

**ANXIETIES PERTAINING TO  
JOB-LIFE: A UNIVERSAL  
PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM  
OF THE MODERN AGE**

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In the present age of technological advancements exploitation of researches in the physical sciences has led to rapid changes in industrial operations resulting in remarkably increased production. With the aid of modern technology and nuclear energy man is becoming powerful and materially prosperous day by day. In spite of mechanization and progressive transference of work from man to machine, the significant role of man-power in production cannot be ruled out. The indispensable role of the human element in industries has necessitated a careful study of the individuals operating in the context of business and industrial complexes.

Despite all luxury, prosperity, great riches and human welfare programmes created with the aid of scientific and technological promotions, the majority of people seem to be restless, tense, and depressed, and exhibit feelings of vague fear and insecurity. No wonder that on every side we see worried and bewildered people, who feel deprived in fulfilling their potentials due to lack of satisfactory adjustment with various dimensions of their lives. Among others, the reasons behind these depressions, tensions, and apprehensions are basically psychological. One of the most prominent factors causing such psychic-pains is 'anxiety'. The twentieth century is characterized as the 'age of anxiety' which becomes even more apparent as one penetrates into political, social, professional or domestic crises to discover the inherent psychological causes.

Modern man's path to happiness is not

an easy one. It is beset by seemingly endless personal and social problems. The major emotional problem faced by most people is not that of controlling or coping with the more violent emotions of rage and fear but that of dealing with the more subtle emotion of anxiety apprehended while coming to terms with realities. The multifarious stresses and strains of people in the changing world of today are so wide-spread and frequent that almost everyone has to confront anxiety in one way or the other. And this frequent confrontation is continuously resulting in the development of specific personality traits of vague fear and apprehension, and feeling of insecurity among people. KeirKegaard (1944) has accordingly said "learning to know anxiety is an adventure which every man has to affront. He, therefore, who has learned rightly to be anxious has learned the most important thing."

The psychologists working on problems of anxiety are in agreement that anxiety is a mental state characterized by vague fear and apprehension which distorts the individual's perceptions and mode of thinking. Also they found that it has hideous effect on satisfactory adjustment. Coleman (1969) describes anxiety as "a state of emotional tension characterized by apprehension and fearfulness: psychic pain". Anxiety, like fear, is associated with threat, but the danger that stimulates anxiety is more likely to be remote and anticipated than immediate. It is a probable or imagined threat that might occur. With anxiety the threatening situations

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usually cannot be so readily located, defined, or even identified. Indeed, the causes may be within ourselves. In its stronger and more neurotic form, it may be characterized by emotional turmoil, and a feeling of disorientation, inadequacy or helplessness as to the individual's capacity to cope with himself, with life in general, or with some more specific situations. Anxiety, though diffused and unspecified, can often make an individual constricted more than fear and frustration.

Anxiety is one of the basic personality variables which is manifested by almost every individual in some amount or other, and a moderate amount of anxiety is desirable to our functioning as emotionally mature individuals. In the present era of technological advancements and industrialization the tendency of anxiety is becoming a dominant personality characteristic of most of the people. Of course, there are people who appear to be unable to display normal concern for others and for the consequences of their own behaviour because they are overwhelmed by neurotic anxiety and selfhate. When an individual is faced with or overwhelmed by more anxiety than he can handle he is inclined to behave in ways that are unrealistic, irrational, or panicky.

As an individual moves through various phases in different walks of life encountering quite diverse situations he develops specific anxieties concerning various components of these phases. These specific anxieties are projected in the individual's behaviour and adjustment with these walks of life. For a man of the modern world his job-life, probably, is the most significant aspect of life. People engage themselves in some job or other where they spend more hours than in any other single activity, except in sleeping.

Some of the individuals operating in the context of business, industries or other employments may indicate apprehensions and vague fears about various components of their jobs as a result of interactions between their certain specific personality characteristics and the variables operating in the job-situations. The persistent interactions between the two sets of variables cause the development of a deviant trait among the employees, which may be referred to as "Job-Anxiety". In very simple terms job-anxiety may be defined as "a generalized feeling of vague fear and insecurity, and apprehensive mental state of the employee pertaining to various constituents of his job-life".

A comprehensive analysis of the concepts yields that the fundamental psychological components of the job anxiety are vague fear, apprehension, negative self-attitude, feeling of insecurity and tendency of pessimism with reference to various components of job-life, *e.g.*, security of the job and safety; managerial treatment: recognition and fair evaluation; reward (monetary) and punishment; opportunity of promotions and advancement; interpersonal relations at work; capacity to work and shouldering responsibilities, etc. The anxious employee, most of the time anticipates undesirable and frustrating outcome or response from different components of his job. Such apprehensions are the products of interaction between certain personality dispositions of the employee and occasional unpleasant experiences or painful associations with the components of his job-life. Since job anxiety is basically the manifestation of certain personality characteristics of the employee he is likely to indicate it in either magnitude about almost all the components of his job. But the degree of job anxiety may vary

from one component to another in accordance with the relevance of the component for the employee and the frequency of the painful experiences with the components. The stimuli which provoke job anxiety are more likely to be remote, an imaginary threat concerning certain job-components which are conceived of being likely to occur. The employee with high job anxiety is worried and depressed but is not able to locate or even identify the exact cause of it. The more fear (vague) and apprehension the employee feels about his job life, the more likely he is to manifest job anxiety. In its stronger form job anxiety may be characterized by a feeling of helplessness and self-abasement as to his capacity to properly cope with various constituents of his job-life. At this level, the employee may be aware that 'something is wrong' but may not be very sure what this 'something' is, and consequently he may blame it on his co-workers, management, or any other factor in his job-life which bears only an indirect or even no relationship at all to the true cause of his apprehension. If he is not worrying about one thing, he is worrying about another. He frequently anticipates misfortunes and painful consequences, and is apprehensive about the things, people or situations while as a matter of fact, there is no reason for such concern. However, an employee's level of job-anxiety seems to be relatively independent of the immediate physical environment.

For example, an employee possessing a high level of job anxiety would respond affirmatively to the following statements:

1. I am usually afraid of being suspended or dismissed from my service.
2. I do my work under heavy mental strain.
3. I feel that I may not be very successful in this job.
4. I am sometimes, afraid of being charged with false allegations.
5. I often get worried whether I may come under some catastrophe.
6. I feel that there is no one among my colleagues in whom I can confide.
7. I am usually misunderstood by my officers and colleagues.

With development of large industrial complexes and dominating economic beliefs anxieties pertaining to job life have become one of the most prominent problems of the present era. The majority of the individuals engaged in industries and other employment are observed to be victims of a high degree of job anxiety which results in deterioration of their adjustment and efficiency at work. It suggests that anxieties are so higher today that they are preoccupations of most of the employees. Today employees are more often anxious than frustrated or dissatisfied with their jobs. Job-anxiety has become a frequent source of maladjustment, dissatisfaction, and several other crucial psychopathological problems faced by most of the employees. Anxiety and tension have become the dominant theme of labour-management relations. Employees' job satisfaction and adjustment and industrial morale have been observed to be adversely affected by the high degree of job-anxiety (Srivastava, 1974; Srivastava and Sinha, 1975). The findings of the researches undertaken by the author have established that the employees possessing considerably high degree of job anxiety tend to be least satisfied with their 'job-contents' (nature of work, fellow workers, opportunities of promotion and advancement, interest in work, physical environment, machine and tools, etc.) and

'management' (supervisory treatment, participation, reward and punishment, leave-policy, etc.).

The consequences of high job anxiety are not confined only to the job-life. Employees' personal and social life beyond the periphery of their job-life may also be affected by job anxiety of a high degree. In the study conducted by the author (1974) it has been found that the employees with high degree of job anxiety have inadequate and unsatisfactory 'personal-adjustments' (emotionality, health, relations with family members, etc.) and 'social-relation' (attitudes towards people in community, participation in social activities, sociability, relations with neighbours and friends etc.).

The research findings clearly indicate that the high degree of job anxiety pertaining to every component of the job-life is negatively correlated with employees' satisfactory adjustment, yet the high degree of job anxiety regarding 'security and safety', 'recognition' and 'human relations at work' have far-reaching and comparatively more deteriorating effects on employees' job satisfaction and adjustment at work (Srivastava, 1974).

Since psychological problems like depression, impulsiveness, worry and faulty attitudes have been found to be frequent causes of industrial accidents (Curtsey Metropolitan, L.I.C., N.Y., 1945) employees possessing a high degree of job anxiety would be more susceptible to accidents and other industrial and labour problems. Employees with considerably high amount of job anxiety may be denoted as hyper-job-anxiety employees. Such a high degree of job anxiety is most likely to result in a substantial deterioration in the employees' mental health, work-spirit, productivity, and perfect adjustment with vocational

life. These employees may create problem situations for management and the organization as a whole.

In the context of the present socialistic pattern of society 'Human-Relations at Work' has a wide and very ambitious programme as it concerns itself with interrelationships among personnel (inter-cadre and intra-cadre) in all situations arising in connection with their work. The observations indicate that the high degree of job anxiety pertaining to human relations at work has an inverse relationship with job satisfaction which the employee derives from various 'on-the-job' as well as 'off-the-job factors' (Srivastava, 1974). The finding, while confirming Lindgren's (1969) postulation that "inter personal relationship is the major determinant of anxiety, also extends its application to the industrial work setting.

Not only high or very high degree but very low degree of job anxiety too is undesirable and causes motivation problems. It has been empirically established that 'very low' degree of anxiety regarding one's job and its security significantly deteriorates an employee's job satisfaction and sense of responsibility (Srivastava, 1974). Employees possessing very low level of job anxiety, particularly concerning security of the job, bother the least about their job duties and responsibilities. More-Over, they do not adequately identify themselves with their jobs. Such employees should be taken to be possessive of 'low drive level', lack of enthusiasm and attachment to vocational life.

It is the responsibility of the industrial psychologist to carefully analyze the variables causing job anxieties, and to suggest preventive as well as therapeutic measures, in collaboration with clinical psychologists and management experts.

While analysing its causes and considering the therapeutic measures it is necessary to determine the exact amount and nature of job anxiety possessed by a particular employee. Among others the development and standardization of the Job Anxiety Scale (1974) by the author is an initiatory and relevant effort in this direction. The Job Anxiety Scale is a psychological tool to adequately assess the degree of job anxiety of employees pertaining to various components of job life, e.g., job-security and safety; fair evaluation and recognition; human-relations at work; reward (financial) and punishment; self-esteem and social status of the job; future prospects and opportunities to learn and to take up responsibilities. The scale locates the specific dimensions of the job-life wherein job anxiety is being manifested. It is a merit of the scale (J.A.S.) that it provides a separate account of the involvement of different job-components in the felicitation of the overall job anxiety. Such an account may be of great help when some sort of counselling or psychological treatment is to be provided to the problem-employees. The scores on the Job Anxiety Scale may very conveniently be used to categorize the employees as very high, high, moderate, low, and very low job-anxiety-groups so as to enable the management or administration to place and shift employees possessing different degrees of job anxiety, in accordance with the amount of job anxiety desirable for various types of jobs or duties and working-conditions.

It is worth suggesting, as a preventive measure, that the Job Anxiety Scale be periodically administered to all the employees' of the industrial organizations to assess the trend and rate of the growth of job anxiety. In case the level of job-

anxiety among the employees is found to be increasing continuously concerning some particular components of the job necessary improvements and required changes or modifications should be made in the basic structure of the concerned components so as to create conducive working environment. If it is observed to be going considerably high in only few of the employees an effective programme of counselling or other corrective measures may be adopted for the benefit of the affected employees, as well as to nip several managerial problems in the bud.

It is a general observation that in the present era of high economic values and industrialization monetary causes are predominant in instigating high job anxiety in the majority of employees associated with industrial complexes or other organizations. The findings of one of the studies conducted by the author confirms these observations. The study postulates that the job anxiety decreases with increasing monthly income and work training (Srivastava and Sinha 1974; Srivastava, 1974). In view of the findings it was suggested that 'Refreshers-Course' and 'Additional orientation Training', be introduced for untrained and semi-skilled employees so that they may discharge their job duties more efficiently and with confidence, and may simultaneously qualify for higher emoluments by undertaking greater job responsibilities.

Since human relations is an extremely important aspect of job life the problems or complications in this aspect must be given special attention. It is an established fact and also the author's observation that interpersonal relations in the job life create situations, more frequently than any other factor, provoking job anxiety among

employees. Most of the anxieties of the job life are directly or indirectly concerned with or caused by unsatisfactory and inadequate interpersonal relations among the employees. The concept of anxiety as arising in the locus of inter-personal relations had been most cogently advocated by Sullivan (1948) quite earlier. He denoted anxiety as apprehension of disapproval of interpersonal relations.

Adequate interpersonal relations among the personnel at different levels and group-cohesiveness might prove to be an effective measure to prevent the problems of high job anxiety. It is worth suggesting that sincere efforts must be made to develop amicable attitudes and mutual understanding among the employees at different levels, particularly between blue-collar workers and supervisors. A number of problematic consequences of high job anxiety may be avoided by developing sufficient confidence and reliance in colleagues and superiors. Too much of hierarchical distance between the rank and file worker and high level personnel must also be decreased to provide opportunity to both for clearly understanding each other, as well as to develop cooperative attitudes.

Relevance of self-expression and exchange of views among the employees of different cadres have been well realized by modern industrial organizations. These processes save employees from suppres-

sions which might cause problems in employees' adjustment. Smooth communication may prove to be another easy but efficient means to avoid several misunderstandings and apprehensions among employees which ultimately become a behavioural pattern or a personality characteristic and disrupt their satisfactory adjustment in their job life.

Among others, participation of employees of every cadres in policy-development and in taking decisions on other relevant matters of their concern would help in satisfying their psychological need of self-actualization and generate the sense of joint-responsibility and high morale among employees. Such experiences and feelings would undoubtedly help in maintaining amicable human relations in the job-life. The recent provision for 'Joint Management Councils' in industrial organizations would prove to be a successful means to prevent a number of job anxieties, and thereby several labour-management problems.

Besides the preventive and corrective measures discussed in the foregoing paragraphs, a great deal of constructive and harmonious efforts are still to be made by the psychologists, psychiatrists and the experts of management in collaboration with each other with a common objective to conclude more concrete and practical solutions to this burning problem of the time.

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Construction and Standardization of the Job ANXIETY SCALE was a part of Ph.D. dissertation undertaken by the author. The scale is available with the author for public use.