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QLANTIC
 JOURNAL OF
 SOCIAL SCIENCES
 AND HUMANITIES

Organizational Factors Correlated with Work Alienation: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: *Work alienation is a global concern for both public and private organizations. It has adverse effects on organizational productivity and individual performance. Academic scholars and practitioners have called for a systematic review to understand the factors behind this theoretical and practical problem. This study responds to these calls and aims to conduct a systematic review of potential organizational factors correlated with work alienation in both public and private organizations. The search engines that were used to find the study articles include Web of Science, Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, JSTOR, ERIC, ScienceDirect, the Directory of Open Access Journals, ScienceOpen, and the Social Science Research Network (SSRN). Initially, 102 scientific articles were selected using the PRISMA methodology. After applying inclusion criteria 40 scientific papers were finally reviewed. The results of the study revealed that job design, organizational culture, workload, leadership styles, and career development opportunities are correlated with work alienation. The study suggests further review of studies on organizational factors correlated with work alienation using other forms of scientific knowledge that were not included in the study. Future studies in this direction can explore organizational factors using books, proceeding papers, and information extracted from seminars and conferences.*

Key Words: Organizational Factors, Work Alienation, Systematic Review, PRISMA

Introduction

Modern societies are characterized by work alienation. This crucial concept has its roots in organizational and sociological frameworks, models, and theories. This concept is based on Hegel's work. Marx and Erich Homan further explained and delineated this concept in their writing (Musto, 2021). They defined it as “the feeling of estrangement, disillusionment, and separation people feel in their workplaces.” Marx maintained that as societies became industrialized and urbanized, home and work became separated. This separation broke the centuries-old pattern of working from home. This change in pattern led to a mass-scale spring of factories and workshops in Europe. Initially, people became alienated from the very products they made. As organizational changes and technology modify work nature, the concept of work alienation spread to include work alienation from oneself and other people (Mukhopadhyay, 2024).

The contextualization of this concept demands a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the reasons and factors that cause it. According to sociological theories, particularly Marxist theories, capitalist societies have internal inconsistencies and opposing properties that cause work alienation. The capitalist system is based on an incessant quest for profit motive at the expense of the well-being and creativity of the labor class. This inherent fault in the capitalist system generates anxiety and frustration in the working class, which in turn translates into work alienation (Øversveen, 2022). They feel like they are in a state where they cannot fulfill their humanity because they are unable to understand what is going on in the larger system of profit-driven capitalism. Additionally, organizational, psychological, and structural elements interact in complex ways to increase a state where they cannot become what they want to become. Workers' attitudes towards work are impacted by organizational factors, including but not limited to work

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▪ **To Cite:** Shahzad, M., Batool, Z., & Sajid, S. M. (2024). Organizational Factors Correlated with Work Alienation: A Systematic Review. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(2), 18-27.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.330179374>

design, leadership styles, organizational culture, career development opportunities, and workload. Moreover, a perspective through which to view how work-related factors affect employee well-being is provided by the job demands-resources theory. This theory explains how work demands, such as workload and job resources, such as support, interact with one another and affect work alienation. Organizations seeking to build settings that promote employee engagement and lessen feelings of separation must comprehend this link.

Work alienation does not affect individuals alone; it also influences societal dynamics, the psychological health of employees, and organizational performance. Musto (2021) found in his study that there is a strong correlation between work alienation and absenteeism, higher turnovers, and lower job satisfaction. Moreover, work alienation increases social isolation, loneliness, depression, and social alienation. Both public and private organizations are equally reeling from this social menace. Past literature on this area showed that several negative implications are linked with this phenomenon. For example, low productivity, organizational performance, higher job hopping, low morale and self-esteem, and the psychological health of employees. Because it is negatively correlated with individual and organizational outcomes, researchers and practitioners have been trying to understand the potential organizational factors behind this (Mukhopadhyay, 2024).

This review aims to understand the potential organizational factors behind work alienation among employees of public and private organizations. This review will peruse the scientific literature systematically. It will review all relevant theories, models, frameworks, empirical research, and research findings on the relationship between organizational factors and work alienation.

This review addresses two research problems. First, it aims to identify the organizational factors that are correlated with work alienation. Second, it investigates how these elements appear in organizational contexts that are both public and private. This study will examine several organizational elements, such as workload, career development opportunities, organizational culture, leadership styles, and job design, that have been theorized and empirically tested about work alienation.

This review is important because it can help shape organizational practices, policies, and interventions that try to reduce work alienation and enhance employee well-being in a variety of organizational contexts. This study aims to offer useful insights for managers, HR specialists, and legislators who are trying to establish more supportive and healthy work environments for their employees by highlighting important organizational variables that lead to work alienation. Overall, the organizational factors associated with work alienation among employees in both public and commercial organizations are thoroughly examined in this review study. This paper intends to contribute to a deeper knowledge of the organizational causes behind job alienation and to inform future research objectives and organizational practices in this crucial area by synthesizing and analyzing existing literature.

Methodology

Identification and Study Selection

The pertinent scientific studies for this paper were searched using an organized search method. The databases that were used to search data include Web of Science, Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, JSTOR, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Directory of Open Access Journals, ScienceOpen, Social Science Research Network (SSRN). Key terms were used alone and in combination. The key terms used were "Work alienation," OR "Work Estrangement," OR "work detachment," OR "Job dissatisfaction." "Work alienation" OR "job dissatisfaction" AND "Job design" AND "public organization" OR "Private organization." "Work alienation" OR "job dissatisfaction" AND "Leadership style" AND "public organization" OR "Private organization." "Work alienation" OR "job dissatisfaction" AND "Organizational culture" AND "public organization" OR "Private organization." "Work alienation" OR "job dissatisfaction" AND "Career Development Opportunities" AND "public organization" OR "Private organization." "Work alienation" OR "job dissatisfaction" AND "Workload" AND "public organization" OR "Private organization."



Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The following restriction is applied to include studies in this study.

- Relevant papers published from 2021 to 2023.
- Only those papers that had been published in the W category of the Higher Education Journal Recognition System (HJRS) for the years 2021–2023 were included.
- Open-access articles.
- Articles published in the English language.

Exclusion Criteria

- Scientific literature except for original articles like books, technical reports, conference papers, and conference proceedings.
- Articles that were not published in the English language.
- Articles that had no open access.
- Articles that did not pass the screening stage.

Data Extraction

The data was gathered from the research articles following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines. Initially, 102 articles were identified through databases and other search engines. Subsequently, 18 additional articles were located through other sources. Upon reaching the second stage, duplicate articles were removed, resulting in a total of 100 unique articles for screening. Moving to the third step, articles falling within categories X and Y of HJRS and lacking open access were excluded due to non-compliance with inclusion criteria, leaving 55 accessible articles falling into category W. In the fourth stage, further refinement was conducted, with 15 articles excluded due to unclear objectives, methodology sections, and ambiguous outcome variables of interest.

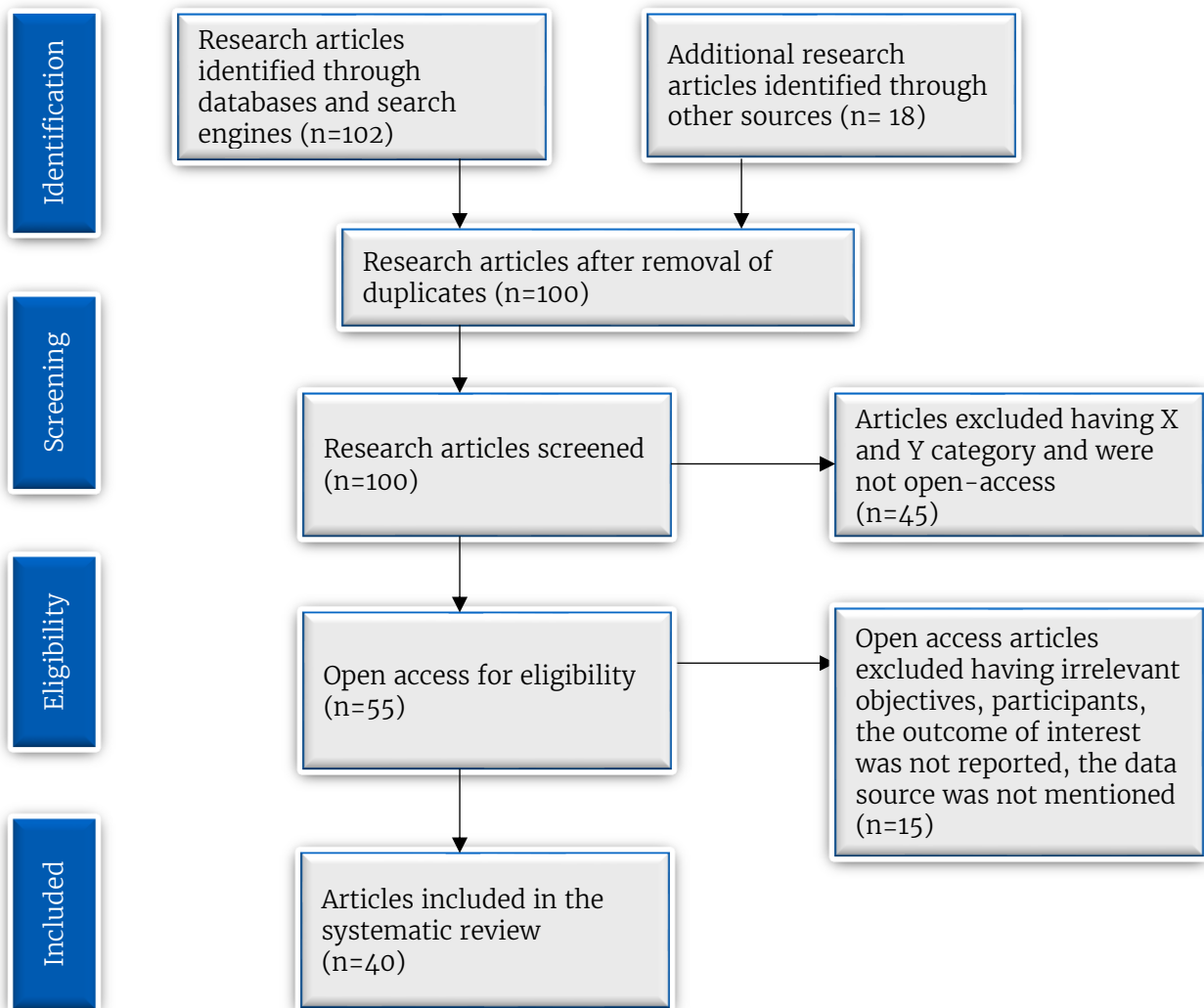
The identified articles were categorized using HEC's HJRS, with selection criteria limited to those published between 2021 and 2023. The majority of the chosen articles employed cross-sectional and quantitative research methodologies, with several incorporating mediation and moderation modeling through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). These studies focused on a diverse range of subjects, namely workers across both public and private sectors, spanning industries such as hospitals, hostels, service sectors, manufacturing, and educational institutions.

Quality Assessment

Based on the internationally benchmarked and recognized prestige parameters of a journal, HJRS calculates its Journal Prestige Index (JPI). JPI is classified into W, X, and Y categories by the relative thresholds determined by the respective scientific review panel of HEC. It ensures that there is no bias towards a single factor by equally weighting them. Predetermined thresholds established by the HEC scientific review panel decide these categories, guaranteeing an impartial and equitable evaluation procedure. To ensure objectivity in the evaluation process, the assessment criteria take into account a number of elements, such as publishing frequency, editorial standards, peer review procedures, and citation metrics. Each of these aspects is given an equal weight. The chosen articles uphold the highest standards of academic excellence and make a substantial contribution to the scholarly debate on the topic by adhering to these set quality guidelines.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flow chart delineating steps of the study methodology



The above figure delineates a step-by-step process to select the identified research articles that were included in the study. In the first step, 102 articles were identified through databases and other search engines. Then, other sources of articles were located, and 18 more articles were identified. In the second stage, duplicate articles were removed from the identified article list. So, after the second stage, 100 articles were screened after the removal of duplicate articles. In the third step, those articles that fall in the X and Y categories of HJRS were excluded and were not open access because they violated inclusion criteria. Consequently, after the third stage, the study had 55 articles that were open-access and fell into the W category. In the fourth stage, 15 more articles were excluded from the open-access article because they had unclear objectives and methodology sections. Moreover, the outcome variable of interest was also ambiguous.

Results and Discussion

Job Design

A review of the selected articles found eight articles on the correlation between work alienation and job design. A review showed that job designs that allow autonomy, liberty, creativity, and diversity have a significantly negative impact on work alienation (Almazrouei, Bani-Melhem, & Shamsudin, 2023). Jobs that are designed in such a way that enriches them and makes them more satisfying and fulfilling have a tendency to reduce work alienation and psychological stress (Aydın, Çınar, & Basım, 2022). At the same time, job designs that stress strict rules, deadlines, and limited exercise of individual decision-making have been positively linked with work alienation (Khan & Rasool, 2022). Job designs that underscore the



hard and fast rules are likely to lead to psychological problems for employees. These symptoms include anxiety, depression, loneliness, and alienation (Mehta, [2022](#)).

Furthermore, the review revealed that several job design factors had a significant impact on work alienation. Particularly, job attributes like autonomy, diversity in tasks, use of skills, and feedback systems were found to be important predictors of work alienation. Lower levels of work alienation were linked to jobs with enriched design features, such as varied tasks, autonomy in decision-making, chances for skill development, and positive feedback mechanisms (Panda, Sinha, & Jain, [2022](#)). On the other hand, employment with inflexible and monotonous design elements was associated with higher levels of work alienation. Similarly, types of job design are also correlated with work alienation.

Transformational job design presents a viable way to mitigate work alienation and foster engagement in the workplace. This design emphasizes job enrichment, empowerment, and employee involvement (Stănescu & Romaşcanu, [2023](#)). Organizations with transformational design lessen employee emotions of disenchantment and detachment by giving employees the freedom to make decisions and enhancing job roles with meaningful tasks (Aydın et al., [2022](#); Panda et al., [2022](#)).

Regarding public and private organizations, the review found that employees may feel detached and disillusioned from their jobs if they are not allowed to grow in their skills. Significant degrees of work alienation might result from people feeling alienated and bored with their job responsibilities in bureaucratic organizations. They are typically characterized by standardized and monotonous tasks (Watson, Kistler, Graham, & Sinclair, [2021](#)). Hence, job designs, along with their various forms and types, impact work alienation.

Leadership Styles

Ten articles were found exploring the impact of leader styles on working alienation. Leadership styles have been correlated with work alienation. The nature of leadership styles has ramifications for work alienation (Aktürk & Yeşiltaş, [2023](#)). Transformational leadership style places a strong emphasis on employee empowerment, communication, and participation in decision-making processes. This type of leadership style has been repeatedly linked to lower levels of work alienation (M. Ali, Usman, Soetan, Saeed, & Rofcanin, [2022](#)). Conversely, levels of work alienation were shown to be higher in organizations with authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership styles. They are typified by a lack of guidance, support, and involvement from leaders.

The findings of the review demonstrate that leadership styles have a significant impact on work alienation. Workplace disengagement and disillusionment are lessened when employees feel connected (Atiq, Ahmed, & Saleem, [2023](#)), purposeful, and engaged (Nezir & Sabir, [2023](#)). Conversely, workplaces marked by micromanagement, indifference, and a lack of support are correlated with higher levels of work alienation (Erdem, [2021](#)). Likewise, Leaders who encourage open communication, teamwork, employee empowerment, and support can create lower levels of work alienation among employees. Past research has consistently found that organizational leaders treating their staff members with empathy (Ghaleb, [2022](#)), respect, and trust both in public and private organizations are more likely to foster a healthy work environment. This positive work setting promotes employee engagement and well-being (Gılıç & İnandı, [2021](#)). Employees may feel more alienated from their jobs if their bosses adopt an autocratic or laissez-faire approach (Sarwar, Zakariya, Afshari, & Ishaq, [2022](#)). This approach is inherently marked by authoritarianism, or a disregard for individuals' say in organizational matters (Smama'h, Eshah, Al-Oweidat, Rayan, & Nashwan, [2023](#); Vilarino del Castillo & Lopez-Zafra, [2022](#)). Therefore, the aforementioned discussion highlights the crucial role leadership styles play in affecting work alienation.

Organizational Culture

The review found six studies examining the connection between work alienation and organizational culture. Work alienation has been proven to be strongly influenced by important organizational culture elements such as fairness, trust, respect, and recognition (Daniels, [2021](#)). Employee work alienation was found to be lower in companies with inclusive, positive cultures that value justice, trust, respect, and acknowledgment (Demirkol, [2021](#)). Conversely, organizations characterized by hostile, unjust, and

bureaucratic cultures were shown to have toxic or dysfunctional cultures, which increased work alienation (Doberstein & Charbonneau, 2022).

The results of this comprehensive review demonstrate that organizational culture has a significant influence on work alienation (Gümüş, Alan, Eskici, & Bacaksız, 2021). At work, employees who are part of positive and inclusive organizational cultures feel more engaged, trusted, and part of the team, which helps to lower employee disillusionment and detachment. On the other hand, toxic or dysfunctional cultures damage workers' well-being, morale, and trust, which raises the risk of work alienation (Li et al., 2023).

Additionally, the prevalent norms, values, and beliefs inside an organization affect how employees feel about their work environment and sense of belonging in both public and private settings. Workers who work for companies that have inclusive, positive cultures that value recognition, trust, and respect are more likely to feel less alienated at work. A strong corporate culture that prioritizes fairness, openness, and employee well-being encourages a sense of commitment and community among staff members, which lessens feelings of alienation (Shahzad, Shahzad, Dilanchiev, & Irfan, 2022). Work environments characterized by hostile, unjust, and bureaucratic cultures are linked to increased levels of employee alienation at work because they undermine employee trust, morale, and engagement. Consequently, this review showed the significance of organizational culture in increasing and decreasing work alienation.

Career Development Opportunities

Seven studies examining the connection between job alienation and career development opportunities were found in the review. It has been revealed that important aspects of career development options have a major impact on work alienation. They include advancement pathways, mentorship programs, and training courses. Lower levels of job alienation among employees have been linked to organizations that offer plenty of opportunities for skill development, mentorship support, and career promotion. Organizations that disregard or undercut possibilities for professional advancement, on the other hand, may be a factor in the rise in employee work alienation (ALBashayreh & Al Gharaibeh, 2021).

The results of this systematic review demonstrate the importance of career development opportunities in reducing work alienation. By enabling workers to develop, learn, and progress in their careers, organizations that support career development programs lessen employee dissatisfaction and feelings of alienation from their jobs (Dawood, Shaalan, & Nsaif, 2022). A sense of purpose, direction, and advancement is fostered by offering employees chances for skill development, mentorship support (Goyal, Nigam, & Goyal, 2023), and career advancement (Koyuncu & DEMİRHAN, 2021). This can reduce job alienation and increase employee engagement and satisfaction (Odei-Tettey, 2021). In alternative terms, offering career development opportunities to staff members is crucial in reducing job alienation and promoting engagement and dedication in the workplace. Employees who see chances for skill improvement, career promotion, and personal development are more likely to feel appreciated and driven in their positions in both public and private companies (Şenol & Şeneldir 2022).

Investments in mentoring programs, promotion routes, and training programs show an organization's dedication to the growth and well-being of its workforce, which can lessen alienation and boost job satisfaction and retention rates (Zohourparvaz & Vagharseyyedin, 2023). Organizations may enable people to take charge of their careers and foster a feeling of purpose and fulfillment in their work by providing clear career paths and opportunities for skill development. Thus, this systematic review highlights the significance of career development initiatives in influencing employee experiences and attitudes in the workplace by presenting evidence of the link between career development opportunities and work alienation.

Workload

The study included nine articles investigating the association between work alienation and workload. Work alienation has been demonstrated to be highly influenced by key workload variables such as task complexity, time pressure, and job demands. Elevated levels of workload have been linked to heightened



work alienation among workers. High workloads can cause stress, exhaustion, and burnout in individuals. Workload lowers engagement and job satisfaction (Abdelmohsen, [2022](#)).

The systematic review's insights underpin the important relationship between workload and work alienation. Employees who have a heavy workload often work in stressful, demanding, and exhausting conditions (S. Ali & Ishrat, [2022](#)). A high workload negatively affects workers' well-being and positively affects work alienation. Workload management techniques like evaluation, prioritization, and resource allocation can lessen the detrimental effects of workload on job alienation and increase employee satisfaction and engagement (Cui et al., [2023](#)).

Additionally, work alienation among employees is significantly influenced by the workload in both public and private organizations (Kırklıkçı, [2021](#)). There are several important aspects of this complicated link between workload and work alienation that merit further discussion. First off, research indicates that high job demands, pressure to meet deadlines, and an overwhelming workload can all lead to an increased risk of work-related stress in workers (ÖZTÜRK ÇİFTÇİ, [2021](#)). When faced with unmanageable workloads, workers in both public and commercial organizations may feel stressed, exhausted, and burned out, which can lower their motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. Second, organizational variables, including a lack of resources, subpar workload management techniques, and insufficient support systems, aggravate the effect of workload on work alienation (ŞAHİN & ERDOĞAN, [2022](#)). Third, budgetary restrictions, understaffing, and bureaucratic inefficiencies in public organizations can all lead to higher levels of stress and employee alienation from their workloads (ÜMİT & Aysel, [2022](#)). Fourth, pressures to fulfill profit targets, stay competitive, and satisfy productivity standards can also result in higher workloads and job stress in private organizations (Xia, Wang, Li, He, & Wang, [2022](#)).

Importantly, different individuals have different subjective experiences with workloads, and these experiences can be influenced by personal factors like job positions, skill levels, and coping mechanisms. While certain workers might flourish in high-stress settings and view their workload as interesting and challenging, others might feel overburdened and disengaged, which could result in higher degrees of work alienation (Zhang, Li, Chollathanrattanapong, & Lu, [2022](#)). Similarly, the correlation between work alienation and workload highlights the significance of proactive management and support measures in fostering wholesome and long-lasting work environments in public and private establishments. Organizations can improve job satisfaction, productivity, and retention rates by addressing stressors connected to workload and fostering employee well-being. This can eventually lead to organizational success and the flourishing of employees. Therefore, workload affects work alienation positively.

Conclusion

To sum up, this systematic review has given an in-depth analysis of the connection between organizational factors and work alienation. We have obtained important insights into how leadership styles, organizational culture, career development chances, workload, and other factors contribute to employees' experiences of work alienation through the synthesis of empirical evidence from a variety of empirical studies. The review's conclusions draw attention to the complex nature of work alienation and emphasize the important role that organizational factors play in determining employees' work alienation. Lower levels of work alienation have been linked to leadership styles that emphasize employee involvement, empowerment, and support. On the other hand, dictatorial leadership styles have been linked to higher levels of employee alienation. Similarly, it has been discovered that inclusive and positive organizational cultures that promote fairness, respect, and trust help to lessen job alienation, while dysfunctional cultures make employees feel even more detached and disillusioned. Additionally, it becomes clear that fostering employee well-being, managing workload efficiently, and offering plenty of career development chances are essential tactics for lowering work alienation and raising organizational effectiveness. Organizations must make developing encouraging and empowering work environments their top priority going forward to boost worker performance, satisfaction, and engagement. Organizations can cultivate a culture of resilience and well-being by addressing the underlying organizational reasons that contribute to work alienation. This will ultimately enhance outcomes for both organizations and employees. Organizations can foster happier, healthier work environments where people feel appreciated, involved, and fulfilled in their jobs by addressing the intricate interaction of organizational factors that drive work alienation. This

comprehensive review acts as a call to action for organizations, encouraging them to put employee well-being first and build work cultures that reduce work alienation.

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