



OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH OF LEADERS

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Abstract

India is a democratic land of great political leaders, who ruled the country effectively and also by protecting its national interest. India is a developing country and is in the race of becoming a developed country. To become a developed country, India's political leaders need positive mental health and less stress at work. The role of political leaders are very important in the development of country because "a politician, political leader or political figure is a person who is involved in influencing public policy and decision making". The purpose of the present paper is to focus on the stress and mental health of the political leaders. Work Stress "is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope" and "mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community". Political psychology is one of the very important branch, but practices of this branch in India is very low and rare. So, after analyzing work stress and mental health issues of political leaders, it can be said that government and political parties of district, state and national level should take some step and plan counseling programme, intervention programmes, special seminars, workshops etc. for the political leaders.

Introduction

Political psychology is an interdisciplinary academic field dedicated to understanding politics, politicians and political behavior from a psychological perspective. The relationship between politics and psychology is considered bi-directional, with psychology being used as a lens for understanding politics and politics being used as a lens for understanding psychology. Political psychology is very useful for the development of the country, but researches are very few in this area. People are always interested in knowing the problems created by the political leaders and criticize them, but never focus on their work stress, challenges, pressures and difficulties. Political leaders are very important persons of the society, because they are policy-makers, and directly work for the society. So, political leaders should be mentally healthy.

Occupational-Stress and Mental Health

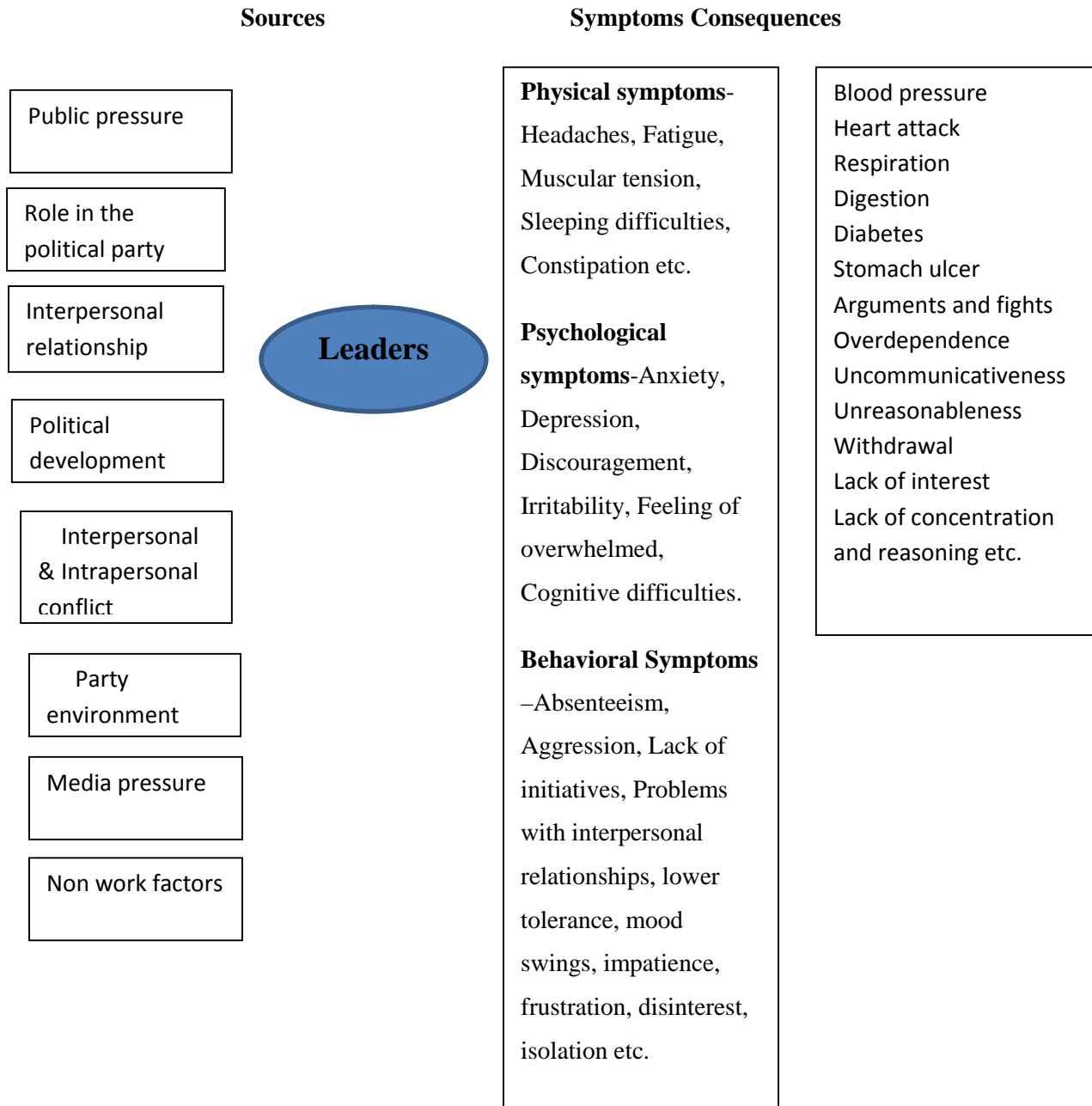
Stress is an everyday fact of life. A good portion of political leader's life is spent at their work/field. Work plays an important role in determining political identity. That is why political leaders often introduce themselves by stating what they do for a living. The term work stress brings to mind terms like political dissatisfaction, work overload, deadlines, conflicting demands, uncertainty, monetary problems, and public expectations and so on. Political leaders experience stress in personal life and at work-place. They have to work effectively against time and within the parameter of various rules and regulations. Various political works, meetings, media-pressures, different type of external stressors affect their behavior.

Political work stress is growing problem around the world that affects not only the mental health and well-being of political leaders, but also the productivity for the country. Actually, work stress arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope. Political leaders might feel under pressure if the demands of their work are greater than they can comfortably manage other sources of work related stress include conflict with boss and other workers, constant change and threat to political security. There are many political stressors faced by the political leaders i.e. culture and environment of political party, role conflict, interparty conflict, intraparty conflicts, jealousy feeling and unhealthy relationship in party workers, work load during elections, position insecurity, less attractive position, lack of autonomy, discrimination, harassment, over supervision, poor relationship with team leader etc. Work related stress is a management issue. It is important for political parties to recognize work related stress as a significant health and mental health issue. The issue of role



stress in any political party is very important factor for the stress. A role is the set of obligations that accompany the party a person holds. Role stress is conflict and tension due to the roles being enacted by a person at any given point of time. There are many problems related to role stress like-role ambiguity, role expectation, role overload, role erosion, role inadequacy, personal inadequacy, role isolation, and role stagnation etc.

Dynamics of Occupational Stress



After reviewing the work stress of political leaders, it can be said that positive mental health is very necessary for healthy politics. Good mental health is a sense of well-being, confidence and self-esteem. It enables us to fully enjoy and appreciate other people, day-to-day life and our environment. There is a negative relationship exists between work stress and mental health. As the work stress increases, mental health decreases. Ignoring mental



health of political leaders doesn't make good political sense. A research shows that performance and effectiveness at work is largely dependent on mental health and well-being. Poor mental health is associated with an increased risk of diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes etc., while good mental health is a known protective factor. Political leaders may not admit their illness in public because it would affect followers and supporters in a negative manner however the inevitable media glare exposes the fact that many of them have to spend considerable time and energy on complicated medical treatment.

There are some examples of ill- health of political leaders' i.e. NCP leader Sharad Pawar is already battling with mouth cancer for some years. BJP President Nitin Gadkari has severe diabetes and recently went through a rigorous weight reduction surgery; Former State Minister Narayan Rane has a problem with very high blood sugar, while congress leader Jaipal Reddy is suffering from some major problems. At the central-state level too many politicians have faced serious health or mental-health issues. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had to go through a bypass surgery. BJP leader Arun Jetley has had heart trouble for some years. A.K. Antony also has had some health problems recently. Mumbai's Senior Cardiologist Dr.Praful Kerkar says "The health problems occur mainly because of sedentary lifestyle, and this is a byproduct of stress. Political leaders always have all the help at disposal so there is no physical effort or walking etc. that they do.

Future psychological perspective for political leaders

For developing positive mental health and reduce work stress of political leaders, and make the country best place to live, the political parties and government should take the initiative for counseling, intervention etc. programmes for their political leaders. Political parties should attach expert psychologist for the solution of various psychological problems related to politics. A psychologist can play a positive role between the link of public psychology and political leaders' psychology. With the help of these programmes psychologist can know the stress area of the leader and party, and can plan accordingly. Many programmes can be planned like-open discussion, relaxation ,method of stress coping strategies, cognitive behavior therapy(CBT),rational emotive behavior therapy(REBT), behavior modification, political issues related lectures, role playing, workshops on related personality development skills and so on. It can be plan properly with the mutual discussion of political party, Government and psychologist. The researchers of psychology should take serious step towards political psychology and develop counseling skills in this area. This vision will be fruitful for the research and for creating the healthy environment in the politics.

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