

The Impact of Job Alienation on the Performance among Palestine Medical Complex Employees

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the impact of job alienation on the performance among Palestine Medical Complex (PMC) employees at Ramallah Governorate, Palestine. To achieve this end, the study adopted the quantitative research approach using the sampling survey method. A 62-item questionnaire was formulated to a random stratified sample of (90) male and female employees. The questionnaire is appropriate for the exploratory nature of the research. The collected data was statistically analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The results revealed that the participants experienced a high level of job alienation, and a moderate level of performance. The study revealed the determinant impact of job alienation on decreasing the performance for employees at Palestine Medical Complex. It was found that when job alienation increases, performance decreases and vice versa. The study recommended the need to address the causes and negative effects of alienation by improving the internal work environment, providing opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making mechanisms, and motivating them. The implications of the findings for practice were also highlighted.

Keywords: Job alienation, performance, employees, Palestine Medical Complex.

Introduction

Competition is the shortest way for the organizations that seek to provide high-quality products and services that meet customers' expectations. Every organization that is aware of the changes in the environment first seeks to identify its competitors and provide better products and services than its competitors. As a matter of fact, attention should not be paid to the material resources only, but rather to the elements which better enable an organization to achieve its objectives—the human resources and the environment in which those resources operate. Hence, attention has been paid to human resources as one of the fundamental sources of an organization's competitive advantage, which in turn has led to paying attention to the work environment. This approach would provide highly ethical elements that pave the way for the employees to strongly adopt and advocate the culture of the organization in order to

achieve the goal of the organization in which they are employed (Drouza, 2014). Many researchers have recently become more and more interested in studying the factors influencing the feelings of the employees in the work environment. They have studied their attitudes, feelings, and their positive and negative behavioral effects on their performance in order to raise the quality of their performance and achieve the objectives of the organization. Many studies showed that the work environment in which altruism, cooperation, and responsibility prevail can positively affect the performance of the organization as well as its employees, which would motivate them to sign an invisible contract with the organization, which also embodies their satisfaction, belonging and citizenship in all dimensions and thus strengthens their immunity to conquer their sense of job alienation (Sabr, 2013). Job alienation is one of the organizational phenomena that negatively affect the performance of the employees and that of the organization. The significance of studying job alienation primarily stems from its strong association with human resources, which is an important organizational resource in an organization. This resource is the cornerstone of the progress in any organization; however, when the employees are overwhelmed with the sense of job alienation, this means that they are in a state of inability and powerlessness. This means that they have lost their ability to control the events surrounding them. This also means that they have developed a sense of meaninglessness, aimlessness, and discrepancy between the objectives and the appropriate means to achieve them. Job alienation also leads to social isolation and self-alienation. All these repercussions are considered part of the phenomena that negatively affect the performance of workers and consequently reflect negatively on the performance of the organization (Amedi, 2013).

Aims and Scope

Employees working in governmental, non-governmental and private sectors face many psychological, social, and economic pressures to varying degrees. One of these pressures, the phenomenon of job alienation, is considered a sensitive and important problem in the governmental institutions and departments in general and health and medical institutions in particular. Job alienation has negative psychological, physiological and behavioral effects that can affect the performance of individuals, reduce their ability to achieve and be creative, and lessen their motivation to work, which adversely affect the level of the required performance. PMC in Ramallah is the first central medical complex in the West Bank. It includes more than one specialized hospital and employs a large number of medical, technical

and administrative staff from different cities and areas of the West Bank. In order to keep PMC in full readiness and high efficiency regarding the provision of medical and health services to various segments of the Palestinian society from all parts of the West Bank and Gaza, it is essential to identify the reality of job alienation in PMC and its impact on the staff performance. The overall objective of the study is to investigate the impact of job alienation on the performance of PMC employees. The study addressed one of the fundamental aspects of the organization hierarchy, namely: job alienation, which may negatively affect the performance of an organization and its ability to achieve its mission and develop its creativity.

Background

Job Alienation

As a concept, alienation is deeply rooted in the history of all mankind. It dates back to the moment when Adam (PBUH) was estranged from Paradise, sent to live on earth and alienated from the life he had before he disobeyed his Lord—that was really the first feeling of alienation ever experienced by man (Khalifa, 2003). The word “alienation” is originally derived from Latin and is used in many domains, including philosophy, psychology, statistics, sociology and other social sciences. Hegel was the first to use the term “alienation” in his writings with two meanings: firstly, as a theological concept, meaning the separation of the self from the social essence, i.e. the alienation of the soul from self and the human spirit from the social essence, and secondly as a philosophical one, meaning the individual's renunciation of his self-independence, his unification with the social essence and ending the stage of his alienation from the social essence. In other words, Hegel believes that man is necessarily alienated, either from himself or from his community, and that man evolves from social alienation to self-alienation. However, the concept of alienation has recently acquired negative connotative meanings and lost its positive ones. It has generally become associated with anything that would threaten man and his freedom, which enhanced the spread of a one-dimensional negative connotation for the concept in the domains of philosophy and psychology (Ferguson, 2004). According to Kanungo (1992), alienation can be defined as an individual's feeling of isolation, loss, loneliness, lack of belonging, loss of trust, anxiety and aggression, rejection of social values and standards and suffering from psychological stress. As for Vandenberghe (2002), alienation refers to the weakness of the relationship between

the individual and the job and the level of integration. This integration may be psychological, intellectual or professional.

Although researchers have not agreed on a specific definition for alienation, there is wide agreement on many of its facets and dimensions, which they reached through their thorough investigation of this concept. The most prominent of these was Seeman (1959) who defined the meaning of alienation and identified five dimensions of alienation:

1. Powerlessness: This dimension refers to the individual's inability to control the events, to influence the social attitudes to which he is exposed, and to control his actions and desires.
2. Social Isolation: This dimension refers to the individual's sense of alienation and isolation from those around him, both inside and outside the organization; thus his sense of belonging to the group with which he works decreases and so does his effectiveness in achieving organizational goals.
3. Meaninglessness: This dimension refers to the individual's feeling that he lacks a guide or a director for his behavior and belief.
4. Normlessness: This dimension refers to the individual's feeling that the standards have lost their organizational power in the social or professional environment and that these standards are no longer respected socially or professionally.
5. Self-estrangement: This dimension refers to the individual's separation from and lack of conformity with himself.

Furthermore, the factors which lead to job alienation among the employees in an organization are varied and numerous, and it can be divided into two main types, as indicated in Ben Zahi (2010):

Factors related to the organization: mechanization and automation, dysfunctions in performance reports, poor administrative efficiency, poor incentive system, retention of information, size of organization, lack of incentives, functioning in separate locations, lack of the individual's role, poor religious values and role of governmental organizations, intense competition, poor training.

Factors related to the employees: fear and lack of job security, lack of efficiency, leisure time, poor coordination and adaptation, employees' values and trends, poor time management, poor faith, poor leadership qualities, lack of specialization, despair and surrender to failure, suppression and unconsciousness, introversion and isolationism.

Moreover, An-Nouri (1979) and Shata (2004) referred to a range of effects related to the state of estrangement, as follows:

Backwardness and Marginalization: There are many people who are unable to adapt to the movement of the society towards coping with the rush after financial spoils and social status as a result of their persistence to adhere to traditional values—a situation which would impede the compatibility of their behavior with the ongoing social changes. They are often overwhelmed with the perception that their deeds have a positive impact. In the context of these qualitative developments, the frustration diminishes and the material failure turns to a moral one covering the various considerations that they would use to justify their opposing positions in life.

Decadence of Identity: Based on modern research, it can be observed that the maximum extent of the state of alienation in the contexts of social and economic change and industrialization is the separation of man from his identity, which is called self-estrangement by Seeman (2004).

Isolation and Lack of Belongingness: They are often prominent in modern western societies, which are significantly based on egoism, without paying much attention to the spirit of the community, as well as the lack of communication between the urban population and the emergence of psychological and social barriers that precede the interactive distances between them (An-Nouri, 1979).

Job Satisfaction

A comprehensive definition by Locke (1969) states that job satisfaction is a “Pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one's job or job experience”. Agho (1993) also defined job satisfaction as a personal evaluation of conditions present in the job, or outcomes that arise as a result of having a job. Job satisfaction further relates to the extensive magnitude in which people enjoy being at their jobs, doing their work as well as

being rewarded for their efforts (Hirschfield, 2000). This suggests that job satisfaction has to do with an individual's perception and evaluation of their job, and this perception is influenced by unique circumstances such as needs, values and expectations. Overall job satisfaction focuses on the internal state of gratification or discontentment about one's job (Thompson, 2012). Positive experiences in terms of friendly colleagues, good remuneration, compassionate supervisors and attractive jobs create high levels of job satisfaction.

Moreover, there is no doubt that the employees' alienation and dissatisfaction with their work has a negative impact on many factors such as absenteeism percentage, relationship between colleagues, relationship with management and administration, turnover, absenteeism through false pretenses such as false sickness claims and the like. Modern contemporary administrative thought points out three trends concerning the effect of job alienation on performance:

The Negative Trend: Proponents of this trend argue that there is an inverse relationship between job alienation and performance, and that the greater the gap of job alienation, the lower the rate of performance and vice versa.

The Positive Trend: Proponents of this trend states that job alienation occurs due to several factors within the work, such as the absence of rewards, which leads to work negligence.

The Proportional Trend: This trend attaches no importance to the impact of the job alienation on the performance of the employees. This trend assumes that the employee may sometimes suffer from job alienation, but this has no impact on the level and quality of performance. Nevertheless, it is sometimes possible to increase performance by exercising pressure or by using dictatorial methods of leadership; and thus the level of performance will be high despite the existence of job alienation (Hajir, 1996).

Furthermore, performance generally consists of several elements that can be summarized as follows:

Knowledge of Job Requirements: This includes professional skill, technical knowledge and general background of the job and related fields.

Quality of Work: This includes precision, order, technical ability, capacity to organize work and error-free work.

Quantity of Work: This includes the volume of the work performed under normal conditions and the speed of work completion.

Perseverance and Reliability: This includes seriousness in work, ability to take responsibility and complete work on time, and the need for supervision and guidance (Maher, 2015).

Further Related Studies

Several studies have been published, researched alienation and its impact on job performance as a multidimensional phenomenon, as well as addressed theoretically and through applied research. In a recent study, Abbas (2017) concluded that the hostile work environment variable has a passive effect between the leader and the followers on organizational alienation. In another study, Dağlı (2017) found that a significant difference was detected in all dimensions except in self-alienation with respect to the teachers' gender.

Abu Rumman (2016) indicated that there is no statistically significant impact regarding the ambiguity role on job alienation; and there is a statistically significant impact in conflict role, the burden of the role, the opportunities of growth and career advancement on job alienation. The results of a study done by Nyberg et al. (2016) supported a contingency approach to pay-for-performance's impact on future employee performance, and also found that merit pay and bonus pay can substitute for each other and that the strength of pay-for-performance's effect is a function of employee tenure, the pay-for-performance trend over time, and job type (presumably due to differences in the measurability of employee performance across jobs).

Moreover, the study of Golden (2015) showed that job alienation has a direct negative impact on confidence, and thus it has a negative effect on job performance. In another study, Drouza (2014) revealed that the respondents' perceptions of the existence of a moral work environment in the Ministry were high, while the perceptions about the level of feeling of job alienation among the respondents were of average. By the same token, the study of Abu Samrah (2014) showed that the level of job alienation among faculty members was high, with an average of 3.81. A study by Sabr (2013) showed a significant impact of work stress on the level of job alienation among workers. The findings of a study conducted on a sample of midwives by Tummers and Dulk (2011) indicated that work alienation does not only have an impact on work related outcomes, but it also influences the degree of work-to-family enrichment. In particular, work meaninglessness is relevant for both work outcomes and

family life. Midwives felt that their work was meaningless and had no value. As a result, they showed less tendency to put more effort into work. The findings also indicated a negative effect of alienation on social relations between midwives and supervisors at work.

Methodology and Design

The study adopted the quantitative research approach. The questionnaire is appropriate for the exploratory nature of the research. The population of the study was limited to the employees of the Palestine Medical Complex at Ramallah Governorate during the 2017. The target population consisted of 765 employees (172 doctors, 315 nurses, 134 technicians, 45 administrative staff, and 99 support and service workers).

The study adopted the quantitative research approach using the sampling survey method. A 62-item questionnaire was formulated to a random stratified sample of 90 male and female employees. The questionnaire is appropriate for the exploratory nature of the research. A 5-point Likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree) was used to measure the responses.

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ascertain reliability and consistency of the survey. Cronbach's Alpha for the survey instrument was 0.93, indicating excellent reliability and consistency.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire items were rated on a 1–5 Likert scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neither, 2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree). Thus, the highest score indicated a high level of job alienation and performance. Descriptive statistics gauged job alienation and performance scores among the sampled population. The following statistical techniques were measured: Pearson correlation, T.test, One way analysis of variance, Manova, and Cronbach's Alpha.

The demographic breakdown of the participants was as follows: gender, age, marital status, qualification, experience, and income. The females represented 54.4% of the participants, while the remaining 45.6% were males; the age of 47.8% of them was between 25-35, and 65.6% of them were married. Nearly 46.7% of the respondents had 9-13 years of work

experience; the majority 71.1% of them had a full-time job, 56.7% of them had a bachelor's degree, and 74.4% of them had an average salary of \$600.

The results revealed that the Palestine Medical Complex employees experienced a high level of job alienation, and a moderate level of performance. The mean scores and standard deviation were (M 3.80 SD 0.54) and (M 3.38 SD 0.40) respectively.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the job alienation indicators ranked in a descending order as follows: the nature of the functions and tasks practiced by the staff, as they do not give them opportunities to learn and exploit their abilities and available potentials (M 3.14 SD 0.87); the nature of the internal work environment of the institution (M 3.11 SD 0.89); the nature of work, which is a great burden on them (M 3.10 SD 0.86); and the lack of appreciation and acknowledgment for the performed work (M 3.09 SD 0.83).

Moreover, the findings revealed that the job performance indicators ranked in a descending order as follows: the lack of the appropriate skill for the work done by the employee (M 3.56 SD 0.88); the employee does not approve of accomplishing several tasks and responsibilities at the same time (M 3.40 SD 0.91); the employee does not believe that work is an act of worship (M 2.51 SD 0.84); and the employee does not keep official working hours (M 2.48 SD 0.92).

Moreover, the study investigated demographic breakdown of job alienation among the employees with the aim of identifying differences. The findings revealed that a gender is a significant variable. However, no statistical significant differences were found in the rest of the study variables, such as age, marital status, qualification, experience, and income. In relation to gender, the differences favored females (M 3.51 SD 0.47) compared to males (M 3.48 SD 0.56): T.test value was (3.295 P=0.000).

Finally, the findings also denoted that there are statistical significant negative correlations between job alienation and the average score of performance among the employees of the Palestine Medical Complex. Thus, the R-correlation was (0.388 P=0.001).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to investigate the impact of job alienation on the performance among Palestine Medical Complex (PMC) employees at Ramallah Governorate, Palestine. The

results revealed that the participants experienced a high level of job alienation, and a moderate level of performance.

According to the study's results, the females scored a higher level of job alienation than males. The study revealed the determinant impact of job alienation on decreasing the performance for employees at Palestine Medical Complex. It was found that when job alienation increases, performance decreases and vice versa. The findings of this study are similar to certain findings in the related studies while certain aspects disagreed with others as well. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Organization should improve the internal working environment; provide opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making mechanisms; and use real systems that provide material and moral incentives for the employees.
2. Providing training programs that will enhance the expertise and knowledge of the employees in carrying out the tasks and responsibilities assigned to them.
3. Organization should strengthen the bonds of cooperation and solidarity among the employees and take care of social responsibility programs for them and their families so that the employees can achieve a high level of productivity based on the required quality standards.
4. There is the need to address the causes and negative effects of alienation by improving the internal work environment.

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