

“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.

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