

Secure attachment: implications for hope, trust, burnout, and performance

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Summary

Secure attachment is a healthy attachment style that enables individuals to work autonomously as well as with others when appropriate. Secure attachments are characterized by internal regulatory mechanisms that allow individuals to be flexible and constructive in their interpersonal relationships. Our model incorporates hope, trust in one's supervisor, and burnout as explanatory variables that translate the benefits of secure attachment into better supervisor-rated task performance. Among 161 employees of an assisted living center and their supervisors, secure attachment had a significant, positive relationship with hope, trust, and burnout, but only trust had a significant, positive relationship with supervisor-rated performance. These results indicate that secure attachment should be considered a positive psychological strength that has important implications for working adults. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Introduction

Since the 1960s, Bowlby's attachment theory has become an important framework in understanding *interpersonal* processes in adulthood; namely, the way in which attachment style affects the quality of close relationships. These interpersonal processes have been studied in a variety of contexts including the work context wherein attachment style has been related to socialization, change adjustment, and leader-follower relations (Kahn, 1995; Keller, 2003; Nelson, Quick, & Joplin, 1991). Recently, progress has been made in terms of theory and research on the internal regulatory processes that are characteristic of attachment styles (Mikulincer, 1995; Mikulincer & Florian, 1995). This research has shifted focus to include the impact of attachment style on one's representation of the self and one's view of others, which then has explored the explanatory mechanisms that might translate secure attachments into positive psychological states and performance at work (i.e., Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990). In fact, Lopez (2003) concluded that "given its strong associations with healthy and adaptive self-regulation in adulthood, attachment security arguably could serve as a key construct in the continued development of positive psychology" (p. 285).

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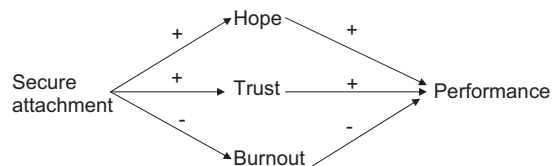


Figure 1. Research model

The model we propose in Figure 1 posits that secure attachment affects the states of hope, trust, and burnout, which in turn affect supervisor-rated task performance. An individual's attachment style is internalized into broad regulatory strategies that guide a person's view of others and their current situation (Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982/1969, 1988). Thus, secure attachment should influence individual psychological states, which in-turn should affect valued outcomes, such as performance. Research along these lines can help answer Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) researchers' calls for the investigation of states that influence performance in organizations as well as identifying the antecedents of these states in individuals (Luthans, 2002a).

Hope, trust, and burnout are examined in this model because they represent fundamental but different states thought to be impacted by the regulatory nature of secure attachment. Hope represents one's psychological state regarding his or her current situation, whereas trust represents one's psychological state regarding another person. Burnout, a negative state, is included in our model to provide a more balanced view answering the call for POB researchers to examine both the positive and the negative simultaneously (Nelson & Simmons, 2004; Simmons & Nelson, 2001, 2007). With respect to valued work-related outcomes, trust in the supervisor has been initially linked to better performance (*cf.* Mayer and Davis, 1999), and hope is garnering a lot of theoretical attention (*cf.* Luthans, 2002a) and nascent empirical support (Youssef, 2004) in its impact on performance. And while the belief that burnout negatively affects performance is conventional, the empirical support is surprisingly meager (*cf.* Wright and Bonett, 1997).

We will begin by providing a considerable discussion of attachment theory and secure attachment and then explore the linkages between secure attachment and each psychological state (hope, trust, and burnout) and the relationship between each of these states and work performance.

Attachment theory

Attachment theory posits that infants formulate internal working models of their relationships with others based upon their relationships with a primary caregiver who serves as a secure base and provides support and protection in times of threat and distress (Bowlby, 1982, 1988). Infants form either secure or insecure (i.e., avoidant or anxious-ambivalent) orientations toward others based on their early experiences (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Secure infants differ from the other two types in that they experience felt security by trusting that the attachment figure can be relied upon in times of hardship. This allows the secure infant to leave the caregiver to explore the environment and return for comfort and assistance as needed. Central to Bowlby's theory and Ainsworth's extensions is the idea that infants' early experiences become internal working models of self and others and shape individuals' future social experiences and relationships.

Contemporary research indicates that attachment styles extend into the adult years (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990). These attachment theory perspectives have been extended into management literature to reflect three basic attachment styles (Nelson et al., 1991; Quick, Nelson, & Quick, 1987, 1990). *Secure*

attachment is the healthy attachment style characterized by the formation of flexible, reciprocal relationships (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Bowlby (1988) described secure attachment as the capacity to connect well and securely in relationships with others while having the capacity for autonomous action as situationally appropriate.

A person with a secure attachment style exhibits a healthy pattern of behavior, manifested in the ability to work well alone or with others by forming flexible, reciprocal relationships with a variety of different people. "Character and strength lie at the heart of autonomous and independent action," (Simmons, Nelson, & Quick, 2003, p. 362). This strength of character manifested in secure people helps them create a reliable social support network that they can tap in times of need and enables them to work effectively and comfortably if and when they are required to act alone.

In regard to the explanatory processes that drive such stable interpersonal differences, securely attached individuals rely on basic guidelines of the attachment system: acknowledging emotional arousal, engaging in instrumental action, asking for others' support and hoping for successful management of the situation (Mikulincer & Sheffi, 2000). Secure individuals seek support from significant others and have confidence in their own skills and thus develop more successful and constructive coping plans. These individuals hold more positive expectations about stress manageability (Mikulincer & Florian, 1995) and have confidence in others' good intentions (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990).

Avoidance is an unhealthy approach to relationships, as is *anxiety-ambivalence*. These two styles are the domain of study in clinical psychology research that focuses on diagnosis and intervention strategies for unhealthy individuals. Preliminary evidence indicates that the majority of working adults are securely attached to varying degrees (Krausz, Bizman, & Braslavsky, 2001; Quick, Joplin, Nelson, Mangelsdorff, & Fiedler, 1996a). Thus, from the standpoint of examination of working adults, it makes conceptual sense to investigate the influence of the varying *degrees* of secure attachment on hope, trust, and burnout. These three psychological states will in turn, affect performance and this is the focus of our study.

Secure attachment, hope, and performance

Hope has been identified as a positive state reflecting a degree of expected benefit resulting from an evaluation of a particular situation (Lazarus, 1993; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993). Thus, hope is based on a sense of successful goal-directed determination and planning to meet goals (Snyder et al., 1996) or a belief that one has both the will ("agency") and the way ("pathways") to accomplish valued goals. It is this conceptualization of hope that Luthans (2002a) declared was the most unique positive organizational capacity in its ability to be developed in individuals and its potential impact on job-related outcomes.

Secure attachment reflects the ability to form useful social relationships based upon healthy respect for and reliance on others' competencies (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). Secure individuals work effectively both autonomously and with others as they find ways to achieve valued goals. Their resourcefulness and confidence in their own skills facilitate their goal directed attitudes and behavior. These interpersonal impacts of secure attachment on hope are made possible by unique internal regulatory processes that allow them to view their circumstances in a positive light (Quick, Nelson, Matuszek, Whittington, & Quick, 1996b). Secure individuals have a sense that the world is a safe place that is amenable to them and the accomplishment of their goals. For secure people, this means that their resourcefulness is especially likely to help them find the will and the way to accomplish valued work goals. One study indicated preliminary support for the relationship between secure attachment style

and hope (Simmons et al., 2003). In a sample of home healthcare nurses, those who were secure were more likely to be hopeful.

We hypothesize that hope is a mechanism through which secure attachment leads to better performance. The agency component of hope involves setting realistic goals and then reaching for those goals with self-directed determination and a perception of internalized control. The pathways component involves individuals generating alternative paths to desired destinations should the original ones become blocked (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991). Secure attachment allows one to view one's goals and capabilities with positive expectancies, leading to both agency and pathway. In turn, agency and pathway result in overall higher hope, which leads to better performance.

Support for the impact of hope on significant work outcomes is emerging. In an exploratory study, hopeful leaders had more profitable work units and had better satisfaction and retention rates among their subordinates than leaders with low levels of hope (Peterson & Luthans, 2003). Another study of over 1000 managers and employees demonstrated that hope was positively related to performance (Youssef, 2004). Based on this theoretical rationale, we hypothesize the following:

H1: There is a significant, positive relationship between secure attachment and hope.

H2: There is a significant, positive relationship between hope and individual task performance.

Secure attachment, trust, and performance

In this paper we adopt the Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) definition of trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another. Trust is an aspect of relationships (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007), a characteristic that it shares with secure attachment. Trust research has traditionally followed a three-pronged design to the formation and consequences of interpersonal trust: properties of the trustor (i.e., the one who is trusting), attributes of the trustee (i.e., the one that is being trusted), and the contextual determinants of the willingness to trust (Kramer, 1999). Although the attributes of the trustee (e.g., Mayer et al., 1995; Mayer & Davis, 1999) and contextual determinants (Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 2000; Perrone, Zaheer, & McEvily, 2003) have received much attention, a vacuum exists with respect to research concerning the properties of the trustor. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) concluded their meta-analytic review of the trust literature by calling for more research designed to examine the properties of the trustor. Similarly, Rotter (1971, 1980) maintained that individual predispositions to trust affect the willingness to trust regardless of the perceived trustworthiness and/or perceived risk. Secure attachment might reflect one such stable individual predisposition driving the willingness to trust another at work.

Attachment theory has a long-standing history in clinical psychology research wherein it has been found that individuals with secure styles were more willing to trust others (Mikulincer, 1998). Secure attachment has been suggested as a defining marker that regulates one's expectations of others and as a determinant of trust-based social interaction in personal relationships (Holmes, 2002; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Lopez and Brennan (2000) concluded that secure adults are biased toward more trust of others based upon their effective recall of more positive trust-based interactions from past experiences. Studies outside the workplace have indicated that secure individuals have generally been more trusting of others (*cf.*, Baldwin, Fehr, Keedian, Seidel, & Thomson, 1993; Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996; Miller & Noirot, 1999; Pietromonaco & Carnelley, 1994). In studies of romantic relationships, individuals with secure attachment styles were

less suspicious and more willing to trust their partners (Ickes, Dugosh, Simpson, & Wilson, 2003). We believe the research suggests that secure workers will also be more trusting of their supervisors.

Trust has been related to better performance as well. For example, trust in the supervisor has been linked to higher profitability, better sales, lower turnover (Davis et al., 2000), better individual performance (Mayer & Davis, 1999), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Accordingly, we suggest the following:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant, positive relationship between secure attachment and trust in the supervisor.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant, positive relationship between trust and individual task performance.

Secure attachment, burnout, and performance

We incorporated burnout in our model in order to provide a more holistic assessment of the positive constructs secure attachment, hope, and trust. We believe that a more complete evaluation of the effects of POB constructs on performance is best obtained by examining them in conjunction with at least one negative psychological state. Studies have supported the idea that people experience a range of both positive and negative responses simultaneously to any given demand at work (Simmons & Nelson, 2007).

We adopt the perspective of burnout as the affective reaction to ongoing stress, which results in the gradual depletion of individuals' intrinsic energetic resources over time, which then leads to feelings of emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and cognitive weariness (Shirom, 1989). As the end result of a process in which motivated and committed individuals lose their spirit, burnout is a state that follows prolonged exposure to chronic stress. The regulatory nature of secure attachment is thought to guide responses to stress and shape the way an individual manages distress (Mikulincer, 1997). Secure individuals use constructive coping mechanisms because of their positive expectations, belief in others and confidence in their own abilities (Mikulincer, 1997).

Secure individuals have been found to explore and tolerate distress-related cues (Mikulincer, 1997) and acknowledge negative emotions without being overwhelmed by them (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995). Furthermore, there is growing empirical support for the effects of secure attachment on health and well-being (Priel & Shamai, 1995; Simmons et al., 2003). Secure attachment has been related to better health in terms of less distress and fewer adverse psychological and physical symptoms (Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Quick et al., 1996b).

Although the negative relationship between burnout and individual performance is widely accepted, the empirical support is limited. In a longitudinal study of 100 human resource staff members, Wright and Bonett (1997) found a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and subsequent work performance, but no link between other aspects of burnout and performance. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H5: There is a significant, negative relationship between secure attachment and burnout.

H6: There is a significant, negative relationship between burnout and performance.

We offer one additional hypothesis in order to satisfy the rigor of the approach to modeling relationships between constructs employed in this study. Kelloway (1995) advised researchers using

structural equation models to theoretically develop every relationship in the model, including those thought to be zero. This satisfies James, Muliak, and Brett's (1982) condition number 10, which requires that unestimated parameters are confirmed to be zero. The one possible remaining relationship in this model would be a direct relationship between secure attachment and performance. Our review of the attachment literature does not provide sufficient support to conclude that we should expect a direct relationship between the trait secure attachment and individual task performance. We argue, instead, that the regulatory nature associated with secure attachment will affect an individual's psychological states which will in turn affect performance. We hypothesize the following:

H7: There is no direct relationship between secure attachment and performance.

Methods

Sample and data collection procedures

Surveys were distributed to 381 employees of an assisted living center in an urban area of a Midwestern state. The package that employees received contained two surveys: one for them to complete and one for them to give to their supervisor (a 10-item survey assessing the employee's performance) if they chose to participate in the study. All surveys were both distributed and collected in the workplace of the employees and their supervisors, and the employer authorized time for both employees and supervisors to complete the surveys. Employees and supervisors were asked to drop off their surveys in designated collection boxes. A total of 203 usable employee surveys were returned for a response rate of 53 per cent. We received a total of 161 supervisor surveys that we were able to match to our 203 employee respondents. The respondents were 83 per cent female; they worked in a wide variety of occupations, the most numerous of which were certified nursing assistants (30 per cent), dietary (17 per cent), environmental services (9 per cent), administrative (8 per cent), registered nurse (7 per cent), and licensed practical nurse (6 per cent). The tenure of respondents was as follows: less than 1 year (19 per cent), 1–2 years (20 per cent), 3–5 years (24 per cent), 6–10 years (16 per cent), 11–15 years (8 per cent), more than 15 years (13 per cent).

Measures

Secure attachment was measured with a 10-item subscale from the Self-Reliance Inventory (SRI), which was designed to measure attachment style in working adults (Joplin, Nelson, & Quick, 1999; Simmons, Nelson, & Quick, 2003). Sample items included "Most people can be counted on to do what they say they will do," "On some tasks, I can work effectively without other people," and "I can work alone and in a solitary fashion." The scale demonstrates face validity by reflecting a fundamental proposition of attachment theory: securely attached individuals are comfortable seeking out others as required and can also function effectively alone. Response format was a seven-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The SRI has demonstrated predictive validity by distinguishing between healthy military trainees (who had secure styles) and those who were clinically diagnosed as having behavioral problems (those who had unhealthy styles) (Quick et al., 1996). Internal consistency reliabilities for the SRI have consistently exceeded .70 (Joplin et al., 1999;

Quick et al., 1996; Simmons et al., 2003). Moreover, the Joplin et al. (1999) study demonstrated that the SRI displayed a clean factor structure consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of attachment theory and evidence for construct validity.

In our study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the SRI showed that the measurement model fit the data well (CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06). All standardized factor loadings of the secure attachment indicators were acceptable (0.40–0.75). Furthermore, the composite reliability estimate for secure attachment from CFA was .82 and Cronbach's α was .81.

Hope was measured with the six-item state hope scale, which had been used to provide a snapshot of a person's goal directed thinking and engagement (Snyder, et al. 1996). While not developed specifically for occupational psychology, the scale can be used as a situational assessment of goal-related activities involving academics, sports, relationships, and work. Representative items include, "At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals," and "There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now". Items were measured on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (definitely false) to 7 (definitely true).

Trust in the supervisor was measured using the Mayer and Davis' (1999) four-item trust scale (two items are reverse scored). The scale was adjusted to reflect the relationship with the supervisor in a health care setting. The item "I would be comfortable giving top management (supervisor) a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor their actions," was changed to read "I am comfortable discussing with my supervisor concerns I have about my ability to do my job". In an attempt to improve the scale's original reliability of .60 in the Mayer and Davis (1999) study, Nelson and Simmons (2004) added two items which improved the reliability to .79 (Nelson & Simmons, 2004). These items were intended to reflect the willingness to be vulnerable when discussing the working relationship and suggestions for workplace improvements with the supervisor, which would be reflective of a degree of trust between the employee and the supervisor. The items added to the scale were "I am comfortable discussing with my supervisor my ideas for improvement in the workplace," and "I am comfortable discussing with my supervisor concerns I have about our working relationship." The reliability of this six-item scale was .80 in our study. Other researchers have also added items to the original four-item scale to improve its reliability, with the highest reported reliability estimate being .84 from a six-item revision (Schoorman et al., 2007). All items were rated on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Burnout was measured with the 12-item Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM). This measure taps the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and cognitive weariness. Representative items include "I feel fed up," "I feel physically drained," and "I am too tired to think clearly." Items were measured on a seven-point scale ranging from 1(almost never) to 7 (almost always), and the 12 items were combined into one composite measure.

Performance (Heneman, Greenberger, & Strasser, 1988) was rated by the supervisor of each participating employee on the following dimensions: quality, quantity, following of procedures, willingness to help co-workers, productivity under pressure, acceptance of responsibility, adaptation to different situations, dependability, innovation, and overall performance. The items were rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 6 (excellent).

Results

The descriptive statistics and reliabilities of study measures are reported in Table 1. All reliabilities met or exceeded .80. All correlations were in the expected direction, and the strongest correlations were

Table 1. Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations

	Means (SDs)	Secure attachment	Trust in supervisor	Hope	Burnout	Performance
Secure attachment	5.79 (.67)	0.81				
Trust	4.98 (1.25)	0.25**	0.80			
Hope	5.10 (1.08)	0.52**	0.27**	0.86		
Burnout	2.76 (1.02)	-0.48**	-0.36**	-0.47**	0.91	
Performance	4.91 (.79)	0.05	0.18*	0.07	-0.03	0.95

$N=213$ for all variables except performance, where $N=161$, reliabilities indicated along the diagonal.

*significant at the $p < .05$ level.

**significant at $p < .01$.

All items were measured with seven-point scales with the exception of performance which was measured with a six-point scale.

between secure attachment and hope ($r=0.52$; $p < 0.01$) and secure attachment and burnout ($r = -0.48$; $p < 0.01$). Given that each supervisor could have rated more than employee, we were concerned with non-independence of data which could potentially violate the assumption of heteroscedasticity and uncorrelated error terms; however, our tests for homoscedasticity and correlated error terms indicated that this was not a concern in this data.¹ Next, we conducted a power analysis of this model following procedures outlined by MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996). Using an $\alpha = 0.05$, our model has a power of 1.00 for both tests of close fit (RMSEA $\varepsilon_0 = 0.05$ and $\varepsilon_a = 0.08$), and exact fit (RMSEA $\varepsilon_0 = 0.00$ and $\varepsilon_a = 0.05$), so although our sample size is modest it is adequate to address the simple structural relationships we have proposed. Finally, we proceeded with our primary analyses which consisted of maximum likelihood estimation in structural equation modeling (SEM) (Hu, Bentler, & Kano, 1992) using LISREL 8.80. First, a measurement model was fit to the data, and second a series of nested structural models were evaluated consistent with our hypotheses (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Measurement model

Exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring revealed that all measures were one dimensional, as was expected. There were no significant cross loadings exceeding .20. Confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the measurement model afforded a modest fit to the data (CFI = .92 and RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .08) (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Our model had a total of 44 indicators. Hair et al. (2006) suggest that more complex models with smaller sample sizes may require somewhat less strict criteria for evaluation of multiple fit indices, with CFI above .90, SRMR .08 or less, and RMSEA .07 or less indicating acceptable for models with more than 30 observed variables and a sample size greater than 250. All indicators significantly loaded on their respective latent variables, lending support for construct validity. The composite reliabilities and variances extracted for all endogenous variables are shown in Table 2. The results for each variable are higher than the generally accepted .70 cutoff for

¹The null plots all were random indicating the linear nature of study relationships. The partial regression plots exhibited a linear pattern as well. Heteroscedasticity of error terms was supported as indicated by null plots and Levene's tests. Sequence plots showed that the error terms were uncorrelated with each other as well as with the exogenous variables. Furthermore, all Durbin Watson statistics were close to 2 indicating support for uncorrelated error terms. Finally, normal distribution of error terms was ascertained through the normal probability plots of residuals which indicated a fairly linear pattern (Hair et al. 2006).

Table 2. Composite reliabilities and variances extracted in the endogenous variables

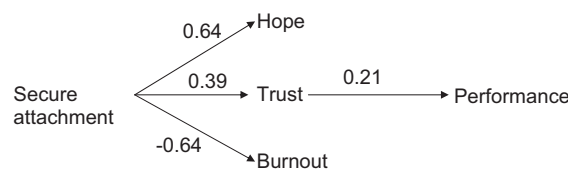
Variable	Composite reliability	Variance extracted
Trust	.82	.47
Hope	.87	.54
Burnout	.92	.53
Performance	.95	.65

composite reliability and the .50 cutoff for average variance extracted, with the exception that the variance extracted for the variable trust was .47 (Netemeyer, Johnston, & Burton, 1990).

Structural model

We next evaluated the set of relationships proposed in the hypotheses. The structural model provided modest fit to the data (CFI = .92; RMSEA = .08; 90 percent confidence interval for RMSEA = (.08; .09); $\chi^2 = 1753.85$; SRMR = .08 $\rho = 0.00$; $df = 854$) (Hu & Bentler, 1995). As we hypothesized, secure attachment had a significant positive effect on both hope ($\beta_s = .64$, $p < .01$) and trust ($\beta_s = .39$, $p < .01$), and a significant negative effect on burnout ($\beta_s = -.64$, $p < .01$). Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 positing effects of secure attachment on hope, trust, and burnout, respectively, were supported. In contrast to our hypotheses, the effect of both hope and burnout on supervisor rated task performance was not significant. Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 6 were not supported. Trust had a significant, positive effect on performance ($\beta_s = .21$, $p < .01$), thus lending support for Hypothesis 4.

Our final test satisfies James, Muliak, and Brett's (1982) condition number 10, which requires that unestimated parameters are confirmed to be zero. In this study, the only path hypothesized to be zero was between secure attachment and performance. We examined a second model in which a path directly from secure attachment to performance was estimated in addition to the other hypothesized paths in our original model. In this model, all of the significant and non-significant patterns of relationships we found previously remained the same, yet the new path from secure attachment to performance was not significant. Furthermore, while the fit statistics for the two models were nearly identical, the nested model comparison yielded a non-significant χ^2 difference ($\Delta\chi^2 = .02$, $df = 1$) favoring our original model with no direct relationship between secure attachment and performance. Our final model is shown in Figure 2.



$\chi^2 = 1754.84$; $p = 0.00$
 CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.08
 90% confidence interval for RMSEA = (0.08; 0.09)
 P value for test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05) = 0.0

Figure 2. Final model

Discussion

The main proposition of this study was that secure attachment style, a positive psychological strength, merits attention in the conversation of POB. As hypothesized, in this sample of assisted living center workers and their supervisors, we found significant, positive relationships between secure attachment and both hope and trust, and a significant negative relationship between secure attachment and burnout. We also confirmed that the direct relationship between secure attachment and task performance was, as hypothesized, virtually non-existent. The implications are that secure individuals work effectively both autonomously and with others, including their supervisor, to find ways to achieve valued goals. And their ability to tap into a well-developed social support network not only facilitates hope and trust, it also helps keep them from becoming burned out along the way.

This study provided a balanced assessment of the effect of several important states on performance. Much to our surprise, “the most unique positive organizational capacity” (Luthans, 2002a) hope was not significantly related to performance. We also provided an examination of the effect of burnout on performance, and in this study the relationship was not significant. Although we did not hypothesize a relationship between hope and burnout in our model, the correlation between these variables in our study was highly significant ($r = -0.47, p < .01$), which suggests this may be a relationship that merits further evaluation. We did, however, find a positive relationship between trust in the supervisor and supervisor-rated task performance, in keeping with past research on interpersonal trust (e.g., Mayer & Davis, 1999) which we believe is a contribution to both the POB and trust literatures. Our extension of those literatures is the affect of secure attachment style, a positive property of the trustor, on trust.

Our findings suggest that secure individuals are more likely to trust their supervisors, and this enhances their work performance. This finding can be given particular emphasis because performance was not self-reported but rated by another source (the supervisor). This follows recent developments in trust literature indicating that when employees trust their supervisors they are more focused on their tasks and do not have to “watch their backs” (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Our findings shed light on a critical issue in the attachment literature: secure attachment matters to adults because it affects their work performance via the way it enhances their relationships with their supervisors. The presence of a trusted supervisor serves as a social support mechanism in helping the secure employee overcome daily workplace hassles (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). Accordingly, trust may be the mediator through which the benefits of a secure, healthy attachment style are translated into enhanced performance.

Implications for theory and practice

Secure attachment leads to a range of work-relevant outcomes, yet the connection to other positive constructs and work performance has remained elusive. With this research, secure attachment is cast as an antecedent to hope, trust, burnout, and performance. Its main contribution to the attachment theory literature is in providing empirical support for the healthy nature of secure attachment and its relevance for hopeful, trusting, high-performing workers. There are contributions to the trust literature as well. The trust literature has suffered from a relative lack of research on the antecedents of trust at work, particularly a lack of research on characteristics of the trustor (Kramer, 1999). Secure attachment is clearly one such antecedent and merits inclusion in future studies of interpersonal trust at work.

Supervisors, as attachment figures, may lead individuals to revise their internal working models of relationships. Bowlby (1988) called for interventions that alter the individual’s internal working models, and evidence suggests that therapeutic encounters between individuals and counselors can make progress in this regard (Hardy & Barkham, 1994; Lopez, 2003). The attachment figure provides protection and

emotional security and can bring about variation in attachment orientations (LaGuardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000). Supervisors may help adults revise their internal models of work relationships by demonstrating secure behavior patterns and by being responsive to employee's needs for security and protection.

The supervisor is the focal representative of the organization in the eyes of the employee. When employees trust their supervisors, they are amenable to the context-shaping interpretive roles that supervisors play. Secure individuals work well both autonomously and with others as situationally appropriate; and it is important for the supervisor to recognize, encourage, and reward these behaviors. If the supervisor recognizes that an employee lacks secure attachment, it lets the supervisor know that his/her relationship with the employee is of critical importance and that the employee may have few other resources to draw upon for remaining productive.

Among the study's limitations is the idea that a general positive attitude among supervisors and subordinates might explain the correlations among the constructs we studied. The potential causal nature of the relationships we found can only be established through longitudinal replications and extensions. And the results should be interpreted with caution because our respondents were caregivers. While the same pattern of results might extend to other settings, generalizability will only be supported through replication, preferably in longitudinal studies with samples sizes larger than the one we were able to obtain.

One explanation for the lack of a significant relation between hope and performance may be that we are missing an important variable that may moderate the relationship between hope and performance. It may be possible that employees and supervisors were "hoping" for different things (Simmons & Nelson, 2007). Our supervisor ratings of performance captured aspects of work related to accomplishing goals established by the supervisors. Yet employees engaged in their work may be "absorbed" in the work itself, and therefore more focused on the satisfaction of mastering skills associated with the work they do.

Individuals with high performance goals may become concerned with failure and therefore may reduce effort because they obtain few intrinsic rewards from sustaining the effort required to achieve high performance. And individuals focused on mastering skills are less concerned about the implications of failure for challenging tasks, because negative as well as positive outcomes may provide useful feedback about their current task strategies and effort (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). We believe that the relationship between positive emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral responses and valued outcomes at work will be strongest when both employees and their supervisors develop relationships where they can engage each other in meaningful dialog about important, challenging, yet shared understandings about what is expected at work.

We also acknowledge some potential methodological limitations of our research. First, we had no way of testing for differences amongst survey respondents and non-respondents because all responses were anonymous. While in one sense this is a limitation of our study, it is also a suggested procedural remedy for controlling for common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Secure attachment, trust, hope, and burnout are perceptual in nature and self-reports were appropriate in this study; however, the potential for common method bias in the predictor variables must be acknowledged. Although our design incorporated the best recommendation for controlling for common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003), obtaining different sources for measurement of the predictor and criterion variables, our design could have been improved by creating a temporal separation between the measurement of predictor variables and by measuring other variables (e.g., NA, PA, optimism) that could affect either the measurement of or substantive relationships between all study variables. This would, of course, have to be balanced with the overall length of the survey in order to not have an adverse impact on response rate. We acknowledge the issue of plausible non-independence of supervisory ratings, although a preliminary heteroscedasticity test indicated that this may be an insignificant concern regarding our data. Finally, we note that the fit indices of our models, while acceptable, are not ideal.

This research frames a rich playing field for further examination of secure attachment in the interpersonal trust domain. Our research confirmed the attachment theory proposition that secure

individuals are predisposed to trust important others, specifically the supervisor. But what if the supervisor is not trustworthy, or what if the supervisor finds the employee less than trustworthy (Mayer et al., 1995; Mayer & Davis, 1999)? A future research avenue might be to examine the role of trustworthiness in the relationship between secure attachment and trust in the supervisor. Schoorman et al. (2007) suggest that some of the most pressing issues in the study of trust might be what happens when trust is violated. How does the securely attached individual respond to a violation of trust, and how does this response affect their hope, burnout, and performance? Another interesting avenue concerns the role of leadership, especially transformational leadership, in potentially shaping the attachment orientation of the employee over a period of time (Popper et al., 2000). And along similar lines of inquiry, how might the attachment orientation of the supervisor, in addition to other personality variables of both parties (e.g., optimism and locus of control), affect trust and ultimately performance within this very important relationship?

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