Police Officers' Identities, Team Adaptability and Authentic Leadership in the Belgian Federal Police

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OBJECT AND BACKROUND

The targeted study will focus on the current and desired identities of police officers and their adaptive capacity, required to realise identity changes. Currently, the budgets of the integrated Belgian police are under pressure due to, amongst other things, the economic situation and the increased pension costs. Both local and federal police forces are thus investigating ways to maintain the current service level while reducing costs.

GOAL

In this study we are interested in differences between the current and desired identities of individuals in the federal police as well as differences between identities in the local and federal police forces. Additionally, we aim to investigate how differences in identity profiles shape change acceptance amongst officers and how leadership and climate predict team performance.

We will first investigate the current identities of police officers, specifically measuring the core norms, values and expectations that officers associate with their force. We will then see how officers' perceptions of their organisation differ from an 'ideal' scenario (i.e., a desired identity that officers would wish to move towards in the future). Next, we will use change scenarios to examine how change acceptance relates to different identity profiles. We expect that perceptions of threat and change resistance will be shaped by an officers' identity, such that prospective changes will be less accepted when they threaten core norms and values. Fourth, we will analyse the leadership of the teams. We aim to investigate the change orientation of the leaders, and their degree of authenticity. In general, we expect authentic leadership which positively influence performance. Additionally, since team members are inclined to copy the values and the behaviour of more authentic leaders, we expect the leader's change orientation to impact team performance, but only when the leader is perceived to be authentic. When a leader strongly believes that change is necessary and demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions, the team is likely to have a lower focus on optimising current efficiency, and hence we expect a lower team performance. In the last part we investigate the team and organisational climate because we expect that the way the team and organisation are structured will impact team performance. A highly structured team and a formalised, traditional climate are expected to positively impact team performance.

DESIGN

The current study is a quantitative study where data will be gathered through online surveys. It will be a multilevel study in the 4 different parts of the federal police, with 150 teams included in our sample.