INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEE-DETERMINED FLEXIBILITY

Problem
Different effects of flexibility of shift schedules on individual work-life balance and organizational structures and processes?

Methods
Online questionnaire answered by n=927 police patrol officers working three different kinds of shift schedules (enacted std. working hrs. 40 h/w):
- Four shift-groups (4SG) with a specified shift roster with three shifts (A, M+N, 2 days off), no flexible elements (n=650)
- Five shift-groups (5SG) with a specified shift roster with three shifts (A, M+N, 3 days off), some self-determined flexible elements (n=51)
- Flexible model (Flex) with no specified shift roster, officers create their individual schedule observing some administrative constraints (n=226)

Results

Trend 1: Social Life / work balance

Example-item:
- Shift schedule interferes with leisure activities
Similar trends for:
- Other items measuring social life / work balance

Trend 2: Work related social structures in focus

Example-item:
- Reciprocal support if work gets burdening (socio-emotional support)
Similar trends for items measuring:
- Other items measuring socio-emotional support
- Participation of officers (e.g. supervisors consult officers before decisions are made)
- Flow of information (e.g. officers are informed of important things and proceedings of their department)
- Reciprocal trust (e.g. trust in fellow officers regarding officers safety; being able to talk about personal matters)
- Assessment of interpersonal relationships
- Satisfaction with disposition of working time

Trend 3: Effective Leadership in focus

Example-item:
- Supervisors become aware if an officers does not feel well (socio-emotional supervision)
Similar trends for items measuring:
- Supervision (e.g. supervisors become aware if an officer does something that should be criticized)
- Work-coordination by supervisors
- Supervisors representing the needs of their officers
- Feedback given by supervisors
- Overall satisfaction with supervisors
- Satisfaction with supervisors and fellow officers

Conclusions
- Employee-determined flexibility provides some clear advantages for the individual
- Pure Employee-determined flexibility is also accompanied by a broad variety of dysfunctional, especially organizational effects.
- Support flexible systems with some synchronizing elements which allow to develop some minimal organizational / social structures and effective leadership.
- Fixed shift systems should allow for at least some flexibility on the side of the employee in order to alleviate possible (shift) work-life conflicts (e.g. 5SG model).

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