

Navigating Workplace Mental Health Challenges in Politically Unstable Times

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, October 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The

escalating political instability worldwide is posing unprecedented challenges to organisations, particularly in safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of their workforces. Political instability is a known trigger for mental health issues, as the stress associated with social and



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civil disturbances often leads to heightened levels of anxiety. Constant exposure to political conflicts and uncertainties can contribute to feelings of helplessness and concern about the future, further impacting mental health and wellbeing.

This year has witnessed a record-breaking number of elections worldwide, with 64 countries holding major polls, including the upcoming US presidential election in November. Elections often exacerbate dormant conflicts with heated campaigns and debates which can have

mental health complications. It is evident that psychological distress among individuals increases during campaigns, on Election Day, and in the aftermath. Given these factors, International SOS, the world's leading health and security risk services company, is emphasising the crucial need for organisations to proactively mitigate the detrimental effects of political instability on their workforce.

Workplace Impacts

Political anxiety, a state of distress or unease caused by concerns about political events, can have a devastating impact on employees and organisations. The negative consequences can include:

- Reduce job performance due to decreased productivity and impaired concentration.
- Increased absenteeism as fears related to commuting and business travel can lead to employees avoiding these activities due to safety concerns.
- In severe cases, prolonged exposure to political turmoil can result in serious mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety disorders, which may require medical attention and time off work.
- Increased workplace conflict from heightened tension among employees, leading to more frequent misunderstandings and disagreements.

Dr Rodrigo Rodriguez-Fernandes, Global Health Advisor, Wellness & Mental Health, at International SOS, said, "The intersection of politics and mental health has become increasingly evident, especially in today's highly polarised political climate. In November of last year, International SOS issued the highest number of alerts related to political violence compared to all other months in the past three years. As the US approach another election cycle, it is crucial for organisations to recognise the significant stress that elections can cause for many individuals. Political instability and the resulting anxiety can disrupt workplace dynamics. By providing resources like counselling services and stress management programmes, organisations can help mitigate these negative effects. Fostering a supportive environment where employees feel safe to express concerns and seek help is essential."

STRATEGIES TO COMBAT EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AMID GLOBAL POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Identify political stress and assess the level of impact
Assess the psycho-social hazards in the workplace and external exposures to understand and address varying levels of stress among employees.

Establish clear guidelines
Develop or update policies to establish clear guidelines for political discussions in the workplace.

Foster empathy and understanding
Facilitate open and respectful dialogue that fosters connection.

Provide end-to-end support
Offer tailored support services, such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) that provide counselling and emotional support.

Training and education
Conduct workshops and training sessions to help employees understand the impact of political anxiety and how to cope with it effectively.

Access to reliable information
Provide reliable and vetted sources of information to negate the impact of misinformation. Offer real-time updates during known events like elections or rising tensions.

Provide access to mental health professionals
If the impact of politics on mental health becomes overwhelming, having professional help from a therapist or counsellor can offer employees valuable support and guidance on coping strategies to navigate the emotional challenges that political instability can bring.

In a record-breaking year for the number of elections worldwide, with 64 countries holding major polls, International SOS urges organisations to recognise and mitigate the potential impacts on employees.

International SOS offers proactive strategies to combat political anxiety among workforces amid global political uncertainties:

1. **Identify Political Stress and Assess the Level of Impact:** Assess the psycho-social hazards in the workplace and external exposures to understand and address varying levels of stress among employees.
2. **Establish Clear Guidelines:** Develop or update policies to establish clear guidelines for political discussions in the workplace. Define acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and outline consequences for violations to avoid bias or discrimination claims.
3. **Foster Empathy and Understanding:** Cultivate a workplace environment of empathy and understanding by facilitating open and respectful dialogue that fosters connection rather than division.
4. **Provide End-to-End Support:** Offer tailored support services, such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) that provide counselling and emotional support, and personalised hotlines for employees to call in the event of an incident.
5. **Access to Reliable Information:** Provide reliable and vetted sources of information to negate the impact of misinformation. Offer real-time updates during known events like elections or rising tensions to ensure employees are well-informed.

6. Education and Training: Conduct workshops and training sessions to help employees understand the impact of political anxiety and how to cope with it effectively. Training can also address the importance of respectful political discussions in the workplace. Provide access to wellness programmes and resources. As the election draws closer, consider recirculating company policies related to workplace conduct.

7. Provide Access to Mental Health Professionals: If the impact of politics on mental health becomes overwhelming, having professional help from a therapist or counsellor can offer employees valuable support and guidance on coping strategies to navigate the emotional challenges that political instability can bring.

Listen to International SOS' latest podcast, "US Election Briefing: Misinformation and Workplace Dynamics", to learn more about the effects of misinformation and disinformation on the information and security environment. The podcast also discusses how election-related violence could pose problems for the workplace and offers advice about how to mitigate any risks.

On 5 November, International SOS will host a security forecast webinar with a special focus on the US election, exclusively for clients. Register here: <https://my.internationalsos.com/security-forecast-series>

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