

Impact of Attachment Style on Managers' Ability to Cope with Demands of the Role

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Introduction. Attachment theory deals with deeply embedded working models that shape attitudes and guide behaviours of individuals in interpersonal relationships. Every situation in life individual interprets and evaluates according to these working models as they guide behaviour, cognition and feelings. Because of the demands that work and work contexts place on workers, including performance expectations and evaluations, interpersonal relationships, ambiguous and increasing role demands, organizational politics, and power exercises attachment theory is considered as relevant for understanding people behaviour at work. Managers in organizations are attachment figures or potential sources of support and comfort in organizational setting. In the times of crisis, the tendency to relate to the leader through processes of transference and projection, are intensified and the tendency to merge with the leader and lose self-autonomy is likely to occur. This dependency on leader for protection and guidance gives the power to leader whether to help the followers to regain confidence and guide towards self-efficacy and autonomy or in detrimental manner influence negatively follower's self-esteem and as a consequence intensify this regressive dependency.

Aim, Materials and Methods. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore and understand how attachment security and underlying working models affect ability of managers to deal with the ambiguity of the role to serve as a "secure base" and "safe haven" for the employees and seek proximity in stressful situations.

The study focused on individual experiences of managers and their reactions to challenging working situations, their thinking process, emotions, feelings, actions, interpersonal relationships and coping strategies. Research consisted of Attachment Style Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. 10 participants were selected according to the following criteria: 1) the minimum of two years of managerial experience in current position; 2) the minimum of two years within particular organization; 3) manager has at least three subordinates; 4) the age is above 28.

Results. The qualitative study showed that attachment styles mediate managers' ability to fulfill successfully the role of "secure base" and "safe haven" for their employees. Managers classified as secure had higher levels of self-esteem, they were trusting and supporting and they generally felt more balanced and are more able to support "secure base" and "safe haven" needs of their employees. Low levels of anxiety and avoidance are related with low dependence from attachment figure and opinions of others, therefore higher autonomy and independence. Due to the lack of dependence, positive internalized view of self, ability to be themselves and express their opinion supported by arguments ensures that they less frequently enter distressful situations.

Conclusions. Globalisation, rapid technological development and lifestyle changes demand from organizations high flexibility and receptiveness for constant change and development. Organizations are complex social systems and good interpersonal relationships play important role. Implications of this and other researches in this field can help to understand and develop effective communication within the organization in order to work more effectively.

