

## INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

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# JOB satisfaction



Culture is powerful because it is so deeply entrenched in the psyche and lifestyle of a population that it becomes very difficult to name it, separate or identify it even though we know it exists. Culture of a population is palpable at every area of life including workplace. However, people immersed in a culture day in and day out can hardly notice the damaging outcome of a cultural aspect, unless they can step out of it and is able to see it with bird's eye view.

I believe most people in our society do recognise the culture of power showdown, power worship and power abuse are like "the white elephant" in the room. However, I'm doubtful if people are widely aware of how our rigid hierarchical cultural practices lead to systemic oppression of people who are front line, or at grass root level.

This overall cultural phenomenon reflects at workplaces and ordinary workers start feeling demoralised, unappreciated and unfulfilled very quickly.

Worker burn out and loss of productivity is the ultimate cost for staying stuck in this toxic culture.

Work is the primary source of living for most people. Workplace is where most people spend half of their lifetime if not more. People derive a sense of identity, social connection, enjoyment and self-esteem through work.

Appreciation, admiration and recognition reserved only for selected groups of people in absence of overall dignity of labour, equitable opportunity to learn and perform by others can be quite demoralising work atmosphere.

It is important to realise mistakes at work are normal and inevitable. Severe criticism or punitive measures are often counterproductive. Growth enhancing positive work environment allow workers to learn from their

mistakes, motivate towards self-improvement, provides support and mentoring to bring the best out of each worker. There is usually more than one way of accomplishing a task, it is healthy to celebrate diverse and unique ways of doing things and learn from each other if situation permits.

Stress at work and stress management capacity of workers is a big factor in job satisfaction. It is should be well understood that job satisfaction at various stages of life is a complex issue which depends on factors like employer, employee and work culture.

Workload, deadlines, conflict, lack of support, miscommunication, etc. are common sources of stress at work.

Working hard to remain poor is a pathetic human condition. A continued sense of urgency, manpower shortage, or financial challenges of an organisation can make it hard for the organisation to follow an inclusive, future oriented democratic decision-making process.

If an organisation is always busy putting out fires, this crisis-oriented daily operation drains out staff energy and hinders job satisfaction. Heavy turn-over eventually becomes another source of stress for employers.

Job satisfaction is also related to individual personality traits. People who do not want to take risks in life or cannot use creativity, are more prone to get stuck in boring jobs. People who can face the fear of unknown, brave enough

to be vulnerable (although a very uncomfortable physiological state) seems to have a greater chance to break away from stuck situations.

Ironically, vulnerability is the birthplace of creativity and innovation. People who take a leap of faith, put themselves wholeheartedly out there while knowing outcome is not in control, even in worst case scenario might find satisfaction in failure by just daring greatly and knowing "I did my best".

Life is a good sport for people who know how to play a game without getting fixated on winning, or losing. Practicing gratitude is an antidote to frustration and depression when things are in status quo.

When pressure of negative feelings starts to grow inside, it is helpful to talk and understand what is underneath it. If source of this discomfort/dissatisfaction is really about workplace, address it in an appropriate manner, seek support and be part of the solution instead part of the problem.

If job change is the best option, look for a job that matches the personality. If someone finds a job that is aligned to their inner values, interest and aptitude, then work becomes fun!

Career counselling helps people to discover their skill sets and facilitates job search accordingly. Attending job fairs, using professional networks, applying and interviewing for better positions is often helpful!

Stability in life often becomes priority amongst middle age family persons for the sake of growing children. Advantage of a stable job with enough security and seniority (even though not quite fulfilling) sometimes outweighs instability and stress of job change. This could become a difficult internal

negotiation between ambition to grow to the fullest and the need for basics of life.

Internal neurotic conflict (yes and no) can keep people stuck in a place feeling paralysed with indecision. Psychotherapy can help people to authentically use emotional energy to generate momentum in this process.

It is important to remember, if the balance shifts further with chronic illnesses resulting from burnout or stagnation, then it would be even harder to change career. This can result in feeling powerless over life situation.

It is better to make a conscious choice after giving it substantive attention and feel the power of letting go of the other choice. Acceptance of life situation is also a blessing; regret is not useful if there is nothing new to learn from it. Life with stress of indecision for a prolonged period can be detrimental to health as well.

Resetting new goals in other areas of life (e.g. family, hobbies etc.) and looking for new sources of joy can be a saviour.

Do you really enjoy your work? How many of us are happy with our career? See the next page to find out what people are saying – on work culture, job satisfaction, and chasing dreams.

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