

## **DEVELOPING A NEW MEASURE OF WORK ALIENATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is limited research on work alienation in contemporary management studies. One of the possible reasons is the lack of a parsimonious and validated measure of work alienation. The present study reports the construction and evaluation of a new scale for measuring work alienation, in the interest of facilitating further research in this area and aiding the detection and assessment of worker alienation, providing cues to which management should pay attention for any consequent correction, if needed. In Study 1, we developed an initial scale in order to assess the construct and administered it to 99 management executives in India. Exploratory factor analysis led to a revised unidimensional scale, which was then administered to a second sample. In Study 2 ( $N = 371$ ), confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and the reliability and validity of the scale was assessed. The results indicate good psychometric properties for the newly developed measure of work alienation, providing a robust measure for its use in testing worker alienation and facilitating any required correction to ensure enhanced employee well-being.

The concept of alienation has a rich history in the social sciences and is discussed across a broad range of subjects such as theology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and psychiatry (see Johnson, 1973, for a review of the usage of the

term across various disciplines). Largely popularized through the early writings of Marx (1844/1932), alienation has been discussed (Fromm, 1955) as the mode of experience in which a person experiences him/herself as an alien or, in other words, becomes estranged from the self. Horowitz (1966) suggests that alienation implies an intense separation, first from objects in the world, second from people, and third from ideas about the world held by other people. The core meaning of the concept of alienation has also been identified as a dissociative state of the individual (a cognitive sense of separation) in relation to some other element in his or her environment (Kanungo, 1979; Schacht, 1970). In exploring the epistemological and ontological considerations of the term, Overend (1975) classifies alienation as a separation/estrangement of a human being from the citizen body, from nature, from production, from other humans, and ultimately from him/herself. In much of the work concerning alienation, the definition of the term is not clear (Seeman, 1975), even though much has been written about it since Marx.

Marx conceptualized alienation as the separation of the worker from ownership. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx distinguishes three forms of alienation—alienation from the product of work, alienation in the process of production, and alienation from society. According to Marx, work and alienation were inseparable in industrial society, where the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object (Finifter, 1972). Weber's treatment of the concept of alienation (see Gerth & Mills, 1946) has been similar to that of Marx, who viewed alienation as emerging from a perceived lack of freedom and control at work, while Durkheim (1947) saw it as a consequence of the condition of anomie, referring to the breakdown of norms in society that leads to the experience of normlessness.

The scientific discussion of the concept has largely been attempted by sociologists and to a limited extent by psychologists. It has been suggested that there has simply been no development of psychological theories to explain the phenomenon of alienation in the literature (Kanungo, 1979). Although alienation has a rich tradition in the sociological literature, it has not received much attention in organizational studies. Kohn (1976: 113) points to this dearth of empirical literature on alienation: "most occupational studies, of course, do not purport to deal with alienation. Of those that do, some use job dissatisfaction as their index of alienation. But extrapolating from job dissatisfaction or even from a lack of occupational commitment to feelings of alienation is unwarranted." Traditionally, the psychological link between the individual and the organization has predominantly been studied in the form of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). An early contribution to the understanding of commitment came from Etzioni (1961), when he discussed the three ways in which individuals can be oriented toward the organization as moral, calculative, and alienative. Subsequent literature, however, has neglected the alienative component, possibly, as discussed by Swales (2002), due to its negative orientation. More recently, Bratton, Callinan, Forshaw, and Sawchuk (2007) have drawn

attention to the fact that much of the research appears indifferent to and ignorant of the concept of alienation.

There is little contemporary work on alienation. With the exception of a few studies (Banai & Reisel, 2007; Banai, Reisel, & Probst, 2004; DiPietro & Pizam, 2008; Sarros et al., 2002; Schabracq & Cooper, 2003; Suarez-Mendoza & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2007; Wallace, 2006), most of the studies of alienation emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, with only occasional research on it since then. Further, research on alienation has traditionally focused on the blue-collar or factory worker (Blauner, 1964; Dean, 1961; Shepard, 1977), with less attention to alienation among non-factory workers or workers in the New Age industries such as information technology or the service sector. This relative lack of attention to the concept of alienation in organizational studies appears surprising, given the wealth of literature in the recent past that has been presented on attitudes and affect toward the organization such as satisfaction, commitment, or identification. Perhaps it is the overuse of the concept in the sociological literature, an aversion to the negative tone of the concept, conceptual confusion between it and other terms, or poor operationalization and measurement of alienation that have contributed to its relative neglect in management studies.

In this article, the focus is specifically on alienation from work. We draw attention to the conceptual ambiguity surrounding the concept of alienation, highlight the problem of operationalization and measurement, and then discuss the development and testing of a new measure of work alienation.

### PROBLEM OF CONCEPTUALIZATION

Alienation has been referred to as a “panchreston” (Johnson, 1973: 3), denoting its vagueness and wide use as a general term, a popular expression, and a scientific term. Johnson also points out that alienation as a term has acquired a semantic richness as well as a confusion attained by few words of corresponding significance. The ambiguity surrounding the concept of alienation is rooted in a number of factors.

First, the concept has been variously treated as unidimensional or multidimensional. Early theorizing viewed alienation as a unidimensional concept characterized by powerlessness or lack of control over work, as initially discussed by Marx, while in the late 1950s and 1960s other dimensions of the concept were developed, largely through the work of Seeman (1959, 1975). The first organized view of the concept of alienation as provided by Seeman (1959) includes the five-facet conceptualization of alienation as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Seeman’s (1959) classification of alienation has formed the basis for several empirical studies (Blauner, 1964; Dean, 1961; Seeman, 1967; Shepard, 1977). However, it has also been criticized for not adequately capturing alienation when operationalized, and for a failure to delineate relations among the five dimensions (Overend, 1975). Other researchers

(Kanungo, 1979; Mottaz, 1981), critiquing such a multidimensional conceptualization, have argued that dimensions such as meaninglessness and powerlessness are better viewed as antecedents to or even consequences of alienation. Some other conceptualizations of alienation have viewed it as consisting of either personal or social alienation (Korman, Wittig-Berman, & Lang, 1981; Lang 1985), and Lang (1985) also adds another dimension, that of occupational alienation. More recently, researchers (Banai et al., 2004; Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000) have tended to return to the unidimensional conceptualization of alienation.

Second, the distinction between the concept of alienation, antecedent conditions, and outcomes are not always clear in the literature. Kanungo (1979: 129) points out that isolation, meaninglessness, and powerlessness may describe different conditions or causes of alienation but should not be equated with it. Similarly, Mottaz (1981) found lack of meaningful work to be a predictor of alienation, and Seeman (1967) discusses the consequences of work alienation in terms of both anomie and powerlessness.

Third, the theoretical and operational definitions of alienation have further compounded the ambiguity surrounding the concept. Alienation as a concept has lent itself to various definitions and considerable confusion over its meanings, usage, and measurement. Although Marx brought the term alienation into focus with regard to the industrial worker's separation from ownership and lack of control over his/her work, he did not define the term alienation in any of his works. In the literature of alienation, the concept has rarely been defined, although the term has been used widely across disciplines. The complexity of the concept of alienation and the variety of meanings attached to the term make it difficult to abstract from them one basic meaning of alienation. Table 1 outlines a few definitions of alienation as they appear in the literature.

A common theme appearing in most conceptualizations of alienation appears to be the notion of estrangement or separation. In keeping with this understanding, an operational definition of work alienation that we have advanced is *estrangement or disconnect from work, the context or self*.

Finally, alienation has been conceptually and operationally confounded with a variety of different concepts. Hirschfeld and Feild (2000) have equated both work centrality and identification as the polar opposites of work alienation, although Watson (2003) argues that people can be alienated from work only if they consider work to be central in the first place. The hypothesis that a certain type of industrial work causes alienation was studied using absenteeism as the index of dissatisfaction (Fried, Weitman, & Davis, 1972). Alienation has thus been equated with work dissatisfaction. Seybolt and Gruenfeld (1976) point out that work alienation and work (dis)satisfaction have been studied separately, although in parallel fashions, in the behavioral science literature and ask whether they are in fact separate attitudes or merely different terms for the same construct. Baxter (1982) discusses the transcendence of alienation through instrumental job satisfaction, which refers to the satisfaction derived from extrinsic factors such

Table 1. Definitions of Alienation

Source	Description/Definitions of Alienation
Fromm (1955)	Mode of experience in which a person experiences him- or herself as alien or estranged from him- or herself (p. 120)
Seeman (1959, 1975)	Described in terms of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement
Horowitz (1966)	Intense separation first from the objects of the world, second from people, and third from ideas about the world held by other people (p. 231)
Schacht (1970)	Dissociative state of the individual in relation to some other element in his or her environment
Miller (1967)	Objective state of isolation from others (p. 260)
Kanungo (1979)	Generalized cognitive (or belief) state of psychological separation from work insofar as work is perceived to lack the potentiality for satisfying one's salient needs and expectations (p. 131)
Hirschfeld & Field (2000)	Represents the extent to which a person is disengaged from the world of work (p. 790)

as pay and rewards that may compensate for and offset, to some extent, the experience of alienation. Instrumental job satisfaction is seen as a consequence of dealing with alienation. Watson (2003: 176) points out that alienation is not necessarily reflected in felt job dissatisfaction or frustration, arguing that a person may be happy sitting at a desk and sorting papers day after day in return for a wage, but may nevertheless be alienated due to lack of self-fulfillment if working under different conditions. In other words, a person may possibly not be alienated if the job or work allows for self-expression, as in the concept of self-actualization presented by Maslow (1970) or as discussed more recently in the dimension of work as enabling selfhood in the Existential Meaning of Work Inventory (Fairlie & Flett, 2004). Hall (1994: 111) points to the role of alienation beyond work dissatisfaction when he notes that "the negative side of work is not dissatisfaction, it is alienation." For a more detailed discussion of the ways in which alienation both overlaps with and is distinct from other related concepts, see Nair and Vohra (2009).

The issue of the operationalization of the concept is discussed in further detail in the next section.

### PROBLEM OF OPERATIONALIZATION

One of the earliest operationalizations of alienation was a seven-item index developed by Seeman (1967), derived from the Blauner (1964) survey. Blauner (1964) used the Roper Fortune Survey questionnaire, which asked a range of questions relating to the respondent's experience of work. The five-item scale of alienation developed by Miller (1967) assessed the sense of pride and accomplishment in work. Seeman (1967) addressed the issue of self-estrangement at work by asking whether workers experience variety, creativity, responsibility, and autonomy on the job. This operationalization of alienation has a high degree of overlap with work satisfaction (Robinson, Athanasiou, & Head, 1969; Seybolt & Gruenfeld, 1976). Aiken and Hage (1966) measured alienation in their study on the basis of six questions that essentially appear to address work satisfaction. It is interesting that almost all the questions start with "How satisfied are you . . ." (501), and then go on to assess various aspects of work. Seybolt and Gruenfeld (1976) call for a refinement of the operationalization of alienation owing to measurement overlap with the concept of satisfaction. Kohn (1976) used a Guttman scale to measure alienation, with subscales for each of the following dimensions: powerlessness, self-estrangement, normlessness, and cultural estrangement. However, the specific questions appear to assess a broader sense of alienation that includes alienation from society or life in general, rather than alienation specifically from work. Similarly, the measures of Korman et al. (1981) and Lang (1985) address both personal and social alienation. The alienation scale of Maddi, Kobasa, and Hoover (1979) also addresses too broad a notion of alienation, assessing powerlessness, vegetativeness, nihilism, and adventurousness with respect to work, social institutions, family, other persons, and self. Mottaz (1981) measured alienation using seven items each for the dimensions of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement. He concluded, however, that powerlessness and meaninglessness are in fact determinants of self-estrangement. Although Kanungo (1982) purports to measure work alienation, he confuses alienation with (non)involvement.

Among the more recent empirical studies (Banai & Reisel, 2007; Banai et al., 2004; DiPietro & Pizam, 2008; Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000; Sarros et al., 2002; Suarez-Mendoza & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2007), there is considerable variability in how alienation is measured, ranging from Seeman's (1967) measure to Korman et al.'s (1981) measure. Some scales, such as Mottaz's (1981) or Kohn's (1976), which are based on Seeman's conceptualization, consider alienation as multidimensional, using dimensions such as meaninglessness, powerlessness, and self-estrangement. This multidimensionalization of alienation has been critiqued by Mottaz himself and other researchers (Kanungo, 1979; Mottaz, 1981; Overend, 1975), who suggest that meaninglessness and powerlessness are antecedents to or consequences of alienation rather than part of the concept itself. Seeman (1967) also concludes that powerlessness may be viewed as an

outcome of alienation. Similarly, Korman et al.'s (1981) scale considers both personal and social alienation, with items that address alienation from society in general. The various scales of alienation used in the literature, with their attendant problems or issues, are summarized in Table 2.

Thus, it appears that there is a great deal of variability in the literature with regard to how alienation is measured, both in terms of the scales that are used and in terms of how narrowly or broadly the term is used. Further, in most cases, the scales have not been adequately tested for their psychometric properties. Even the more recent studies on work alienation (Banai & Reisel, 2007; Banai et al., 2004; DiPietro & Pizam, 2008; Suarez-Mendoza & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2007) use older scales for which there is insufficient psychometrical support or which consider too broad a notion of alienation. In other words, to address alienation specifically from work, the use of Korman et al.'s (1981) scale, which considers a more general notion of alienation, will not suffice, and the use of Seeman's multidimensional conceptualization as used in Mottaz's (1981) or Kohn's (1976) scale, which has been found to lack robustness by other researchers such as Roberts (1987), will not be adequate.

Since we are primarily interested in alienation from work, and there does not, from our survey of the literature, appear to be a reliable scale of work alienation, in this study we propose to develop and test such a scale of work alienation. Our new measure of alienation is specifically intended to measure alienation from work and aid in detecting and correcting employees' alienation from work.

## **DEVELOPING A MEASURE OF WORK ALIENATION**

### **Method**

In developing a new measure of work alienation, the guidelines for item generation, scale development, and scale evaluation as proposed by Hinkin (1995) were followed. Separate samples were used for item generation and scale development as against scale evaluation. Study 1 focuses on item generation and scale development, and Study 2 is concerned with scale evaluation.

### **Item Generation and Scale Development: Study 1**

After reviewing various published sources (where items of the scale were not published they were obtained by writing to the authors directly for the alienation items used in their studies), we gathered together potential items for a scale of work alienation. Our conceptualization of alienation views it as distinct from other concepts, such as satisfaction, work centrality, and so forth, and so we discarded items that appeared to measure not alienation but related concepts such

Table 2. Existing Operationalizations of Alienation

Developed by	About the scale/measure	Problems/issues
Aiken & Hage (1966)	Six items, all starting with "How satisfied are you . . ."	Measures work satisfaction rather than work alienation
Seeman (1967)	Seven-item scale	Psychometric properties not tested, also confounds alienation with work satisfaction
Miller (1967)	Five-item scale	Measures pride in work rather than alienation
Kohn (1976)	16-item Guttman scale for powerlessness, self-estrangement, normlessness, and cultural estrangement	Assesses too broad a notion of alienation; includes alienation from society or life in general
Maddi et al. (1979)	60 items for assessing powerlessness, vegetativeness, nihilism, and adventurousness in relation to work, social institutions, family, other persons, and self	Too broad a conceptualization of alienation; not specific to work alienation
Korman et al. (1981)	18-item scale, with items for both personal and social alienation	Too broad, not specific to work alienation, and scale not adequately tested
Mottaz (1981)	21 items for powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement	Concludes that meaninglessness and powerlessness are in fact predictors of alienation; multidimensional operationalization also found not to hold up to statistical robustness
Kanungo (1982)	Multimethod, multiple items, also includes a graphical scale	Confounds alienation with work involvement
Lang (1985)	11 items measuring personal, social, and occupational alienation	Too broad, not specific to work alienation, scale not adequately tested, poor reliability

as satisfaction. Additionally, we first generated a potential list of items that might capture work alienation independently and then we brainstormed together. Items were chosen to reflect the sense of disconnect/estrangement from work and the sense of pain/burden associated with alienation. All the items were then screened for redundancy. A list of 14 items was generated by this process.

The items were first tested in Study 1 using an exploratory approach, in order to examine the nature of the construct of alienation and eliminate poorly loading items. The responses were on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 with 1 representing *total disagreement* and 7 representing *total agreement* with the statement presented. The scale was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis with the extraction method of principal axis factoring.

### *Sample*

The sample for the item development phase consisted of 99 middle and senior level managers from three different organizations who were participants in a management development program (MDP) in a leading business school in India. In offering a review of scale development practices in organizational studies, Hinkin (1995: 973) notes that item-to-response ratios generally range from 1:4 to 1:10. In the case of our sample of 99 respondents, the item-to-response ratio was around 1:7. In total there were four different groups of participants, as one organization had two groups participating in the MDP. Two organizations were from the private sector and one was from the public sector. The average age of the participants was 40 years, with an 80:20 male-female ratio and an average work experience of 15 years. The data were collected at four different points in time spread over a month.

### *Results and Discussion*

The analysis of the 14 items resulted in four factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Items with a factor loading of less than 0.5 and those cross loading on more than one factor were examined. For example, the item "I find it difficult to feel enthusiastic about work" appeared to be cross loading on more than one factor and may be conceptually closer to the lack of vigor in work rather than to alienation from it. Reverse-scored items also did not appear to be working well. For example, the item "I am so into my work that I often lose track of time" demonstrated poor factor loading on the primary component and could be indicative of involvement in work rather than of (a lack of) alienation. Based on a screening of the items from the factor loading and a recheck for their conceptual fit with alienation, six items were deleted, and the final list was composed of eight items. Two of the deleted items were reverse-scored items. With regard to the other deleted items, either their essence was captured by the remaining items or there was some ambiguity as to what was intended to be captured by the items. The remaining eight items were found to load on a single factor explaining 55.67%

of the total variance. From an examination of the factor loadings, inter-item correlations, scree plot, and variance explained by the factors, we decided to go ahead with the one-factor structure comprising eight items. The eight items were also thought to adequately encompass our conceptualization of alienation. The factor loadings of the final eight items are shown in Table 3.

Scale reliability was computed using coefficient alpha. The coefficient alpha for the one-factor, eight-item measure of alienation was 0.860. The average inter-item correlation for the eight items was 0.435. This is indicative of a common domain but lack of item redundancy as recommended by Briggs and Cheek (1986).

### Scale Evaluation: Study 2

In the second phase of the study, scale evaluation was undertaken using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on a separate sample to validate the factor structure of the alienation measure as obtained from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

#### Sample

Data for the second study were collected from management executives across seven different organizations who were participants in a series of management development programs (MDPs) at a leading business school in India. Responses were obtained from both current, in-house participants in the MDPs as well as prior participants in the MDPs who were contacted by mail. In total, 371 responses were obtained. The participants were primarily male (89.7%), in the age group of 25–55 years, and had an average work experience of 16 years.

Table 3. Factor Loadings for EFA of the Final Eight Alienation Items

Items	Factor 1
I do not enjoy my work	0.752
Facing my daily tasks is a painful and boring experience	0.755
Work to me is more like a chore or burden	0.778
I feel estranged/disconnected from myself	0.775
I often wish I were doing something else	0.511
Over the years I have become disillusioned about my work	0.633
I do not feel like putting in my best effort at work	0.575
I do not feel connected to the events in my workplace	0.808

Extraction method: principal axis factoring.

### *Results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the eight items of the work alienation scale. In order to test the adequacy of the models, a number of key model fit indices were examined. First, the  $\chi^2$  to degrees of freedom ratio are examined. Following the recommendations of various authors (Bollen, 1989; Gallagher, Ting, & Palmer, 2008; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Muller, 2003), who suggest a ratio between 2 and 3 as an acceptable fit, the  $\chi^2/df$  of 2.723 for our model indicates an acceptable fit. The goodness-of-fit indices (GFI = 0.964, AGFI = 0.935) are also above the generally accepted 0.90 level. In addition, the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.965), incremental fit index (IFI = 0.966), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI = 0.951) are above the acceptable level of 0.90 as suggested by various authors (Bentler, 1992; Bollen, 1989; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004). The parsimony fit indices (PGFI = 0.535, PNFI = 0.676, PCFI = 0.69) are all above the generally acceptable 0.50 level (Muliak et al., 1989). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.068) indicates an acceptable fit, given that an RMSEA value of less than 0.08 is thought to represent reasonable errors of approximation in the population (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). A summary of the CFA results for the alienation measure is shown in Table 4.

### *Convergent Validity and Reliability*

The factor loadings or regression weights for the eight items were all above 0.5, as suggested by Gallagher et al. (2008). The average variance extracted for the alienation measure is 0.431, which is close to the acceptable level of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2003). It may also be noted that some authors, like Fornell and Larcker (1981), note that variance extracted is a more conservative measure, and on the basis of construct reliability alone the researcher may conclude that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate. The computed construct reliability of 0.857 for the measure was high and above the suggested value of 0.5 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2003), thus providing an adequate indication of convergence. The internal consistency reliability of the construct of work alienation for this study was 0.855, and the average inter-item correlation was 0.424.

As part of another study, examining the predictors of work alienation (Nair & Vohra, 2010), we were able to assess the extent to which the alienation measure was able to discriminate between alienation and related constructs such as meaningfulness, with the variance extracted for alienation (0.614) being greater than the squared inter-construct correlation (0.283) for meaningfulness, providing additional support for the validity of the alienation measure. While the present article focuses specifically on the development and preliminary testing of the new measure of work alienation, the other study examined the predictors of work alienation, in which meaningfulness (absence of it) was hypothesized as one

Table 4. Summary of CFA Results (Fit Indices) for Work Alienation Measure

Model	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	IFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	PGFI	PNFI	PCFI	RMR	RMSEA
Study 2 (N = 371) Default model	2.723	0.964	0.935	0.966	0.947	0.951	0.965	0.535	0.676	0.69	0.072	0.068

predictor among others such as structure, work characteristics, satisfaction in work relationships, and perceptions of organizational justice.

## DISCUSSION

Although the concept of alienation has a rich sociological tradition, in the realm of management research only limited numbers of studies dealing with work alienation have been carried out. Our examination of the literature on work alienation suggests that one possible reason for this neglect appears to be the ambiguity surrounding the concept and the poor operationalization and measurement of work alienation. We have discussed the problems of conceptualization and operationalization of alienation, which point to the lack of a reliable and validated measure that specifically addresses alienation from work. In the interest of facilitating research on work alienation, which has implications for the performance and productivity of employees, this article reports the development and preliminary testing of a new measure of work alienation.

In developing this new measure, we first generated a conceptually grounded pool of potential items. Subjecting the items to exploratory factor analysis, we were able to select eight items for the alienation measure. The eight items were found to load on a single factor, capable of explaining substantial variance. The internal consistency reliability for the work alienation items in the first study was also high. Next, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the eight items emerging from the exploratory analysis. The results indicate a good fit, and the internal consistency reliability and the construct reliability were both high. Our findings provide preliminary support for the eight-item, one-factor measure of work alienation. The measure that we developed is also an improvement over previous measures of alienation (Aiken & Hage, 1966; Kanungo, 1982; Kohn, 1976; Mottaz, 1981; Seeman, 1967), without the conceptual confusion with related measures such as satisfaction or constructs such as meaningfulness. Our measure also focuses specifically on alienation from work.

Given the importance of having parsimonious measures of key constructs for use in research, our eight-item measure of work alienation is a step toward facilitating further research in the area of work alienation in management studies and providing a much-needed, reliable, and parsimonious tool for assessing worker alienation. In a study (Nair & Vohra, 2010) that examined the extent and predictors of work alienation of over 1,000 knowledge workers, this measure of work alienation was used through an online survey. The results of the study showed that one in five knowledge workers was alienated to some extent. The most significant predictors of work alienation were lack of meaningful work, lack of self-expressiveness in work, and poor work relationships. Thus, with the help of our instrument, workers can be easily surveyed for the extent of their work alienation, and if the survey shows high levels of alienation, then the workers can think of means to reduce alienation. Also the fact that the measure can be

administered in an online version makes it highly usable. The alienation score is arrived at by simply adding together the scores on each of the eight items, thus making it easy to understand and interpret.

It is also suggested that, if this questionnaire is to be used as a stand alone measure of alienation, it should be introduced as an “experience at work” questionnaire rather than an “alienation at work” questionnaire, to avoid cuing the respondents to the negative work outcome of alienation. Not directly communicating the content of the questionnaire is not considered as deception in the social psychology of the experiment literature (Bröder, 1998; Kimmel, 1998; Kron, 1998).

## CONCLUSION

There are a few potential limitations of the present study that deserve attention. The article reports the development and preliminary testing of the measure of work alienation that we developed. We acknowledge that additional work on the measure is required with respect to its construct validity and the ability of this measure to discriminate between work alienation and other related constructs. Further research is required to establish the validity of the measure of work alienation in discriminating between alienation and other concepts such as satisfaction, identification, or work centrality, which have some degree of conceptual overlap with work alienation. Although the eight-item work alienation measure presented here exhibited adequate psychometric properties across different organizational samples, we have been able to sample middle and senior management executives only in one specific cultural context. Further research is also required to test the generalizability of the results in other cultural contexts and occupational domains.

The key contribution of the present study is the development and testing of an eight-item measure of work alienation that is aimed at promoting further research in work alienation, an underrepresented area in management studies. Our measure of work alienation is conceptually grounded and builds on previous understandings and conceptualizations of work alienation. Given the results of the preliminary testing of the new measure, indicating good psychometric properties and robustness across different samples in the two studies, it is hoped that the new measure will offer a useful tool to aid in the assessment of workers and, in the event of high alienation being found, to aid workers in seeking action by the organization/management that will adequately counter or mitigate the levels of alienation being experienced. It is also expected that the tool we have developed will provide an impetus for future studies in the rich domain of work alienation.

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