

# **Alienation From Work: A Comparative Study Among Business Managers**

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## **Abstract**

**In the present study attempt has been made to explore the effect of the nature of the job and sector of the organization in experiencing alienation causing factors like powerlessness,meaninglessness, normlessness, instrumental work orientation and self-evaluative involvement.To study the effect of the nature of the job on alienation causing factors data was collected from 100 service oriented and 100 production oriented managers.In order to study the effect of the sector of the organizations data was collected from 100 private and 100 public sector managers. ‘t’ test was used to analyse the data and a comparative account has been presented .**

## **Introduction**

The concept of alienation which has it’s root in sociological tradition has come in sharp focus in recent times. Alienation to a common man means a state or process in which something is lost by or estranged from the person who originally possessed it.The concept of alienation may be traced back to the early writings of Karl Marx who had deliberated upon the human phenomenon of alienation, originally from the logic of production relation.Social and political philosophers of 19<sup>th</sup> century were deeply concerned with certain massive changes in the human condition, which had been brought about by technical-social and political revolutions. To these philosophers , social and technical change has both negative and positive influences. One of the major negative influences is that of “alienation”. Seeman (1959), did a significant amount of pioneering work in this area.He has identified five major variants of alienation. The first of these refers to the sense of powerlessness.Second is meaninglessness.The third variant of the term refers to a condition of normlessness.Fourth type of alienation refers to social isolation. The fifth and final variant of alienation is that in which a person experiences himself as an alien i.e. self-estrangement.According to Kanungo(1979),alienation can conceived of

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as a generalized cognition (or belief) of the state of psychological separation from work to the extent that the work is perceived to lack the exciting prospect of satisfying one's salient needs and expectations. According to Stokols(1975), an individual's alienation develops within the frame work of an ongoing relationship between himself and some other frame of reference(another person, group, and society etc.).Shepard (1972), used five terms with respect to work alienation. The terms are powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, instrumental work orientation and self-evaluative involvement.Powerlessness refers to perceived lack of freedom and personal control on the job.Normlessness is the expectation that culturally accepted goals can only be achieved through illegitimate means. Meaninglessness refers to the inability to understand the events in which one is engaged .Instrumental work orientation refers to a state where a worker can no longer find intrinsic satisfaction in what he or she is doing.Self –evaluative involvement refers to the degree to which a person tests his or her self-esteem through involvement in a particular role.

## **Methodology**

**Objectives:** The present study has the following objectives:

- 1.To study the effect of the nature of the job in experiencing alienation from the work.
- 2.To study the effect of the sector (private sector/public sector) in experiencing alienation from the work.

## **Hypotheses**

- 1.There will be a significant difference between the managers of production and service oriented in experiencing alienation causing factors.
- 2.There will be a significant difference between the managers of private sector and public sector in experiencing alienation-causing factors.

**Sample:** Stratified random sampling method was adopted to collect data from the managers.100 mangers each from private and public sectors were contacted for data collection. Similarly, 100 each from production and service oriented managers were contacted and data was collected from them.

**Tool :** Questionnaire method was used to collect data from the respondents.Alienation from work questionnaire was used to collect data from the mangers.

**Alienation from Work Questionnaire:**The questionnaire was developed by J.M. Shepard(1972) to measure work alienation.Using Seeman's analysis(1959), Shepard sets out to operationalise five uses of the term with respect to work.They

are powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, instrumental work orientation and self-evaluative involvement.

The full scale has 30 items .Sub scale scores are obtained by summing responses across items, with a high score indicating low alienation.The powerlessness , meaninglessness, and normlessness items each refers to a characteristic of work , and responses are in terms of the extent to which that feature exists in the respondent’s job, from minimum(scored 1) to maximum (scored7).Instrumental work orientation and self-evaluative involvement are measured through statements open to agreement or disagreement scored from 1 to 5.

### Results and Interpretation

The results obtained through statistical analysis have been presented in the following tables table-1 to table-3) in this section.

**Table-1**

**Means and Percentage s of Means of Various Alienation Causing Factors  
(Production Oriented Managers and Service Oriented Managers)**

Sl No	Alienation Causing Factors	Production oriented		Service oriented	
		Mean	% of Mean	Mean	%of Mean
<b>1</b>	<b>Powerlessness</b>	<b>36.61</b>	<b>65.37</b>	<b>32.62</b>	<b>58.25</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Meaninglessness</b>	<b>31.95</b>	<b>57.05</b>	<b>27.94</b>	<b>49.89</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Normlessness</b>	<b>20.46</b>	<b>58.45</b>	<b>19.38</b>	<b>55.37</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Instrumental Work Orientation</b>	<b>14.32</b>	<b>71.6</b>	<b>13.56</b>	<b>67.80</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Self-evaluative involvement</b>	<b>17.77</b>	<b>70.88</b>	<b>17.96</b>	<b>71.84</b>

*Note :Low score on alienation indicates high score and vice-versa*

**Table-2**  
**Means and Percentages of Means of Various Alienation Causing Factors**  
**(Private Sector Managers and Public Sector managers)**

SI No	Alienation Causing Factors	Private Sector		Public Sector	
		Means	% of Means	Means	% of Means
1	Powerlessness	32.86	58.67	34.16	61
2	Meaninglessness	31.15	55.62	28.19	50.33
3.	Normlessness	17.23	49.22	18.94	54.11
4.	Instrumental Work Orientation	13.85	69.25	14.83	74.15
5	Self-evaluative Involvement	17.87	71.40	17.83	71.32

*Note :Low score on alienation indicates high score and vice-versa*

Table (1) and table (2) show means and percentages of means of various alienation causing factors between the production and service oriented managers and between the managers of private sector and public sector organizations. Results of 't' value between the service and production oriented managers and between the managers of private and public sector organizations are presented in table-3.

**Table-3**  
**'t' Value between Private and Public Sector Managers ;Service and Production Managers on Alienation Causing Factors**

SI No	Alienation Causing Factors	Private Vs Public	Service Vs Production
1	Powerlessness	3.03**	8.74**
2	Meaninglessness	6.79**	10.14**
3.	Normlessness	4.98**	3.88**
4	Instrumental Work Orientation	3.53**	3.77**
5.	Self-evaluative Involvement	0.16	0.77

*Note :Low score on alienation indicates high score and vice-versa*

\* significant at .05 level

\*\* significant at .01 level

According to the result presented in table (3) private and public sector managers have shown significant differences on alienation causing factors i.e. powerlessness (3.03), meaninglessness(6.79), normlessness(4.98) instrumental work orientation(3.53). When both groups are compared in terms of their means private sector managers are found to have scored more on powerlessness, normlessness and instrumental work orientation( low score on alienation indicates high score). The result indicates that inadequate power of control over the job and lack of autonomy have made private sector managers to score relatively higher on alienation stemming from feeling of powerlessness. This is a general characteristic of Indian private sector organizations. Because, in such organizations power lies in the hand of management or the people who are loyal to the management. This creates a feeling of powerlessness among the managers of private sector organizations. Feeling of normlessness has been found to be on higher side among the managers in private sector. The presence of authoritarian environment and absence of much clear cut norms of behaviour may be attributed for the creation of a normlessness atmosphere in the private sector organizations. Among the private sector managers alienation arising due to instrumental work orientation is more as their mean score is higher than public sector managers. It seems they do not find instrumentally satisfying activities in their work place.

On the other hand, public sector managers scored significantly higher on alienation causing from meaninglessness. The alienation from meaninglessness arises when one experiences difficulty in finding and utilizing appropriate standard for judging the importance of use of actions and beliefs. In public sector organizations people from top to bottom are secured. Managers and employees rarely bother if target is not achieved. Reason is they do not have any threat for their jobs. Promotions and increments are time bound. Therefore, managers and employees don't feel work pressure. This type of work culture lacks internal motivation and creates lots of confusion. Such a work culture inculcates feeling of meaninglessness among the managers and employees.

In order to study the effect of the nature of the job on various alienation causing variables, a comparative study was made between the service oriented and production oriented managers. Both group of managers showed significant difference on alienation causing factors like powerlessness(8.74), meaninglessness(10.14), normlessness(3.88), instrumental work orientation(3.77). The service oriented managers are found to have scored more on alienation causing factors ( low score on alienation indicates high score). The reason for such a finding is due to the difference of their nature of the jobs. The service here refers to such jobs as personnel, accounts, and such services as banking, insurances etc. These jobs generally do not have very clearly defined goals, especially in terms of out put of the work. Such jobs and their success mainly depends on individual factors and environmental conditions. For such managers parameters of success are very unstable and unpredictable in nature. On

the other hand , production oriented managers have well defined target.They are well versed with their volume of the work.Therefore, it appears that alienation caused due to powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness ,and instrumental work orientation among the service oriented managers is more as compared to the production oriented managers.Above findings partially support hypothesis (I) and hypothesis (II).

### **Suggestions to the Corporate Managers**

On the basis of the results obtained through this study , following suggestions are offered to reduce alienation at work:

- Managers should be given adequate power to execute their managerial activities. They should be provided freedom and autonomy to do the work as long as it is within the limit of the organisation.
- Job should be designed in such a way that it should appear meaningful to the managers and employees.
- As far as possible set norms should be followed .Norms and code of conducts should be applicable equally from top to bottom.It should be followed honestly at every stage.
- Sincere efforts should be made to make the managers satisfied internally.

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