

# The Sense of Insecurity (SOI) of Employees

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## Abstract

Employees work for the needs of their life: physical and psychological needs. In doing their jobs in accordance with their status and positions, it is always necessary for them to demonstrate their ability to survive against the tide of changes in their workplace. They will face the challenges and demands, both positive and negative of the people around them. In the developed countries, generally, employees work individually. They focus on their job and target in the workplace. As consequently, they should hard work. However, such a harsh working environment sometimes makes some employees workaholics, thereby causing them to feel the sense of insecurity (SOI). This paper presents a chronological framework to encourage their awareness of SOI, which may help overcome psychological problems within their life. This will enable them to measure their capabilities and to manage risks in their jobs and daily activities. These are supported by creative and innovative thinking in their life.

**Key words:** Employees; job, risk; sense of insecurity; workplace;

## 1. Introduction

Individual belief plays an important role in raising an individual's voice of conscience and rational motivation (Boudry & Coyne, 2016; Kodelja, 2015; Weiss, 2016; Zoupanou & Rydstedt, 2017). An individual's accurate perception of his/her need for motivation is a key factor for job motivation and commitment (Baay, de Ridder, Eccles, van der Lippe, & van Aken, 2014; Valero & Hirschi, 2016). Kitayama, Akutsu, Uchida, and Cole (2016) mentioned that a job may provide a person with a sense of security, reduce one's perception of threat and uncertainty, and positively influence his/her physical health. This is an individual welfare mostly influenced by personal identity to conceive socio-cultural conditions as a part of the human life mechanism (Cole, 2015; Kitayama, King, Hsu, Liberzon, & Yoon, 2016; Kitayama & Uskul, 2011; Tevrüz, Turgut, & Çinko, 2015).

Those highly motivated to work sometimes think that they work for life (Brekke & Nyborg, 2010). This viewpoint may cause them to feel discomfort if having no complete knowledge and realistic personal hope necessary for successfully overcoming these vital problems. Robbins (2007) mentioned that discomfort they feel forms excessive stress, boredom, or even frustration over their life condition.

To reduce these risks, they have to make a crucial decision to make a wise career choice and achieve the greatest happiness in their life (Lerner, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015). Maslow's theory has also taught that people will be highly motivated in order to fill the most fundamental need in this life, their physical life continuance (Maslow, 1943). Tay and Diener (2011) also mentioned that human needs consists of basic need, social need, and need for dignity, power, and autonomy. According to Lee, Park, Min, Lee, and Kim (2013), all of these mentioned can be known from their welfare measured by evaluation process of their whole life, positive feeling like happiness, and negative ones like sadness, anger, or stress.

Given the explanation above, it can be concluded that jobs can be defined as any activity people are engaged in to fill their physical and psychological needs. In this case, ones often do their jobs for a long time while risking their physical and psychosocial health, which may lead to an unpleasant consequence of feeling insecure.

Regardless of the health service provided by the company, if unaware of their own safety, employees are most likely to carelessly give vent to the sense of insecurity. The uneasy feeling may result from employees'

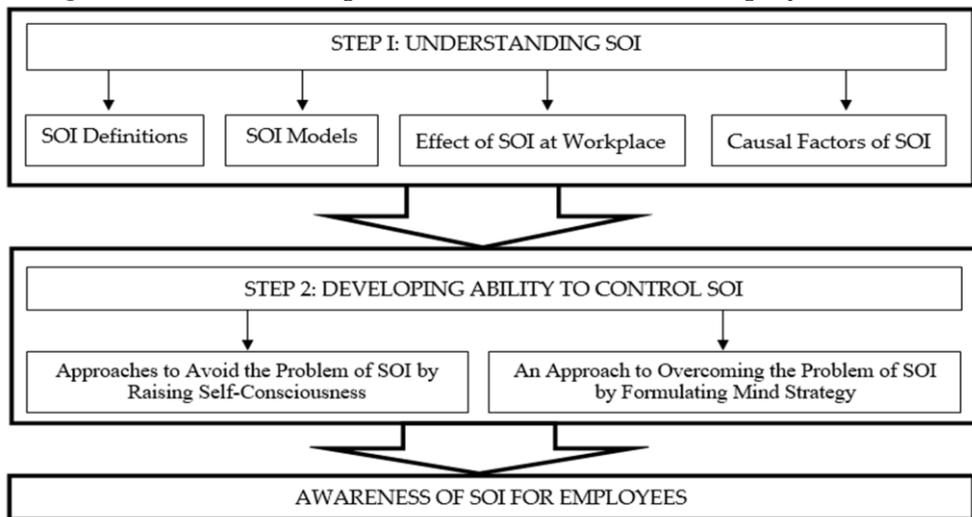
declining health and their poor communication with each other. This will subsequently bear another harmful consequence: a fierce, unhealthy competition among workers, which -- if left abandoned -- will negatively affect their performance, and even that of the company.

For this reason, understanding the nature of the sense of insecurity is highly important for employees to have to solve those problems it poses. Such understanding will foster intuitive awareness of the importance of showing good behavior during their working life, hence making a promising career in the future.

To serve this purpose, it is essential that employees comprehend SOI and know how to work under such adverse working condition; therefore, this article will consecutively discuss definitions of SOI, models of SOI, effects of SOI in workplaces, causal factors of SOI, and approaches to avoid the problem of SOI. It is expected that this work can help employees have safe work and reduce risks of their unsafe actions. Indeed, this will guarantee their safety and both physical and psychological health in their workplace.

## **2. A Framework to Manage SOI**

Workers' awareness of unsafe actions in workplaces can be developed by increasing knowledge of two things: the nature of SOI and the ability to mask their SOI. It is showed by a chronological framework of SOI for employees such as in Figure 1. In step 1, knowledge of SOI can be acquired by comprehending four components: (1) SOI Definitions, (2) SOI Models, (3) Effect of SOI at Workplace, and (4) Causal Factors of SOI. Subsequently, the comprehension will lead workers to have knowledge of approaches to repressing SOI, such as (1) approaches to avoid the problem of SOI by raising self-consciousness and (2) an approach to overcoming the problem of SOI by formulating mind strategy.

**Figure 1:** The Chronological Framework of SOI for Employees

Furthermore, these components are explained further as follows.

## 2.1. Step I: Understanding SOI

### SOI definitions

SOI is an integral part of personal or organizational welfare, threatening workers and making them worried, afraid, and unhappy (Ali, Dercon, & Gautam, 2007). Näswall and De Witte (2003) described workers' SOI as job dissatisfaction caused by subjectively perceived threats due to workers' are being forced to finish their job quickly at a limited time or to give up the job earlier than they expect. The experience of job insecurity is usually followed by a dramatic decrease in welfare, a negative attitude towards the job and organization, and refusal to stay within the organization they work for.

SOI is an emotional dejection or merely a discomfort. It is a general feeling of agitation evoked by self-perception to be susceptible or inferior to many things, or vulnerable to unstable condition which may shed one's personal image and ego (Maslow, 1942). Subsequently, Vornanen, Törrönen, and Niemelä (2009) explained that SOI constitutes the external reality closely related to socio-economic welfare which is divided into three spheres: (1) the inner sphere, that is, a sense of insecurity concerning personal emotion and inner experience; (2) the social sphere, insecurity about social interaction; and (3) the outer sphere, insecurity about external

reality. In addition, Lee, Wu, Chien-Yu, Chen, and Lo (2014) mentioned that SOI is actually a basic need which cannot be satisfied due to stress and worries possibly causing one to be confronted with problems of physiological and mental health (Carnelley & Rowe, 2010).

A definition will provide employees with a clear explanation about what SOI really is. SOI is a poor, unstable condition someone may live in due to an emotion-affected perception. The condition is likely to cause stresses, illnesses, and discomfort in a workplace.

## **2.2. SOI models**

Models of SOI can be classified into seven kinds of feeling (Maslow, Hirsh, Stein, & Honigmann, 1945). The first is feeling of being rejected, loved, ill-treated, or hated. The second is feeling of being isolated, being outside of something, or being strange. The third is to perceive the world and life as something so dangerous, threatening, dark and hostile that everyone is an enemy of each other and everyone believe in "dog eats dog - kill or be killed". The fourth is to perceive other people to be naturally bad and selfish, so that they will be dangerous, threatening enemies. The fifth is to perceive threats as threats and worry-arousing constant dangers. The sixth is feeling of discredit leading to jealousy of others, hostility, prejudice, and hatred. The last kind is the tendency to negative thinking and lowered expectation of the future, what is so called general pessimism.

These models will offer employees some insight as to what forms SOI will take. Knowing these models, employees can do positive activities which can reduce or banish such hostile conditons in the workplace.

## **2.3. Effect of SOI at Workplace**

There are many causal factors of employees' critical conscience. Negative attitudes of leaders will in turn affect attitudes of employees. In the flow of time, employees will internalize these attitudes. They keep the attitudes prevalent by still believing in their insecurity while working together with a manager at a workplace or living their life although the condition does not soothe their conscience and match their positive expectation.

Firestone and Catlett (2002) found powerful voices evoking someone's SOI. Those voices cause people to feel stupid, uninteresting, and different from other people, to fail to get something right, to believe none will love them, and to be ashamed of being fat, introvert, and unable to overcome

their alcoholic and nicotine addiction. They then feel they have never reached anything and done nothing to have better life.

SOI may influence employees' life in countless regions. Every person will see their inner criticism become increasingly vocal over a particular aspect. An employee, for example, may feel fairly confident at his/her workplace, but actually, he/she is a bit lost in his/her love, and vice versa. Employees may not know that when an aspect becomes better, others are getting worse. Most of them can communicate with each other, but at times, they may think to sabotage themselves concerning their career. The odd feeling that they are incompetent, or that they are never respected may encourage them to discuss their feeling with their manager, causing them to always negatively think about their career.

Employees' SOI may be aroused by some powerful voices of conscience. They are: (1) employees do not know what they are doing; (2) why do managers expect an employee do everything by himself?; (3) who are employees to managers? Can employees never be successful?; (4) employees cope with too much pressure and carry too may burden to perform all the jobs; (5) employees are assumed never to complete all their jobs because they are extremely lazy; (6) employees need to delay doing a job until tomorrow; (7) none respect employees; (8) employees must be perfect, or they will be fired; (8) none love employees at the workplace; (9) employees have to put their career back and not to spend time prioritizing their own target; (10) when will employees get their proper, regular job?; and (11) none will employ them.

Finally, SOI will make employees' performance in the organization bad. This will in turn lead to natural defense against each other, making working environment uncomfortable, and even vicious cycles within the organization. If ignored, this poor condition will make the organization suffer from considerable disadvantages.

#### **2.4. Causal factors of SOI**

Those factors are internal dialogues following feelings of insecurity, what is so-called critical voice of conscience. Firestone, Firestone, and Catlett (2002) stated that critical voices of conscience result from unhappy experiences in early life in which people witnessed bad behavior or someone meted out cruel treatment for them or their beloved ones. When they fully grow up, they unconsciously adopt the awful thought and integrate themselves and other people into it, either directly or indirectly.

Therefore, someone's past painful, traumatic experiences can be a causal factor of SOI and someone's mistakes. According to Sullivan (2003), SOI is caused by negative effects of traumas on someone's personality. SOI may begin with spelling mistakes or others' bad behaviors which direct their thought. This may cause someone to be introvert or independent on way of making them feel insecure or skeptical to other people. A study shows that giving a compliment in excess can also destroy someone's dignity because the praise may be much higher than his/her actual ability.

Gallie, Felstead, Green, and Inanc (2016) said that not only is job insecurity caused by the lack of occupational safety and uncertainty about job titles and prospects, but it is also closely related to worries about unexpected changes of desired job descriptions. Uncertainty about job titles is quite natural in a workforce and is more related to personal characteristics and various conditions of the job and labor market than factors prompting worries about job losses. This is also related to different organizational contexts.

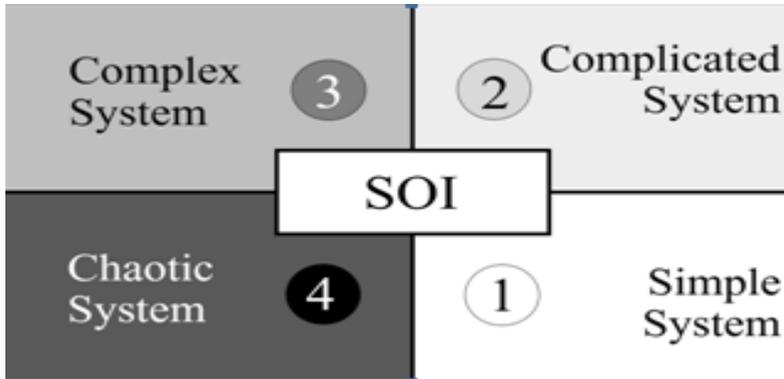
Another determining factor is that to feel secure, employees need to be observed by whom they are working for. Many of their problems concerning insecurity may result from models of their first attachment when starting to work. Most often nobody knows and sees whether they suffer humiliation or gain appreciation, for none knows who they are. This makes them feel insecure and fails to display their great professional skills.

However, Siegel and Hartzell (2013) said that health crucially depends on the feeling of security, calmness, and comfort. Positive, friendly attitudes of co-workers may help an employee see and defend himself realistically and treat them with love and respect. The best way to support co-workers is to allow them to something special for themselves so that they can reach it. It is important not only for managers but also for all employees to perform this action. As a leader, Stuart (2015) mentioned not asking about what the world needs, but asking about what makes someone alive and doing it. As an employee, workers try to find everything interesting that makes them alive. Leaders should offer workers an enthusiastic support and express appreciation to jobs of those involved to focus on the result. These actions will help employees have dignity and confidence at workplaces so well that the quality of their performances can be maintained.

Snowden and Boone (2007) established a general framework for SOI, which classifies systems and problems into four kinds of systems: simple

systems, complicated systems, complex systems, and chaotic systems. More detail can be seen in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** The General Framework for SOI



**Source:** Adapted from Snowden and Boone (2007)

In Figure 2, the simple system is characterized as a relationship simple to understand, between causes and effects of a phenomenon or someone's particular actions. On account of the fact that almost everyone can understand the character of this relationship; this first system is the known domain.

The second system is in a complicated system, where causes and effects cannot be immediately known. Experts can understand the complicated system by using a model to represent the power played. Different models can be applied to the same and existing system. These models may compete in such aspects as representation accuracy, ability to precisely predict future attitudes and behavior, range of application, or simply artistic excellence. The quality of experts dealing with complicated problems appears from their ability to choose optimal, excellent models. This kind of the system constitutes known and unknown domains. Both simple and complicated systems are set up, meaning that actors mentioned in the system are limited with a system. The system prioritized is the determining one and can be minimized through a set of rules implemented.

The third is the complex system. In this system, it is impossible to identify a priority of cause-effect relationship. This brings about unexpected attitudes which cannot be modeled or predicted. Nevertheless, it is possible to follow and observe the pattern emerging from co-evolution of the system and agents. This is the unknown domains.

The fourth is the chaotic system. It is marked by the absence of the causal relationship. In this system is turbulence which cannot be limited with a system and one's attitudes. It is the unknown domain. Both complex and chaotic systems are arbitrary.

At last, it is important to know contributing factors of employees' SOI. The system evoking SOI must be considered soon before it becomes complex and chaotic ones. Regarding factors in a simple system will facilitate the program for overcoming the problem of employees' SOI. Employee Assistant Programs (EAPs) can be carried out for this purpose. EAPs are a counseling program established to resolve employees' psychological problems by the appointed team from either insiders or outsiders. The objective of this program is to enhance employees' performance in accordance with the organization's target.

### **3. Step 2: Developing Ability to Manage SOI**

#### **3.1. Approaches to avoid the problem of SOI by raising self-consciousness**

Self-consciousness is an approach to understand someone's cognitive process involved in the decision-making process in a complex and dynamic working environment (Endsley, 1995a). The state of consciousness is to know what is going on, and environmental consciousness is defined as a perception of natural elements in time and space, understanding their importance, and the projection of their status in the near future (Endsley, 2000).

According to Endsley (1995b), this model of self-consciousness in making dynamic decisions includes a three-level hierarchy to be lodged in environmental consciousness in making decisions and planning actions. The first level is the perception of natural elements influenced by individual ability to perceive relevant elements. This ability is influenced by experience, training, and available signs in reality.

The second level is the understanding of the current situation. This level is beyond the perception of how people interpret and integrate relative information with their objectives. Experience plays a role in drawing and comparing the situation of someone's mental models. The third level is the projection of the future status. It is related to and affected by how effective the meaning employees understand is, so that their future can be predicted to decide what action to do.

The state of self-consciousness is in alignment with the purpose of the risk consciousness program for exploring cognitive processes related to the achievement of self-consciousness (Borys, 2009). Three-level environmental consciousness can be successfully implemented to better understand how an individual can act with the full risk consciousness. For instance, risk-posing relevant elements at the workplace should receive much attention. These elements may include dangers related to particular jobs, the adequate safety rule, time pressure, physical environmental changes, available tools, and other people ready to help others to help complete their tasks. In order to calculate the risks, such elements must be integrated and understood in such a way that there will be an image that the condition is getting worse.

While the state of consciousness may explain cognitive process involved in being more conscious of possible risks, reasoning may also take a significant part in building safety awareness encouraging someone to be aware of the risks. Using logical reasoning, for example, employees may see safety procedures as a proxy for risk awareness.

Literature on reasoning process is deeply rooted in philosophy (Lonergan, 1980), anthropology (Geertz, 2000), and health behavior study (Diefenbach & Leventhal, 1996). General knowledge differs from theoretical one. Knowledge is a conception based on philosophy and anthropology and is characterized by knowing for doing (Gerber, 2001). This kind of knowledge is practical, concrete, immediate and local (Stewart, 1996). General knowledge may develop a wide network or a belief system (Ferguson, 1989; Linde, 1993) about the world, and it is called the cultural system (Geertz, 2000).

Lonergan (1980) defined reasoning as basic knowledge that allows one to encounter personal, concrete situations which occur in ordinary life in accordance with his/her local usual standards. Intellectual horizons form the comprehension belonging to everyone in doing a particular action (Gerber, 2000; Lonergan, 1980; Stewart, 1996). Knowledge obtained from reasoning is expected not to result universally valid knowledge, but to produce tangible results (Stewart, 1996). This means that knowledge from reasoning is put on specifically for a particular community or culture (Geertz, 2000; Gerber, 2000, 2001; Stewart, 1996; Valle, Massaro, Castelli, & Marchetti, 2015).

Therefore, this kind of knowledge which employees have played an important role in raising self-consciousness of risks and establishing safety

standards and procedures for themselves is wanted. Leaders of organizations have to control and train their employees' knowledge to be potential elements making them creative and innovative in the workplace.

### **3.2. An approach to overcoming the problem of SOI by formulating mind strategy**

Once employees have overcome their sense of insecurity (SOI), which is deeply rooted in their previous experiences of life, they may begin to challenge it. It may begin with lowering the critical voice of their conscience. Firestone (1988) said that one of the approaches to face problems of SOI is to undergo the voice therapy. It is a cognitive, affective and psychomotor approach to encountering problems of SOI within their conscience.

Firestone (1988) mentioned that the voice therapy involves five procedures in which a client and a therapist collaborate in understanding the client's destructive way of thinking. The first step of the procedures is to identify the client's negative thinking as a voice of second person. Emotional expressions in the first step lead spontaneously to the second step which involves broadening intellectual horizons to the source of the voice. The third step involves the voice of the client that responds to the voice. Often, it is a cathartic experience, especially if the client feels the full effect of his/her body's taking over the voice. The fourth is the client's broadening horizons about the relationship between the voice attack and the pattern of their behavior that limits and destructs themselves. Subsequently, the last step is for a client to change their behavior based on the destructive way of thinking, thereby changing the client's basic self-concept, their perception of others and their social world, and their defense mechanism.

The voice therapy is a complex process in which changes always bring about worries (Greenberg, 2006). The defense mechanism and critical voice of conscience have existed in human life, and it is uncomfortable for humans to do against them. When they change, they feel the voice sounds louder and louder. They will not lose the sense of insecurity in any time. The process runs slowly; however, the voice will fade out due to the clients' perseverance. When an employee detects the possible attacks, he/she should get ready not to obey its suggestions. If they want to live healthily, they should not allow the voice not to make them avoid doing sports. If

they want to get closer to their soul mates, they should not listen to the voice suggesting them not to express their love.

Borchard (2015) mentioned five things to do when someone feel insecure: (1) to assume the feeling to be beautiful things, (2) stand on his/her dignity,(3) avoid meeting everyone making him/her feel insecure, (4) position him/herself around those supporting him/her, and (5) believe the feeling is not real. In addition, Chung and Mau (2014) mentioned three approaches to repress employees' sense of insecurity in the workplace. The first is to see previous individual actors from subjective insecurity. The second is to see organizational and contextual characteristics at the level of subjective insecurity. The third is to see individual and public result as subjective insecurity.

Subsequently Gallie et al. (2016) said that effective participation of co-workers helps reduce SOI in the workplace. Cheng, Mauno, and Lee (2014) also found that negative effects of SOI on employees' welfare may be reduced by specific activities by individuals in cognitive and behavioral forms, either consciously or unconsciously.

Besides, humans tend to improve personal security based on such things as relationships, (Lemay, 2014), financial stability (Fagerström et al., 2011), and individual achievements (Koomen, van Leeuwen, & van Der Leij, 2004). The ideas help create control over uncertainty and potentially harmful conditions, so that individuals may live their life freely and safe (Lee at al., 2014).

To help individuals achieve a form of more lasting happiness in order to feel safe, Buddhism also provides various methods considering sensory experiences to be unreal, immortal experiences and teaching them how to deal with those experiences and reduce total dependence on their external safety (Wada & Park, 2009). Lee et al. (2014) explained some practices of Buddhism likely to be useful to help professionals face SOI, including: (1) having love and compassion to help employees accept instinctive needs for security and understand more effective ways to have security, such as finding inner peace of mind; (2) practicing meditation to enhance consciousness of thinking process, like actions in looking for security, reasons for insecurity, and our experiences concerning kinds and quality of security; (3) understanding and accepting immortality of all given things; (4) introspecting behavior and thinking process in everyday life to better understand motivation encouraging employees to have safe life; (5) having unquestioning acceptance of someone's insecurity without thinking of the

past and worrying about the future in an excessive way; (6) introspecting environmental causes and effects of their actions to help individuals change the cause of their misery (Vimalaramsi, 1997); and (7) trying to have love and express deep sympathy for others to reduce their sense of insecurity of having unreal desire (Wada & Park, 2009).

At last, the approach of mind strategy mentioned above may put employees at ease. The preference as to which approach to be used has to be subject to the condition of the employees. This needs to be done consistently to encourage employees to control their own emotion and sense of security. Calmness and peacefulness gained from the approach of mind strategy will positively affect employees' physical and spiritual health in their family and working life.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Every single employee must experience SOI in his/her working life, especially in workplace. SOI comes over employees due to internal factors or external ones, such as relationship the employees establish with others either inside or outside the workplace. To overcome this problem, they have to use risk management to SOI they feel.

SOI can come over people when they are, at their working age, making an effort to meet their human needs. According to Maslow Et al. (1945), human needs can be divided into seven certain needs: biological and physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization needs. Besides, the coming of SOI may be caused by employees' psychological conditions and previous experiences.

In general, they are unaware of SOI. Consequently, a chronological framework of SOI is highly important for them to have. The framework involves a two-step process: understanding the nature of SOI and developing ability to repress it. This framework is aimed at encouraging employees' awareness of SOI so that they can be more creative and inovative.

The first step of understanding SOI includes comprehending defintions, models, effects, and causal factors of SOI. Meanwhile, the second step includes understanding approaches to avoiding the problems SOI poses by raising self-consciousness and an approach to overcoming the problems of SOI by formulating mind strategy.

Both of the steps show that comfort is something employees need on the whole. Furthermore, the understanding give them insight as to how to use the risk management to avoid such unpleasant conditions, with or without assistance of others. For instance, they may do meditation, devise various-choice plans, behave flexibly, and perform professional attitudes and actions. Meanwhile, solving SOI with others' assistance can be done by psychologists, psychiatrists, and Buddhists.

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