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A Conceptual Analysis of how Workplace Environments Develop Secure Organization-based Self-esteem and Prevent Burnout

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Abstract

This conceptual paper introduces the construction of Secure Organization-Based Self-Esteem (SOBSE) to explain how non-contingent workplace support can foster resilient self-worth and mitigate burnout. While Organization-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE) has long been associated with higher job satisfaction and performance, existing research seldom distinguishes between secure and fragile forms of esteem. Drawing on self-esteem theory and attachment perspectives, this paper argues that not all OBSE is equally beneficial. Fragile OBSE—grounded in performance contingencies and external validation—may predispose employees to overwork, anxiety, and eventual burnout. In contrast, SOBSE represents a non-contingent, internalized sense of worth that remains intact despite failure or criticism. Secure self-esteem, as established in developmental psychology, is typically formed through parents' unconditional love and acceptance in childhood, fostering an enduring sense of self-worth that is independent of external evaluation. Extending this logic to organizational contexts, the paper theorizes that unconditional managerial regard and psychological safety serve as antecedents of SOBSE, while its outcomes include reduced risk of burnout. By distinguishing between fragile and secure forms of OBSE, this work advances understanding of how organizational environments influence self-esteem and employee well-being. The paper concludes with theoretical implications for self-esteem research and practical recommendations for creating psychologically secure workplaces.

Keywords: Psychological Safety; Well-Being; Mental Health; Unconditional Regard; Managerial Support