

“Going nowhere slowly” – An exploration of the South African Police Service’s Promotion policy

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Abstract

To better understand police officers’ perceptions of their experiences regarding current practices in terms of career progression within the South African Police Service (SAPS) environment, a qualitative study with semi-structured focus group interviews was conducted. Three focus group interviews were held, with 30 police officers of various ranks participating, from three selected police stations in the Gauteng province. This study established five themes. Among these themes, low prospects of promotion, inconsistency in the administration of promotion procedures and practices due to perceived favoritism or nepotism, and lack of vacancies were cited by the participants as hindrances to career advancement within the SAPS. This article recommends that the “top-heavy” SAPS structure should be revised to unlock recruitment and the promotion of low-ranking officials. The absence of a sound promotion policy, poor implementation, or the lack of promotion opportunities for SAPS officials can have a negative impact on police officials’ morale. Low morale among police officials hinders professionalism and negatively influences quality service delivery to the community. This article provides insight into the SAPS promotion processes, theories of motivation, as well as the legislative framework that underpins development in the SAPS.

Keywords: Career progress, Personal development, Employee promotion, Job performance, Staff morale and motivation.

Introduction

Workplace advancement influences employees’ financial status by enabling them to enhance their personal development and family support. Personal development refers to those activities that improve a person’s talents, potential, employability, consciousness, and ability to realize their dreams and create wealth. In short, it is what you do to improve yourself and your prospects in life (Corporate Alchemists, 2018). During his Budget Vote Speech on 24 July 2020, the Minister of Police, General Bheki Cele, stated that police officers remain the number one asset of the organization and that without them, there is no policing organization (South African Police Service [SAPS], 2020). If this is true, then why does the SAPS management not earnestly strive to implement a promotion policy? The SAPS still uses National Instruction 3 of 2015’s guidance for promotions and grading the progress of SAPS employees.

National Instruction 3/2015 defines policy in this context as the promotion and grade progression policy of the SAPS as set out in the Safety and Security Sectoral Bargaining Council (SSSBC) Agreement 3 of 2011 (SAPS, 2015). In a press conference held on 14 March 2019, Police Minister Bheki Cele noted that long overdue SAPS promotions date back to 2011/2012, which resulted in a backlog of 69 219 overdue promotions. Furthermore, in 2018, he urged SAPS management to follow due process during promotions and ensure that deserving members are promoted in the hope that this initiative would boost the morale of police officers to enable them to execute their tasks optimally. Going forward, working on the embitterment of the members' conditions of employment (SAPS, 2019).

Mr Cele also called upon all disciplined members of the SAPS nationally to take their leadership into full confidence in the matter of promotions, so that it would be further addressed with the speed it deserves to benefit the entire SAPS family and amicably with all parties involved, including labor unions (SAPS, 2019). Yet, to this day, the SAPS still applies the promotion guidelines as set out in the SSSBC Agreement of 2011, as stated in National Instruction 3/2015. This article discusses the current promotion process and criteria used in the SAPS, hinderances to career advancement, and the consequences of the lack of promotions. All these factors have an effect on police officers' morale, professionalism, and motivation to create a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa.

This study sought to determine how the institutional environment – including values, promotion policy or absence thereof, and their implementation – shapes police officers' inequities in career progression for women and men, as well as the challenges and prospects in relation to creating a professional and motivated workforce. The findings are drawn from a wider research study that aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the barriers and enablers of police officers' career progression within the ranks of the SAPS, because a motivated workforce serves as a catalyst to improve service delivery to communities.

Literature review

South African Police Service (SAPS) Promotions

On 19 June 2012, during the Parliament Portfolio Committee on Police meeting regarding the SAPS's promotion policy, the Deputy General Secretary of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) stated that since 2005, the SAPS has had no promotion policy. It has instead been using the National Instructions on Promotions as a tool for upward mobility. This has resulted in middle management and junior ranks being deprived of upward mobility in terms of promotions. The use of National Instructions in promotions and appointments within the SAPS was criticized and committee members were of the opinion that the structure needed a complete overhaul (POPCRU, 2012). The lack of transparent processes during the call for promotion could be marred by perceptions of unfair screening and appointment practices by human resource practitioners, the commanders, as well as the Promotion Committee (Mokoena, 2018). In the SAPS's Annual Performance Plan 2021/2022, one of the key institutional policies strategies over the five-year planning period is to review

the SAPS's promotion policy (SAPS, 2021). The SAPS management meets annually to discuss its strategies as highlighted in its performance plans. Strategic plans clearly identify the goals of policing and provide a road map to achieve them. The effective operationalizing of identified strategies must be pursued with intention (Pheiffer, 2018).

According to the SAPS's National Instruction 3/2015 on the Promotion and Grade Progression of employees in service posts Level 1 to 12, promotion means the progression from the lower level, band, or rank to the next higher level, band, or rank, where "band" means a salary band as contemplated in Policy 2 of 2006 (SAPS, 2015). The employees in the SAPS are either employed in terms of the SAPS Act of 1995 as police officials or as civilians in terms of the Public Service Act (PSA) of 1994. National Instruction 3/2015 further states that on post Levels 1 to 12, a constable must have a minimum of seven years' service as a member of the SAPS, excluding a period of training on contract as a trainee, must have at least an annual rating of "satisfactory" for the last Performance Enhancement Process (PEP) assessment cycle, and suitability for grade progression. For a sergeant to be promoted to the next level (warrant officer), at least a National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 6 qualification and a minimum of two years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS on Band A as a sergeant or at least a minimum of five years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS are required. The sergeant must also have at least an annual rating of "satisfactory" for the last PEP assessment cycle and suitability for promotion. For warrant officers, at least an NQF 6 qualification and a minimum of two years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS or at least an NQF 4 qualification and five years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS are required.

To be promoted to captain, at least an NQF 6 qualification and a minimum of two years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS are needed. For employees appointed in terms of the PSA, from Levels 1 to 2, a minimum of two years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS on Level 1 is required and at least an annual rating of "satisfactory" for the last PEP assessment cycle, as well as suitability for promotion. From Levels 2 to 7, at least a minimum of two years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS at each level, at least an annual rating of "satisfactory" for the last PEP assessment cycle, and suitability for promotion are required. From Levels 7 to 8, at least an NQF 6 qualification and a minimum of two years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS on Level 7 or at least a minimum of five years' uninterrupted service in the SAPS on Level 7 are required, and the officer must have at least an annual rating of "satisfactory" for the last PEP assessment cycle, as well as suitability for promotion.

There are internal and external promotions in the SAPS. Internal promotions used to be called post promotions and no one was promoted to another level or rank (for example, if you are on Level 5, you cannot apply for or be promoted to Level 7 or 8; you have to apply for or be promoted to Level 6) and only employees of the SAPS could apply for the posts. External promotions are advertised externally and are open for everyone as long as they meet the requirements. A member appointed in terms of the SAPS Act may not apply for promotion to an advertised post to be filled in terms of the PSA, but an employee appointed in terms of the PSA may apply for a post to be filled in terms of the SAPS Act.

Mokoena (2018) investigated the career advancement barriers faced by SAPS officials and specifically examined SAPS Act personnel. The perceived low staff morale within the SAPS, supposedly due to a lack of effective implementation of the promotion policy, especially for the police officials, inspired the research. While the factors that impacted negatively on the morale of SAPS officials due to a lack of career advancement were known to the SAPS, very little empirical research has been conducted to advise policymakers about individual needs for the future police service. There were low chances of promotion in the SAPS in the Gauteng Central Region. This negatively affected the motivation and performance of experienced officials. The study also found that not all officials benefited from the promotion processes as outlined in National Instruction 3/2015. Promotion procedures are unclear, which results in staff demoralization. Although police officers have developed themselves, coupled with years of experience in the policing environment, they do not have high expectations of being promoted and some graduated students leave the police due to the current promotion policy and grading guidance provided by National Instruction 3/2015.

Job Performance Factors

Haryono, Supardi, and Udin (2020), Imam, Nazaruddin, Isfenti, and Yossie (2019), and Elnaga and Imran (2013) indicate that promotions, mutations, and organizational culture simultaneously and significantly influence employee job performance. Performance enhancement should be an ongoing, continuous process that is not only seen as constructive but is in fact expected of leaders and managers. Staff will gain the most out of performance enhancement by engaging in the relevant processes fully and openly (University of Bristol Human Resources, 2021). According to National Instruction 3/2015, for the employee to be promoted to the next level, at least an annual rating of "satisfactory" for the last PEP assessment cycle is needed. This also means that if employees are not assessed (PEP), they will not be considered for promotion. An employee's performance relates to job satisfaction, work motivation, professionalism, and training. Job satisfaction is one of the most researched phenomena in the domain of human resource management and organizational behavior. Job satisfaction is a key element of work motivation, which is a fundamental determinant of one's behavior in an organization (Culibrk, Delic, Mitrovic, & Culibrk, 2018). Pheiffer (2018) states that, according to the Draft White Paper on the Police (2015), the SAPS of the 21st century will be a professional, well-resourced, and highly skilled force that has a firm understanding of the challenges, both internally and externally, that impact on the organization and able to operate in the digital era.

The SAPS's strategies consist of operational priorities and organizational priorities. The SAPS's strategic plan of 2014-2019 is clearly rooted in the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 on building safer communities. The NDP Vision 2030 clearly emphasizes the police as being a well-resourced professional institution staffed with highly skilled officers who value their work, serve the community, protect the peaceful against violence, and respect the rights of all to equality and justice (South Africa, 2011). This futuristic plan focuses on professionalizing the police through strategic outcome-oriented goals, which include an efficient, effective, and developmental-

oriented public service.

In order to improve employee performance and motivation, SAPS managers should utilize training to improve police officers' capabilities. Training and formal qualifications may be seen as a waste of time, yet are advanced. Blom and Alvesson (2015), as well as Gathungu, Iravo, and Namusonge (2015), argue that training is deliberately aimed at improving performance and facilitating promotions. Collinson and Tourish (2015) concur that training enables individuals to perform their work more effectively. The NDP Vision 2030 also highlights the importance of training and skills development (South Africa, 2011). Different pieces of legislation and authorities in South Africa govern training and development in the SAPS. These pieces of legislation and authorities are outlined as follows:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996):** Section 195 of the Constitution states that public administration must be governed by democratic principles and values, such as good human resource management and career development (South Africa, 1996). This can only be achieved through training and continuous development of SAPS employees.
- **SAPS Act (No. 68 of 1995) as amended:** The SAPS Act of 1995 states that the minister may make regulations with regard to training, appointment, promotion, and transfer of members. Chapter 8 of the Act stipulates that the minister can further obligate members to attend training courses (Naidoo, 2004, as cited in Mokoena, 2018).
- **Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998):** The Skills Development Act of 1998 forms part of the National Skills Development Strategy, which is aimed at addressing social and economic problems in South Africa (Mnisi, 2015). Mohlala (2004, as cited by Mnisi, 2015) states that the development of skills through training and development has been the most important tool for improving both individual and institutional competitiveness. Skills development and training in the South African context should be addressed against the social, political, and economic background where reconstruction and development still occupy the highest status on the national agenda.
- **Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999):** The Skills Development Levies Act of 1999 states that every employer must pay a skills development levy to the South African Revenue Service, which is responsible for administering the Act. The SAPS has a registered skills development facilitator (SDF) at police station level (Masilela, 2012). The purpose of the SDF is to consolidate workplace learning needs at station level and report them to the provincial SDFs so that they can nominate members with skills deficiencies for workplace learning programs, monitor individuals' skills needs, and assist members to compile individual development plans (Mokoena, 2018).
- **Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA):** SETA is a body that comprises representatives of labor, employees, key government department members, professional bodies, and bargaining forums from business industry sectors (Masilela, 2012). The main function of the SETA is to contribute to the development of skills.
- **The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA):** SAQA is responsible for the establishment of the NQF and national standards bodies to set training standards that ensure progression and portability, which means that a qualification earned in a workplace training environment has value in the formal system and vice versa (Mohlala, 2011). The

SAPS attempts to improve service delivery, such as arrests and investigation of crimes. It is therefore necessary that the learning programs offered must be needs based and relevant to circumstances.

- **National Qualifications Framework (NQF):** The NQF is a framework that provides a vision and structure for the creation of a national qualification system. It is a national effort of integrating education and training into a unified structure of recognized qualifications. All qualifications and competencies are registered with the NQF according to their field of learning and level of progression (Botha, Kiley, & Truman, 2007, as cited by Mokoena, 2018).
- **Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA):** SASSETA is a SETA that was established to facilitate education and training specifically for the wide range of safety and security providers in South Africa, such as the military, police, and the diplomatic sector. According to the SAPS Education, Training and Development Policy (2007, as cited by Mokoena, 2018), in the SAPS, the Divisional Commissioner: Training must ensure that a quality management system is developed, implemented, and managed according to the criteria provided by SAQA or SASSETA. Every education, training, and development institution in the SAPS must, on a quarterly basis, report to the Divisional Commissioner: Training on all the learning interventions offered.

Research objectives and methodology

An exploratory qualitative cross-sectional study design was adopted for this research. This study is part of a larger project that focused on career advancement in the SAPS to investigate constraints to career advancement in the SAPS, to assess the level of motivation among SAPS officials, to recommend strategies to minimize constraints to career advancement, and to assess the effect of career advancement on motivation. Three focus group interviews, with 30 police officers (12 males and 22 females) of various ranks, from three selected stations in the Gauteng Central Region (Pretoria Central, Lyttleton, and Sunnyside), were held to collect data to grasp the variation of perspectives [34] and to deepen understanding through the interaction among the participants. Purposive sampling was utilized. The interview schedule consisted of the following questions: What is the level of career advancement in the SAPS? What are the constraints to career advancement? What is the level of motivation among SAPS officials? What strategies can be used to minimize constraints to career advancement in the SAPS? What is the impact of career advancement on motivation? The study was approved by the Tshwane University of Technology's Faculty of Humanities (project reference number FCRE/SSM/STD/2016/12). All audio data were transcribed verbatim by an experienced qualitative research assistant. The transcripts were verified by comparing the audio files and transcripts with the field notes. Once this process was completed, the transcripts were sent to all individual study participants for member-checking to ensure that the participants' views were correctly captured.

This process also allowed the participants to identify content they preferred to be removed from the analysis, such as individual characteristics and statements that they felt might easily identify them. Following the member-checking process, all par-

ticipants asked to have their identities and stations they were deployed at, as well as years of service and duties performed, withheld for confidentiality purposes. To protect the participants' anonymity and confidentiality, all identifiers were replaced with pseudonyms. Thereafter, the data were organized and coded in QSR International's NVivo 11 qualitative data-management software, and analyzed inductively based on emergent themes and the relationships between them as presented in a conceptual framework, as reflected in the findings and discussion section below. The authors utilized a grounded theory approach and employed constructivist grounded theory research guidelines (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020) and a checklist of saturated concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). These efforts may provide detailed information on some aspects, such as how to produce a saturated theory. All illustrative quotations were carefully reviewed for their potential to reveal individual identities.

Findings and discussion

The researchers analyzed the empirical data in an attempt to assess the factors that hinder career advancement and how it affects staff motivation. They also set out to identify strategies that have the potential to minimize the constraints to career advancement. The interpretation, discussion, and assessment of the data were laid out in relation to the objectives of the research and in comparison with the literature study. The need for this study was evident based on the perceived low morale within the SAPS due to the lack of effective implementation of a sound promotion policy, particularly for police officials. The various themes that relate to the specific research objectives and research questions are discussed in detail below.

Theme 1: Prospects of Career Advancement

The findings of this study focused on chances of promotion. The study directed its attention to how the participants viewed the existence of prospects of promotion within the SAPS, chances of being promoted, and whether officials benefited from career advancement after training or development. This study found that the majority of the participants acknowledged the low prospects of promotion. For these participants, the SAPS's processes and procedures were not clear regarding what criteria were implemented for promotion. Training, performance, and merits were therefore not generally considered relevant to promotion. Andersson and Tengblad (2016) posit that promotion is not as "automatic" as it used to be. Training and formal qualifications may be seen as a waste of time, yet are advanced. Furthermore, Mangkunegara and Agustine (2016), who point out that training is expected to ensure continuity in staff career development, confirm these findings. Conversely, only a few participants believed that they had better chances of promotion after career development. Indeed, under normal circumstances, training facilitates progress. Furthermore, according to Antoncic and Antoncic (2011), employee loyalty exists in a company when employees believe in the objectives of the company, accept the objectives as their own, work for the common welfare, and want to stay in the company. Loyalty, according to De Graaf (2011), is a concept that has normative, symbolic, and emotional connotations.

Likewise, according to Antoncic and Antoncic (2011), the loyalty of an employee can be expressed through the desire of individuals to belong to the company and team of co-workers, whom they want to help. A motivated workforce commits to the organization's success because an organization's success benefits the individual too.

Theme 2: Procedural Fairness in the Promotion Process in the SAPS

Procedural fairness can be considered as the right of an employee in respect of the procedure(s) followed in the process of discipline or dismissal. Procedural fairness is important because it ensures that employees can state and defend their case in light of allegations brought against them. This study found that the majority of the participants considered SAPS processes inconsistent, especially in the administration of promotion procedures and practices. This is due to perceived favoritism and/or nepotism, which comprises normative principles. Some comments from the participants were as follows:

"Fairness is not always practiced. People with experience and qualifications are overlooked in favor of young inexperienced members and sometimes politically connected people get the job" (Focus Group 1).

"There is so much nepotism and favoritism during this (promotion) process... no fairness at all, and if you don't know anyone in the SAPS Promotion Committee, chances are [that] you will never get a post ... The process is not fair. It's not based on who can do the work best ... We don't know how other members have been promoted, hence some of them don't know the job" (Focus Group 2).

"It is totally not fair. If you have no family [someone you are related to] in the panel, you won't be promoted ... Many people who are overly or highly qualified are being overlooked; they [are] still on [a] lower rank despite their performance, good behavior, and self-development" (Focus Group 3).

After probing if the promotion process in the SAPS entailed procedural fairness, the research found that the SAPS processes were not consistent in the administration of promotion procedures and practices due to perceived favoritism or nepotism, which, as a result, compromised the procedures. Scandura (2017) posits that work motivation consists of the need for achievement, strength, and affiliation. The challenge of continuous development for all staff was recognized. Career advancement is normally based on merit. Lussier and Hendon (2017) define work motivation as a series of attitudes and values that influence individuals to achieve specific things through individual goals. These attitudes and values give individuals the strength and courage to achieve their goals. Most career pathway models currently in use are either theoretical or descriptive (Fein, 2012). Both are useful, but neither provides a data-based perspective that can advance research and practice. Moreover, although considerable research continues to add to the knowledge base on career development, few research studies have linked the interplay of these career-relevant variables in the workplace with career pathway progression and career success.

Theme 3: Hindrances to Career Advancement

Factors that hinder SAPS officials from being promoted after training were examined. It was found that the majority of the participants viewed the lack of vacancies as a

hindrance to career advancement within the SAPS. Others attributed irrelevant training and promotional restrictive measures, as well as poor performance, as contributing factors that restricted their career advancement.

“Time given for the members to be eligible for promotions is too long ... for some have to wait for more than 10 years to be promoted and this does not sit well with members ... There is no consistency ... it goes with luck [and] it also depends on knowing the commanders ... The SAPS takes time to advertise and the SAPS officials with qualifications are overlooked” (Focus Group 2).

“Candidates [have been] promoted without experience and qualifications due to gender, color and affirmative action ... No chances of promotion, as well as white colleagues don't get promoted due to equity target of the SAPS; these cut growth for people in that group ... No posts available as equity plays the biggest role and experience is not taken into consideration” (Focus Group 3).

The participants' responses showed that any kind of workplace discrimination within the SAPS was unacceptable and illegal, but promotion discrimination was mostly damaging as it affected the career prospects of those who worked hard, as well as their income potential and reputation. As with any workplace discrimination, denying an eligible employee a promotion because of bias is illegal. However, being biased can be difficult to prove. This is in line with what Ingram (2012) states, namely that the organizational structure provides guidance to all employees by laying out the official reporting relationships that govern the workflow of the company. Ingram (2012) further states that a formal outline of a company's structure makes it easier to add new positions in the company, as well as providing a flexible and ready means for growth.

Before 1995, under normal circumstances, an eligible SAPS official with formal qualifications would qualify for promotion after two years. However, in exceptional circumstances, enhanced promotions were facilitated. Lack of recognition for “self-made development” such as formal qualifications was advanced as a constraint. McShane and Glinow (2017) suggest that low employee job performance is not only due to employee mistakes, but that there is a possibility of leadership patterns not being right. Zlate and Cucui (2015) note that work motivation is a top priority for managers. Managers must develop organizational strategies to motivate employees to work; the primary goal of organizational management is to improve organizational job performance. Performance improvement plans should focus on individuals' training needs and the assessment thereof. Training gaps should be addressed by relevant training courses.

Theme 4: The Consequences of a Lack of Promotion Within the SAPS

The findings indicated that the participants attributed abuse of leave policies, underperformance in positions, and reluctance to embrace change in the workplace to poor workplace morale. It is the researchers' view that the implications of low morale could affect the retention of key or experienced officials. Problems with retention and morale are not just issues that confront the station commander; they also have a measurable effect on the performance at the station level. Some of the participants said:

“Poor performance for long-serving officials is evident ... [T]here is demoralization as mem-

bers become less interested in their job; as a result some book themselves off sick ... People wait for too long and [as] a result they become negative and demoralized" (Focus Group 1).

"People become negative, they don't apply for posts in the SAPS anymore. People look for work outside the SAPS ... [T]here is such a lack of morale characterized by poor service delivery. Officials display negativity towards the community and corruption, especially among non-commissioned officials, becomes rampant" (Focus Group 2).

"There are not enough posts for members; thus, morale is low and performance as well as service delivery are negatively affected ... [W]e are not recognized by senior management [and] our expertise and knowledge don't get utilized at the higher level ... Members are resigning due to lack of promotion" (Focus Group 3).

The results of this study are consistent with those of previous studies by Asaari, Desa, and Subramaniam (2019) and Gathungu et al. (2015), which indicated that job promotion had a positive and significant effect on work motivation. Forms of work motivation vary greatly, and one of them is promotion. The promotion of employees who excel in higher positions will have an impact on increasing work motivation, and job performance will increase. This study's findings are in line with the findings of Zlate and Cucui (2015), Mangkunegara and Agustine (2016), Mohamud, Ibrahim, and Hussein (2017), Ghaffari, Shah, Burgoyne, Nazri, and Salleh (2017), and Mubarak and Putra (2018). Their findings generally suggest that there is a positive relationship between work motivation and job performance.

The research results indicate that managers must develop organizational strategies to motivate employees to work (Melwich & Mofokeng, 2020); it is the primary goal of organizational management to improve organizational job performance through knowledgeable workers who are recognized as critical thinkers (Mofokeng, 2020). Career development or training people for the sake of training leads to little advancement. Emanating from the latter belief, the study further found that many officials began to look for work elsewhere after realizing that there were no promotion opportunities for their current position. Lack of advancement opportunities is the most commonly cited reason that SAPS officials begin to look for new jobs elsewhere. Many police officers who left the SAPS claimed lack of promotion potential as their exit reason. The implications of low morale can also affect the retention of key or experienced officials. According to Dean and Joseph (2015), job promotion is an increase in the workforce or employees in better jobs, compared to previous responsibilities, achievements, facilities, status, proficiency demands, and additional wages or salaries and benefits. Armstrong and Mitchell (2019) explain that work motivation arises because of two factors, namely internal factors that arise from within oneself, and external factors that come from outside the self. According to the results of research conducted by Güngör (2011), both extrinsic and intrinsic work motivation affect employee job performance.

Theme 5: The Criteria for Post Promotion in the SAPS

One of the primary drivers of post promotion in the SAPS might be seniority, based on experience and supported by relevant training and qualifications for a post. Performance is viewed as a criterion for one to be considered for post promotion (Mokoena, 2018). Performance must thus be an obvious factor to determine an employee's eligi-

bility for a promotion. Wan, Sulaiman, and Omar (2012) argue that workers would be more committed and loyal to the organization and that the intention to leave the organization would be lower if promotions were fair and equal.

The setting of clear and transparent policies on promotion, training, and advancement is a strategy that can be used to minimize constraints to career advancement after training. Reviewing the policy on promotion and recognition of formal qualifications and performance was a strategy identified by the participants. Another suggested strategy related to this was the design of policies to guide management. Improving human resource management and relations was also identified as a possible strategy, and free and fair competition for promotion was also suggested as a strategy. Swanson, Robison, and Agrawal (2021) state that positive change begins at the most local level, which is the individual. Before meeting the needs of others, managers can reinforce their own wellbeing by strengthening their connection to their sense of self, to their team, and to the organization's mission. Management is encouraged to try to understand the employees' perception of the situation.

Recommendations

This paper provides guidance to fast-track the development of an SAPS promotion policy, better implementation, and improved processes. The following recommendations are made:

- **Employee participation in decision making and receipt of regular feedback:** This study recommends that participation in decision making and receipt of regular feedback should be fortified as motivation elevators. An attempt by line managers to improve communication channels and to create greater awareness regarding organizational goals could improve career paths, as the lack of participation breeds unenthusiastic and uncommitted employees.
- **Encourage self-development coupled with organizational commitment for rewards and recognition:** It is recommended that SAPS policymakers revisit previous strategies employed before 1995, such as recognition of self-development through monetary incentives, as well as possible career advancement. The modern workplace requires adaptable and critical thinkers who can communicate effectively and are aware of their value, as well as their areas of development. In other words, employee needs should be compatible with the organization's goals and needs. That would be the only way to obtain management support and encouragement.
- **Clear career path and retention strategies should be developed:** Formal career planning and guidance should be the heartbeat of the SAPS, and it is highly recommended that this be put forward as a possible strategy. Since career planning is a process, employees may not be able to plan their career goals and paths effectively without guidance. In the law enforcement environment, the importance of effective planning and management of human resources cannot be overemphasized.

Conclusion

The SAPS is surely going nowhere slowly in terms of its promotion policy that is

still not properly in place. This research has confirmed that there are low chances of promotion in the SAPS. This indeed affects the motivation and performance of experienced officials. Mokoena (2018) concludes that because the current promotion processes and procedures are unclear, demotivating factors are evidently at play. The majority of the participants developed themselves, coupled with years of experience in the policing environment, yet they deemed their chances of promotion as only average. The SAPS has a “saturated” or “top-heavy” organizational structure, with lack of vacancies or openings as the largest constraint to career advancement. The organizational structure has a negative impact on the officials’ career advancement. It was labelled an inflexible structure with limited opportunities (or openings). Hence, for the SAPS to fulfil its mandate, it requires a motivated workforce. The participants were not highly motivated despite their efforts of career development. The SAPS needs an effective promotion policy to address the poor morale and low performance of police officers.

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