

Organization and health - police organizations in the tension between task perception and employee responsibility

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Abstract

Considering the challenges that arise for the working world due to demographic change, health has become an important topic for police organisations by now. The development of health-promoting structures and processes and their integration into official everyday life is supposed to strengthen the performance and operational capability of the employees. The meanwhile much discussed implementation of health management into a police organisation needs to be considered against this background.

This paper focuses on the organisational-sociological analysis of this implementation process. It intends to show how a police authority acts as a specific part of the public administration, when confronted with a new requirement. The implementation and realisation of health management into the organisation of the German Federal Police provides such an occasion. The overarching objective of the analysis is to understand and explain better the inner regulatory functioning of police organisations under reform pressure. The central leading question is, “How does the Federal Police work when health management as a new and innovative organisation topic is being expressed to them?” The key question is being answered empirically via a qualitative-interpretative research approach, which is intended to provide insight into the specific inner workings of one of the largest German police organisations.

Contextual factors, such as the specifics of police organisations, background knowledge on health management, organisation-theoretical models and basics, influence the empirical study as sensitising concepts. On the basis of participating observation (as an access to the research area) and problem-focused interviews (as a method of data collection) it was analysed which factors are action-guiding for the functioning of the Federal Police with respect to the implementation of health management and how the authority deals with the subject. The evaluation is conducted through recourse to several basics and procedures of the “Grounded Theory” and aims at the reconstruction of official procedures and manners of formation.

With this approach, it is accomplished to come closer to the organisational reality of the Federal Police in the context of the implementation of health management as far as possible. “Volatility of authority actions” as an interpretation of authority actions under reform pressure plays a central role within organisation procedures of the Federal Police. It is identified as an organisational experience, as a part of official action consistency and as an expression of individual influence and missing willingness to change of official actors.