

Structural Equation Modeling of Effective Dimensions of Job Alienation

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Purpose: Considering the importance of human resources and increase leaving job positions, the aim of this study was structural equations modeling of effective dimensions of job alienation.

Methodology: The present study was a cross-sectional from type of correlation. The research population was the employees of the government organizations of Isfahan city in 2021 year, which number of 400 people of them were selected as a sample by simple random sampling method. The research tools were the demographic information form and the researcher-made questionnaire of job alienation, that its construct validity and reliability were evaluated as appropriate. Data were analyzed with exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling methods in SPSS-19 and Smart PLS-3 software.

Findings: The results of the exploratory factor analysis showed that job alienation had 158 questions in 7 factors of extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesired behavioral and organizational attitudes, job fatigue and dislike and hatred of work. The validity of the factors based on the factor load was higher than 0.60 for all questions, the convergent validity was higher than 0.80 and the average variance extracted was higher than 0.50, and the reliability of its factors with using the Cronbach's alpha method was higher than 0.80. The results of structural equation modeling showed that the job alienation model had a good fit, and in this model, extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation had a significant direct effect on job alienation and job alienation had a significant direct effect on undesired behavioral and organizational attitudes, job fatigue and dislike and hatred of work ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: According to the effective dimensions of job alienation, organizational managers and officials to reduce job alienation can provide the ground for adjusting the effective dimensions on it, including extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesired behavioral and organizational attitudes, job fatigue and dislike and hatred of work.

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1. Introduction

The inclination to leave service is a function of the desirability and perceived ease of leaving an organization. Individual factors such as age, organizational factors such as job conditions, and external factors like the economic conditions of society play a determining role in the individual resignation of employees (Chiaburu, Thundiyil & Wang, 2014). The intention to leave a job is a voluntary desire of individuals to end their cooperation with an organization and, although it may never be actualized, it impacts the performance and effectiveness of the organization through absenteeism, negligence, sabotage, etc. (Ortiz, Chih & Tsai, 2018). Dissatisfaction and a lack of interest in work and profession in professional and work environments are significant and observable phenomena in occupational societies. So much so, that many problems and dilemmas occur only in the work environment, and when individuals leave this environment, they seem like different people. This indicates that the presence of employees in the work environment is not pleasurable, and this presence represents a compulsion to continue the job and life (Trott, 2017). Sociologists and social psychologists consider occupational alienation as the most important social phenomenon in organizations and emphasize research on it (Lin, Liu, Zhang & Longobardi, 2023). Therefore, one of the significant organizational issues in recent decades, which has had an increasing trend in the third millennium and is evident to managers and executives, is occupational alienation. It often stems from the instability and severe volatility of environmental conditions and the emergence of stress-inducing variables, leading to destructive effects such as demotivation and despair (Chervenak & McCullough, 2019).

Occupational alienation is a social phenomenon recognized in most cultures as a social problem. In sociology, it means the state of disconnection from the social system in various dimensions, which may include separation from popular culture, fundamental values, occupational norms, political governance, or the general public. The issue of alienation is so important that many social abnormalities and deviations, such as suicide, drug addiction, etc., are related to social alienation. Alienation hinders cultural growth and dynamism, disintegrates social structure, creates social disorder, etc., all of which threaten the survival of society (Amzulescu & Butucescu, 2021). Value conflict between employees and the organization increases occupational alienation. When the values of managers differ from those of employees, the employees experience anxiety and confusion. Research results indicate that value differences between employees and the organization or between employees and managers cause occupational alienation. In these conditions, employees feel worthless to the organization and managers and withdraw (more psychologically than physically) from them (Hou, Chen & Shang, 2016). A job is defined as a set of specific related tasks and responsibilities introduced by an organization as a job or profession (Matthews, Hyde, Llewelyn, Shafiei, Newton & Forster, 2022). Occupational alienation is a reaction of employees to inhumane and unethical conditions and behaviors in the workplace, leading to the development and increase of hostile and unethical behaviors in the work environment (Yildiz & Saylikay, 2014). This construct is a psychological state of separation from the job and profession, where an individual perceives that the job and profession do not have the capacity to satisfy their basic expectations and needs. Occupational alienation is the psychological separation of an individual from themselves and their social interactions both inside and outside the workplace. Individuals experiencing occupational alienation have problems with family, society, and even themselves, are not in a good physical and mental health state, and slow down the organization's progress towards its goals (Sarwar, Zakariya, Afshari & Ishaq, 2022).

Occupational alienation has psychological roots, where an individual feels a psychological break from their job duties and responsibilities and lacks the desire to establish and maintain social and occupational relationships with others and the organization. In such situations, an individual who was continuously and potentially capable of performing job duties and always tried to establish and maintain social relationships with others, upon experiencing job alienation, no longer feels any attraction or allure to their job duties and becomes socially and organizationally isolated (Banai & Reisel, 2007). Occupational alienation arises from unusual expectations, role conflict and ambiguity, a strong sense of external control over the job and job duties, and a lack of close and sincere social connections with colleagues (Gao, Zhao, Feng & Xu, 2022). It

includes incapacity, a lack of personal control over life events, a sense of meaninglessness in work and social activities, feelings of worthlessness, self-deprecation, hatred in tasks, and detachment from matters (Yildiz & Alpkan, 2015). Occupational alienation is not a stable and permanent personality trait but a situational event that arises under specific conditions. An alienated person is someone who lacks commitment to their job role and is disconnected from their work, leading to reduced motivation and negative outcomes for the organization (Khan, Jianguo, Mann, Saleem, Boamah, Javed & Usman, 2019).

Although research has been conducted on the factors influencing occupational alienation, no study has investigated its effective dimensions. The following are the results of the most important and relevant domestic and international research. Ciftci (2021) concluded in a study that loneliness and occupational alienation play an effective role in leaving a job, with emotional exhaustion mediating this effect. Yurdakul and Oneren (2021) reported in a study that abnormal social behaviors by employees have negative consequences for the organization, and the phenomenon of occupational alienation is also a negative situation that employees experience for various reasons and, like abnormal social behaviors, has negative consequences for the organization.

Hajizadeh Meymandi, Koraei, Bonyad, and DashtiZad (2020) conducted a study and concluded that the influencing factors on occupational alienation, in order of significance, included organizational culture, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job characteristics, organizational justice, and quality of work life. Kanten and Ulker (2014) found in their research that factors of occupational alienation included job characteristics, lack of decision-making opportunity, poor control over work, organizational commitment, job involvement, performance pressures, organizational justice, structural adjustment, organizational structure, and technological changes. Rastegar Khaled, Kaveh, and Mohammadi (2014), in a study titled "Investigation of Sociological Factors Associated with Occupational Alienation," concluded that background factors (gender, marital status, education level, income level, and receiving in-service training), social trust, social participation, social support at work, satisfaction with life, and social responsibility were among the sociological factors related to occupational alienation. Ghodarzvand Chegini, Noyan Ashraf, and Alavi Saeb (2014) in their research on factors influencing alienation from work, identified the most important factors as focus, formality, job independence, skill diversity, a challenging and creative environment, meaningfulness of work, self-expression, quality of work relationships, procedural justice, and distributive justice. Boeree (2001), in his research, introduced six main variables as dimensions of occupational alienation: incapacity (lack of job autonomy, low control, and absence of free work activities), futility (inability to understand how one's participation relates to larger goals), normlessness (presence of a state of disorder), social isolation (minimal credence to value-laden goals and beliefs in society), self-estrangement (considering work as a means for external need satisfaction rather than an expression of potential capabilities), and cultural estrangement (lack of personal attachment to cultural values) (as cited in Mehdad, Zaribafan & Mehdizadegan, 2015). The current administrative system in Iran suffers from numerous deficiencies, causing it to be ineffective and adopt an inactive, abnormal, and undesirable state. Most of these deficiencies in Iran's administrative system are related to behaviors and motivations of employees who have very low work motivation, little desire to perform job-related behaviors, no devotion to their work, and perceive a significant distance between themselves and their job and profession, thus experiencing occupational alienation. Occupational alienation in the structure of the administrative system is considered a serious damage and lack of proper and precise attention to it will lead to the emergence of psychological-social issues in the work environment and result in reduced work motivations, loss of creativity, decreased job performance, increased absenteeism, negative feelings, isolation, feelings of incompetence, occupational diseases, concerns, and chronic stress being some of the consequences of occupational alienation. Given the importance of occupational alienation in organizations, it is necessary to study the dimensions affecting it in Iranian organizations, and since this construct may have different meanings in different cultures, it is essential to identify and evaluate the impact of each dimension in Iranian culture, aspects previously overlooked in

prior research. Consequently, considering the importance of human resources, job resignations, and the role of occupational alienation in these, the aim of this study was to model the structural equations of the dimensions affecting occupational alienation.

2. Methodology

The present study was cross-sectional and correlational in nature. The research population consisted of employees of government organizations in the city of Isfahan in the year 2021, from which 400 individuals were selected as the sample through simple random sampling. In simple random sampling, each member of the population is assigned a unique code, and then a required number of codes are selected from the population, which in this study, 400 cases were chosen as the sample.

The research instruments included a demographic information form and a researcher-made questionnaire on occupational alienation. The first tool, the demographic information form, was designed by the researchers to gather more information about the samples and measured data in areas such as gender, education, age, and marital status. The second tool, the researcher-made questionnaire on occupational alienation, was designed by the researchers to examine the tool's validity and to construct a model for it. This questionnaire contained 158 questions in 7 factors of extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work, and its validity and reliability were appropriately assessed. The face validity was confirmed by experts, construct validity by exploratory factor analysis, and their reliability by Cronbach's alpha method, which were reported in the findings section. It is worth mentioning that a five-point Likert scale was used for answering each item, ranging from 'strongly disagree' with a score of one to 'strongly agree' with a score of five, with a higher score indicating more alienation or a higher degree of each of the seven factors.

The research process began with the approval of the proposal, followed by the identification of theoretical foundations and their study. In addition to studying theoretical foundations, interviews with experts on occupational alienation were conducted. Next, indicators were identified and categorized. For this purpose, some indicators were omitted due to repetition, and others were merged due to high overlap, ultimately preparing the initial form of the researcher-made questionnaire on occupational alienation. Subsequently, the samples, i.e., employees of government organizations, were identified, and 400 individuals were selected as the sample. After explaining the importance and necessity of the research, they were asked to participate in the study. Upon their agreement, the two research instruments, including the demographic information form and the researcher-made questionnaire on occupational alienation, were provided to them for completion. After this phase, the data were prepared for computer entry and, following their entry into the computer, were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling in SPSS-19 and Smart PLS-3 software.

3. Findings

The examination of demographic information revealed that most of the participating employees from government organizations in the city of Isfahan in this study were women (72.5%), married (68.25%), with bachelor's degree education (49.25%), and in the age range of 31-40 years (47%).

The examination of the prerequisites for exploratory factor analysis showed that the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy index was 0.761, and the significance level of Bartlett's test for sufficient correlation between variables was less than 0.001. Hence, the conditions for exploratory factor analysis existed. Table 1 reported the results of the exploratory factor analysis of the dimensions affecting occupational alienation.

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Model of Dimensions Affecting Occupational Alienation

Factor or Component	Item Count	Subcomponent	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Reliability
Extra-organizational Alienation	31	Dehumanization in Work	685.0	875.0	584.0	821.0
		Cultural-Social Anomie	852.0			
		Effects and Values of Industrial Society	830.0			
		Social Alienation	793.0			
		Cultural Beliefs	755.0			
Organizational Alienation	57	Weakness in Talent Management	827.0	921.0	875.0	904.0
		Weakness in Organizational Socialization	767.0			
		Unprofessional and Weak Managers	686.0			
		Organizational Alienation	830.0			
		Weakness in Interpersonal Communications in Organization	785.0			
		Organizational Stress and Conflict	685.0			
		Weakness in Laws and Regulations	688.0			
		Inefficient Supervision and Control System	744.0			
		Organizational Disorder	633.0			
		Organizational Culture Based on Construction	763.0			
		Corruption	742.0			
		Autocratic Management Style	812.0			
		Powerlessness in Work	733.0			
Occupational Alienation	27	Sense of Meaninglessness in Work	688.0	865.0	717.0	792.0
		Lack of Job Motivation	774.0			
		Ambiguity in Role and Responsibilities	856.0			
		Job and Organizational Frustration	814.0			

Individual Alienation	26	Inability in Work	817.0	880.0	649.0	817.0
		Low Self-Esteem	872.0			
		Psychological Disorders	709.0			
		Lack of Ethical Orientation	818.0			
Undesirable Behavioral and Organizational Attitudes	8	Reduced Commitment of Employees to the Organization	781.0	916.0	578.0	895.0
		Tardiness	831.0			
		Absenteeism at Work	719.0			
		Procrastination	740.0			
		Mechanical Presence in the Organization	675.0			
		Cynicism and Distrust	741.0			
		Indifference and Passivity	829.0			
		Job Resignation	751.0			
Job Burnout	4	Emotional Exhaustion	925.0	926.0	759.0	893.0
		Feeling of Decreased Self-Efficacy	803.0			
		Reluctance to Participate in Decision Making	839.0			
		Difficulty in Manifesting Potential Talents	911.0			
Aversion and Hatred Towards Work	5	Boredom and Aversion to Work	918.0	822.0	518.0	728.0
		Psychological Disinterest in Work	843.0			
		Unattractiveness of Work	755.0			
		Intense Hatred of Work Environment	739.0			
		Feeling of Hatred towards Performing Work	782.0			

According to the results of Table 1, occupational alienation consisted of 158 questions in 7 factors: extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work. The validity of the factors was confirmed based on a factor loading higher than 0.60 for all questions, convergent validity higher than 0.50, and the average variance extracted higher than 0.80, and the reliability of the factors was obtained higher than 0.80 using Cronbach's alpha method.

The examinations indicated a good fit for the occupational alienation model. The R² values were higher than 0.50, and the Goodness of Fit (GOF) index was 0.558, which is higher than 0.36. Figure 1 and Table 2 reported the results of the structural equation modeling of occupational alienation.



Figure 1. Results of Structural Equation Modeling of Occupational Alienation

Table 2. Results of Structural Equation Modeling of Occupational Alienation

Paths	Path coefficient	t-values	Results
Extra-organizational Alienation's Impact on Occupational Alienation	442.0	548.10	Approved
Organizational Alienation's Impact on Occupational Alienation	518.0	587.26	Approved
Occupational Alienation's Impact on Itself	580.0	516.15	Approved
Individual Alienation's Impact on Occupational Alienation	381.0	792.9	Approved
Occupational Alienation's Impact on Undesirable Behavioral and Organizational Attitudes	635.0	235.25	Approved
Occupational Alienation's Impact on Job Burnout	357.0	562.7	Approved
Occupational Alienation's Impact on Aversion and Hatred Towards Work	587.0	665.17	Approved

According to the results of Figure 1 and Table 2, extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, and individual alienation had a significant direct effect on occupational alienation, and occupational alienation had a significant direct effect on undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work ($P < 0.001$).

4. Conclusion

Occupational alienation has numerous negative consequences for organizations, leading to a decline in performance and effectiveness. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to model the structural equations of the dimensions affecting occupational alienation.

The findings of this study revealed that occupational alienation consists of 158 questions in 7 factors: extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work. The validity of

these factors was confirmed based on a factor loading higher than 0.60 for all questions, convergent validity above 0.80, and the average variance extracted higher than 0.50. Their reliability was obtained higher than 0.80 using Cronbach's alpha method. Further findings indicated a good fit for the occupational alienation model. In this model, extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, and individual alienation had a significant direct effect on occupational alienation, and occupational alienation had a significant direct effect on undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work. Although limited research was found on the dimensions affecting occupational alienation, the findings of this study can be aligned with the studies of Ciftci (2021), Yurdakul and Oneren (2021), Hajizadeh Meymandi et al. (2020), Kanten and Ulker (2014), Rastegar Khaled et al. (2014), and Ghodarzvand Chegini, Noyan Ashraf, and Alavi Saeb (2014).

Explaining the findings of this study, it can be said that to reduce occupational alienation, it is necessary to create conditions to reduce extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work. For this purpose, in the dimension of extra-organizational alienation, dehumanization in work can be increased, social alienation with the work environment reduced, cultural beliefs improved, and the role of cultural-social anomie and the effects and values of industrial society adjusted. In the dimension of organizational alienation, weaknesses in talent management, organizational socialization, and interpersonal communications can be reduced through training workshops, choosing qualified and strong managers for organizational leadership positions, eliminating inefficient supervision and control systems, and creating conditions for improving supervision and control, as well as reducing organizational alienation, stress and conflict, non-compliance with rules, organizational disorder, corruption, autocratic management style, and powerlessness in work. In the dimension of occupational alienation, the sense of meaninglessness in work can be reduced, employees' fates can be linked to the organization's destiny, job motivation can be enhanced considering intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, job and organizational frustration reduced, and role and task ambiguities diminished with job and organizational clarifications. In the dimension of individual alienation, incapability in work can be reduced through job and professional empowerment workshops, employees' self-esteem increased with appropriate reinforcements, the lack of ethics reduced through ethics training, and conditions for reducing psychological disorders through workshops and psychological training courses provided. In the dimension of undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, commitment to the organization can be enhanced, punctuality emphasized, absenteeism and job resignation reduced through rewards, and employee procrastination, mechanical presence, cynicism, apathy, and passivity in the organization reduced. In the dimension of job burnout, conditions can be created for the emergence and flourishing of employees' talents, reducing feelings of decreased self-efficacy, reluctance to participate in decision-making, and emotional exhaustion through making jobs attractive, emphasizing employees' capabilities, and offering rewards for participation in decision-making. In the dimension of aversion and hatred towards work, working conditions can be improved, and job and professional advantages and rewards provided to reduce job boredom, psychological disinterest in work, job unattractiveness, hatred of the work environment, and feelings of hatred towards performing work.

Researchers always face limitations in their studies, some of which even become apparent at the beginning of the work. Generally, every research project comes with its own specific limitations, some of which are mentioned in the present study. In this study, questionnaires were used for data collection, and it is possible that some of the statistical sample may have refrained from giving true responses, given less accurate responses, or their responses might have been influenced by specific conditions. Given the population of this study (employees of government organizations), the results may differ for other communities, so caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other communities. Also, this research was conducted in a specific time frame, and results may differ at other times. Researchers intending to conduct related research are advised to conduct this study in other communities. In addition, researchers are suggested to conduct the present research at different time intervals, as the results may vary over time due to rapidly changing

conditions, which may also affect the research outcomes. Finally, considering the importance of occupational alienation, it is suggested that other dimensions affecting occupational alienation be examined. The findings of this study indicate the effective role of seven dimensions of extra-organizational alienation, organizational alienation, occupational alienation, individual alienation, undesirable behavioral and organizational attitudes, job burnout, and aversion and hatred towards work in occupational alienation, and it is suggested that organizational managers and officials make efforts to reduce this negative construct (occupational alienation) to facilitate the adjustment of these dimensions. Another practical suggestion is for organizational managers and officials to implement the occupational alienation questionnaire developed in this study for their employees, analyze the results considering all seven factors or effective dimensions, and if necessary, create conditions to improve the situation of a factor or dimension in which employees do not have a suitable and desirable condition.

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