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The Crucial Question or "How do you feel about Corruption?" Results of the BAK study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria"

The Crucial Question or "How do you feel about Corruption?"

Results of the BAK study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria"

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The work and impact of the police is largely dependent on the confidence of the population. Corruption could shake this trust in the long term. Thus, it was only logical that the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAK), in cooperation with the Hannover and Münster Universities of Applied Sciences, initiated the study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria", in which the attitudes of police officers and other groups to corruption were measured. The aim of the study is to gain insights into corruption risks in order to develop and implement more appropriate prevention concepts. In the study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria", the BAK interviewed 1,687 people about their attitudes towards corruption; about half of them were cadets of the Austrian Federal Police and the other half were students of the Universities of Vienna and Innsbruck from the Faculties of Law and Psychology. The survey tool used was the Hannover Corruption Scale (HKS 38), a questionnaire that measures attitudes towards corruption and, in the case of group measurements, enables conclusions to be drawn regarding these groups' susceptibility to corruption. The questionnaire distinguishes three areas (conative, affective and cognitive) in the attitudes towards corruption. The results show that the respondents from the police are less prone to corruption than the comparison groups, however, a detailed analysis of the three areas also provides promising starting points for new, evidence-based prevention concepts that can support police work.

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1. CORRUPTION PREVENTION IN THE POLICE: NECESSARY OR NICE-TO-HAVE?

Corruption prevention is considered by many as "nice-to-have", because corruption is allegedly rarely on our gauges. At least that is what many people think. This trivialisation of corruption is reflected, for example, in the international Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which depicts subjectively perceived corruption, so the kind of corruption "perceived" by experts. Austria is ranked 17th in this index where-

as Germany is in 10th place (the better the ranking, the lower the perceived corruption) out of at least 176 countries worldwide (TI 2017). However, the order of countries in the CPI does not infer an absolute frequency of corruption, rather the CPI simply enables relative comparisons between countries. Although the CPI is relatively easy to understand due to the presentation of descriptive data, however, it also carries the risk of misinterpretation. Based on the relatively good rankings of Austria and Germany, it could be assumed that corrup-

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tion is not a big issue in the two countries. It is also possible that existing corruption is not noticed or perceived as such. If in countries such as Germany and Austria, which are considered less corrupt, cases of corruption get public, the indignation is often very great and the press coverage is sometimes devastating. There have recently been reports on corruption scandals, such as Telekom Austria (Wieselthaler 2014) and Deutsche Bank (Wolff 2016). From a business perspective, it is crucial that corruption that gets public and forces monetary losses (through possible fines or falling sales) also regularly means a loss of the corporate image, which can perpetuate negative sales. Preventing corruption in companies therefore primarily means protection against losses.

But what about corruption in state organisations? Is there any? What are its effects? In the case of state organisations, corruption points to a grave social problem beyond the criminal aspect. In addition to the material damage, possible intangible losses, mainly in the form of a permanent loss of trust and political credibility, pose a high risk (Linssen/Pfeiffer 2009; Linssen et al. 2011). Fleck and Kuzmics (Fleck/ Kuzmics 1985) therefore regard corruption in the public sector as even more problematic than in the private sector.

From this perspective, corruption prevention in state organisations is especially important from a socio-political point of view. This is even more true for state organisations such as the police and the judiciary, which enjoy high collective trust (European Commission 2016; Reuband 2012). The police traditionally enjoys high status and support among the general public. This applies not only to Austria or the neighbouring Germany, but also to most other western industrialised societies (Jackson et al. 2011; Reuband 2012). Furthermore, the acceptance and impact

of the police are dependent on this trust (Mischkowitz et al. 2000). The issue of corruption in the police thus concerns an area of state order particularly sensitive to trust and carries a high risk of scandalism. The relevance and, at the same time, the risk potential of the topic of police corruption is also demonstrated by the fact that in this millennium, there have only been a few empirical data surveys made in the German-speaking area (for example Schön 2016) and if data was generated, the results remained unpublished (Linssen et al. 2014; Mischkowitz et al. 2000). Preventing corruption in the police is therefore far more than mere protection against loss or even something "nice to have".

2. PREVENTION REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE OF CORRUPTION RISKS

Following this line of thought, the Prevention and Cause Study Department of the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAK), in cooperation with the Hannover and Münster Universities of Applied Sciences, initiated the study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria". This study investigated the opinions and attitudes of, amongst others, Austrian police officers towards corruption. However, in view of the relevance to the confidence of the general public and thus to the consistent work of the police, this is quite noteworthy due to the sensitivity of the topic. The aim of the study is to gain insights into possible corruption risks and to devise and implement further appropriate prevention approaches in the Austrian police. The results of the study will feed into corruption prevention training for the police and help develop new, evidence-based prevention measures. Thus, the focus of corruption prevention should not only be directed at regulations and procedural instructions, but also at psychological aspects, since human

behaviour is particularly influenced by situational and personal factors and their shared interaction (Heckhausen/Heck-hausen 2010). Therefore, new prevention approaches aim to preventively take into account both classes of influencing factors on human behaviour in order to preserve and develop the high level of trust that the police enjoys with the general public and on which they depend in their work.

In a comparative study, the attitudes towards corruption among police cadets and students of psychology and law in Austria were assessed using the Hannover Corruption Scale (HKS 38) (Litzcke et al. 2014). The HKS 38 is a standardised questionnaire for measuring attitudes towards corruption; its evaluation makes it possible to draw conclusions about susceptibility to corruption. The comparison of police cadets to other people of a similar age from other professions should enable a relative assessment of the attitudes towards corruption among police officers against other sections of the population.

In the following the questionnaire, the sample and the realization of the measurement will be presented in order to showcase the key results of the investigation.

2.1 The BAK study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria": the measuring instrument
The HKS 38 is a questionnaire developed in Germany which fulfils psychological quality criteria and allows the assessment of susceptibility to corruption (Litzcke et al. 2014). This is possible because the questionnaire measures risk factors that are based on a person – that is, their attitudes towards corruption. Thus, the questionnaire records a risk area for corruption which lies beyond situational influences on corruption. Since the questionnaire was standardised in Germany on the basis of a representative sample of the German

resident population, it also enables a comparison of the respective sample with the general population. The evaluation of the questionnaire therefore makes no statement as to whether, for example, the "procurement" area is particularly susceptible to corruption due to structural factors or whether job rotation makes sense at one point in the organisation; however, statements about the susceptibility to corruption of groups of people are possible – no matter in which sector these people work and how this sector is designed. Formal regulations such as job rotation may arise as a consequence of such a measurement, for example if individual groups are particularly susceptible to corruption. The attitudes towards corruption are measured by providing statements on this topic and a respondent can agree or disagree with these statements. The options for each statement range from 1 (I strongly agree) through 2 (I disagree), 3 (I neither agree nor disagree), 4 (I agree) to 5 (I strongly agree). If at the statement "Someone who otherwise works hard may also sometimes take advantage", option 5 is ticked, it means a strong agreement with corruption. It should be noted that some of the statements within the HKS 38 are reversed in order to identify those people who are insufficiently motivated and only answer the questionnaire randomly and jeopardise the data quality of the survey. Reversed statements must be taken into account accordingly in the interpretation.

130 statements were developed in order to measure attitudes towards corruption, of which 38 statements were selected for the HKS 38 using various analysis methods from classic and probabilistic test theory (Litzcke et al. 2014). Many statements were thus rejected as they did not appear to measure the same construct or measured several constructs at the same time; others were unable to distinguish between

respondents with different characteristic values. Overall, reducing the number to 38 statements made it possible to develop a practical questionnaire that fulfils psychometric requirements. The statements of the HKS 38 are theoretically based on the attitude model of Eagly and Chaiken (Eagly/Chaiken 1993), thus can be divided into three areas (cognitive, affective and conative). Therefore, the questionnaire is suitable for appropriately recording attitudes towards corruption, thus allowing conclusions on susceptibility to corruption to be drawn. Only measuring the cognitive area, for example, could lead to erroneous conclusions. Example statements for the three different areas of attitudes in the HKS 38 are as follows:

Cognitive: "Profiting from corruption myself is fine."

"Corruption is normal. Anyone who claims otherwise is naive."

Affective: "I'm pleased when corruption offences are revealed by anonymous tip-offs."

Conative: "If I could save my company from bankruptcy by way of corruption, then I would do it."

The HKS 38 is designed in such a way that, based on a pre-defined minimum size of a group, reliable and credible statements can be made about their collective attitudes towards corruption and thus the group's susceptibility to it. It should be noted here that the HKS 38 is only suitable for making statements about groups and not about individuals. The HKS 38 was initially only developed for research purposes and cohort measurements, not for individual diagnostics. If HKS 38 is also to be used in the future in the context of individual diagnostics, another methodological approach is necessary, which, among other things, complicates socially desirable response tendencies.

2.2 The BAK study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria": sample and implementation

The HKS 38 was conducted with a total of 1,687 people in Austria – including 847 police cadets and 840 other students (rounded to 50 % each) – to measure attitudes towards corruption. In the case of the police, the surveys were carried out in almost all police education centres: in Vienna, Traiskirchen, Ybbs, Graz, Eisenstadt, Krumpendorf, Linz, Salzburg and Absam. Vorarlberg was excluded for purely practical reasons, particularly as students from there were represented in other classes. The comparison group of students came from the Faculties of Law and Psychology of the Universities of Vienna and Innsbruck, with 421 law students and 419 psychology students participating (each rounded to 25 % of the sample).

Respondents were presented with the HKS 38 as an online questionnaire, programmed via LimeSurvey. In addition to the HKS 38, sociodemographic data were collected: gender, age, start of training or studies, place of birth, voluntary activity. The questionnaires were completed voluntarily during courses. In order to ensure a standardised survey situation, the questionnaire had to be completed online, in the presence of the investigator, using a smartphone, tablet or PC; access before and after was blocked. A pre-test took place in the Vienna training centre prior to the survey.

The following data for the sample de-

Source: Linssen/Schäffer/Heber

	Police (n=847)	Law (n=421)	Psychology (n=419)
less than 1 year	467 (55 %)	27 (6 %)	276 (66 %)
1 year	309 (37 %)	171 (41 %)	32 (8 %)
2 years	68 (8 %)	114 (27 %)	46 (11 %)
3 years	3 (0.5 %)	63 (15 %)	13 (3 %)
more than 3 years	–	46 (11 %)	52 (12 %)

Table 1: Duration of studies since the beginning

scription are commercially rounded to whole numbers. Initially, the description of the sample composition is based on sociodemographic data.

The gender of the respondents was approximately equally distributed in the total sample: 831 respondents (49 %) were female and 856 (51 %) were male. Female and male respondents were unequally distributed within the individual subsamples. 255 female police cadets (30 %), 289 female law students (69 %) and 287 female psychology students (68 %) took part in the survey. The age of the total sample was – as is often the case in student samples – relatively homogeneous. The average age was around 23 years old (σ=5).

Of the 421 law students, 406 respondents (96 %) were majoring in law, while in the case of the psychology students, 406 of the respondents (97 %) were also majoring in psychology. An overview of the duration of studies in years since the beginning (see Table 1, page 41) also shows that the majority of respondents can be described as first-year students or professionals with a maximum of one year's experience. Only among the law students was the group with a maximum of a year's study experience (47 %) more or less balanced out by the group with two or more years' study experience (53 %).

1,361 respondents (81 %) were born in Austria and 326 respondents (19 %) outside Austria. The proportion of non-Austrian respondents amongst the psychology students in particular was, at 64 % (268 respondents), disproportionately high. Within the police subsample, the proportion of those born outside Austria was 3 % (24 respondents) and 8 % (34 respondents) within the law subsample.

2.3 The BAK study "Attitudes towards corruption in Austria": results of the surveys

The data reported here are also commercially rounded and clearly presented in Table 2 (see page 43). Descriptive data are rounded to integers and inferential statistics to two decimal places. Inferential statistical calculations are performed to enable statistically robust conclusions to be drawn from the data in the sample. The review resulted in a slightly skewed distribution of data. The assumption of a normal distribution led to the selection of parametric test methods. Only variables which are relevant in terms of content are considered inferential statistically in the following. Further results – such as the voluntary work variable – will be presented in more detail in subsequent publications.

From a descriptive point of view, the overall sample (n=1,687) achieved an average ($\overline{x}$) of 86 and a standard deviation (σ) of 20 in terms of attitude towards corruption, which corresponds to a percentile ranking (PR) of 63 compared to a representative German sample. This percentile ranking of 63 means that in a representative German sample around 36 % of the people are more susceptible to corruption than those surveyed in this study. Around 62 % of the people in the standard sample show a lower susceptibility to corruption than the respondents in this study. Percentile rankings are also shown below in addition to averages and standard deviations. Averages are listed, among other things, because their underlying raw values were also used for the inferential statistical calculations and enable the comparison of groups. Percentile rankings are also listed because they allow the comparison of groups with a representative sample, which increases the meaning of the data.

Source: Linssen/Schäffer/Heber

	HKS 38 total	Cognitive	Affective	Conative
Whole sample [n=1,687]				
	x̄=86, σ=20, PR=63	x̄=32, σ=9, PR=52	x̄=30, σ=8, PR=67	x̄=25, σ=7, PR=76
Gender				
Female (n=831)	x̄=88, σ=19, PR=71	x̄=33, σ=8, PR=61	x̄=30, σ=7, PR=71	x̄=26, σ=7, PR=85
Male (n=856)	x̄=85, σ=21, PR=56	x̄=31, σ=9, PR=43	x̄=30, σ=8, PR=62	x̄=24, σ=8, PR=68
Inferential statistics – gender	$t_{(1685)}=3.10$, p=.00, r=.08	$t_{(1685)}=3.49$, p=.00, r=.08	$t_{(1685)}=-.30$, p=.76, r=.01	$t_{(1685)}=4.61$, p=.00, r=.11
Professional groups				
Police (n=847)	x̄=81, σ=19, PR=50	x̄=30, σ=8, PR=40	x̄=29, σ=8, PR=62	x̄=22, σ=6, PR=62
Law (n=421)	x̄=90, σ=21, PR=71	x̄=34, σ=9, PR=62	x̄=29, σ=8, PR=62	x̄=27, σ=8, PR=83
Psychology (n=419)	x̄=93, σ=18, PR=75	x̄=34, σ=8, PR=62	x̄=31, σ=8, PR=71	x̄=29, σ=7, PR=89
Inferential statistics – professional groups	$F_{(2, 1684)}=62.59$, p=.00, r=.26	$F_{(2, 1684)}=37.88$, p=.00, r=.21	$F_{(2, 1684)}=7.04$, p=.00, r=.09	$F_{(2, 1684)}=170.22$ p=.00, r=.41
Age				
Inferential statistics – age (n=1,687)	p=.00, r=-.21	p=.00, r=-.18	p=.00, r=-.10	p=.00, r=-.24

Table 2: Data on attitudes towards corruption

People born in Austria were less susceptible to corruption than those born outside Austria. It should be noted, however, that the representative sample was generated in Germany; although Austria belongs to the German-speaking world, it is conceivable, however, that other values also apply due to cultural differences between the two countries. Thus far, however, there is no representative sample from Austria available, hence the use of the data from the German standard sample here. A specially developed Austrian version of the HKS 38 (HKS 38 A), which takes linguistic specifics into account, has been created for future studies in Austria and is currently being standardised on an Austrian sample on behalf of the BAK. Thus, data from an Austrian representative sample can also be used in future.

In the three areas of attitudes towards corruption in the HKS 38 questionnaire, the entire sample resulted in the following values: cognitive (x̄=32, σ=9, PR=52), affective (x̄=30, σ=8, PR= 67) and conative (x̄=25, σ=7, PR=76). The percentile rankings in particular make it clear that there appears to be a different attitude towards corruption in the individual areas. Of particular note is the comparatively high percentile ranking (76) in the conative area, which is interesting because this area includes statements of behaviour.

2.4 The difference between men and women

Table 2 also presents data on female and male respondents. In detail, female respondents achieved higher scores (x̄=88, σ=19, PR=71) in the HKS 38 as male respondents (x̄=85, σ=21, PR= 56). Higher values mean a comparatively higher susceptibility to corruption, which is particularly evident from the reported percentile rankings. Female respondents also achieved higher percentile rankings in the three areas of the HKS 38 than male respondents, so the trend is consistent. If raw values are included in the analysis – in Table 2, this has also been taken into account in the form of inferential statistical calculations –, the differences between the genders are

relativised, because at their level (r=.08 to .11), they are rather negligible. Nevertheless, the female respondents' comparatively high susceptibility to corruption is remarkable in that women are mostly described as less susceptible to corruption in the relevant literature. In particular, official data rather suggests a typically male offender group for corruption offences (BAK 2016; Bannenberg 2002; Gottschalk 2014). However, Bannenberg's and Schaupensteiner's estimation (Bannenberg/Schaupensteiner 2007) suggests an unreported number of corruption offences exceeding 90 %, so conclusions based on official figures should be given careful consideration. The results of actor-centred studies of unreported offences within the German-speaking cultural world, however, draws a contradictory picture. While some authors (Campbell 2015; Heber 2012; Heber 2013; Litzcke et al. 2012; Rabl 2008) detected no difference in the susceptibility of the genders to corruption, the findings of other authors (Müllers 2013; Schön 2011) suggest a difference, although the findings can still be described as diffuse and conclusions appear premature.

2.5 Are police officers less susceptible to corruption than other professionals?
A look at the comparison of attitudes between the individual professions is interesting for the question indicated at the beginning as to whether (or to what extent) the Austrian police might be susceptible to corruption in terms of personality factors. Do police cadets achieve more positive values than the student comparison groups? As shown in Table 2 (see page 43), the police professional group ($\overline{x}=81$, $\sigma=19$, PR=50) demonstrates by far the lowest values in relation to the other two professional groups (law: $\overline{x}=90$, $\sigma=21$, PR=71; psychology: $\overline{x}=93$, $\sigma=18$, PR=75) – the difference to the other two profession-

al groups is also significant in terms of inferential statistics (F (2, 1684)=62.59, p=.00, r=.26). Although this results in the conclusion that police cadets are less susceptible to corruption compared to the other professional groups surveyed here, it cannot be concluded that police students are immune to corruption. On the one hand, the level (r=.26) of the effect is rather low, but on the other, a look at the three individual sub-areas of attitudes that the questionnaire differentiates permits a more precise and qualifying analysis. If the values obtained for the police professional group in the affective ($\overline{x}=29$, $\sigma=8$, PR=62) and conative areas ($\overline{x}=22$, $\sigma=6$, PR=62) are assigned to percentile rankings, the values point to an above-average susceptibility to corruption in comparison to the representative sample, but only in two out of three sections, not in the entire questionnaire. This still shows that police cadets are less susceptible to corruption than the student comparison groups selected here. However, the comparison with the representative sample is rather less satisfactory, as almost two-thirds of the representative sample still means a lower susceptibility to corruption in some areas than the surveyed police cadets.

It is also noticeable that all three professional groups achieve their highest percentile ranking in the conative field. Only the police professional group has a similarly high percentile ranking in the affective area as in the conative.

In addition, the age variable was examined in terms of influence on susceptibility to corruption. The results in Table 2 suggest that there is a lower susceptibility to corruption with increasing age (p=.00, r=-.21), although the effect is rather low in magnitude. The low magnitude of the effect is relativised by the rather homogenous character of the sample.

It should also be noted that the data ob-

tained are robust because reliable response behaviour can be assumed. On the one hand, the online questionnaire proved its worth in the present of the test administration, which obviously motivated many participants to answer the entire questionnaire. On the other, the reliability of the responses was also controlled by the fact that the HKS 38 contains two different statements that measure the same thing in terms of content (reliability test). These were assessed for their quality by means of the reliability test prior to the evaluation of the data. This check found that 1,215 respondents (72 %) did not differentiate between the two statements. 402 respondents (24 %) differed by one response level at the two statements and only 70 respondents (4 %) deviated by more than one response level. Overall, the results of the reliability test speak for a conscientious response-style to the HKS 38 by the respondents.

3. CONCLUSION

The values measured with the HKS 38 questionnaire about attitudes towards corruption among police cadets of the Austrian Federal Police and students of the Universities of Vienna and Innsbruck from the Faculties of Law and Psychology permit statements on corruption risks and susceptibilities of the respective groups. Only a few of the key findings were presented in this article; these are briefly reviewed below. The main focus is on the goal of the study: the development of new, evidence-based prevention approaches.

What is interesting about the results is that the overall sample, that is both police cadets and students, has lower percentile rankings for the cognitive area than for the conative. This could be interpreted in such a way that, although corruption is predominantly refused at the cognitive level, there is certainly willingness at the be-

havioural level not to act in accordance with this cognitive understanding. However, respondents are at least not completely consistent in their attitudes towards corruption. The result of the overall sample is also surprising because female respondents not only achieve higher percentages in all three areas, but must also be described as more susceptible to corruption by inferential statistics. The fact that relevant literature tends to assert opposing views on women, however, may also be because women in employment are less likely to hold positions of power where corruption is evident or assumed. Women are less likely to be in management positions and to work more often in part-time jobs, etc. Whether this can explain the differences between the genders remains open. In any case, a review of gender differences would be interesting as a follow-up study.

Nevertheless, the research focus of the study was principally the difference between police and other sections of the population in terms of attitudes towards corruption. In this regard, the overall values of the groups are quite optimistic, at least as far as the police are concerned. The attitudes of the police officers differ significantly from those of the other two groups; the police can therefore be described as considerably less susceptible to corruption than the two student comparison groups. On the other hand, the overall percentage rank of police cadets of 50 shows that in comparison to the (German) representative sample, they are neither more nor less susceptible to corruption. However, as police officers are generally expected to have a high degree of conformity with the norm, it would certainly make sense to address the topic of corruption more in police training in the appropriate lessons in order to further improve this value. The differentiated consideration of the three areas of the questionnaire also

includes the relativisation of the positive overall impression of the police cadets: here, as in the overall sample, the reason-based cognitive attitude areas are the least susceptible to corruption, while the other areas deviate from this in some places. This is of particular interest for the objective of the study. Thus far, anti-corruption training has been used at the cognitive level in particular, as it mainly conveyed what is forbidden via laws, policies, controls and so on. However, this does not appear to be the decisive point in reducing the susceptibility to corruption, which is why an increasing number of behavioural levels are addressed in basic police training. For example, brief role plays and group discussions are held and practical examples are discussed. Film material is also presented. Value exercises are also incorporated into the curriculum in various training sessions in order to address the emotional level too. However, based on the present results, training should appeal more to the affective and conative areas.

From a research point of view, it would be desirable for the future to use the HKS 38 to investigate further samples from the police as well as from other sections of the population in order to make even more far-reaching statements about individual cohorts. In order to enable this, the HKS 38 has already been "translated" by the research group representatives from BAK and the Hannover and Münster Universities of Applied Sciences, i.e. adapted to Austrian linguistic usage (HKS 38 A). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, BAK has commissioned a validation study for the HKS 38 A in order to draw up a representative sample for the Austrian population. Their values may differ from those of the German sample. Its own questionnaire and own representative sample will enable research into personality-related aspects of corruption and thus also the development of empirically-based prevention concepts to be further developed for Austria.

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