

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS AND GOAL-BASED MANAGEMENT: A MODEL OF SECURITY-ACTUALIZATION OF INSECURITY MISMATCH IN EMPLOYEES WITH *JOB INSECURITY*

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Abstract

Goal-based management, from Management by Objectives (MBO) to Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), rests on a motivational assumption rooted in a managerial reading of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: employees will be tied to their jobs when given autonomy and challenging goals. McGregor (1960) makes this assumption explicit through Theory Y, with the view that the physiological and safety needs of workers are relatively met. This conceptual article examines the conditions when these premises do not apply, namely in employees who experience job insecurity. Through a theoretical synthesis of the literature on hierarchy of needs, goal setting, job insecurity, Conservation of Resources Theory, and work attachment, this article proposes the construct of Security-Actualization Misfit as a specific form of needs-supplies misfit, i.e. the misalignment between the needs that employees are prioritizing (security) and the needs served by goal-based management practices (self-actualization). The proposed model is a moderated mediation with five propositions: job insecurity increases nonconformity, especially in high-intensity goal-based practices; nonconformity decreases work attachment; its indirect effect is conditional on the intensity of the practice; job insecurity can in parallel maintain target achievement through motivation to maintain work; and personal resources attenuates the impact of nonconformity. This article also proposes construct measurement through two separate components analyzed by polynomial regression. The contribution is theoretical and underpins empirical testing, particularly in organizations that hire contract employees under a target-based performance system.

Keywords: *Hierarchy Of Needs, Job Insecurity, Work Attachment, Purpose-Based Management, Needs-Supplies Fit*

1. INTRODUCTION

Goal-based management is one of the most enduring management practices. Drucker (1954), in *The Practice of Management*, proposed *Management by Objectives and Self-Control* (MBO), which is the setting of shared goals between superiors and subordinates, flexibility for employees to determine how to achieve them, and results-based evaluation. Grove (1983) later developed it at Intel into *Objectives and Key Results* (OKRs) by adding quantitative measures to each goal, and Doerr (2018) introduced the framework to the founders of Google in 1999. The empirical foundation is strong: a review of 35 years of

research shows that specific and challenging goals result in higher performance than vague goals, with effects that depend on a number of moderators (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Behind this practice lies a motivational assumption about human work. McGregor (1960), in *The Human Side of Enterprise*, bases Theory Y on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and argues that since the physiological needs and relative safety of workers have been met, motivation needs to be sought at a high level of need through the integration of purpose and self-control. The historical study of Bridgman, Cummings, and Ballard (2019) shows that it was through McGregor that Maslow's theory entered the study of management, and that the rigid pyramid shape was popularized by management textbooks, not by Maslow himself. Thus, the relationship between the hierarchy of needs and goal-based management is not new. What has not been extensively examined is the boundary condition implied in the relationship: the premise that the safety needs of employees have been met.

This premise is increasingly difficult to maintain in the contemporary job market. *Job insecurity*, which is a threat to the continuity and stability of work as experienced today, has received increasing attention along with technological, economic, and political changes (Shoss, 2017). At the same time, *work engagement* remains low globally; Gallup (2023) reports that only 23% of workers in the world are classified as job-related. In Indonesia, *job insecurity* is documented in contract employees in the banking sector (Lisa, Marpaung, & Manurung, 2020), in honorary teachers (Permatasari & Hadi, 2018), and in contract employees in industrial estates (Stella, Mora, & Ibad, 2024). However, these studies do not examine how the performance management system implemented by organizations shapes the impact of *job insecurity* on job attachment.

This gap appears from two sides of the literature. Goal-setting theories identify moderators such as commitment to goals, feedback, and task complexity (Locke & Latham, 2002), but do not model job security as a condition of their effectiveness limits. In contrast, the *job insecurity* literature shows consistent negative impacts on work attitudes and well-being (Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002) as well as on job attachment (Pires, 2025), with an inconsistent relationship to performance (Muñoz Medina, López Bohle, van Beurden, Chambel, & Ugarte, 2023), but has not explained the role of goal-based management practices in shaping these impacts. The findings of Tay and Diener (2011) that various needs contribute to well-being relatively independently also shift the relevant question: it is no longer the order in which needs are met, but which needs are being prioritized by employees and which needs are served by management practices applied to them.

This article aims to develop a conceptual model that explains why goal-based management practices can fail to generate job attachment in employees who experience *job insecurity*. The contribution is threefold. First, this article proposes the construct of Security-Actualization Misfit as a specific form of *needs-supplies misfit* that can be distinguished from *job insecurity*, violation of psychological contracts, and person-environment suitability in general, complete with its proposed measurements. Second, this article formulates the

boundary conditions for the motivational premise of goal-based management in the form of a moderated mediation model. Third, this article includes a counter-mechanism that explains why target achievement can be maintained when work attachment decreases.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Its Revisions

Maslow (1943), in *A Theory of Human Motivation*, proposed that human needs are organized into five groups, namely physiological, security, social, reward, and self-actualization, with the principle of prepotence: more basic needs tend to dominate behavior as long as they are not met. Maslow himself asserted that the fulfillment of needs is relative and partial, not an absolute condition that must be fully met before the next need arises. The interpretation of hierarchy as a rigid ladder stems more from the way this theory is taught in management studies; Bridgman et al. (2019) note that this theory has received little support in empirical studies, while its pyramid representation is formed by textbooks.

A global-scale test by Tay and Diener (2011) of Gallup World Poll data from 123 countries showed that the fulfillment of needs was consistently associated with subjective well-being across cultures, but the order was not rigid: individuals were able to report good social relationships and self-actualization even though their basic needs and security had not yet been fully met. The same study found that different types of needs were associated with different types of well-being; the fulfillment of basic needs was most strongly associated with life evaluations, while social needs and rewards were most strongly associated with positive feelings. The implication for this article is that the argument cannot rest on the distance between levels in the hierarchy. More tenable is the logic of suitability: which needs are currently prominent for a person, and whether his or her work environment serves those needs.

From Theory Y to MBO and OKR: The Motivational Premise of Purpose-Based Management

McGregor (1960) distinguishes two sets of managerial assumptions about human work. Theory X relies on direction and control, while Theory Y, which is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, assumes that employees can direct themselves towards the goals to which they are committed. McGregor's argument for Theory Y rests on the view that the physiological and safety needs of workers at the time have been relatively met, so that the rewards that target these needs lose their motivation and management needs to target high-level needs through the integration of individual goals with organizational goals. The MBO formulated by Drucker (1954) is one of the operational manifestations of this logic: shared goal setting, self-control, and results-based evaluation.

This article does not claim that Drucker neglects the well-being of workers. What is examined is that MBO, as later implemented and developed into OKRs (Grove, 1983; Doerr,

2018), treats goal-setting and self-control as generally accepted motivational mechanisms. This kind of system essentially serves the needs of growth and self-actualization: autonomy in determining how to work, stretch *goals*, and opportunities to demonstrate achievement. The premise that employee safety needs have been met, which is explicit in McGregor, becomes implicit in his contemporary practice.

Goal Setting: Evidence and Its Limits

Locke and Latham (2002) summarize 35 years of research showing that specific and challenging goals improve performance through attention direction, effort mobilization, perseverance, and strategy development, with effects moderated by commitment to goals, feedback, and task complexity, as well as influenced by self-efficacy. However, Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, and Bazerman (2009) argue that the benefits of goal setting have been exaggerated and the side effects are ignored, including a narrowed focus on what is measured, increased unethical behavior, stunted learning, and decreased intrinsic motivation. They suggest that goal setting be treated like a hard drug that requires careful dosing and supervision.

The contemporary motivational literature makes it clear when autonomy and purpose work as resources. Deci, Olafsen, and Ryan (2017) show that the fulfillment of basic psychological needs in the workplace, including autonomy, promotes autonomous motivation, high-quality performance, and well-being. In contrast, autonomy can also serve as a demand: Velati et al. (2026), in a correlational study of 747 hybrid employees in Italy, found that high intensity of remote work, which demands independent management of work boundaries, is associated with higher affective rumination in employees with low general self-efficacy. *Job Demands-Resources Theory* in its latest developments (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2023) explains this pattern: job demands generate attachment or burnout depending on the available job resources and personal resources.

Job Insecurity, Resources, and Work Attachment

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) conceptualize *job insecurity* as the perceived powerlessness to maintain the desired continuity of work in a threatened situation. Shoss (2017) defines it as a threat to the continuity and stability of work as experienced today, and identifies four mechanisms that link it to its consequences: stress, social exchange, *job preservation motivation*, and proactive coping. Shoss emphasizes the tension between these responses: some employees withdrew, while others increased their efforts to maintain their positions.

This tension is reflected in empirical evidence. A meta-analysis by Sverke et al. (2002) found that *job insecurity* is detrimental to work attitudes, attitudes towards the organization, and health, but its impact on behavioral relationships with organizations occurs only to a certain extent. A systematic review of Muñoz Medina et al. (2023) found that the

relationship between *job insecurity* and performance was inconsistent between studies and dependent on mediators and boundary conditions. For work attachment, the evidence is more consistent: Pires (2025), using data from 938 workers from the European Working Conditions Survey with the *framework of Conservation of Resources Theory*, found that *job insecurity* negatively impacts psychological well-being and work attachment, with self-efficacy in the workplace acting as a buffer.

Conservation of Resources Theory explains the basic mechanism: individuals seek to acquire, maintain, and protect the resources they value, and the threat of loss of resources has a stronger impact than equivalent acquisition (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). Work is a central resource that underpins other resources, so the threat to it encourages employees to allocate energy to protection efforts.

Work attachment in this article is defined as a positive, satisfying, and work-related state of mind, characterized by *vigor*, *dedication*, and *absorption* (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Kahn (1990), who laid the foundation for this concept, identified three psychological conditions that allow a person to devote himself or herself to a work role, namely meaningfulness, psychological security, and psychological availability. The last two conditions are directly relevant to this article: psychological security has to do with the belief of being able to devote oneself without fear of negative consequences to status or career, while psychological availability has to do with a sense of having the physical, emotional, and psychological resources to invest in roles.

Indonesia's evidence shows a pattern that is consistent with the non-permanent workforce. Lisa et al. (2020), in a study of 100 contract employees of a bank in Medan, found a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.858$) between *job insecurity* and psychological well-being. Permatasari and Hadi (2018) found a significant relationship between *job insecurity* and low job attachment in honorary teachers of public high schools in Surabaya, and Stella et al. (2024) found that *job insecurity* had a negative effect on job attachment in 330 contract employees in Karawang. It should be emphasized that none of the studies examined the performance management systems implemented by organizations, so this evidence supports the relationship between *job insecurity* and work attachment, rather than the role of moderation of goal-based management practices that this article proposes.

Conceptual Gaps

Table 1 summarizes the focuses, contributions, and unexplained points of each literature group reviewed.

Table 1. Focus, Contributions, and Gaps of the Literature Reviewed

Literature groups	Focus	Kontribusi	What's not explained
Maslow (1943); Tay & Diener (2011); Bridgman et al. (2019)	Structure of human needs	Needs are met partially and relatively independently; different needs are related to different welfare	Which needs are served by the management practice and the consequences if they are not in accordance with the employee's prioritized needs
McGregor (1960); Drucker (1954); Grove (1983); Doerr (2018)	The motivational premise of goal-based management	Autonomy, integration of goals, and self-control motivate when relatively low-level needs are met	Conditions when security needs are not met
Locke & Latham (2002); Ordóñez et al. (2009)	Effectiveness and side effects of goal setting	Specific and challenging goals improve performance with specific moderators; overuse causes side effects	Job security as a condition for the limit of effectiveness
Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt (1984); Shoss (2017); Sverke et al. (2002); Pires (2025)	Consequences of <i>job insecurity</i>	Lowers work attitudes, health, and attachments; the mechanisms can contradict each other	The role of goal-based practice in shaping these consequences
Lisa et al. (2020); Permatasari & Hadi (2018); Stella et al. (2024)	<i>Job insecurity</i> in non-permanent workers in Indonesia	<i>Job insecurity</i> is related to lower well-being and attachment	Its interaction with a target-based performance system

Gap	Connecting mechanism	The literature explains the premises, evidence, and consequences separately	There is no construct and model that explains how the mismatch between the needs prioritized by employees and the needs served by purpose-based practices forms work attachment to <i>job insecurity conditions</i>
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Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

The last line of Table 1 summarizes the gaps that this article fills: the existing literature describes the motivational premises, evidence of effectiveness, and consequences of *job insecurity* separately, but does not provide constructs and models linking the three to conditions when employee security needs are not met.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses a *theoretical synthesis* design, one of the four conceptual article templates identified by Jaakkola (2020), which integrates several theoretical frameworks to explain a phenomenon more completely. The phenomenon described is the impact of *job insecurity* on work attachment in organizations that implement goal-based management, while the integrated frameworks are hierarchy of needs, goal setting theory, *Conservation of Resources Theory*, and *person-environment fit*.

The literature search was conducted through academic search engines as well as official publisher pages and repositories, with three keyword groups: (1) hierarchy of needs and goal-based management (Maslow, hierarchy of needs, Theory Y, *management by objectives*, OKR, goal setting); (2) *job insecurity* and work attachment (*job insecurity*, *work engagement*, meta-analysis, systematic review); and (3) the Indonesian context (*job insecurity*, work attachment, contract employees). Foundational works are selected without age restrictions based on their status as the original source of a theory, definition, or measurement method. Empirical evidence is prioritized from 2016 to 2026 publications, with priority on meta-analysis and systematic review. Each source is verified against the publisher's website or official repository, and the cited findings are checked against their abstract or full text.

The analysis is conducted in three stages: identifying the premises implicit in purpose-based management, examining the evidence that tests or limiting those premises, and then deriving constructs and propositions describing the mechanisms by which the premises are not met. As a conceptual article, this search is not intended to produce a

complete body of literature as a systematic review, and the resulting propositions have not been empirically tested.

4. RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

Conceptualizing Security Incompatibilities-Actualization

Security-Actualization Mismatch is defined as the degree of misalignment between the needs that an employee is prioritizing and the needs served by the goal-based management practices applied to him, at a commensurate dimension, namely security orientation versus self-actualization. This construct consists of two components that are measured separately. The personal component is needs priority, i.e. the extent to which employees are currently prioritizing security needs, such as continuity of work and predictable income, relative to growth and actualization needs. The environmental component is the service orientation of practice, i.e. the extent to which goal-based management practices offer and demand actualization investments, such as goal-setting autonomy, challenging targets, and self-accountability, relative to the provision of security certainty, such as clarity of contract renewal criteria and reward stability. Non-conformity occurs when the personal component leans toward security while the environmental component leans toward actualization.

By this definition, the proposed construct is a specific form of *needs-supplies misfit* in the *person-environment fit* tradition, which rests on the premise that individuals and environments together predict behavior better than each other separately (van Vianen, 2018). This article does not claim to find a new family of constructs; its contribution is to specify the dimensions of conformity (security versus actualization) and its source of supply (goal-based management practices). Table 2 explains the differences with adjacent constructs.

Table 2. Differences in Security-Actualization Incompatibility with Adjacent Constructs

Construct	Core definition	Difference with Security-Actualization Nonconformities
<i>Job insecurity</i> (Shoss, 2017)	Threats to the continuity and stability of work experienced today	It is an antecedent of a personal component, not a construct itself. <i>Job insecurity</i> can exist without inconsistency if management practices do not emphasize actualization, and inconsistencies can arise from other sources of security priorities

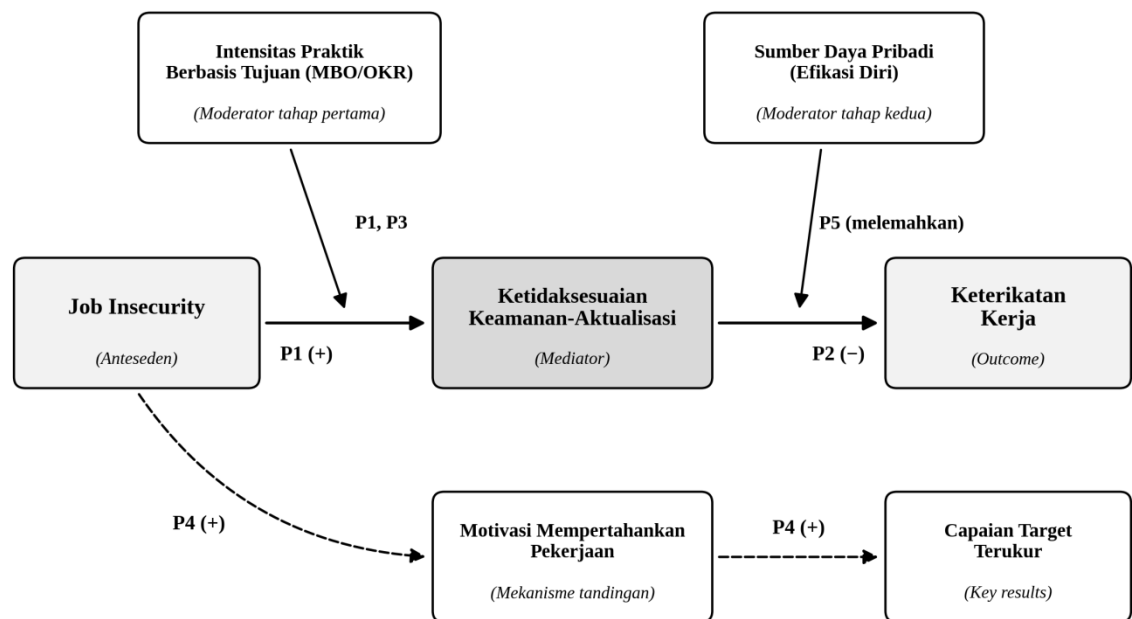
Breach of psychological contract (Rousseau et al., 2018)	Perception that the organization is failing to meet the mutual obligations that employees trust	It does not require a breach of promise; a non-conformity may occur in an employee who has accepted his contract status from the outset
<i>Needs-supplies fit</i> in general (van Vianen, 2018)	Compatibility between individual needs and environmental supply	This construct specifies the dimensions of conformity (security versus actualization) and supply source (purpose-based practice)
Work attachment (Schaufeli et al., 2002)	Positive states characterized by <i>vigor</i> , <i>dedication</i> , and <i>absorption</i>	It is an <i>outcome</i> in the model, not part of the construct

Source: *Proceed Data*, 2026

Because it consists of two components, this construct is not recommended to be measured by difference scores. Edwards and Parry (1993) point out that difference scores contain methodological problems and propose polynomial regressions that use individual and environmental measures separately, with interpretation through *the response surface methodology*. Future testing may develop two commensurate scales: a scale of needs priority at the individual level, and a scale of practice service orientation that can be measured through employee perceptions as well as aggregation at the work unit level to reduce the bias of the same source. Both scales need to go through development and validation procedures before the model is tested.

Conceptual Models and Propositions

The proposed model is in the form of moderated mediation, as illustrated in Figure 1. *Job insecurity* acts as an antecedence, Security Non-Actualization as a mediator, and work attachment as an *outcome*. The intensity of goal-based management practices moderates the first stage, personal resources moderate the second stage, and motivation to maintain work is modeled as a counter-mechanism that can maintain measurable target achievement.



P3: efek tidak langsung job insecurity terhadap keterikatan kerja melalui ketidaksesuaian bersyarat pada intensitas praktik berbasis tujuan

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Security-Actualization Nonconformity

Source: Proceed Data, 2026

Proposition 1 (P1). Job insecurity is positively related to Security-Actualization Mismatch, and this relationship is stronger in work units with high intensity of goal-based management practices.

This proposition rests on the logic of resources, not on the distance between levels in the hierarchy of needs. According to *the Conservation of Resources Theory*, the threat of loss of a central resource encourages individuals to prioritize the protection of that resource (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Because work underpins other resources, *job insecurity* increases the priority of employees over security needs, i.e. the personal component of the construct. The findings of Tay and Diener (2011) that the need to contribute relatively independently supports this view: the prominence of security needs does not require the loss of other needs, but changes which needs are prioritized. The mismatch is only formed when the environmental component is inclined towards actualization, so this relationship is predicted to be stronger in practices that emphasize autonomy, challenging targets, and self-accountability.

Proposition 2 (P2). Security-Actualization Nonconformity is negatively related to work attachment.

Kahn (1990) states that a person devotes himself or herself to a work role when he feels psychologically secure and has the availability of resources to invest in the role. When the performance system demands self-investment for growth while an employee's resources

are allocated to secure his or her continuity of work, both conditions are eroded. In the *framework of Job Demands-Resources*, challenging demands of goals without commensurate resources tend to result in burnout rather than attachment (Bakker et al., 2023). The benefits of autonomy over autonomous motivation also depend on the fulfillment of basic psychological needs (Deci et al., 2017), and excessive goal setting can lower intrinsic motivation (Ordóñez et al., 2009).

Proposition 3 (P3). *Indirect effect of job insecurity on work attachment through Security Nonconformity-conditional actualization on the intensity of goal-based management practices: the effect is stronger at high intensity and weaker at low intensity.*

This proposition combines P1 and P2 into the first stage of moderated mediation. The direct relationship *between job insecurity* and work attachment has been supported by evidence, both in European workers (Pires, 2025) and in contract employees in Indonesia (Stella et al., 2024). The contribution of this proposition is to explain why the magnitude of these relationships can differ between organizations: some of the impact is channeled through mismatches that only form when management practices target the need for actualization.

Proposition 4 (P4). *In a goal-based management system, job insecurity is positively related to efforts to achieve measurable targets through motivation to maintain a job, so that target achievement and work attachment can move in the opposite direction.*

This proposition answers a counter-mechanism identified by Shoss (2017): some employees who feel insecure increase their efforts to maintain their positions. The finding that the relationship *between job insecurity* and performance is inconsistent (Muñoz Medina et al., 2023) and that its impact on behavior only occurs to a certain extent (Sverke et al., 2002), while its impact on attachment is more consistent (Pires, 2025), is consistent with this possibility. OKR systems provide explicit and measurable targets, and goal setting tends to narrow the focus on what is measured (Ordóñez et al., 2009). As a result, an insecure employee can focus efforts on *visible key results* while attracting his or her psychological investment, a pattern that can be called non-attachment compliance.

Proposition 5 (P5). *Personal resources, particularly self-efficacy, weaken the negative relationship between Security-Actualization Mismatch and work attachment.*

Pires (2025) found that self-efficacy in the workplace buffers the impact of *job insecurity* on well-being and job attachment, and Velati et al. (2026) found that job demands requiring self-management are associated with higher rumination especially in employees with low self-efficacy. Goal-setting theory also places self-efficacy as an important factor in goal effectiveness (Locke & Latham, 2002), and *Job Demands-Resources Theory* includes personal resources as a determinant of whether demands lead to attachment (Bakker et al.,

2023). The role of job resources, such as employer support, is left as an open question because Pires (2025) did not find its moderation effect on work attachment.

Theoretical Implications

This article provides three theoretical implications. First, this article makes explicit the boundary conditions implied in the motivational premise of goal-based management since McGregor (1960): the effectiveness of autonomy and challenging goals depends on the fit between the needs that the practice serves and the needs that the employee is prioritizing. Second, by reframing the hierarchy of needs in the *needs-supplies fit logic*, this article offers a way of using Maslow that is consistent with his empirical revisions (Tay & Diener, 2011) and his historical critiques (Bridgman et al., 2019), without relying on rigid interpretations of the ladder. Third, by including counter-mechanisms as propositions, this model offers an explanation for the inconsistent findings about the relationship *between job insecurity* and performance: target achievement and job attachment can be influenced through different pathways.

Practical Implications

For organizations that implement a target-based performance system while hiring a large number of contract employees, this model implies several things that need to be tested further. Key *results* cannot be used as the only indicator of work engagement, as P4 predicts that the two may move in opposite directions; work engagement needs to be measured separately. Organizations can also include information that reduces security uncertainty, such as transparent contract renewal criteria, before or in conjunction with challenging target setting, as well as align the intensity of goal-based practices with the employee's employment status. Employee self-efficacy development is an additional pathway according to P5. These implications are propositional and are not intended as a recommendation to abandon goal-based management.

Limitations and Research Agenda

This article has several limitations. First, the proposed proposition has not been tested, and second, the scale needed to measure constructs has not been developed. Second, the Indonesian evidence referred to supports the relationship between *job insecurity* and job attachment, but does not examine the organizational performance management system, so the role of goal-based practice moderation is still a proposal. Third, the direction of the relationship can be reciprocal; low attachment can also affect employees' perception of their job security, so a longitudinal design is required. Fourth, the literature search is purposive according to the design of the theoretical synthesis, so it does not guarantee complete literature coverage. Fifth, most of the integrated frameworks developed in the Western context, and their relevance to Indonesia's work culture needs to be tested.

The next research is directed to: (1) develop and validate the needs priority scale and the practice service orientation scale; (2) test the model multilevelly, with the intensity of goal-based practices at the work unit level and *job insecurity* and attachment at the individual level; (3) test P4 by comparing target achievement data from the organizational system with the size of work engagement; and (4) conduct testing on Indonesian organizations that employ contract employees under the target-based performance system.

5. CONCLUSION

This article examines the premise implicit in goal-based management since McGregor (1960), namely that employee safety needs have been met so that motivation can be driven through autonomy and challenging goals. When this premise does not apply, as in employees experiencing *job insecurity*, practices that serve the needs of actualization are confronted by employees who are prioritizing security. The Security-Actualization Misfit construct is proposed as a specific form of *needs-supplies misfit* that captures the condition, with two components that can be measured separately.

The proposed moderated mediation model explains why the impact of *job insecurity* on work attachment can be stronger in organizations with high-intensity goal-based practices, why self-efficacy can buffer these impacts, and why target achievement can be maintained when attachment declines. The contributions of this article are theoretical and propositional; the development of empirical instruments and testing, particularly on the contract workforce in Indonesia, is an essential next step.

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