



180.6 - "Coffee and Cigarettes": Work Contexts and Performance Management

 Tuesday, 23 February 2021

 22:00 - 22:00

Abstract

In a context of an increasingly global and competitive economy, emerging restructuring and organizational dynamics demand greater versatility and functional efficiency, while often establishing precarious working conditions for professionals. Problems such as the intensive pace of work, insufficient free time for extra-work activities, long working hours and/or rotating shift systems, along with the need to adapt to new practices and routines, are just some of the indicators which reflect the high pressure put on professional performance. While this pressure cross-cuts different working areas, the extent of its impact tends to be most relevant within professional groups whose nature of work links them to more demanding and higher responsive levels of performance.

This presentation draws on an ongoing sociological study on 'performance consumptions' at work, i.e., the use of medicines, dietary supplements and other products to improve physical, intellectual and social performance in the workplace. Based on five Focus Group Discussions with a total of 22 participants from two main professional groups, we explore 1) the work context and working conditions of these professionals and the pressures they create for certain forms and levels of performance and 2) how these groups manage (pharmacologically or not) such professional imperatives. Focusing on the social context that structures the daily work of these individuals, we analyse the social expression of such performance consumptions, specifically those that are mobilized to deal with issues such as sleep problems, fatigue, to improve concentration, or to deal with the negative implications of stress. While the widespread use of coffee and cigarettes appears as a legitimate practice in the everyday working routines, due to both their socializing markers and their perceived improvement in performance management, specific products (energy drinks and medicines) were mentioned mostly when managing more extreme situations arising from work-related activities.

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