term withdrawal behavior because of the high degree of tolerance and consideration shown by their coworkers. Because individuals high in PA are gregarious and more able to make friends at work (Tokar & Fischer, 1998), it is plausible that their coworkers “cover” for their tardiness and early departure. In relation to this possible explanation, we found that PA had a positive impact on coworker support ($\beta = .15, p < .05$) and significant positive indirect effects on employee tardiness ($\beta = .02, p < .05$) and early departure ($\beta = .04, p < .01$). Hence, employees high in PA enjoyed greater coworker support, which was associated with their increased shorter term withdrawal.

In relation to absenteeism, PA was found to have only direct effects. Unexpectedly, individuals high in PA exhibited lower absenteeism. These individual differences may view the consequences of engaging in longer forms of withdrawal differently from those associated with tardiness or leaving work early. In contrast to Cooper and Payne’s (1967) conditioning hypothesis, the negative outcomes (e.g., poor performance appraisal) of such behavior may act as a deterrent.

In relation to the main effects of NA, we detected only a positive relationship with early departure (partially supporting Hypothesis 2). We posited neurotic and impulsive explanations for the withdrawal behavior of individuals high in NA. Surprisingly, NA failed to demonstrate a significant relationship with tardiness (although it had a significant correlation: $r = .12, p < .05$) or with absenteeism (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). Factors such as external responsibilities may again assist in our explanation of this behavior. Although exploratory, the results confirmed the intervening role of external responsibilities for NA. Specifically, employees high in NA who perceived they had greater nonwork obligations ($\beta = .29, p < .01$) were more likely to engage in early departure ($\beta = .16, p < .001$). In further analyses, NA was observed to have a significant indirect effect ($\beta = .03, p < .05$) on early departure via the job stress variable of work overload (Watson & Clark, 1984). That is, employees high in NA who perceived their job performance requirements to be excessive reacted by leaving work early. Deriving from the maintenance explanation, it would be predicted that employees high in NA may engage in early departure so as to prevent their levels of stress (i.e., work overload) from escalating (Hackett & Bycio, 1996). Although research is scant, the maintenance explanation of employee withdrawal appears to be a relevant avenue for future research.

With respect to the moderator effects as proposed in Hypothesis 3, job satisfaction was found to have a stronger negative effect on tardiness and early departure for individuals low in PA than for individuals high in PA. These findings were unexpected. We predicted that individuals high in PA would withdraw from work in an attempt to address their dissatisfaction (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). The intensity of dissatisfaction was argued to be stronger for individuals high in PA than for those low in PA. An alternative explanation was proposed by Dietz, Brief, Hayes, Calahan, and Melone (1997). They observed in a study of communication employees that the “relationship between positive affect at work (i.e., mood) and absenteeism was stronger among employees low on PA than it was among employees high on PA” (Dietz et al., 1997, p. 13). The authors argued that individuals low in PA tended to rely more often on their jobs for positive stimuli than individuals high in PA. A similar finding has been reported by Duffy, Ganster, and Shaw (1998), who examined a three-way interaction among PA, job satisfaction, and tenure in predicting negative employee outcomes. They found that among employees with low tenure, job-searching activity was significantly higher for individuals low in PA than for individuals high in PA when they were dissatisfied with their jobs. The trend was reversed for high-tenured employees. This finding therefore suggests that in certain situations, when employees low in PA experience job dissatisfaction they are more likely to exhibit negative organizational outcomes than employees high in PA.

We hypothesized that job dissatisfaction would be less important for individuals high in NA in predicting tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism (Hypothesis 4). It was suggested that these types of individuals would have a predisposition to be dissatisfied in their lives and their jobs compared with individuals low in NA (Watson & Clark, 1984). We found support only for the relationship with early departure. However, this was in the opposite direction from that hypothesized. Individuals high in NA were significantly more likely to leave work early if they were dissatisfied with their job. It is possible that these types of employees experience greater intensity from negative events and from the work environment than those low in NA (McCrae & Costa, 1991;
minimize this limitation by testing other plausible a priori models. A third limitation of this study is related to our inability to obtain personnel data on the timing and duration of tardiness and employee departure and on the timing of absenteeism. If we could have obtained these data, they would have shed light on the temporal ordering of the three outcomes. A fourth limitation pertains to the work setting. The sample was predominantly male, blue-collar, and unionized, which obviously restricts the generalizability of the findings. Finally, the low base rates of the withdrawal data, especially for early departure (in which permission was generally sought from supervisors), made it more difficult to establish relationships (Johns, 1997). This may have been an artifact of our site, in which unscheduled disruptions to production were viewed as a major concern by the organization. Nonetheless, other researchers such as Gupta and Jenkins (1983) obtained comparable tardiness rates (e.g., 40%) in similar manufacturing settings.

Notwithstanding the limitations outlined above, the present study has contributed to our understanding of the role of affective disposition in tardiness, early departure, and absenteeism. Both PA and NA were found to increase early departure, whereas PA was found to increase tardiness and decrease absenteeism. In terms of moderator effects, for individuals low in PA, job satisfaction had a significant negative effect on tardiness and early departure. Moreover, job satisfaction displayed a similar relationship with early departure for individuals high in NA. We should also not omit the practical implications of our research. For employees high in PA, for example, it may be more cost-effective for organizations to tolerate some degree of tardiness and early departure while attempting to minimize absenteeism. Issues such as these need to be addressed in future research. Studies of the personological basis of withdrawal behavior are vital for a full understanding of the factors that affect the motivation of employees to attend work.

References


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analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modeling. Psychological Methods, 1, 130–149.