CHAPTER VIII
IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENTS OF INDUSTRIES

The concept of work alienation developed by Marx is the subject matter of much interest in sociological discussions relating to the human condition and our relationship to society and the work place. Although through their work or employment, individuals are obviously cut off from their own activities. While a person does have a function in the modern system, he/she does not have direct access to the results of their own work. The examples of alienation provided by modern society are almost inexhaustible. The social and economic system is now more complicated than ever. Any work performed by an individual is now only a small part of a large system that serves all kinds of interests. However, individuals cannot exist outside society since they are compelled to live and work in a certain way.

Our ability to work, to improve how we work and build on our successes, has tended to result in the cumulative development of the productive forces. Thus the alienation of labour arose when a majority of society involved in the productive process, and from human subordination to the domination of the productive process (Cox, 1998). The most significant feature of the factory production is the division of labour.
which meant that employees had to specialize in particular tasks, a series of atomized activities, which realized only one or two aspects of their human powers at the expense of all others. (Braverman, 1974). To work meant to be reduced to a human machine, lack of control over the process of production. Modern methods of production has increased the fragmentation of the labour process since Marx’s time. This creates alienation among them.

In the new globalised economy and its high-commitment s, alienation is supposed to be a psychological relic of the past. However an analysis in the past highlights that alienation remains a serious problem of workers and their employing s and that under modern theories of managerial control, alienation at work has only become worse (Bacharach et al, 2002).

As such the present study is an attempt to systematically examine the problem of work alienation among supervisors in industrial s. A careful assessment of the phenomenon and its incidence in relation to its different sources has helped to realize the influence of a host of factors which effect feelings about work. Even though both personal and work related factors have been selected to identify the causes it is interesting to note that though some of the personal factors have shown negative relationship none of them have statistically significant contributions to make. Among the work related factors all have shown negative relationship, indicating that positive response to these will resulting in lowering levels of alienation. Significant
among these have been job expectations and job satisfaction. A detailed
description of these variables and their independent contributions as
predictors of alienation has been given.

One thing which very clearly emerges is that alienation is the result of
an interplay of certain work related factors and that personal variables do not
contribute significantly to the extent that they become sources of alienation.
Therefore in so far as alienation needs to be overcome, thrust should be on
matters relating to work and the al context.

The problem of increasing production and also making work more
pleasant has been approached many a time by managements, through the
introduction of changes in the work environment. Such changes have mostly
been related to changing the physical aspects of job which usually result in
changes in the integral part of the job or task being performed and not
environmental changes (Blum & Naylor 1984)

It may have been observed by most management that unfavourable
environmental conditions contribute to a slow down of activities and
production. They lead to increasing turnover, high absenteeism, alienation
and a reduction in efficiency. This realization can help them take
appropriate steps in the direction of creating positive and conductive work
situation. There is no doubt that employees prefer pleasant to unpleasant
surroundings and when favourable work environment is created it inevitably increases work performance.

The nature of technical operation is an important environmental factor affecting the supervisors and those under their supervision. Because of increased mechanization work has become repetitive and mechanically paced. Fewer opportunities for interpersonal contact are found. Excessive repetitiveness and monotony creates anonymity and personal relationship becomes scarce. All these situations create conflict resulting in different forms of work behaviour. Negative work behaviour fosters alienation among supervisors as was observed.

The classic problem of work alienation has received little attention both by researchers as well as managements. It is much more prevalent than is realized. Most of the time, it goes unnoticed as supervisors tend to get immuned to the constraints of job and avoid being over taken by such tendencies. None the less it is generally held that environmental factors effect behaviour not by themselves but rather to the extent that they interact with other individual or personal factors. According to Lewin (1951) who has proposed the model human behaviour based upon his research says that human behaviour is a function of the interaction of both personal differences and environmental surroundings. What he intended to emphasize is that the interrelationship between work environment and individuals in the work
setting creates a structure of relationship leading to the work behaviour of supervisors. As such an environment fostering two way communication, satisfaction with most aspects of work, positive attitudes, expected attributes and host of such factors can have great impact on creating positive work behaviour and seldom create alienation.

As found in the study the two factors, which have contributed to alienation, need to be perceived as the sources of alienation. Effort should be thus made to see that these two factors should be looked into in order to alleviate conflict, and create opportunities for better participation. The importance of the factors of job satisfaction has been greatly emphasized time and again. Managements feel that a pay raise is a cure-all, which can make everyone happy. But most studies found that pay ranks below certain other factors like opportunities for advancement, job security and type of work. (1947) The present study also established this fact as it found that among the five dimensions of job satisfaction, pay did not show significant association with alienation.

Co-worker, superior and work, emerged as contributing factors to alienation. It was found that the higher the satisfaction with these three dimensions the lower is the alienation. Emphasizing on the importance of these factors and providing reasonable possibilities for enhancement of colleagueship and better superior subordinate relationship can help achieve
strong positive feelings and discourage alienation among supervisors. Superior was judged to be the most important single factor in determining employee morale scores in a series of investigations where comparisons were made of morale scores of groups of employees who had different superiors. (WatesenGoodwin1939). Having a friendlier superior changed attitudes greatly. The favourable attitudes of employees towards their superior is believed to produce a climate in which attitudes of good team spirit are established and positive work behaviour are achieved.

Work itself as a factor of job satisfaction also assumes importance in the study. The components that go into making work include freedom and responsibility which go with the job, participation and prestige. Variance in these task structures will significantly influence satisfaction and performance relationship (Downey Sheridan, Slocum, 1975). However there are other factors of satisfaction that have bearing on alienation and performance. The present study found a strong collective contribution of all the five dimensions of job satisfaction to alienation.

Unclear targets and objectives and poor communication can contribute to dissatisfaction and eventually lead to poor work performance. Industrial s often are faced with problems in communication between the top management and bottom layers. Most of the time management objectives are carried down through the supervisors who serve as link between the
management and the rank and file workers. More often than not they tend to be caught some were between and get blamed for not communicating issues of primary concern to both groups. Unless a proper communication channel is developed and supervisors are involved in and aware of matters of their concern, they tend to be overlooked by the workers. This can spur feelings of neglect and lead to indifference or withdrawal. The findings of the study corroborate the statement. When supervisors reported positively on communication pattern in their s they also felt less alienated.

Although it is clear that supervisors satisfaction and performance are the result of complex factors related to the job it is also apparent that managements should take steps to significantly influence the relationship between these in order to foster positive work behaviour and reduce alienation.

Offering high job satisfaction needs some simple strategies like offering them a variety of meaningful tasks. Repetitive routine work often leads to job dissatisfaction. Leaders should think about introducing application of creativity in their work. Rotating the staff to different tasks at regular intervals makes their work challenging. Supervision should be done unobtrusively and more responsibility may be given by empowering the supervisors. Allow them opportunity to self pace themselves.
Expectation from work is another significant predictor of alienation in this study. While administering rewards, it must be made sure they match their expectation. Granting of rewards based on expectation will lead to varying degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The low performer will invariably report low satisfaction and gradually exhibit negative tendencies. These types of work behaviours lead to alienation among them. However the relationship between rewards and performance is often not as simple or direct as one would think as there are other causes of performance that have more direct bearing on them. Type of satisfaction, work experience and the job environment might be significant causal variables. Another significant observation is that what is rewarding for one person may not be rewarding for the other. Thus these aspects should be considered while potential causes of negative work behaviour are to be approached. Concern should be with equal emphasis on what s want from their employees and what employees expect in exchange from the management. An exchange relationship exists which creates linkages between employees and in a process in which both agree and work towards situations in which both al and employees goal attainment are facilitated.

Absenteeism and turnover are the symptoms of withdrawal and alienation as high levels of al commitment tend to be associated with lower rates of absence, turnover and alienation. (Porter et al 1974, 1976: Steers
1979). However as seen in the study, various other important variables also influence the decision to withdraw and feel alienated. Other work related factors like job attitudes; communication patterns and attributes of work situation have inverse correlation with alienation that is, the positive attitudes towards these aspects lower the levels of alienation. The relationship between job attitudes and job behaviour cannot be undermined. A causal relationship was largely assumed during the human relation movement in 1930’s where by positive attitudes caused positive behaviour and improved performance. Steers, Poster (1979). The management implication is quite clear that supervisors should be motivated to foster positive attitudes and job behaviour. However later research evidence did not comply with this pronouncement Bayfield and Crockett (1955). Satisfaction scores were also considered to predict turnover which had proved fruitful by studies in this area. A study by Ross and Zander (1957), has found this.

An other important factor determining alienation is work attributes or characteristics of the work situation. If supervisors have positive opinion on the work attributes or characteristics they indicate lower levels of alienation. These attributes defined into situation and get recognized. As long as the attributes are meaningful to them, creating positive reinforcement can help to achieve attached employees. A generalization that Herzberg, Mausner, and
Snyderman (1959) draw was that persons tend to describe good feelings towards factors intrinsic to themselves or towards their work activities, while bad feelings were due to things outside of themselves or their immediate job situation.

Among the personal variables which the study selected caste, education and years experience have shown association and negative correlation with alienation. However as the correlations are not largely significant, predictions cannot be made on the basis of these variables. Nonetheless, their importance cannot be under rated. Caste being an inseparable part of our society needs to be identified as a phenomenon of attributional importance especially, its consequences on work. Supervisors in this study indicated that caste does not affect lower or higher levels of alienation. The managements have tough role to play in this situation as caste has a very personal significance. But in as much as it creates alienation at the workplace its role cannot be ignored. Proper stand can be taken to educate, motivate and prepare supervisors to overcome social barriers and efforts to assimilate all will go a long way in achieving attached and committed supervisors.

Education serves varied purposes. Managements prescribe different educational qualifications for different jobs. Efforts should be made to procure the right man for the right job. Work roles and responsibilities
should commensurate with educational qualification of employees if managements have to acquire and sustain adjusted supervisors. Tendencies towards alienation can be curtailed provided supervisors find their work comparable to their scholastic achievements as the study has found.

Along with education, years of service or work experience equips employees with several experiences, feelings and opinions. Long association with the creates attachment if supervisors had faced positive reinforcements. On the contrary negative situations and reinforcements influence negative work behaviour to an extent that they indicate withdrawal and feel alienated. Hence, it is important for managements to help create positive work environment as past occurrences can have an impact on the present behaviour to the extent that they modify the present behaviour. As such supervisors with long association with the should be motivated to meaningfully participate and contribute to with their experience and capacities. Efforts should be made to sustain and retain such employees who will be of immense value to the.

Supervisors have other roles to perform too, as found in this study: that of a counselor. Their role in the counseling effort consists of sensitivity to the needs of their subordinates to an approximate extent that encourages them to commit their personal problems. By overlooking, superimposing or by oversight, they get away easily and will only undermine their superior
position of authority in the eyes of their subordinates. The supervisors role of a counselor, which is thought to be complex, difficult and time consuming is absolutely essential for their job satisfaction and useful for maintaining and improving job efficiency, as well as growth.

Achieving high job satisfaction needs some simple strategies. Offer employees / supervisors a variety of meaningful tasks. Repetitive routine work often leads to job dissatisfaction. As leaders, managements must think about introducing application of creativity in their work. Rotating the staff to different tasks at regular intervals so that their work remains challenging, will foster better results. If they need to be supervised it should be done unobtrusively. Giving more responsibility by empowering them and allowing them opportunity to self pace themselves will definitely give positive signals to the employees.

One hallmark of a socially responsible organisation is its success in achieving not only high performance outcomes, but also in helping its team members experience a high level of job satisfaction. Quality of work-life (QWL) is a key indicator of the overall quality of human experience in the workplace. QWL expresses a clear way of thinking about people, their work, and the organisation in which their careers are fulfilled. QWL establishes a clear objective that high performance can be achieved with high job satisfaction.
Job satisfaction needs effective communication about the tasks, which have to be done. The employees must know the performance achieved in relation to the target. Regular work appraisal should therefore be provided. More importantly they must have an awareness of departmental and organisational changes, which affects their job. Change agents should periodically meet supervisors to share the progress on changes no matter how small. Critical to this is listening to them and their perception as it is more likely to affect their job satisfaction work performance.

At a job interview last year, a candidate who had been retrenched produced a photo album with clippings from her former company’s newsletter and a national newspaper which featured her as an exemplary worker and an outstanding performer. She proudly announced to the interviewing personnel, “The salary was not much but I was recognized as the best by being reported in the newspaper and rewarded with a big bonus. I was sometimes invited to company dinners and sat with the bosses. I was very satisfied!” It was her definition of job satisfaction that had powered her to a sterling job performance. If the economic vagaries had not forced her to be retrenched, she would have continued even though her monetary reward was at the mid-range. She could make any employer proud as long as she achieved job satisfaction!
Several issues of importance to the have been discussed in the preceding analysis. Any or all of these factors might affect supervisors’ reaction to their work situations. Whatever, the reason for work and function of work the point is that it is embedded in a rich social setting which effects how people conceptualise and feel about the job. Hence work and its several dimensions and influences on it have to be approached with a broader perspective and effort should be made in the direction of achieving committed, attached and adjusted employees and to overcome alienation.