

The adverse effects of the rise of unscrupulous security service providers on the private security industry

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Abstract

The private security industry (PSI) in South Africa continues to grow and transform, which is accompanied by the rise of unscrupulous security service providers (SSPs), which presents new regulatory challenges to the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSiRA) of South Africa.

The purpose of this study is fourfold. Firstly, to identify the leading causes of the prevalence of unscrupulous SSPs in the PSI, to scrutinise their adverse impact on the PSI, and to recommend strategies that could be employed to prevent their prevalence in the PSI. Secondly, to identify challenges that hinder the effective professionalisation of the PSI. Thirdly, to ascertain the need to professionalise the PSI. Lastly, based on the findings, to propose possible best practices, in the form of recommendations, to reconceptualise the research gap identified from previous studies, in order to guide all relevant stakeholders, especially PSiRA, towards the professionalisation of the PSI. In pursuit of the objectives of the study, a quantitative approach was adopted that followed a cross-sectional design. The data-gathering instrument was a paper-based, self-administered, structured questionnaire, which utilised a standardised measuring instrument using a five-point Likert scale. The first author distributed 450 questionnaires to private SSPs (private security companies and security officers) in the Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Three hundred responses were returned that were used for analysis. The findings highlighted that the majority (n=207; 80.33%) of the respondents agreed that there are unscrupulous security companies that operate in the PSI without registration. Furthermore, the findings also highlighted that the Private Security Industry Regulation (PSIR) Act does not adequately confer powers to PSiRA in order for it to deal effectively with unscrupulous security companies.

This study recommends that in order to minimise the prevalence of unscrupulous SSPs, PSiRA needs to revise its funding mechanism and strengthen its regulatory framework through

amendment of the PSIR Act. Furthermore, PSiRA needs to be given power to criminally investigate and prosecute unscrupulous SSPs, instead of handing them over to the South African Police Service, as well as the authority to publish the names and business addresses of all unscrupulous SSPs so the public can be aware of them.

Keywords: Compliance; endangerment; exploitation; inspection; Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority; registration; regulation; security industry; security service provider; security services; unscrupulous.

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