

Impact of Meditation on Alienation and Locus of Control of IT Professionals

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ABSTRACT: *This present study examined the effects of meditation on alienation and locus of control of software professionals. Hundred and eight software professionals with age range 25 - 45 participated in this study. In the present study, it was hypothesized that the alienation will be higher and locus of control will be more external before the inducement of meditation than after the practice of meditation for three months. To test this, the present study was conducted on 108 software professionals from Bangalore City of Karnataka state sample drawn from randomly selected IT companies. Alienation and locus of control scales were administered group wise. The self-reported responses of the subjects were recorded, scored and subjected to 't' analysis and correlation analysis. It was found that after the practice of meditation subjects had lower level of alienation, and more internal locus of control.*

Keywords: *Alienation, Locus of Control, Meditation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where technological achievements unimaginable in previous societies are within our grasp: this is the age of space travel, of the interest, of genetic engineering. Yet never before have we felt so helpless in the face of the forces we ourselves have created. Never before have the fruits of our labour threatened our very existence: this is also the age of nuclear disasters, global warming, and the arms race. For the first time in history we can produce enough to satisfy the needs of everyone on the planet. Yet millions of lives are stunted by poverty and destroyed by disease. Despite our power to control the natural world, our society is dominated by insecurity, as economic recession and military conflict devastate lives with the apparently irresistible power of natural disasters. The more densely populated our cities become, the more our lives are characterized by feelings of isolation and loneliness. "The most dangerous aspect of present-day life is the dissolution of the feeling of individual responsibility. Mass solitude has done away with any deference between the internal and the external, between the intellectual and the physical". –Eugenio & Gustav (1967). Seaman (1971) provides a more contemporary interpretation of alienation. In his thesis on various forms of urban alienation, Seaman (1971) distinguished five components of alienation: *Powerlessness* (i.e. lack of control), *Meaninglessness* (i.e. the inability to comprehend the relationship of one's contributions to a larger purpose), *Normlessness and isolation* (i.e. when norms or codes of conduct do not effectively guide behavior toward personal goals), and *Self-estrangement* (i.e. when work becomes a path for satisfying merely extrinsic needs rather than a means for expressing one's potential). This concept of work alienation posits that certain work constructs and procedures (such as centralized control over work processes, routine non-complex work tasks governed by rigid rules and instructions) provide individuals with limited job autonomy, preventing employee participation and work enrichment. When these constraining work conditions occur, employees express feeling of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement.

In ancient times, people thought they had no control over their environment. The world moved in mysterious ways, and there was little anyone could do to deal with the powerful forces that affected their lives. Many cultures developed superstitions as a means of making sense of life events and as an attempt to exert some control over their world. Psychologists have identified two sources of perceived control. One is an internal locus of control, where the individual believes he or she has control over life events. The other is an external locus of control, where the individual believes that some outside force such as fate, destiny, other people, or random circumstances control life events. Research has shown that the presence or absence of perceived control has important consequences in our lives over and above the actual control available to us in a given situation. This gives credence to the familiar adage, "Whether you believe that you can or you can't, you are probably right". People who have a high degree of perceived control are more likely to seek knowledge and information about the events that affect their lives. This becomes self-fulfillment prophecy, in that people who feel in control take actions that actually make them more in control of their lives. And, as you might expect, there is a strong positive relationship between perceived control and personal adjustment. People with an internal locus of

control use more effective strategies for coping with stress, as well as taking steps that will maximize their overall health and well-being.

Blauner (1964) studying work alienation across four American industries, printing, textile, automobile and the chemical process industry, was able to isolate the socio-technical characteristics that contribute to alienation, namely technology and the division of labor. He found alienation in its most extreme form in the assembly line production of automobile industry owing to standardized, routine, repetitive and highly fragmented work. Automation in the process chemical industry was seen as contributing less to alienation where skill was replaced by responsibility.

When I took the introspective reports of the software professionals and my conversations with them revealed that they have external control and high alienation. Also before introducing the meditation technique to the professionals I used Levinson's Locus of Control Scale by Sanjayvohra and Work Alienation Scale specially developed to measure work alienation by Ramyashilpa and A.A. Pal to find out whether the professionals have internal or external control.

The test results revealed that most of the professionals have external control and high level of alienation. And this will affect the progress of the organization, hence to change external control to internal control is crucial and for this the effective method is daily practice of meditation. Our below discussion evidently presented in statistical tables will reveal the significant difference before and after the intervention of meditation of software professionals.

II. METHOD

Participants

The study was carried out on two dependent variables alienation and locus of control considering meditation as independent variable before meditation and after meditation. Total sample for the study consisted of 108 software professionals (54 male and 54 female) in the age range of 25-45 years. They were randomly selected from IT companies of Bangalore city Karnataka state. Alienation and locus of control scales were administered to software professionals before introducing them to the practice of meditation. Then after the software professionals were thought to practice meditation regularly for three month than after again alienation and locus of control scales were administered.

Measures

Alienation Scale Developed by Ramyashilpa and A.A. Pal (2006). Work Alienation Scale has been particularly designed to measure the work alienation experienced by the employees in an organization in respect to six areas or aspects of work alienation namely, powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, self-estrangement and social isolation. The scale has 30 items, 6 items each from six areas to be answered strongly agree, agree, undecided, strongly disagree and disagree. This test is a five point Likert type scale which can be hand scored, each item scores range 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. While constructing items for each of these areas due care was taken to make use of the simple language and provide well-defined purposeful statements to the respondents for the assessment of their level of alienation.

Locus of Control Scale Levenson by Sanjayvohra used to assess the locus of control of software professionals. The present scale is Likert Type Scale, with multiple choice responses presented in a continuum. Responses range from Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, disagree to Strongly Disagree. In this five point scale, the responses are given weight from 1 to 5 as; 5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Undecided, 2 for Disagree and 1 for Strongly Disagree. The scale consists of 24 statements, 8 each for P-powerful others, C-chance control, and individual control.

Procedure

Alienation scale measuring six dimensions and locus of control measuring three dimensions were administered to the participants before the practice of meditation and also after the three months practice of meditation. Participants were tested on these two variables on two different occasions before meditation and after meditation. Testing was done in quite atmosphere. The instructions were given clearly without any ambiguity. On both the occasions of testing were asked to proceed with answering the questionnaires only after ensuring that all of them have understood the instructions. There was no time limit for completing the questionnaire. However, they were asked not to spend too much time on any specific question and to proceed with the test spontaneously as there were no rights or wrong answers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before meditation in the dimension of Powerlessness is 54.31 and after meditation is 45.68, SD is 8.56 before and after is 9.49 and 't' value is 6.69. In the second dimension of alienation that is *Normlessness* the mean score before meditation is 55.34 and after is 44.65, SD is 7.46 before and after meditation is 9.35 and

the 't' value is 8.69. Moving on to the third dimension of alienation Meaninglessness mean score before meditation is 55.32 and after is 44.67, SD is 8.27 and 8.67 before and after respectively and the 't' value is 8.67. In the fourth dimension Cultural Estrangement mean score is 52.93 and 47.06 before and after the practice, SD is 9.61 and 9.54, and 't' value 4.50. In the second last dimension self-estrangement the mean score is 54.51 and 45.48 before and after meditation, SD is 9.09 and 8.77 and 't' value is 7.08. And in the sixth dimension of alienation Social Isolation mean score before meditation is 54.44 and after is 45.55, SD is 8.67 and 9.26, and 't' value is 7.24.

On the whole alienation mean score before meditation is 55.06 and 44.93 after the practice, SD is 7.87 and 9.33 before and after respectively, and 't' value is 8.27. From the above score discussions the mean scores differ significantly in all the dimensions of alienation and also in the total scores of alienation. The 't' values of all the dimensions are significant at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001.

The above score analysis show that software professionals experience high level of alienation in this modern day technological computerized world. Modern technological world has brought to us many time saving devices and made our work easy, but at the same time this has created in us unimaginable psychological problems. Countless sophisticated gadgets have been invented to reduce our physical work. The present day man faces threat to his/her mental health. In an organization for example man faces too much of work pressure from supervisors. The work for a person in a company becomes so much mechanical that he loses his ability to work creatively. The employee feels alienated from his work environment.

To overcome thoughts of being alienated one of the best methods is to meditate. Daily meditation gives deep relaxation and calmness to the mind. Meditation leads to unitary state of consciousness by bridging the gulf between what the individual is doing and what he would expect to do. Meditation helps the individual to reconsider many of his psychological conflicts and arrive at possible solutions. A bio-psycho-social unity of consciousness results from an hour of meditation.

The mean score in locus of control scale of first dimension Powerful Others before the practice of meditation is 52.19 and after the practice is 47.80, SD is 11.21 and 8.08 before and after correspondently, and the 't' value is 3.24 which is significant at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 level of significance. In the second dimension the mean score before is 55.68 and after the practice is 44.31, SD is 7.75 and 8.69 before and after respectively, and the 't' value is 9.47 which is significant at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 level of significance. And in the last dimension individual control the mean score before meditation is 44.29 and 55.70, SD is 8.24 and 8.20, and the 't' value is -9.75 which is highly significant at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 level of significance.

Correlation scores of software professionals before meditation between Alienation and LOC [Powerful Others] is (0.510), alienation and LOC [Chance Control] (0.568), which are highly significant, and between alienation and LOC [Individual Control] correlation of (0.123) is not significant. The correlation at ($p < 0.01$) between alienation and locus of control of software professionals after the intervention firstly, the correlation between alienation and LOC [Powerful Others] is (0.649), alienation and LOC [Chance Control] is (0.713) and; alienation and LOC [Individual Control] is (-0.655) which show highly significant correlation.

In conclusion it may be observed that after the meditation as intervention to the software professionals the level of alienation decreased and also they showed more internal locus of control.

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