



# Anxiety, Stress and Depression among job seekers in COVID-19 Pandemic Circumstances at Kolkata

Haru Roy<sup>1</sup>Chayan Adak<sup>2</sup><sup>2</sup>M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Education, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India<sup>1</sup>JRF Scholar, Department of Education, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India

## Abstract

Almost everyone is aware of the threats of the Corona Virus nowadays, which has affected people at all levels of the world in one way or another, be it psychologically or physiologically. Significant effects have been observed on the mental and physical health of individuals working on the frontline and their families in a big number of cases. Researchers in different parts of the world have been studying up on the mental health of front liners and their families and upon students and trying to figure out the ways to support mental health and well-being in this situation. The current study focused on the mental state of job seekers in these circumstances and the main aim of the study was to find out the current status of anxiety, stress, and depression among job seekers in this lockdown period. A cross-sectional survey technique was adopted with the help of a snowball sampling technique among 175 sample units. The findings of the study revealed that job seekers had much concern about their future, and it had a bad effect on their mental health. Significant differences were found in gender and caste variations on Anxiety and depression at 0.05 and 0.01 level statistically.

**Keywords** – Covid-19, Anxiety, Depression, Stress, Unemployment

## Introduction

The Novel Corona Virus disease (2019-nCoV) is believed to be started to spread from Wuhan City, China as reported by the international media at the end of December 2019 and now it is rapidly engulfing the whole world. The first Covid-19 case in India was reported in late January 2020 and the infected person was returned from abroad. It was reported that approximately 17 million peoples have been infected around the world and total numbers of fatalities were 0.7 million till July 2020 (Worldometers). India also maintained the same trend in terms of the numbers of infected peoples and causalities. Due to a lack of medicines and vaccines for the prevention of this new disease in medical science, complete lockdown- the only approach has been adopted by most of the countries. Economists around the world are worried about the world's economy as a result of a long-term lockdown (BBC, 2020) as International Monetary Fund stated that the global economy will shrink by 3% in this year and developing countries like India would affect significantly. Disorders related to mental conditions tend to be very normal in situations like this (WHO, 2020), especially thinking about protecting own self and family and looking to the uncertain future. Along with the common people, all the people working on the frontlines have suffered from mental issues

(Duy et al., 2020). Fear and anxiety are the main and common mental disturbances currently. In this changing world, symptoms associated with mental illness were very common with the rapid adaptation and heavy workload among the majority of people and now this epidemic illness (SARS-CoV-2) has raised more concerns about the mental problems of people. The long-time house arrest, fear of Covid-19 infected and death, and thinking of uncertainty of future have made the person distance from his or her normal life which pushes a person towards a very stressful situation. Mental illness like both anxiety and depression are the result of a stressful situation. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2001), 15 percent of the total population and 30 percent of the women population of that were suffered from a severe depressive disorder. Various studies had shown a positive relationship between unemployment and mental health issues in more than one country. Common mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or stress are common nowadays among job seekers who had not to get a job after obtaining a certain quality degree from universities (Rafi et al., 2019). As a result of which the suicidal rate is very high in those job-seeking people at present and especially among young job seekers. Job seeking stress and increases in unemployment played a major role in bad mental issues which later turned into a suicidal tendency among most of the young job seekers (Lim et al., 2018). A direct association of unemployment with stress had proven in some previous cross-sectional studies (Cohen & Janicki, 2012) and unemployment is also considered as a public health problem (Hammarstorm & Janlert, 2005). With the current epidemic, there is growing concern about whether in the future the job seekers will get the jobs they need.

If all the job seekers at Kolkata are considered in such situation then most of them will appear with some mental issues related with anxiety, depression, and stress at the moment. Due to over population India has been raised with less job opportunity and shortage at the scope of employment and now this pandemic situation has further increased the anxiety and fear of job seekers with that. The current study intended to examine and investigate the present status of mental disturbance associated with anxiety, stress, and depression among job seekers at Kolkata in this Covid-19 pandemic situation.

## Literature Review

Despite a lot of research works done on mental health in the past, finding out the mental state of job seekers also is an important question. Artezcoz, L. et al. (2004) conducted a research to find out the gender differences in the effects of unemployment on mental health and significant gender differences found in the effects of unemployment on mental health. Similarly, another study done by Rafi, M. A. et al. (2019) to find out the prevalence rate and associated risk factors of depression, anxiety, and stress among Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) job seekers. Research was done on 304 participants and moderate to severe level of anxiety, depression and stress was found with no gender significance in the study. Esteban-Gonzalo, S., et al. (2018) studied on Employment status, gender and health in Spanish women with the aim to observe relationships between employment status, gender role conformity, and health among adult Spanish women from a biopsychosocial approach. Obtained results from multiple logistic regression implied that full-time housemakers showed higher levels of feminine norms conformity and no significant differences found on educational levels. Again, another prospective study conducted by Butterworth, P., (2012) aimed to assess the role of mental health in determining future employment status. Researchers collected data in five waves from 5846 respondents since long-time and the results revealed that respondents who were not employed for long time, tend to show poor mental health and there was no significant difference on mental health of men and women. Most of the previous researches suggested that mental and physical health of a person affected by their present employment status and unemployment condition. Pharr, J. R., et al (2012) studied on "The Impact of Unemployment on Mental and Physical Health, Access to Health Care and Health Risk Behaviors". Main aim of the study was to investigate the effect of employment status and unemployment condition on people's mental and physical health. The study raised with important findings and suggestions that was unemployed people had significant worse mental health than employed people and they also had tendency to do risky physical behavior. Pandemic situations also have bad effects on people's mental health that had seen in a research article done in china

among frontline health workers. The study showed prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among medical staffs were 13.11%, 14.75% and 4.92%, respectively (Duy, 2020).

Above summary of the previous researches on mental health displayed a clear picture of employment status's relation with the mental health issues. The present study has been tried to investigate the current mental state of job seekers at Kolkata in this Covid-19 pandemic circumstances, which has not been examined before.

### Research Question

After analyzed previous research works on the impact of unemployment on mental health, the researcher found that the status mental health of job seekers at Kolkata in this Covid-19 pandemic is a questionable matter and new things to be discovered. Researchers stated the research questions as –

- 1) What is the present status of anxiety, stress, and depression among job seekers at Kolkata in the Covid-19 pandemic situation?
- 2) What are the variations of socio-economic variables on mental health among job seekers?

### Delimitations

The study had many delimitations due to unavoidable circumstances i.e., Lockdown, Proper manpower and infrastructure. Therefore, the study was delimited in following –

1. The study delimited within only Kolkata district.
2. The study was conducted on only 175 sample units.
3. The study focused on only two major independent variables viz. Gender and Belonging Social Caste.

### Objectives

In the find of probable answers of basic research question, the researcher framed the following research objectives –

1. To observe the present status of existing anxiety, depression, and stress among job seekers in this Covid-19 pandemic situation.
2. To investigate the differences of existing anxiety, depression, and stress among job seekers in this Covid-19 pandemic situation with respected to their gender.
3. To investigate the differences of existing anxiety, depression, and stress among job seekers in this Covid-19 pandemic situation with respected to their belonging social caste.

### Hypotheses

Following hypotheses were framed on the fulfillment of the research objectives -

**H<sub>01</sub>** Mean score of Anxiety does not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**H<sub>02</sub>** Mean score of Depression does not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**H<sub>03</sub>** Mean score of Stress does not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**H<sub>04</sub>** Mean score of total ADS does not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**H<sub>05</sub>** Mean score of Anxiety does not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging to social caste is concerned.

**H<sub>06</sub>** Mean score of Depression does not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging to social caste is concerned.

**H07** Mean score of Stress does not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging to social caste is concerned.

**H08** Mean score of total ADS does not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging to social caste is concerned.

### Study Design

A cross-sectional survey framework was designed in this study with the help of a snowball sampling technique. The sample consisted of Job seekers in terms of those people, who were not currently studied at any institution or organization; they completed a certain level of degree and were searching for a job at any Govt. or Private sector. The study was implemented on a total number of 175 sample units. Anxiety, Depression, and stress had been identified as dependent factors in the study and what variations of gender and caste had been seen on it. Anxiety, Depression, and Stress scale (ADSS-BSPSA) by Dr. Pallavi Bhatnagar were used as a data collection tool and there were 19, 15, and 14 subscales of anxiety, depression, and stress respectively. Hypothesis Testing

**H01** Mean score of Anxiety do not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**Table 1: Presenting the Independent Sample T-Test based on H01.**

Independent sample T-Test										
Variable	category	N	Mean	SD	t	df	MD	p-value	Std. error	Remarks
<b>Gender</b>	Male	105	8.80	3.784	2.865	173	1.671	.005	.583	S* P<0.01
	Female	70	7.13	3.776						

Calculated scores of Tables 1 displayed the mean score difference of anxiety upon gender. Mean scores of Anxieties of male and female students found a statistically significant difference between two groups [ $t = 2.865$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ]. Therefore, H01 null hypothesis is rejected and it seemed that there is a significant difference exists between male and female on their anxiety.

**H02** Mean score of Depression do not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**Table 2: Presenting the Independent Sample T-Test based on H02.**

Independent sample T-Test										
Variable	category	N	Mean	SD	t	df	MD	p-value	Std. error	Remarks
<b>Gender</b>	Male	105	7.69	3.545	3.397	173	1.829	.001	.538	S* P<0.01
	Female	70	5.86	3.402						

Calculated scores of Table 2 displayed the mean score difference of depression upon gender. Mean scores of Depressions of male and female students found a statistically significant difference between two groups [ $t = 3.397$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ]. Therefore, H02 null hypothesis is rejected and it seemed that there is a significant difference exists between male and female on their depression.

**H03** Mean score of Stress do not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**Table 3: Presenting the Independent Sample T-Test based on H<sub>03</sub>.**

Independent sample T-Test										
Variable	category	N	Mean	SD	t	df	MD	p-value	Std. error	Remarks
Gender	Male	105	8.00	2.682	1.861	173	0.771	.064	.414	NS* P>0.05
	Female	70	7.23	2.693						

Table 3 showed that obtained value of Independent sample T-Test comparing the mean scores of Stresses among male and female job seekers. Observed t-value ( $t=1.861$ ,  $P>0.05$ ) showed that there was no statistically significant difference exists between male and female candidates according to their stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained, and it can attribute to any chance factor.

**H<sub>04</sub>** Mean score of total ADS do not significantly differ among job seekers when gender is concerned.

**Table 4: Presenting the Independent Sample T-Test based on H<sub>04</sub>.**

Independent sample T-Test										
Variable	category	N	Mean	SD	t	df	MD	p-value	Std. error	Remarks
Gender	Male	105	24.56	9.026	3.114	173	4.290	.002	1.378	S* P<0.01
	Female	70	20.27	8.784						

Calculated scores of Table 4 displayed the mean score difference of total anxiety, depression and stress scores upon gender. Mean scores of total ADS of male and female students found a statistically significant difference between two groups [ $t = 3.114$ ,  $P<0.01$ ]. Therefore, H<sub>04</sub> null hypothesis is rejected and it seemed that there is a significant difference exists between male and female on their total ADS.

**H<sub>05</sub>** Mean score of Anxiety do not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging social caste is concerned.

**Table 5: Presenting the One-way ANOVA based on H<sub>05</sub>.**

ANOVA						
Anxiety Score						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Between Groups	132.705	3	44.235	3.078	0.029	*S P<0.05
Within Groups	2457.272	171	14.370			
Total	2589.977	174				

It can be observed from the table 5 that the computed F value comparing the anxiety scores of job seekers from different social caste (Unreserved, SC, ST, and OBC). The differences in between the groups found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level ( $F=3.078$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the scores are evident that there exists a significant caste difference in anxiety among job seekers.

**H<sub>06</sub>** Mean score of Depression do not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging social caste is concerned.

**Table 6: Presenting the One-way ANOVA based on H<sub>06</sub>.**

ANOVA						
Depression Score						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Between Groups	124.960	3	41.653	3.359	0.020	*S P<0.05
Within Groups	2120.674	171	12.402			
Total	2245.634	174				

It can be observed from the table 6 that the computed F value comparing the depression scores of job seekers from different social caste (Unreserved, SC, ST, and OBC). The differences in between the groups found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level (F=3.359, P<0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the scores are evident that there exists a significant caste difference in depression among job seekers.

**H<sub>07</sub>** Mean score of Stress do not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging social caste is concerned.

**Table 7: Presenting the One-way ANOVA based on H<sub>07</sub>.**

ANOVA						
Stress Score						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Between Groups	50.374	3	16.791	2.348	.074	*NS P>0.05
Within Groups	1222.963	171	7.152			
Total	1273.337	174				

It can be observed from the table 7 that the computed F value comparing the stress scores of job seekers from different social caste (Unreserved, SC, ST, and OBC). The differences in between the groups found to be not statistically significant (F=2.348, P>0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis is retained, and the above analysis is evident that there exists no significant caste difference in stress among job seekers.

**H<sub>08</sub>** Mean score of total ADS do not significantly differ among job seekers when belonging social caste is concerned.

**Table 8: Presenting the One-way ANOVA based on H<sub>08</sub>.**

ANOVA						
Total Anxiety, Depression and Stress Score						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Between Groups	807.524	3	269.175	3.345	.021	*S P<0.05
Within Groups	13761.311	171	80.476			
Total	14568.834	174				

It can be observed from the table 8 that the computed F value comparing the total ADS scores of job seekers from different social caste (Unreserved, SC, ST, and OBC). The differences in between the groups found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level (F=3.345, P<0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the scores are evident that there exists a significant caste difference in total ADS among job seekers.

### Major Observations

- The study observed that male candidates (n=105, m= 24.56) appeared with greater mean score on total anxiety, depression and stress than their female counterparts (n=70, m=20.27) in this Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- Statistically significant difference found between male and female candidates on their anxiety and depression scores.
- Differences on stress scores not found to be significant with gender consideration.
- Statistically significant difference found between candidates belonging from different caste on their anxiety and depression scores.
- Mean scores of total anxiety, depression and stress of candidates belonging from different caste found to be significant statistically.
- No significant variation found on stress scores between male, female, and different castes also.

### Discussion and conclusion

In today's society, it is often seen that most of the people suffers from the symptoms of mental health related diseases. The causes of mental illnesses are not limited to just one reason, rapidly changing society, various physical chronic illnesses (Turner & Kelly, 2000), excessive workload, consuming drugs, alcohol and tobacco, substance abuse (Nasirazadeh,

M. et al., 2013) (Booth, B. M. et al., 2011) and so many various causes are there of mental illnesses. Anxiety, depression and stress related problems are now very common and important health issues facing most of the people worldwide and it has already been proven that adolescents and adults with anxiety, depression and stress problem leads to worse results in the future. Job seekers are not exception to this, as mentioned earlier in the introduction part. Even a well-adjusted person can break-down if encountered with stressful situation, especially in challenged situations such as penniless, uncertainty of future can lead to sense of worry and fear.

The data results of analyses obtained from the present study helps us to understand the current state mental health of job seekers at Kolkata in present condition. Moderate level of total anxiety, depression and stress scores found in this study among job seekers, which is a bit worrying. The study observed that male candidates (n=105, m= 24.56) appeared with greater mean score on total anxiety, depression and stress

than their female counterparts (n=70, m=20.27) in this Covid-19 pandemic situation and their found a statistical significance at 0.01 level. Whenever gender variation is observed on mental health related studies around the world, most researches had always shown that women were more likely anxious, depressed and stressed than men (Droogenbroeck, F. V. et al., 2018) (Lim, A. Y. et al., 2018) (Kvrgic, S. et al., 2013) (Albizu-Garcia, C. E. et al., 2001) (Williams, K. & Umberson, D. 2000) (Zunzunegui M.V. et al., 1998) (WHO., 1997, 1998, 2000). The reason for the difference here may be that the number of participants was higher for men than for women and small number of samples have studied in a very short time and in one city that would not represent the entire job seekers mental health as population worldwide. The study examined caste variations on mental health, it has been seen in very few studies but there were some important researchers of social exclusion on mental health. According to Rosenthal, Russell and Thomson (2006), discriminated and excluded persons can be explained as 'unconnected and stressed', which makes them to feel isolated, anxious, psychologically distressed and tend to do self-harming and risk-taking behavior. Mean scores of total anxiety, depression and stress of candidates belonging from different caste found to be significant statistically in current study. Thus, no significant variation found on stress scores between male, female, and among different social castes. The feel of not include in a larger social group as caste discrimination (Pal, 2015) significantly effects on the mental health of peoples. Previous studies revealed that social exclusion, caste discrimination led to low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, feeling of depressed and stressed and increases in self-defeating and harmful behavior (Buckley, Winkel & Leary, 2004; Williams & Govan, 2005).

The situation aroused by Corona Virus disease has showed a terrible picture all over the world. Mental health related problems, feeling anxious, worried and fearful all the time is common phenomena among peoples (WHO, 2020). Present study has uncovered a new aspect by examining the mental health state of job seekers at Kolkata in this situation. Keeping yourself physically fit by doing exercise and meditating every day can keep common problematic mental issues at bay (WHO, 2020). The researcher further concluded that by removing unnecessary emotional anxieties, keeping calm can be a way to promote good mental health and well-being at present circumstances. Thus, Present study conducted upon a limited sample group and in a short time, so there will be still have scopes of do further researches in this particular area.

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