



Research Article

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Transforming policing in South Africa: Towards an ideal police service

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Abstract

A complex history of colonialism, apartheid, and a transition to democracy marks the policing landscape in South Africa. This paper explores the multifaceted efforts to transform the South African Police Service (SAPS) from a force often associated with oppression and human rights abuses to one that embodies the principles of democratic policing. The study examines the challenges and reforms undertaken to enhance accountability, community engagement, and operational effectiveness within SAPS. Key focus areas include the institutional reforms aimed at depoliticizing the police service, strategies for improving police-community relations, and implementing policies designed to uphold human rights and ensure justice. A qualitative approach was adopted using forty-three participants in focus group interviews. Additionally, the paper analyzes the impact of socioeconomic factors on crime rates and police performance, addressing issues such as resource allocation, training, and technology integration in policing practices. Results show that police organizations which adopted various policing models have been effective in reducing crime levels. This paper seeks to develop strategies for ideal policing in the South African context.

Keywords: South African Police Service, Transformation, crime, crime prevention, ideal policing, accountability, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Professionalism.

1. Introduction

In the past decade, much research in South Africa has focused more on high crime rates and less or very scant evidence on technological advances, which contributes to the ever-increasing crime rates. Technical advances and innovation bring various challenges for police organizations worldwide, providing a platform for criminals to commit crimes. Research shows that police organizations worldwide grapple with various kinds of crime, and these challenges are not unique to one particular country (Sithole, 2017). Sithole argues that several countries worldwide have experienced, and continue to experience, difficulties in dealing with crime decisively. These challenges

range from organizational design, strategic frameworks, and systemic challenges to implementing policing models suitable for a particular environment or geographic situation. This situation often becomes more difficult to satisfy all communities and neighbourhoods often resort to devising their own means to ensure their safety and security. Whereas frameworks, systems, policies, and strategies are continuously developed by the South African Police, implementing such appears to be challenging, resulting in rising crime levels and deteriorating levels of community trust towards the police. Moreover, research shows that criminals appear to be steps ahead of the police as they use technology to perpetrate crime (Ackroyd, Harper, Hughes, Shapiro & Soothill, 1992). Challenges, as highlighted above, are not only prevalent in developing countries but are a world phenomenon, as globalization makes it possible for criminals to commit crimes without physically being in a particular location. The challenge is that South Africa has become a gateway to the international market and is often used as a springboard. Research further indicates that criminal elements exploit technology to commit crimes using weak border control (Ackroyd et al., 1992). Most certainly, there are various police systems and policing models; however, not all are suitable for a particular policing environment. Mabunda (2014) argued that police models must be developed based on the requirements and in consultation with particular communities for successful implementation. However, most police organizations share certain features in their police models, for instance, the characteristics of the Chicago Alternative Police Strategy in South Africa (White & Gill, 2013). According to Mabunda (2014), having a suitable police model in South Africa has posed a serious challenge for a long time, as annual crime statistics show an increase in crime despite the availability of policies and frameworks entirely designed to address crime challenges (Crime stats, 2020). A suitable policy model addresses challenges that societies are faced with daily. This requires broad consultation with local communities rather than the police dictating how police communities. There are various ways to analyze whether a particular model is suitable for a country, such as culture, socioeconomic conditions, historical background, and legislation of a country, particularly its constitution. In addition, police models must continuously be reviewed and managed to ensure their relevance to the prevailing needs of citizens (Chan, 1997). It may be argued that police models are developed to address the inherent needs of communities based on the capability of police to implement them. It remains unclear what the management of the police organization (SAPS) is doing to ensure that officials are trained and have adequate resources to deal with crime, which appears to be getting more sophisticated by the day. This study explored factors contributing to inefficient policing in South Africa, looking at developing a transformed and ideal policing geared to tackle sophisticated crime such as cybercrime and other related matters. I argue that the police model must be created based on the viability of effective and/or efficient implementation and in collaboration with all stakeholders. A qualitative research approach was adopted using available data, such as documents, constitutions, policies, strategies, and frameworks, to provide an in-depth study. This article seeks to explore various police models around the world

to help develop a suitable police model for the South African Police Service (SAPS).

2. Historical context

In the contemporary socio-economic landscape of South Africa, the transformation of policing emerges as a crucial imperative (Evettes, 2011). The historical backdrop of apartheid and its impact on law enforcement, coupled with the challenges faced by the current police service, necessitate a comprehensive examination of the journey towards establishing an ideal police force/service. Efforts were made to recruit members from diverse backgrounds. However, challenges such as corruption, brutality, and a high crime rate persisted, requiring ongoing reform efforts (Evettes, 2003). Historically, policing in South Africa has been marked by both positive and negative aspects, reflecting the country's broader social and political context. The legacy of apartheid-era policing practices continues to influence perceptions and challenges facing law enforcement in modern South Africa.

Policing in South Africa must be seen within the context of the country's socio-political dispensation (Burger, 2011). Over the years, policing was used by the white minority to suppress the majority non-white population and also to entrench its hegemonic position. As a result, the police and other internal security forces became agents of a brutal political system that utilized police powers to maintain apartheid (SAPS, 2020). Moreover, during the 1980s and early 1990s, the South African Police were often manipulated by state security forces to exploit violent political conflicts, particularly in relation to clashes between various ethnic groups, such as between Zulus and Xhosa, particularly in the townships (SAPS, 2020). In terms of section 205(3), the objects of the police service are to prevent, combat, and investigate crime, to maintain public order, to protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, and to uphold and enforce the law (South Africa, 1996).

3. The evolution of policing in South Africa

The legacy of apartheid has left an indelible mark on the structure and functioning of the South African Police Service (SAPS). The historical role of the police in enforcing discriminatory policies and maintaining social order during apartheid has influenced contemporary challenges faced by the police force (SAPS, 2020). The history of policing in South Africa is complex and deeply intertwined with the country's colonial and apartheid past (SAPS, 2020). Here is a brief overview:

Period	Policing events
Colonial Era (17 th to 20 th centuries)	Policing in SA has its roots in the Dutch and British colonial past. During the 17 th century, the Dutch East Indian Company established a settlement at Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch introduced a form of policing to maintain order among the settlers and control the indigenous Khoisan populations.
British Era (17 th to 20 th centuries)	With the British colonization in the 19 th century, policing structures evolved. The Cape Colony was the first to establish a more organized police force in 1825. The police were mainly tasked with enforcing colonial laws and maintaining control over the indigenous populations.
Mineral Revolution and Apartheid (late 19 th -mid 20 th centuries)	Discovery of minerals, particularly gold and diamonds, led to rapid industrialization and urbanization. The police played a crucial role in maintaining control over the diverse and often exploited labor force. The apartheid system, implemented in 1948, institutionalized racial segregation, and the police force became a tool for enforcing apartheid policies.
Apartheid Policing (1948-1994)	During apartheid, the police force played a central role in enforcing racial segregation and suppressing opposition. The South African Police (SAP) and other security forces were notorious for human rights abuses, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and brutal crackdowns on anti-apartheid activities.
Post-Apartheid Era (1994-present)	With the end of apartheid, there were significant changes to the policing system. The South African Police Service (SAPS) was established in 1995 to create a more inclusive and professional force. Efforts were made to recruit members from diverse backgrounds. However, challenges such as corruption, brutality, and a high crime rate persisted, requiring ongoing reform efforts. Throughout its history, policing in South Africa has been marked by both positive and negative aspects, reflecting the country's broader social and political context. The legacy of apartheid-era policing practices continues to influence perceptions and challenges facing law enforcement in modern South Africa.

Table 1. The historical evolution of policing in South Africa

4. Methodology

The data for this study were collected by focus-group and individual (one-on-one) interviews and personal experience as a former police officer and observation. This paper adopted a qualitative approach in accordance with guidelines (De Vos, Strydom,

Fouche & Delpont, 2011). Forty-three (43) participants, ranging from Major-General to Warrant Officers, were interviewed in one-on-one focused interviews. In addition, in-depth interviews with police experts in research organizations and academics with insight into policing were also conducted. A literature review of research reports, journal articles, and policy documents was conducted to assess the readiness for ideal policing. It was convenient and easy to interview participants because of the researcher's connection as a former police officer with twenty-six years of experience and having served in various management positions in the South African Police Service. This made interviews to be effortless and worthwhile. Most participants were approaching retirement and had nothing to lose in participating in the research. The culture of secrecy in policing organizations is valued, as the continued acceptance and future development of individual police officers largely depends on how they are perceived to be loyal by management. Therefore, it was important to approach those senior officers to obtain honest responses.

The advantage of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to gauge interviewees' reactions (Creswell, 2009) instantaneously. I used a purposive sampling technique to select participants in the study. This technique is also called judgmental sampling (De Vos et al., 2011:232). The following participants were interviewed: Two (2) major generals, seven (7) Brigadiers, thirteen (13) Colonels, six (6) lieutenant colonels, eleven (11) captains, and four (4) warrant officers. A total of 43 participants were selected and interviewed.

An ethnographic design was also employed to draw on the organizational culture theory, which was fundamental to this research as it consists of shared beliefs, values, and practices that groups rely on to understand their worldview (Gall and Borg, 2003). The literature study examined media reports, peer-reviewed journals, books, scholarly reports, and information accessed through keyword searches using Google Scholar and Research Gate. Owing to the nature and extent of the study, I reviewed historical and contemporary literature concerning policing in South Africa and drew on my experience as a former police officer.

5. Data analysis

This paper adopted a qualitative approach in accordance with guidelines provided by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delpont (2011). The advantage of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to gauge interviewees' reactions (Creswell, 2009) instantaneously. So, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select participants in the study. This technique is also called judgmental sampling in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delpont (2011). Forty-three (43) police officers, ranging from Major-Generals to Warrant Officers, were interviewed. The researcher interviewed two (2) major generals, seven (7) Brigadiers, thirteen (13) Colonels, six (6) Lieutenant-Colonels, eleven (11) Captains, and four (4) warrant officers, totaling 43 South African Police Service police officers. Moreover, in-depth interviews with policing experts in research organizations and academics with insight into policing were also

conducted. In addition, a literature review of research reports, journal articles, and policy documents was conducted to assess the readiness for ideal policing. It was convenient and easy to interview participants due to the researcher's connection as a former police officer with twenty-six years of experience and having served in various management positions in the South African Police Service (SAPS). This made interviews to be effortless and worthwhile. Most participants were approaching retirement and had nothing to lose in participating in the research. The culture of secrecy in policing organizations is valued, as the continued acceptance and future development of individual police officers largely depends on how they are perceived to be loyal by management. Therefore, it was important to approach those senior officers to obtain honest responses. Also, an ethnographic design was employed to draw on the organizational culture theory, which was fundamental to this research as it consists of the shared beliefs, values, and practices that groups rely on to understand their worldview (Gall & Borg, 2003). The researcher collected qualitative information on day-to-day policing activities. The literature study examined media reports, peer-reviewed journals, books, scholarly reports, and information accessed through keyword searches using Google Scholar and Research Gate. Owing to the nature and extent of the study, the researcher reviewed historical and contemporary literature concerning policing in South Africa and drew on his experiences as a former police officer. Members of the research team took detailed notes during the focus group sessions. These notes were merged and cleaned. This process resulted in text representing what was said in each focus group. We used content analysis to code the data. Content coding is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that systematically allocates data into content categories representing the text's ideas, patterns, or themes. Relationships between categories are then identified. A main strength of this approach is that it provides a structured method for quantifying focus group data (Creswell, 2009).

6. Results

The findings of this study clearly show that crime statistics are continuously on an upward trajectory quarter on quarter, and it appears that the police cannot address these crimes (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Whereas there are various factors for these, what is evident is that the police are not able to deal with crime challenges as they are either not trained or have other political reasons that require further investigation. The reactive approach notoriously adopted by the police in South Africa is not sustainable, and there appears to be no consequences or accountability. Poor or lack of leadership is also posing a risk to the safety and security of the public as enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa which guarantees the right to safety and security. Mabunda (2014) highlighted the trust deficit between the police and some communities, and it appears that very little or no progress is recorded in this area, as various authors have indicated that the police alone are incapable of addressing crime challenges (Cavanagh, 2004).

It is important to recognize that South Africa attracts criminals from all over the world due to the ease at which undesirable individuals can simply enter the country even if they do not have the required documents. South Africa is considered a "heaven for organized criminals (Marks & Wood, 2010). At the writing of this paper, the exact or estimated number of undocumented or illegal immigrants in South Africa was unknown, and the Department of Home Affairs also did not have these numbers. This makes it easy for these individuals to either operate individually or in groups to commit crimes, knowing well that it is difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace and apprehend them, given the current circumstances in South Africa. The unemployment rate is so high that some people commit crimes as a survival mechanism, while sophisticated or organized criminals may commit crimes motivated by greed or political reasons. An intelligence-led policing approach is required as these criminals do not just decide spontaneously to commit crimes. Still, they engage in high-level planning and strategies before they commit crimes.

I used a focus group methodology in the study. Focus groups involve assembling a group of people (in this case, SAPS officers who had worked together for some time) guided by a facilitator to provide feedback on a clearly defined topic (Morgan, 1997). This qualitative research methodology was selected for use in this study because it encourages candid responses, allows participants to share ideas, leverages the team's collective experiences, and makes it possible for researchers to go beyond the numbers and gain insights that would be harder to gather using a survey methodology (Morgan, 1997). Notably, police officers have many demands on their time, and a focus group methodology proved to be a very efficient way to collect information from a substantive group of people. The focus groups lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Between five and twelve officers attended each of the focus groups. Several questions were used to guide the discussion. Responses to the following questions are reported in this paper: (1) In your view, what is professionalism? (2) How has transformation improved community-police relations? (3) How often do you attend refresher training courses?

7. Discussion

Whereas transformation for any organization is important, research by (Mawby, 2008; Emsley, 2008) shows that police organizations must remain at the cutting edge on matters related to evolving crime. These authors posit that police organizations must always develop strategies to deal with ever-emerging crime trends. The advent of democracy in the 1990s saw a spike in crime due to factors such as high unemployment and other socio-economic factors. However, cybercrime appears to be a major challenge as organized criminals can commit it anywhere worldwide (South Africa, 1996; Faull, 2013). Faull argues that the police in South Africa were historically designed to serve the needs of the so-called colonizers during the apartheid era, neglecting the larger sections of society. This resulted in the majority of the previously disadvantaged communities not recognizing the legitimacy of the

apartheid government and its security forces (Burger, 2011).

South Africa has become an attractive base for organized criminals around the world, and various cells of terrorist groups have been uncovered in various provinces, the latest being the discovery of Libyan operatives in an illegal/unaccredited training facility in Mpumalanga Province. Porous entry points such as border gates, harbors, and airports are the responsibility of the Border Management Authority (BMA), which has recently been established. Many undocumented immigrants are often involved in serious crime in the country, and the police appear to be overwhelmed at times. Moreover, many high-profile murder cases remain unresolved. All these aspects are high risks law enforcement agencies must be equipped and trained to address. Recently, Gauteng's local government system was hacked, losing an unaccounted large amount of money, and the municipality confirmed such a breach. The incident was initially dismissed as a "systemic mechanical failure" by the Gauteng government. These are a few examples of compromises that have been reported, and there are more that have not been reported.

8. Policing Models

Every sovereign government has a very important responsibility to ensure that its police organization functions to benefit all its citizens (Bayley & Stenning, 2016). As a result, the police, as a state machinery, must ensure law and order. Moreover, the police must function within the framework of the law so that citizens continue to respect and cooperate with the police as the custodians of the law. Most importantly, the police should adhere to the prescripts of the constitution. The police in every country are distinguished by uniform, culture, identity, and how they enforce the laws of their individual countries (Bayley, 1994). For this reason, every police organization develops its unique police models. In the South African context, some view the police as protectors of the rights of citizens. In contrast, others view the police as a symbol of draconian laws because these police use upper-hand tactics to enforce the law, particularly against previously disadvantaged groups (Burger, 2011). Over the past years, there have been various developments with regard to the development of frameworks and policies, which, if implemented, the South African Police Service as an organization would be the most advanced in terms of professionalism (Bruce & Neild, 2005). Despite the above-mentioned documents, communities continue to grapple with rising crime levels.

The South African Police Service derives its powers and functions from the Constitution of South Africa 1996 and the South African Police Service Act 68 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996). Implementing available policies and regulations remains a challenge, given the fact that many resources are provided to the police annually to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, and research must be conducted to explore whether there is either a lack of political will to implement or a leadership crisis in the South African Police Service. In comparison, several studies have been conducted about police professionalism, but little (if any) has been achieved to attain this goal (Snyman, 2010).

Continuous change of leadership in the SAPS has not assisted sustainability, as each police commissioner/minister has his/her own priorities (Faull, 2013). Technological advancement has become a thorn for police organizations worldwide as criminals exploit it to commit crimes, while the police seem to be overwhelmed and slow to catch up. Criminals commit crimes while in the comfort of their homes while police are trying to look for them in the streets (Mabunda, 2014).

There are various policing methodologies, as discussed below, which may be used either individually or in combination. According to Mawby (2008), police organizations that combined some of these models achieved the best results and have

Type	Responsibilities/Functions
Predictive Policing	Law enforcement officers use analytical techniques to identify potential offenders.
Problem-Oriented Policing (POP)	Emphasis is on trying to prevent crime from happening. Patterns of crime are closely monitored to devise means to prevent such crime.
Community-Oriented Policing	Police and communities cooperate to address crime jointly. They engender an element of trust.
Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP)	Is a strategic, future-oriented, targeted approach to crime control, focusing on identifying, analyzing, and managing persisting problems or risks.
Reactive (Traditional) Policing	Police respond when called to crime scenes.

been able to reduce crime to acceptable levels. These models are presented in the figure below.

Source: www.saint.org.nz

Implementation of the above models in the South African Police context will ensure that police strategies bear the desired results in terms of crime reduction. This article seeks to find ways of implementing a combination of these models. The police and communities should collaborate and address pressing crime challenges (Blair, 2003).

9. Policing in the twenty-first century

Policing in the 21st century undoubtedly has challenges, particularly for police organizations that do not want to invest in developing their systems, training, and human resources. For the average police officer or detective, the digital space creates an environment for cybercrime to mushroom and often overwhelm investigators, even the most advanced, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigators (FBI). On the surface, it appears that police organizations around the world are losing the war against crime. It may be true, especially in the developing countries. South Africa used to be on par with the developed world during the era of "Scorpions", the police division that was established to deal with organized crime, and these detectives

received training globally; however, this police division was discontinued a few years ago for political reasons, and some were thereafter lured to greener pastures while others were absorbed into the other policing divisions in the South African Police. Notably, there are huge profits in the digital underworld, and police organizations have to invest hugely to remain relevant and not become obsolete. An inadequate or limited budget will only hamstring the law enforcement agencies. Moreover, Mutual Legal assistance must be in place to enable law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes committed, or criminals run for refuge purposes (Brown, 2014). Cybercrime or digital crime can be committed from anywhere in the world, and it is difficult to investigate; however, with proper training, the volume of cybercrime may be mitigated and reduced as law enforcement agencies collaborate with each other. Brown (2014) argues that law enforcement agencies must invest in systems development and innovation to deal with digital crime. Digital crime is committed using artificial intelligence (Fleming, 2014).

10. Challenges faced by the South African Police Service (SAPS)

The SAPS was faced with multiple challenges at the time of writing this article. One particular challenge is the transformation from a system governed by apartheid to a new democratic system. The following section presents these challenges. The following section highlights some pressing issues the SAPS grapples with daily.

10.1 High Crime Rates

Violent crime in South Africa has been a long-standing and well-documented challenge (Statistics SA, 2024). However, despite considerable efforts by the government to improve policing and public resources devoted to this area, South Africa has made little progress in reducing the incidence of crime or improving its criminal justice system, which ranks among the weakest in the world (Statistics SA, 2024). High crime levels threaten citizens' personal security, daily lives, and future prospects, inhibiting efforts to build a more just and dynamic society (Mabunda, 2024). High-crime environments create an atmosphere of fear and destruction that impose intangible costs on everyone, particularly women, children, and the elderly (Bruce & Neild, 2005). Furthermore, crime stunts economic growth and deters investment, thereby increasing poverty, reinforcing social inequalities, and deepening social tensions (Burger 2011). Although the immediate human, economic, and social costs of crime weigh heavily on those most directly affected, such costs also affect ordinary citizens and broader South African society (Faull, 2013). Businesses operating in high-crime areas experience reduced levels of production and investment. The cost of crime is ultimately absorbed by consumers or shareholders (Sithole, 2017). The SAPS addresses and prevents crime, but the persistently high crime rates pose a significant challenge. South Africa has relatively high levels of crime, including violent crimes such as murder, robbery, and assault (Faull, 2013). The SAPS addresses and prevents crime, but persistently high crime rates pose a significant challenge (South Africa, 1996). The

primary role of the police is to ensure the safety and security of the public. An ideal police service is equipped to respond promptly to emergencies, investigate crimes, and prevent criminal activities. This fosters a sense of security among citizens. A police force upholds and enforces the laws of the land. This ensures that individuals are held accountable for their actions and that justice is served. Without an effective police service, there would be a lack of deterrence for criminal behavior.

10.2 Corruption

Research suggests that the SAPS and its officials continue to be involved in corrupt activities. These corrupt activities damage the country's image, hinder economic growth, and promote fear and dissatisfaction among citizens (Faull, 2013). Corruption within the SAPS has been a longstanding issue. Bribery, misconduct, and other forms of corruption undermine public trust and the integrity of the police force. Efforts to combat corruption within the SAPS have been ongoing but have not always yielded the desired results (Faull, 2013).

10.3 Resource Constraints

The SAPS often faces challenges related to inadequate resources, including a shortage of personnel, outdated equipment, and limited funding. Insufficient resources can impact the police force's ability to combat crime and respond to emergencies effectively. This study found that general resource and command constraints lead to ineffective crime prevention and intervention mechanisms due to inadequate equipment, vehicles, and officers (Snyman, 2010).

10.4 Community Relations

Building positive relationships between the police and the communities they serve is crucial for effective policing (Mabunda, 2014). Historically, there have been tensions and mistrust between the SAPS and certain communities, particularly in the context of apartheid-era policing practices. Efforts to improve community policing and foster trust are ongoing. In the late 1990s, the SAPS adopted a community-police forum approach at the local level. However, relations appear to have been strained in various locations, whilst there have been reports of efficiencies and effectiveness in some areas (Rauch, 2004). Building trust and collaboration between the police and the community is vital. Ideal police service actively engages with the community, listens to concerns, and works towards creating a safe environment collectively.

10.5 Organized Crime

South Africa faces challenges related to organized crime, including drug trafficking, gang violence, and other forms of criminal enterprises (Burger, 2012). The SAPS must contend with the complexities of investigating and dismantling organized criminal networks. Table 1 depicts some of the cyberattacks reported on various platforms in South Africa, and it was found that none of these crimes have been solved.

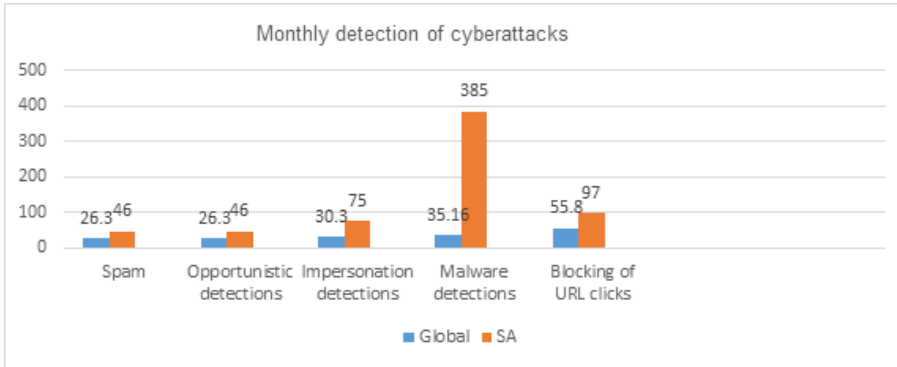


Table 2. Cyberattacks statistics.

Source: Researcher

10.6 Gender-Based Violence

South Africa has a high prevalence of gender-based violence, and the SAPS plays a critical role in addressing and preventing such crimes (Britton, 2020). While there are mechanisms in the form of policies and legislation to address this pressing matter, there has been an exponential increase, as shown by the latest crime statistics (Stats SA, 2024). However, there have been criticisms of the police response to gender-based violence cases, highlighting the need for improved training and sensitivity. The above challenges highlight the significance of the intensification of strategies by the South African Police Service to be better prepared for future crimes.

10.7 Future Crimes

The threat of cybercrime is a reality. Organized criminals will possibly use the emergence of Artificial Intelligence to their advantage (Bayley, 2004). Businesses and individuals dealing with products such as Malware Destructors, Systems Defender, and Windows AntiSpyWare are growing as frantic customers scramble to protect their assets and systems. How many South African Police Detective can respond to a warning such as: *“Your computer is at risk for a system crash and irreparable or permanent data loss. Click here to remove all threats”*. Would an ordinary police investigator be able to investigate and finalize this matter? Whereas other police agencies worldwide may be able to address these with ease, the same is not true with an average South African investigator. It appears that crime somewhat pays, looking at how organized crimes such as cash-in-transit heists are committed in South Africa and very few arrests and convictions. The United Nations estimates that transnational organized crime generates more than €2 trillion in profits annually (Tilley & Laycock, 2014). The money comes from the narcotics trade, intellectual property theft, human trafficking, counterfeit goods, child pornography, identity theft, wildlife smuggling, and cybercrime. Criminals use very sophisticated systems to perpetrate crime. To this end, traditional policing to deal with borderless cybercrime requires extensive

training and the availability of systems. Moreover, hackers have professionalized their trade, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to track and apprehend them. Traditional organized crime groups are highly talented and have united to pull resources together, resulting in huge financial losses to individual and business entities (Loftus, 2009; Blair, 2003). Technology makes crime more efficient, so criminals are perpetual early adopters of technologies. Criminals always look for opportunities and often target unsuspecting individuals, act swiftly, and move on to the next target (Sutton & Fisher 1990; Brown, 2014).

10.8 Technological revolution

Artificial Intelligence (AI) comes with challenges and opportunities, and criminals will use these technologies to commit crimes. Therefore, law enforcement agencies must invest in training their officers to prepare them for a new wave of crime trends. I argue that only law enforcement agencies that invest in training and capacitating their investigators will be able to address future crimes, whereas others will become obsolete. Politicizing policing and lack of poor management is an everyday reality, as can be recognized through high crime rates and the exodus of highly skilled investigators from the South African Police (SAPS). This paper explored technological advancements and how the police may also use drones to police remote and inaccessible areas such as farms and mountainous areas, which are largely seen as heaven for stock thieves in South Africa (White & Gill, 2013). Whereas regulation of some technologies, such as drones, remains challenging, some communities have utilized drones to track their livestock, assisting the police in apprehending criminals (Ackroyd, Hughes, Shapiro, & Soothill, 1992). However, criminals can access these technologies or circumvent their operations, resulting in huge financial losses. For this reason, I argue that technology to combat crime must be regulated and highly monitored. There is a growing concern about the lack of trained cybercrime investigators in South Africa. Moreover, available detectives often carry high volumes of dockets, resulting in poor investigation and subsequent withdrawal of cases from courts due to insufficient or lack of evidence. Intelligence-led policing is effective and may be a solution in South Africa. However, the Crime Intelligence Division of the South African Police Service is highly politicized and, at times, operates without a manager as they are either charged for suspicious crimes or lack of experience and/or leadership. When writing this paper, the police had just been granted permission to use the "Grabber" software to intercept communication of individuals suspected of being involved in crime. However, human rights groups express concern that such software will be utilized to violate human rights, which are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. South African Police have yet to use body and/or dashboard cameras to capture footage during patrols. At the same time, in other developed countries, these were implemented long ago. Using drones to patrol borders around the country may assist in addressing the challenge of human resources and may save costs. However, budgetary constraints remain challenging as the police budget is always reduced.

11. An ideal policing model for South Africa

The South African Police management must reconsider their policing strategies and approaches in line with the envisaged future crime. These require a drastic move towards the digitalization of systems, sophisticated software purchases, and benchmarking, eventually leading to “smart policing.” Research shows that South African Police investigators are not properly trained and/or equipped to deal with digital crime. There are currently several “high-profile” crimes that remain unresolved. These investigators cannot address cybercrime or any other crime that may be committed from outside the border of South Africa. Crawford (2007) argued that policing needs to move towards an approach, system, or network of entities as a crucial but not as a lone node. Universities and researchers can play a significant role in creating what is commonly referred to by White and Gill (2013) as “nexus policing”. Such an approach is more likely to create an environment for effective and ideal policing for South Africa. According to Rickman, Stewart, and Dimitrov (2000), in designing principles for nexus policing, there is a requirement to design and develop principles from the bottom up rather than from the top down. To be considered ideal, a police service must be accountable for its actions. Transparency in operations, investigations, and disciplinary measures is crucial to maintain public trust and confidence.

11. Conclusion

The transformation of policing in South Africa is a critical step toward fostering a democratic, inclusive, and just society. While the legacy of apartheid continues to pose significant challenges, an ideal police service can be realized through a holistic approach that addresses structural, cultural, and operational dimensions of law enforcement. Key to this transformation is a focus on accountability, transparency, and community-oriented policing. By cultivating trust between the police and their communities, the South African Police Service (SAPS) can better combat crime, ensure public safety, and uphold the rule of law consistent with the country’s constitutional values. Moreover, investment in training, equitable resource distribution, and institutional reforms to reduce corruption and violence within the service are essential to this journey. It is equally important that the state commits to addressing socio-economic disparities that exacerbate criminality, thereby allowing the police service to be a vehicle for change rather than repression. Ultimately, the transformation of policing in South Africa will require sustained political will, civil society engagement, and a shared vision of justice to achieve the ideal of a police service that protects and serves all citizens with integrity and fairness. In this paper, I argued that unless there is a conscious decision to invest in improving systems and training, the South African Police Service will be overwhelmed by crime, particularly cybercrime. All available resources should be mobilized to ensure law enforcement officers receive the necessary training to prepare for the future. Adequate budgets should be provided to ensure that the police receive the required resources to meet all crime challenges.

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