

Optimising Professionalism in the South African Police Service – A Critical Path to Enhance Public Confidence and Establish Global Recognition: A Case Study

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Abstract: The South African Police Service (SAPS) is the principal law enforcement agency in the Republic of South Africa. Although there are several other law enforcement agencies such as the military police, traffic police, and municipal police, the SAPS is in the spotlight because of its Constitutional obligation and its endeavour to interact with the public on a daily basis. The high crime rate in South Africa further shines the spotlight on the SAPS, where the communities are scrutinising the performance of the police in relation to the rising and what is considered uncontrollable crime rate in South Africa. This research study endeavours to highlight the challenges that are plaguing the SAPS and the entire law enforcement agency in South Africa and provide possible practical recommendations with a view to address the identified trust and confidence deficiency. For this purpose, data was collected using qualitative research methods, where information was collected through one-on-one interviews, documents review, literature review, media platforms, online internet search, verified social media platforms, parliamentary proceedings, court proceedings, just to mention a few. The subject under research is an ongoing and developing phenomenon and the information is not widely available. The identified sources of information were helpful in gathering the required and necessary data for this research study. The high crime rate in South Africa has directly contributed to the decline of public confidence in the capabilities of the SAPS to deal with criminality. Subsequently, those with financial means have resorted to procuring the services of private security companies for protection of themselves, families and properties. Unfortunately, the high inequality in South Africa means that only the privileged few can afford the services of private security, while many of the underprivileged persons are left vulnerable and dependant on the SAPS for protection against a high level of criminality. The challenges faced by the SAPS relating to limited human and physical resources, amongst others, exacerbate the current situation faced by the communities and further erode public confidence in the SAPS to deal with criminalities. Key to the primary research findings includes that (a) the police unprofessional conduct and the public perception of corruption erode the public confidence on the effectiveness of the SAPS in combating crime and providing safety and security in the society, and (b) that there should be a mandatory vetting of personnel before appointment. There should be a proper and appointment of senior members to top management where academic qualifications and experience are taken into consideration – based on merit and competency. This research study digs deeper into the rot that is believed to have infested the SAPS and other law enforcement agencies. In particular, the infiltration by the external forces who are referred to as the criminal cartels or syndicates. It is reported that some of the top SAPS management officials are highly compromised and corrupt – and collaborate with criminal syndicates for their selfish and personal benefit in the expense of the masses. The subject matter is considered a critical and some information is classified and confidential, thus making access to information a challenge and provides limited data. The practical recommendations made endeavour to address the negative findings made, which are associated with the perception in public domain. The findings made provide a clear view of what is the situation of the law enforcement in South Africa, and the recommendations made are aimed at restoring the professional image of the SAPS and an improved public perception – both locally and internationally. This research output provides additional information to the body of scientific knowledge in the field of Criminal Justice and a new perspective in dealing with the scourge of lawlessness by those who are expected to maintain law and order. This field of study has not been widely and sufficiently explored, and this study provided a documented research output on the subject matter while making original contribution in the scientific field of study. The beneficiaries of this study would be the law makers, law enforcement personnel, scientific researchers, academics, and the public at large. The entire CJS will benefit from this research, and the output is expected to provide direction in dealing with the professionalising the SAPS and to enhance public confidence and global recognition. This expected benefit is crucial as the SAPS is part of the International Criminal Police Organisation (ICPO), also known as INTERPOL. INTERPOL is an international policing body that enforces cooperation in crime fighting strategies to member states.

Keywords: Appointment, Promotions, Public Confidence, Professionalism, Perception, Integrity, Criminality, Talent Management, Retention Strategy, Serious and Violent Crimes, Criminal Cartels, Infiltration, Corruption, State Capture, Criminal Justice System, Law Enforcement, INTERPOL.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the Republic of South Africa, the institution that is responsible for law enforcement is the South African Police Service. Although there are other law enforcement agencies in South Africa, the SAPS is the main role player in that is responsible to maintain law and order in the country. South Africa's population is estimated to be almost 65 million as of the year 2025, with the SAPS having the total workforce of just over 179,000 – of which approximately 120,000 are police act members (also referred to as operational members). This figure of 120,000 includes police act members that are support members and office based, which means that the boots on the ground are even fewer than the 120,000. This estimation is modest taking into consideration shifts that are in place for some police members and absent from work due to various reasons.

Professionalization of the police service includes proper training, education, capacitation of human and physical resources, remuneration, recognition, and other morale boosting activities that promote ethical conduct and behaviour of the police members. The SAPS has various divisions and specialised units that require specialised knowledge, skills, and academic qualifications – that require proper and strategic placement and utilisation for optimal output. The placement of correctly qualified personnel in strategic positions is a key component of professionalising any organisation; and the SAPS is not an exception to the rule.

➤ Problem Statement

There is a widespread decline of public confidence and trust in the South African Police Service (SAPS) by the community members in South Africa. The SAPS's reputation has, over the years, declined to an all-time low – emanating from the reported incidents of corruption, unprofessionalism, unethical behaviour, and other conducts that tarnish the professional image and standing of the police. Subsequently, the public perception and confidence to the SAPS have dropped, thus leading to the communities feeling vulnerable and exposed to criminality and other social ills. In addition, the public confidence in the police is caused by the high crime in South Africa, which serve as an indication that the police are struggling to deal to effectively combat crime.

Although the government is trying to combat crime in South Africa – by capacitating the SAPS through the recruitments of new police trainees, the police are still not able to contain the occurrence of crime. In part, the SAPS is under resources in terms of physical resources and necessary technologies to detect, combat, and investigate crime in South Africa. The limitation of resources in the SAPS affects all the divisions including specialised environments such as the

Directorate of Priority Crimes Investigation (DPCI), and the Forensic Services, just to mention the few.

This research seeks to investigate the possible reasons that lead to the decline in public confidence for the SAPS and explore various options to improve the professional image of the SAPS by making practical recommendations that are aimed at professionalising the national law enforcement agency – the SAPS. As the national police entity, the SAPS cannot afford to lose public confidence because the public play an invaluable role in the success of the police in combating crime. If the public lose confidence in the police service, their cooperation and their active role in assisting the police to eliminate crime will eventually diminish.

It is imperative that this scientific research be conducted because its outcome will assist the executive authority in policy directives and relevant interventions to professionalise the SAPS and improve its efficiency in fighting crime in South Africa. Although the South African government has plans in place to improve the effectiveness of the SAPS, this research output will augment the existing plans, provide different dimension on the professionalization of the SAPS, and enhance public confidence and establish the SAPS's global recognition as the reputable and efficient police agency.

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The policing structures can be traced back to the arrival of the white settlers in South Africa in 1652. Its main objective was to protect the interest of the settlers against (black) criminality. This confirms that white settlers did not discover South Africa but found people who were already staying and living in the Cape. The establishment of the policing structure was to ensure the security of the settlers and their belongings; including that which they took from the natives in South Africa.

The national police in South Africa were established in the year 1913, during the apartheid government, which was led by the white minority. In part, the South Africa Police (SAP), as it was known by then, ensured that the apartheid rules were enforced and maintained. This includes the enforcement of the Group Areas Act – where certain areas and activities were only reserved for certain people; a criterion that was taken based on race. Human right was violated, and the police were one of the main perpetrators of human right, where brutality was the order of the day. The police brutality was, in the main, exerted on black Africans – an act that instilled fear on the police and the government of the day. Up until to date, there are still people who went

missing, some brutally killed and tortured by the apartheid police.

The dawn of democracy brought some relief to majority of black Africans and some white people who were against the apartheid regime. The SAP evolved into the South African Police Service (SAPS), a transition that was aimed to ensure that the SAPS serves all the people of a democratic South Africa without discrimination.

➤ *Research Aim, and Objectives*

The aim of this research study is to seek answers to the identified problem through the application of scientific methodology, which guarantees that the information obtained is reliable and unbiased. Additionally, the scientific research aims to provide practical solutions to the existing problem through empirical findings and practical recommendations emanating from the data collected. The primary aim of this research study is to assist in professionalising the SAPS and to enhance public confidence in the police service, while establishing global recognition through efficient and effective crime combating strategies. With the view to achieve this research aim, this research sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To understand the public’s expectations from the police;
- To evaluate the police’s strategic responses to the high crime in South Africa;
- To examine the current state of the SAPS, and
- To make practical recommendations for the professionalization of the SAPS.

The above research objectives serve as the roadmap that guides the research project to collect relevant data required to address the identified problem. The well-drafted research objectives ensured that the research study stays on the course and within the boundaries of the research aim.

➤ *Research Questions*

The main purpose of research questions is to solicit responses and seek information pertaining to a specific phenomenon. Research questions provide guidance and specific focus of the research project by pinpointing the issues that need to be addressed. A good research question serves as the navigator that provides the roadmap of a scientific research project. For the purposes of this scientific research study, the following research questions were derived to provide a strategic research roadmap that seeks to provide information and to resolve the identified research problem:

- What are the contributing factors to the decline of public confidence in the SAPS?
- What should be done to professionalise the SAPS and to enhance global recognition?

➤ *Key Research Findings*

The findings form a critical component of every research project. For the executives who may (for one or the other reason) not have sufficient time to read all the content of the research report, the findings become the only part that they usually make some time to read. It is on this basis that the research findings must be written in the manner that is easily understandable, unambiguous, and address the research questions of the study. The research findings in other reports are incorporated in what is known as the executive summary. The executive summary communicates critical information that is, in the main, directed to the executive authority for decision making and implementation. It is based on these reasons that this research study provides a distinction between key research findings and the interpretation of research findings. For the purses of this research study and ease of reference, the key research findings are presented on a table format below:

Table 1 Key Research Findings

01	What are the contributing factors to the decline of public confidence in the SAPS?
(a)	The high crime rate in the country
(b)	The alleged criminal syndicate within the SAPS structures
(c)	The alleged political interference
(d)	The perceived cronyism and cadre deployment
(e)	The internal factional battles in the top management
02	What should be done to professionalise the SAPS and to enhance global recognition?
(a)	Capacitate the SAPS to effectively deal with crime
(b)	Employ and promote members based on merits
(c)	Introduce mandatory continuous vetting and background check on all members
(d)	Implement the talent retention and management strategies

The use of a table to present scientific research finding is a common and effective way to transmit information in a manner that is easy to read and understand. A table format research findings presentation eases the burden of trawling through numerous texts and writing that may, at times be laborious to read through. A table improves reading and encourages comprehension while making it easy to locate the critical part of the document that contains research findings. It was on this basic that this scientific research article opted

for the presentation of research findings in a table format, in conjunction with the textual research findings.

➤ *Research Framework*

A research framework is a navigation system that provides guidance to the scientific research study and provides a well-defined structure that ensures a coherent understanding of the content of the research. A research framework serves as a roadmap that provides direction on

which a particular study should take, thus ensuring that the focus of the study remains focused and is not derailed. The principal components of the research framework include the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework as discussed below:

- *Theoretical Framework*

Theoretical framework encompasses the usage of established theories in the subject matter that widely believed to be true and relevant to the subject matter. These theories may involve acceptable norms and standards that may or may not be widely published. Available theories are found in the media, publications, and other forms of available forms of information.

- *Conceptual Framework*

Conceptual framework involves the establishment of a relationship between specific variables and ideas within the field of research study. It also helps to guide data collection and analysis in a manner that is best suited to the research study in question. Concepts are operationalised in a manner that they bring sense to a lived reality, and they are defined to a level of elementary basis for ease of comprehension and application.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a critical part of the research project, and it refers to a systematic, logical, and practical manner of conducting of data collection, using a specific procedure(s) and techniques. For the purposes of this research study, a combination of field and desktop research were deemed critical in obtaining relevant information required to clearly enunciate the professionalization of South African Police Service, enhance public confidence, and to establish reputable global standing and recognition of the law enforcement agency in South Africa – the SAPS.

Desktop research, as utilised in this research study, ensured that the research study is cost effective and saves time as information is readily available from relevant sources such as publications, policies, and official correspondences, which allowed for a quick analysis of the collected data.

Furthermore, the current twenty-first century provides a range of widely available and widely accessible information in the digital platform. However, not every information on digital space is legitimate and reliable. For this research, information from the digital platform was trawled through with extreme caution not to fall prey to misleading information. Unverified information was not considered for this research and only peer reviewed and verifiable information was considered.

Applicable literature and other sources of information were trawled to gather relevant data necessary for this scientific research study. The review of published books, journals, articles, interviews, media publications came handy and provided the fundamental basis for the pursuit of this research study. Personal knowledge and information were used cautiously with a view to remain neutral and objective.

For the purposes of this research and the relevance of information, information was derived from the Madlanga Commission of Enquiry and the parliamentary ad hoc committee.

IV. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics form part of a scientific research process, and all professionally conducted research studies must conform to a specific set of ethical considerations. Ethics assist in ensuring that the researcher is cognoscente of the dynamics that are considered pertaining to the actual research project and the subjects of the research. Central to the ethical considerations is the wellbeing of the subject of the research and the integrity of the information obtained and relayed in a form of a research report or research findings. Various academic and publications have a set of ethical considerations that they consider as prerequisite for the conformance of their set standards before publication and or acceptance of any scientific research output. Subsequently, the research ethics in this study are divided into two, namely: generic ethical considerations, and domain specific ethical consideration. The following ethics were taken into consideration:

➤ *Generic Ethical Considerations*

- **Mutualism:** The research study was conducted with a view to mutually benefit all parties, including the SAPS and other related law enforcement agencies, and the executive authority in the field of criminal justice. This study did not only take into consideration the need for the researcher to be an international published author but considered the importance of the research findings and the recommendations to be beneficial to the law makers, and all interested and affected parties. In the main, the SAPS is the main beneficiary of this research outcome.
- **Integrity:** Special care was taken to ensure that data is collected and analysed in a fair and objective manner. No preconceived outcomes were perpetuated in suppression of the truth and facts. The principle of scientific centralism was maintained throughout the research. The research study was guided by high standard of moral principle and honesty.
- **Authenticity:** This research is the original work and product of the researcher and was not submitted to any journal or academic institution for publication. The researcher was creative in developing the research study with a view to optimise professionalism in the SAPS and to improve public confidence in the law enforcement agency.
- **Quality assurance:** This research conforms to the quality standards as outlined in International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology (IJISRT) among other accredited and recognised journals, and the scientific research in the academic fraternity. The quality output will contribute to the scientific body of knowledge of Criminal Justice, law, and executive authority in the SAPS and other related fields.

- **Financial Influence:** The author received no financial support to conduct this research, and there is no influence emanating from financial support to unduly and unreasonably ignore other facts while persuading a specific funded agenda. This research is influenced by scientific principle of contributing to the body of knowledge.
 - **Data integrity and security:** Only publicly available data was used in this research study, with special care taken to ensure security and integrity of confidential information that has the propensity to compromise confidential and classified information and or ongoing investigations, if handled carelessly.
 - **Communication of results:** The research results will be communicated to all interested parties through the publication of the research journal. The results will be presented in an honest, transparent manner, and no relevant information will be unduly withheld. The language of communication of the research results is the widely used language of English, which is a common and a medium means of communication in South Africa and other parts of the world. Where applicable, the research results will be communicated through seminar and workshops presentations, amongst other mediums of communication.
 - **Autonomy:** this scientific research study was conducted with a purpose of knowledge sharing and to initiate discussions and deliberations that will ignite processes aimed at professionalising the law enforcement in South Africa. The researcher was autonomous from external influence, ideologically of financial. In this era of fake medial propaganda and misinformation, it is critical for the autonomous scientific publications to prevail. Autonomous research is not driven by malicious intent, however, an honest professional purpose of contributing to the scientific body of knowledge. In this instance, the researcher had the absolute autonomy of will, thoughts, and action.
- *Domain Specific Ethical Considerations*
- Unlike the general ethical considerations, the domain specific ethical considerations relate to ethical behaviour and conduct that a researcher had to demonstrate pertaining to a particular study based on the position held and proximity to the subject under research. At the time of conducting this research study, the researcher had over two decades of service and experience in the SAPS and was a commissioned officer – a position of influence and authority in the management structure of the SAPS. As a result, the following domain specific ethical considerations were observed:
- **Victimisation:** The researcher ensured that there is no victimisation of participants, who opted not to participate in the research study. The researcher ensured that his position of a manager in the SAPS, held at the time of this research study was not in any way used as a coercive tool, nor to gain unfair advantage in accessing certain information.
 - **Confidentiality:** A high confidentiality level was maintained whereby information received from the participants pertaining to the subject was not used prejudicially to the participants – but was treated as data for the purposes of the research study.
 - **Privacy:** The researcher ensured that those who voluntarily shared information remain protected by ensuring their privacy. In addition to the ethical considerations, it is a criminal offence in South African to disclose personal information and details without their explicit consent in terms of Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013, also referred to as POPIA.
 - **Honesty:** The researcher did not use the proximity to members and information as a reason not to conduct full interviews and documents analysis. A thorough interview with participants was conducted and documents were thoroughly perused to gain more insight relating relates to the research study.
 - **Neutrality:** Although the researcher had certain level of knowledge and information pertaining to the research topic, neutrality was key to ensure that more and new authentic information is derived from both the interviews and literature study. The researcher remained neutral and open-minded during data collection to ensure maximum data collection. This was done with no preconceived outcome of the research findings.
 - **Decolonisation:** For centuries, Africa (and South Africa in particular) was under the colonial rule, which amongst other things indoctrinated the Africans with a narrative that sought to promote colonial supremacy in the expense of African knowledge and beliefs. This includes the concerted efforts to demonise African practices and cultures, while promoting and praising Western ideology. Subsequently, the legal system in South Africa (and Africa in general) is based on the colonial influence of a legal system. The South African legal system originates from the Roman Dutch law – a foreign colonial legal system that is intended to address African challenges. Decolonisation, in this instance, seeks to identify and isolate Euro-centric and Western superiority complex that seek to impose itself into African affairs for selfish and colonial purposes.
 - **Africanisation:** This research study was conducted in the Continent of Africa. The participants in this study provided knowledge, experiences, and views based on the South African practices. Africanisation does not mean that international practices are not recognised, but the promotion of African knowledge and practices, and ensuring that African knowledge and practices get global recognition and exposure as equal partner in global scientific contribution. Africa should no longer only be a consumer of scientific and professional products, but an

equal partner in scientific research innovation and contribution to the global scientific community. Afrocentrism is influenced by Africanisation, and focuses on cultures, practices, values and norms that originate from Africa for Africans.

In this regard, many African countries had systems and practices in place to deal with criminality, ill-discipline, immorality, and other social ills. These includes the traditional court where the headman (also referred to as indunas or amakhosi) had their trusted men and women who served in the council that dealt with social ills within their jurisdiction. This structure has powers to investigate, summon, trial, and impose sanctions to those found guilty of wrongdoing. Among other sanctions imposed included community service, and compensation to the authorities and victims – in the form of livestock or money.

This practice was effective in reducing the occurrence of social ills in the communities and maintained high social order. This practice was meant to address African challenges by implementing African solutions that are affective in addressing African issues. Following the colonial invasion to Africa, these African practices were deemed illegal and not conforming to the Western laws that were imposed to Africans in the name of democracy. To this date, these African practices are no longer practiced in other African countries, and to the extent that they are practices, they have been diluted by the Western culture of legal system. In this context, Africanisation emphasises the application of African solutions to African challenges.

- **Autonomy:** Autonomy is a ‘double-barrel’ ethical consideration as it is applicable and appears in both the generic and domain specific ethical considerations. In line with decolonisation and Africanisation, the autonomy of scientific research output from the African countries and the global south is inevitable. Africa is freeing itself from the bondage of colonialism in many ways, including but not limited to scientific research publications, self-actualisation, self-reliance, fair and equal treatment amongst other peers, mutual respect, and self-determination and identification. Although cooperation is essential in nation building and prosperity, there should be no external influence in African affairs that is aimed at selfish reasons and exploitation. This research study serves as a living example that Africans can identify shortcomings and make meaningful contributions to address African challenges with limited or no foreign intervention.

V. INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings are the main outcome and the results of the research study. The findings are drawn from the information and data contained in the discussion section of the research study. In the main, research findings are the critical part of the research because they provide readers with what the research found, and they provide an outlook of what needs to be done. Unlike the key research findings which

provided the summary of the primary and critical research findings, this segment provides an in-depth interpretation and analysis of research findings that are drawn from empirical data. To this effect, the interpretation of scientific research findings is hereby presented:

➤ *What are the Contributing Factors to the Decline of Public Confidence in the SAPS?*

- *The High Crime Rate in the Country (South Africa)*

The Republic of South Africa ranks the highest in Africa in terms of most dangerous country with the highest crime rate. The types of crime that take place in South Africa are contact and violent crimes in nature, including murder, rape, armed robbery, hijacking, human trafficking, cash heist, kidnapping. The staggering number of reported murders, for instance, are considered by some to be equivalent to those in a war zone. There is a high number of illegal and unlicensed firearms in the streets of South Africa – which perpetuate the occurrence of violent crime, in particular murder.

The country’s law enforcement agencies are clearly failing to effectively to put a stop to criminality, hence crime continues to thrive. The number of the police boots on the ground is not sufficient to efficiently and effectively combat the high crime rate. This is in part because the police are not adequately resourced in terms of human and physical resources. With the population of over sixty million (60 000 000), the SAPS has just over one hundred thousand (100 000) police act members. Per population ratio, the SAPS is critically under resourced, and while the population is rapidly increasing, the SAPS recruitment of new police members is not fast enough to deal with the problem at hand – the high crime rate in the country (South Africa).

- *The Alleged Criminal Syndicate within the SAPS Structures*

The criminality in South Africa is reported to be linked to the involvement of senior police officers. The infamous ‘July six’ media briefing laid bare the allegations of highly coordinated and sophisticated criminal syndicates that are flourishing unabated. Statistics indicate that police officers are part of the criminal syndicates, ranging from cash heist, kidnapping, insurance fraud, just to mention a few. There is a noticeable number of law enforcement agencies in the prison centres in the Republic of South Africa who were convicted of criminality. These includes police officers, correctional services officials, presiding officers and politicians. The revelation at the Madlanga Commission and the parliamentary ad hoc committee have shared light on the criminal syndicates in South Africa, which involves law enforcement agencies of various departments.

- *The Alleged Political Interference*

This research study found that the allegations of political interference in the SAPS are substantiated and valid. Some politicians are involved in the day-to-day operations of the SAPS, either directly or indirectly. This takes place in a form of providing instructions and directives that are found to amount to political interference in the police operations.

- *The Perceived Cronyism and Cadre Deployment*

The cronyism and cadre deployment is plauing the SAPS. Appointments and promotions are targeted to certain individuals without following a proper and fair process that is inclusive of everyone. This is evident in the number of senior members who are occupying high ranking positions with minimal academic qualifications and work experience, while the highly qualified members are denied a fair opportunity to exhibit their knowledge and skills in the management positions. Some managers have a myopic view to the junior members with high academic qualifications in that they view them as threats rather than compliments to their identified skills and knowledge gap.

- *The Internal Factional Battles in the Top Management*

The research highlights factional battles in the top management of the SAPS and other law enforcement agencies. The factional battles deviate the attention of the police from fighting crime to petty squabbles. Some factional battles are aligned to the alleged criminal syndicates where some police officials are entangled in the web of criminal cartels, whereas some are committed to fighting crime, this creates factional battles between the officers that are on different camps. In this regard, the good cops (police officers) are being frustrated and ill-treated by their seniors who are aligned to the criminal syndicates by either transferring or redeploying them without just course.

➤ *What should be done to Professionalise the SAPS and to Enhance Global Recognition?*

- *Capacitate the SAPS to Effectively Deal with Crime*

The SAPS should be capacited in terms of human and physical resources. The current resources are inadequate to deal with the rising criminal activities in South Africa. There should be a mandatory and continuous vetting and screening of police officials to root out corrupt and compromised police officers. The South African law should be reviewed with specific focus been at the bail system. There are many repeat offenders who commit crime while on parole. The rights of criminals are guaranteed; however, such rights cannot be superior to the safety of innocent citizens. As it stands, the South African prisons are more luxurious than ordinary houses of the citizens. In prison, offenders get free meals, shelter, protection, medical health, recreational facilities, and more. There should be a collaboration between the judiciary and the SAPS to effectively deal with crime in South Africa.

- *Employ and Promote Members Based on Merits*

The recruitment system in the SAPS needs a complete overhaul and automation. There should be a merit-based employment strategy and promotion that is based on merits. There must be a clear policy and directive with strict requirements for promotion into the higher structures of the SAPS. It is regrettable that the same requirements for the entry level are used to promote members to the higher positions in the top management. This is vulnerable to cronyism, nepotism, and favouritism. Questionable and compromised characters should be removed from the position of authority as their retention compromises the entire law enforcement and brings the organisation into disrepute.

- *Introduce Mandatory Continuous Vetting and Background Check on all Members*

The SAPS do not have a mandatory and continuous vetting system. Statistics indicates that there are convicted criminals in the ranks of the law enforcement agencies such as the SAPS and the municipal police. A continuous security vetting on all police officers will assist to root-out criminal elements within the law enforcement agencies and re-establish public confidence and professionalism.

- *Implement the Talent Retention and Management Strategies*

Due to the lack of retention strategies in the SAPS, there has been an exodus of specialised personnel from the SAPS's specialised units to private sectors and other organisations that recognise excellence and exceptional work indeed and in practice. The cost of training members to the level of being experts is exorbitant, and to have such experts leaving the organisation due to lack of proper talent and retention strategy is the highest display of mediocre and lack of organisational understanding.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

This segment of the research study provides the author with an opportunity and a platform to dissect available data and critically analyse available information that was relied on in the content of this scientific research study. The discussion section will contain information critical to reach the findings and recommendations of the research study.

➤ *Professionalising the South African Police Service*

South Africa is a developing country and has its fair share of challenges pertaining to attaining required standard of the safety and security, in particular policing. Professionalising the police service includes, amongst other, the provision of quality and effective training, a properly defined career path, encouraging a culture of self-development, appointing people with relevant experience and qualifications in critical positions, merit-based promotion criteria. In most cases, a professional environment yields high quality results as opposed to an institution which is run like a mafia organisation – where lawlessness and cronyism prevail unabated.

In some Asian countries, particularly the People's Republic of China, the police agency has several academic graduates, and the top management is dominated by people with higher academic qualifications such as Master's degree and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The police's basic training in China is intense and professionalised to address the policing needs and challenges faced in their jurisdiction. The quality of such training is evident in the public display of Chinese police agency, where their drills and display of their capabilities is synchronised rather than a mere rehearsal.

As part of professionalism, the incidents of police brutality and complains against the police are minimal, and the public has a high regard and confidence in the police agency. Subsequently, the occurrence of criminality is very low, thus resulting in social stability and national security.

The police collaborate well with the judiciary to curb any potential occurrence of criminality, which result in consequences for criminality and deterrent for potential criminality.

In South Africa, the police agency is battling to contain the high rate of criminality and lawlessness. There is a high crime rate in South Africa, and the law enforcement agency is struggling to contain the high crime rate. Some sectors of the society attribute the high crime rate in South Africa to the state of policing – which is characterized by corruption and external infiltration. The South African Police Service (SAPS) is infiltrated by what is (considered to be) political and criminal syndicate infiltration. This infiltration was laid bare by the media briefing made by Lieutenant General Mkhwanazi, the SAPS Provincial Commissioner for KZN, and amplified by various witnesses in the Commission of enquiry, also known as the Madlanga Commission.

The Commission chaired by the retired Constitutional Court Justice Madlanga heard, amongst other revelations, that the SAPS is infested by cronyism and nepotism where allegations were made that senior police members have appointed and promoted their friends and associates to higher positions without following due process or without the requisite experience and academic qualifications. The Independent Investigative Directorate Against Corruption (IDAC) described this development as a form of state capture. This description was based on the reason that the inappropriate appointed personnel would be expected to execute a particular mandate as a token of appreciation for their irregular appointment or promotion thus perpetuating the systematic and institutionalised corruption and control of state resources.

There are numerous reported cases of police brutality and corruption in South Africa. Some of the reported instances are attributed to police's lack of adequate training and unprofessional conduct. There is numerous scientific research output in this effect, which is widely available and accessible to the public domain via multiple media platforms, including libraries and digital service.

The SAPS provides the comprehensive basic training for all its new recruits who are appointed into the system. The basic training is comprised of theoretical and practical aspects that prepare the trainees for a demanding and challenging task on the field of work. In addition, the SAPS has targeted and focused training interventions that are specialised to the specific policing area. These specialised training interventions include, amongst other, the detective programme, the Public Order Policing Service (POPS), and other specialised courses that equip the members with necessary skills to effectively and efficiently execute their respective duties.

Despite these interventions, incidents of corruption and unprofessional conducts by some still exist, and it is practically impossible to eliminate all the occurrences of improper conducts by some members within an organisation.

Pertaining to the SAPS recruitment process, the minimum requirements for eligibility for appointment into the police service at an entry level of a student constable includes (1) a senior certificate, (2) no criminal record, (3) no visible tattoos, and (4) a valid driving licence. With the high unemployment rate in South Africa, there is a sizeable number of applicants who apply for appointment for the entry level with a higher academic qualification. This practice is understandable because of the scarcity of employment opportunity and the high cost of living. The challenge though becomes where after such members are employed in the service and there appears to be no clear career path. Some members become frustrated with the system and end up looking for employments elsewhere. In the main, this challenge manifest itself after the members have been trained and developed internally – thus their departure leaved a void of skills and personnel.

Another noticeable shortfall within the SAPS is the appointments of middle and senior managers, where the advertised requirements are not distinct from those of the junior members. Subsequently, there is a situation where the highly qualified members are on the bottom, and the top management is comprised of senior managers with basic academic requirements. It should be noted that the academic qualification is not the only deciding factor in the appointment of a person into the higher position, but one amongst the others. The same could also be argued that years of experience in the service is and should not be the only deciding factor in the determination of the suitability of appointment. In this regard, this study presents that both the academic qualifications and the years of experience should be considered in this regard.

In an ideal situation, there should be a requirement for a higher academic qualification for one to be considered into a senior management position. This approach is in line with the international best practice and the professionalising of the institutions, including the law enforcement agencies. There is a distinct professional standing between organisations that are led by highly qualified management as compared to the one that is led by an individual with the minimum qualification. An institution that is led by a highly qualified manager has a professional standing and such serve as a motivating factor to the other members that are considered as the subordinates.

Similarly, an organisation that has a clear growth and development path motivates members to embark on self-development projects to better their skills and expertise that in turn benefit the organisation that they serve. The SAPS, and other government departments in South Africa, have senior managers with minimal or basic requirements that are required for the entry level, whereas the junior members at the bottom have the higher academic qualifications than their managers. Although this phenomenon is the generic in all spheres of government organisations, it is prevalent and a reality in South African organisations, including the SAPS. As such, the professional standing of the organisation becomes compromised, and allegations of nepotism and corruption become synonymous with the status quo – which becomes extremely difficult to defend or justify.

With a view to professionalise the SAPS, there should be deliberate decision making that will require senior management to possess a higher academic qualification above the one required in the minimum requirements for employees at an entry level. It cannot be that a National Diploma becomes a requirement for both junior and senior management position as such is susceptible to corruption and manipulation.

If the information deposited at the parliamentary ad hoc committee and the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into allegations of Criminality, Political Interference, and Corruption in the Criminal Justice System (also known as Madlanga Commission) is anything to go by, the SAPS and the entire Criminal Justice System (CJS) is rotten to the core – in that political interference is rife, external influence is the business of the day, purging of members based of political and cronyism is normalised, corruption determines who gets appointed to senior positions, fabrication of allegations and criminal charges against opponents is normalised.

Both the Commission and the ad hoc have heard that senior managers at SAPS, are appointed without meeting the necessary requirements and do not get vetted. It was revealed that some external forces (individuals) influence the appointment and the removal of senior police officials – a development that is an indication of a captured and compromised SAPS. Some police officials are alleged to be appointed to senior positions with a specific mandate associated with corruption and not based on merits. These allegations are damning to the image and professional standing of the SAPS in public view and international community.

Due to what is playing out in public domain, the society is watching with deep concern about the capability of the SAPS to effectively execute its constitutional mandate in terms of section 205 (3) of the Constitution of South Africa. This is coupled by the widespread reported cases of corruption and criminality allegedly committed and perpetuated by the members of the police (SAPS & Metro police), which in most cases go unpunished. There is a growing narrative that the police behave like they are a law unto themselves and that their criminal activities are institutionalised, resulting in lack of consequence management within the ranks.

The communities have lost hope, and do not trust the police anymore. Subsequently, the communities do not feel safe and secured in their place of residence. Security has turned to be an expensive phenomenon where only the wealthy enjoy security and protection. Those with financial muscle make use of private security services for their protection while the poor remain vulnerable and in the main, the victims of crime in South Africa. It is with no surprise that the poor are the majority victims of crime, and they happen to be black African.

The mushrooming of the lucrative security business is evident in South Africa and that is testament to the void created by the inefficiency of the police. The affluent

residential areas are mainly guarded by the private security while the poor rural areas are left to rely on the government law enforcement agency, which is evidently struggling to contain the high crime rate in South Africa. Due to desperation for safety and security, some communities resort to community policing forums and other informal structures that are aimed at combating crime and social ills. These structures often get criticised for being illegal and perpetuating what is popularly known as mob-justice or vigilantism.

The rot in the police structures is also associated with the political figures. The revelations from the parliamentary ad hoc committee and the commission of enquiry have revealed strong collaboration between rogue police officers with the corrupt political figures. It is because of these revelations and many others in the public domain that led to the public to lose confidence in the government structures, this is associated with the dwindling voter turnaround during the election in South Africa. The communities have lost hope and are despondent as structures that were created to provide much needed services are embroiled in internal battles for power and personal enrichment.

The public confidence in the SAPS is at a lowest level since the dawn of democracy in South Africa. The increasing perception of police criminality, nepotism, cronyism, cadre-deployments and other unethical behaviours have eroded the public trust in the capabilities of the law enforcement in South Africa. The communities feel deserted by the government of the day, which they voted into power. Instead of fighting for the better life for all, government officials and police senior management are fighting for better lives for themselves and embroiled in internal battles for power to loot public purse instead of fighting criminality and security for all.

Even worse, the various institutions and individuals within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) are said to be infiltrated to an extent that they are used against each other. To this effect, the ad-hoc committee and the Madlanga Commission heard testimony that during the execution of J50 and J51 (J50 - Warrant of arrest, & J51 - search & seizure warrant) by the police members of Political Killings Task Team (PKTT) at the residence of one of the suspects under investigation, the allegations indicated that the police members of the Directorate of Priority Crimes Investigations (DPCI) also known as the HAWKS, were deployed to frustrate the operation against fellow police officers. It is alleged that a high contingent of members and resources were deployed by the senior ranking official(s) to serve the interests of the suspected criminal. In addition, it is further alleged that the municipal police were also deployed – not to support the SAPS operation in executing their official work, but to disrupt the operation as directed by their seniors.

These allegations and others that play out in public domain cause more harm and damage to the reputation of the SAPS and the CJS. The society is left confused and dejected as these spectacles' play in the public gallery – leaving the society with no hope for justice. It is, therefore, believed that justice is a myth in South Africa and the law only applies to

those with political connections and associates to those in positions of power and authority. The international community is watching the as the proceedings take place on open and public medial platforms. The message displayed here is that the SAPS and the CJS are corrupt and infiltrated by external forces and have veered off from their vision of justice for all to serving and protecting cartels.

➤ *Employee Management and Retention*

Employee management and retention is the most critical and important aspect of sustaining an organisational business continuity. Organisations that prioritise employee management and retention are likely to save costs and benefits in terms of enhanced public confidence and professional standing. In addition, employee management and retention boosts production, quality of output, and the culture of self-reliance and sustainability. In contrast to the public perception, retention far outweighs recruitment in many ways. Recruitment is dependent on retention for it to be efficient – in that, the new recruits will need to be trained, mentored, and inducted into the culture of the organisation by the members (employees) who have been in the organisation for longer period. Skilled and experienced employees turned to be bored in an organisation that does not promote growth and recognition – leading to the exodus of the skilled and experienced employees for what is called greener pastures.

One of the effective aspects in employee management and retention is career path and upward mobility of members. It is a proven fact that employees are encouraged to remain loyal and productive in an organisation that has a clear career path and upward mobility. Career path and upward mobility is referred to a clear criterion that provides for a healthy developmental competition amongst members with the purposes to improve their knowledge and skills required for the execution of their duties in return for recognition. A recognition for improved knowledge and skills could be in more many ways than one, including but not limited to promotion, and upward salary adjustment.

The research study has revealed that employees turn to leave their employment for several reasons, including low morale, lack of appreciation and recognition, stagnation, resistance to change, bureaucracy, just to mention a few. Surprisingly, salary was not found to be the main contributing factor that led to employees leaving their employment. Although salary plays a contributing factor in employees' livelihood, peace of mind and a sense of being appreciated play more crucial part, especially to the more skilled and experienced employees.

South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world, with violent crimes and sexual offences being amongst the troubling crimes. Amongst the violent crimes plaguing South Africa are the armed robberies, cash in transit, business robberies, assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, murder, just to mention a few. With the high crime rate, South African police members per population is gravely below the threshold recommended by the United Nations (UN). As of the year 2025, South Africa had police to population ratio of 1.542, which means that there is approximately one (1) police

officer for over 542 people. The UN recommended standard states that there should be one police officer for every 220 people in a country. With this information, the SAPS is evidently under resourced in terms of human resources – especially active police personnel. In fact, South Africa needs to double its police work force to meet the recommended standard set by the UN.

With the declining number of active police officers in South Africa, emanating from natural attrition, the remaining members are severely overwhelmed by the volume of work – leading to exhaustion, extended leave of absence, and unplanned sick leave. Hundred and twenty thousand police act members are not enough to deal with over 65 million population, especially in a volatile and violent country like South Africa. The police management in conjunction with the government need to urgently consider a mass recruitment of new police officers while implementing effective retention strategies for the skilled and experienced members.

The world is evolving, and technology is taking the centre stage. The SAPS need to adopt the use of technology in combating crime and conducting general policing on daily basis. Drones and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) technologies should be introduced to assist in the policing of vulnerable areas – especially those that are classified as high-risk spots. The employment of members with relevant Information Technology (IT) specialities and the skills development of current police members should be given a priority. These efforts will boost public confidence in the police capabilities to combat violent and serious crimes in South Africa and serve as a deterrent to the criminals. In addition, the procurement of gunshot detection apparatus should be considered to identify gunshots and pinpoint the exact location of gunfire for rapid response.

The current policing strategy is not effective to deal with the type and nature of crime in South Africa. South Africa is ranked as one of the violent countries in the world when it comes to criminality – especially serious and violent crimes. It is the daily occurrence of serious and violent crimes that erode public trust and confidence, and the capabilities of the SAPS to deal with crime in the society. The crime that is taking place in South Africa is well known in the global communities, thus raising questions about the SAPS's capabilities and professionalism. Generally, foreign tourists and investors will not likely visit and invest in a country that is invested by high level of criminality and lawlessness. This is another factor that should drive the professionalization of the SAPS in its capacity to execute its constitutional obligation, as outlined in section 205 (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Another hindering factor is the SAPS fleet management. The SAPS vehicle service and repair centres are always filled by the SAPS vehicles that are taking long to be serviced and repaired. The extended period of servicing and repair of police vehicles negatively affect the operation of the police. Almost all police stations in South Africa have a shortage of vehicles to meet the operational needs of their policing precincts. The available vehicles are not sufficient and at

time, not suitable for the pursuit of criminals that make use of latest and superfast vehicles as getaway vehicles after committing violent and serious crimes, including armed robbery, murder, business robbery, Cash in Transit (CIT), just to mention a few.

The intelligence services of the SAPS need to be reinforced to be able to provide the intelligence information of planning of crime. Valuable intelligence information is the one that alerts the police of instances of crime before they happen. An effective crime intelligence information is crucial in intercepting criminal syndicates and avert the occurrence and the effect of crime. The main priority should be to intercept crime before it happens as opposed to reacting after the crime has been committed. The decrease in criminal occurrence in South Africa, and any country, boost public confidence in the police system and improves its global recognition through its effectiveness.

Properly skilled and qualified personnel should be placed at strategic positions to improve the efficiency and the professionalization of the SAPS. Members of the police should be encouraged to upskill their education and knowledge through personal development. The SAPS should recognise personal development. The current recognition of improved qualifications does not adequately address the deficiency in the recognition of personal development. The SAPS should consider revising the current policy to entice and retain skilled and qualified employees. This is also referred to as the retention policy – that is aimed at retaining police members and to placing the police service as the employment organisation of choice.

It is a known fact that the SAPS has advertised posts externally with a view to recruit qualifying candidates from outside the police ranks into the senior positions. This is said to be aligned with attracting professionals with special skills and expertise that the SAPS may necessarily not have. This move has been in line with professionalising the SAPS. Similarly, the SAPS must ensure that the current professionals who are in service of the SAPS are retained to maintain professionalism of the service and improve international standing and public perception. The SAPS has the potential to be the government department of choice for professionals as far as employment and retention of specialised skills and expertise.

The retention of specialised skills and expertise within the SAPS will increase the well of various talent and skills. It should be noted that not all external recruitment and appointment of members in the senior positions in the SAPS yielded expected outcome, some appointments proved to be the biggest mistake of the SAPS. In contrast, the promotion of what is known as the career police persons has proved to be more effective as such promoted personnel rose up to the expectations. This is as the result that the promotion of internal employees does not need much induction and training, the appointees are familiar with the culture and the dynamics of the SAPS and usually hit the ground running. In this regard, the statistics speak for itself without naming individuals.

The SAPS is comparatively under resources both in terms of human and physical resources. The available limited resources of the SAPS are severely over stretched and is not coping with the high crime rate in South Africa. The situation is made even worse by the continued shrinking of the capacity of the law enforcement to tackle brazen criminality and lawlessness.

In 2023, a group of forensic analysts at the Forensic Services with PhDs wrote a comprehensive submission to the executive authority of the SAPS to request recognition for their highest level of attainment in the academic field with a view to retain expertise within the FS. Their written submission was met with rather a disappointing response which appeared to be dismissive. The response did not even address a single aspect that was raised in the written submission by the PhD graduates from the FS. This attempt by the forensic analysts was aimed at engaging the executive authority in the retention strategy for the professionals in the FS, particularly those who possess degrees of Doctor of Philosophy.

➤ *Special SAPS Recruitment Project*

The SAPS has, in the recent past, initiated a special recruitment project where young graduates were recruited into the services. Unlike the conventional recruitment process where a National Senior Certificate (NSC) was a minimum prerequisite for appointment in the SAPS; the special recruitment project targeted the graduates with a minimum NQF level six academic requirement. This special recruitment project has resulted in several graduates being appointed in the SAPS, a move that is regarded as a step towards professionalising the SAPS.

Subsequent to the appointment of the young graduates in the SAPS, the FSL (Biology Section) advertised internal positions for the forensic analyst at the level or rank of a Warrant Officer, and these graduates were the main targets to fill these positions. This move was hailed by some as a progressive move to professionalise the SAPS as opposed to later recruitment process. It is based on this that one can confidently and factually conclude that the SAPS is on the right track to professionalise the principal law enforcement agency in South Africa. Other components recruited the graduates, the FSL in this instance is used as a practical example, and not the only beneficiary of the process.

➤ *Specialised Services in the SAPS*

For the purposes of this scientific research study, the attention and focus will be on the Forensic Services (FS) and the Special Task Force (STF) as the specialised services of the SAPS.

• *Forensic Services*

The Forensic Services is a specialised entity of the SAPS that deals mainly with the examination of forensic exhibits. Due to its nature of specialisation, the decision was taken to recruit graduates and people with required academic qualifications to be appointed at the rank of Warrant Officer, as opposed to rank of a student Constable for the appointment of ordinary police officials, with a senior certificate as a

minimum required academic qualification. As a specialised entity, the Forensic Services was a stand-alone Division in the SAPS before it was amalgamated with the detectives – a move that has proved to be counter progressive in the professionalisation of the SAPS's specialised services.

Following the lack of clear upward mobility within the ranks, the FS has experienced a sizeable resignation of trained forensic analysts. Emphasis is made to 'trained' forensic analysts because it takes years and a lot of money to train one forensic scientist to a point where they are fully competent and proficient to examine forensic exhibits. One would expect the government to take all necessary steps to ensure that such scarce skills are retained for as long as possible within the FS. Majority of these trained forensic scientists that resigns from the FS are PhD graduate – the highest academic qualification that one could obtain in any formal institution of higher education in the world.

As a specialised entity, the FS should ensure that there is a clear policy that is aimed at talent management and retention strategy of highly trained and educated forensic scientists. This would improve the credibility and the international standing of the FS as a specialised entity. Most of the members at a lower level at the have a minimum of a National Qualification Framework (NQF) level seven (7) and above – an indication that majority of the forensic scientists at the FS are graduates. It is common knowledge that the government wages are not competitive comparatively to those in the private sector, which serve as a tempting and lucrative lure for specialised forensic scientists to look for better opportunities within the private sector. The challenge about this scourge is that the government spent a lot of money to train forensic scientists which it (government) cannot retain in its service, and the private sector recruit these scientists and benefit from their services and expertise that were paid for by the government.

The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) is a component of the FS, which has several Sections that conduct specialised forensic examination of different forensic exhibits. These Sections includes Ballistics, Biology, Chemistry, Scientific Analysis, Questioned Documents, amongst others. It is well known that the FSL is battling to deal with the influx of forensic exhibits for examination – thus leading to thousands of critical evidence awaiting processing. The backlog at the FSL is caused by lack of sufficient resources. Some laboratories of the FSL are not conforming to the required standards of a professional laboratory. Professionalising is not only about appointing qualified personnel in the right position but also providing suitable and professional infrastructure that is fit for purpose.

The FS has seen a significant growth and development during the tenure of Lieutenant General Phahlane. General Phahlane was the Divisional Commissioner of Forensic Services, and his tenure was characterised by capacitating the FS and talent management and retention. It was during his tenure that the entry level for the appointment of forensic analysts was elevated from the rank of Sergeant to the rank of Warrant Officer. This decision brought happiness, joy,

motivation to many forensic analysts in the FS, and members were optimistic for the prospects of growth within the ranks in the FS, thus prompting members to be motivated and remain in the FS. It cannot be argued otherwise that this is what is meant by talent management and retention.

In addition, General Phahlane was decisive in recognising excellence and exceptional work by members in that where necessary, the General would invoke section 44 of the SAPS Act (Act 68 of 1995) and section 47 (n) of the Employment Regulations of 2018 to reward exceptional work and achievement by promoting members to a higher level. This was seen as a progressive move and a decisive leadership by the Divisional Commissioner. To this effect, some members of the FS with PhDs were beneficiaries of this leadership and remained in service of the state while improving professionalism through their knowledge, skills and academic qualifications.

The FS used to have international forensic conferences – where international guests would visit South Africa and interact with members of the FS on a professional level. Members of the FS were encouraged to study and conduct scientific research and make presentations on the international stage. The FS was gaining global recognition and had initiated plans for the accreditation of the FSL, which is unfortunately yet to be realised. This is an example that the specialised services within the SAPS need appropriate and decisive leadership for them to realise their intended potential and contribute meaningfully in the CJS and improve the professionalism and public perception of the SAPS by the society.

Following the submission made by forensic analysts with PhDs with the FS in 2023, Lieutenant General Senthumule, the Divisional Commissioner for Detective and Forensic Services agreed with the submissions made by the PhD graduates within the FS and recommended that they be promoted to a higher rank (position) above what they were at – a recommendation that was rejected (without substantial reasoning) by the Divisional Commissioner: Human Resource Management. The rejection letter appeared to be dismissive and did not address the content of the letter initially submitted by the PhD graduates and subsequently supported by the Divisional Commissioner: Detectives and Forensic Services.

The Divisional Commissioner's submission was characterised by a clear understanding of the issues raised by the PhD graduates, and in her submission, the General displayed an appreciation of the fact that the FSL is a specialised environment, which requires not just ordinary skills, knowledge and expertise. To this effect, the representation made by General Senthumule contextualised an understanding and a will to retain scarce skills and professionalise the FSL. The same cannot be said about the response to the letter though – which could be best defined by some as "not worth the paper it was written on".

- *Special Task Force*

The Special Task Force (STF) is an elite and highly specialised unit of the SAPS that deals with high-risk operations that are beyond the scope of ordinary policing including hostage situations, counterterrorism, kidnapping, and specialised high-profile protection. The STF members undergo an extensive and vigorous training process that encompasses air, land and sea combat. The STF is recognised internationally, and it is the best special operations unit in South Africa.

The STF members are in high demand from the private security sector – emanating from their highly specialised training and expertise. In the main, the STF members get lured by lucrative financial packages that are offered by the private sector for their services. Over the years, there has been many STF members who have resigned from the SAPS and joined the private sector. All employees feel valued and appreciated when they are paid well in line with their skills. Like the FSL, it takes years and a lot of money to train a single STF member, and yet, there is no clear retention strategy for this specialised expertise that the government has invested in.

It is a national security risk to have highly trained SAPS (and the South African National Defence Force) members to be recruited in large scale by the private sector as such members with specialised skills and knowledge may have to be at odds with government while serving the interests of their employers – the private sector. The private security sector in South Africa comprises of members who were trained and resigned from the STF, Forensic Services, South African National Defence Force. This makes the private security to be a competitor to the state law enforcement – thus posing a serious national surety threat to the state.

VII. INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW OF POLICE PROFESSIONALISM

There is no anonymous consensus as to which is the best and professional police force in the world. This is mainly because the research in this instance looks at various factors and aspects in their analysis. Different institutions and studies use different criteria to measure professionalism in various police agencies in the world. For instance, the World Internal Security and Police Index (WISPI) have conducted a study and ranked police forces multiple factors such as capacity, process, and legitimacy. Although the ranking of police forces by WISPI can be debated, the report cited Botswana as the best in Africa. Burkina Faso was said to be the most professional police force in Africa. Although the ranking systems and multiple factors factor in to reach these conclusions, the study provide some insight in this regard.

By far, the overwhelming studies and assessments have ranked the Chinese police force (in particular Hong Kong) to be the most resources, efficient and professional. These studies are important as they provide the basis for international benchmark and promote international best practice in policing. It is common sense that one would want to learn from the best in every aspect and it is without any

doubt that South Africa would consider taking one or two lessons from the Chinese on professionalising the SAPS.

South Africa is considered one of the high crime rare counties in the world and the first in Africa. These rankings are not a good reflection of the country's law enforcement, and it is an indictment of the state of law enforcement in the country. South African is known for its violent criminality including murder, armed robbery, fraud and corruption. It is based on this bad reputation that one of the priorities of the government of South Africa should be safety and security. The law enforcement agencies must be capacitated and strengthened for the economy to thrive. South Africa is a mineral rich country, but economic growth is stagnant in part due to mismanagement, fraud and corruption that have infested the government and other organs of the state. The SAPS is not spared from the endemic criminality and external infiltration, thus weakening its ability to effectively and efficiently execute its constitutional mandate. Economic investors need economic certainty, and a safe and secure environment to invest. There is a correlation between economic growth and effective law enforcement and independent Criminal Justice System.

➤ *Criminal Infiltration into the Rank and File, and Top Management of the SAPS*

The July 6, 2025, media briefing by Lieutenant General Mkhwanazi is said to be a ground-breaking and a landmark revelation into the situation of the SAPS and the CJS. Due to the seriousness of the allegations made, the President of the Country, President Ramaphosa addressed the nation, and a Judicial Commission of Enquiry was instituted to investigate the alleged anomaly and provide a detailed report to the president for consideration. Subsequently, the parliamentary ad hoc committee was established to conduct its investigation on these serious allegations that have the potential to undermine the security of the state and constitutional democracy.

The allegations made highlight the political influence into the operational activities of the SAPS, where politicians are said to be pulling the strings on policing matters. Further investigations exposed a deep rot in the SAPS and other law enforcement agencies. Allegations of corruption and police capture were made by some witnesses, where criminal syndicates are alleged to have seized control of the CJC through corrupt politicians and senior officials. State machineries were said to be used against political and cartel rivalries. Those in power were seized by looting as much as they could because they understood that power and position of authority do not last forever. To this end, those seen to be obstacles in their criminal network were neutralised or eliminated by either redeployment, creating frivolous criminal charges, bribed or executed.

The infiltration went to an extent whereby well-known convicted criminals had a firm grip on the state resources though corrupt politicians and senior officials in stage departments and the SAPS, in particular. Money was an important instrument of power, and such instrument was used as a remote control to enhance and enable state capture

though tender corruption, dealing in drugs, money laundering, and other criminal cartels activities.

The infiltration of the state took place in two main forms: (a) internal infiltration and (b) external infiltration. The internal infiltration involves instances where members within a particular government department were using their position of power to their selfish and criminal benefit by unlawfully and illegally channelling state resources to their family members and cronies. Whereas external infiltration took place in a form of people with money and proximity to those with authority to dictate what should happen within government departments to their benefit or to deal with their opponents. External infiltrators are usually people not in the employment of the state but has power and authority to infiltrate and influence what happens within various departments and organisations.

➤ *Public's Perception of the SAPS*

Public perception is everything in the administration of justice. What people hear and see influence their perception of the situation in the country. There is a widespread perception that the South African law enforcement is compromised, and this perception is influenced by what is taking place in public domain – in the communities and broadcast in the media space. The perception of the SAPS is that the police are corrupt and serve the elite and wealthy. The conduct of some members of the police is deplorable and unprofessional – thus creating a perception that the entire police agency is corrupt and incompetent.

VIII. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

No research study is ever able to address all the available variables and dynamics of the research problem in a manner that provides all the required solutions to the identified challenges. It is for this reason that a research study will inevitably have some kind of limitations. Although this scientific research study provides an insightful and invaluable information pertaining to the research topic, there are noticeable limitations that were encountered in the process of the research study. The following research limitations are highlighted:

- The researcher is the active member of the SAPS, and a manager in the FS. This serves as a limitation to express some views without fear, favour, or prejudice. The researcher is bound to maintain some level of confidentiality and secrecy in line with the protection of information that applies to active members of the SAPS. Subsequently, the researcher was limited to diplomacy while critically analysing the 'state of affairs' within the SAPS and the conduct of some senior officials.
- The subject matter under research was (during the research) a subject of Judicial Commission of Enquiry and the Parliamentary ad hoc Committee in South Africa. Information had to be discussed and disclosed with caution not to interfere with these proceedings and the ongoing criminal investigations.

- Scientific research articles are usually written by individual(s) who often decide on the trajectory of the research. This often exposes the research to what is known as researcher bias – a scientific research limitation that is associated with research articles. Although scientific researchers are professional academics, personal bias is a reality, and everyone is prone to bias in one form or the other. Researcher bias is a limitation that may affect the interpretation and generalisation of the findings.
- Due to the controversial nature of the subject matter, in particular pertaining to the appointments and promotion of senior members in the SAPS, there was a significant limitation in getting access to personal information to assess and determine the reasons for the appointment of some members or related information. It is expected that such information will be treated as confidential and restricted to official use only with relevant permissions and disclaimers applicable to it. Subsequently, such information could not be accessed.
- Some participants feared reprisal if they participated in this research study by providing contentious information that involves their current employer and personnel. Despite assurance that their identity would be treated as confidential, there was a noticeable limitation in some potential participants in participating in this scientific research study.

IX. MITIGATION TO RESEARCH LIMITATION

Mitigation to identified research limitations refers to actions taken by the research to limit or prevent negative impact to the research because of the research limitations. This includes taking reasonable and practical steps to ensure that despite the research limitations, the research study remains valid. The identified research limitations in this research study were mitigated as follows:

- Verifiable information: This study relied on factual and verifiable information that can be accessed by the public, including information that is widely available on national television and social media platforms.
- Professionalism: The researcher remained professional throughout the research study and made findings based on the data collected – without any preconceived or predetermined outcomes.
- Scientific principles: This research was guided by scientific principle to contribute to the scientific body of knowledge, and to make original contribution to the field of science and Criminal Justice System.
- Multiple sources of information: With the identification of a research limitation pertaining to fear of reprisal, the study used multiple sources of information thus eliminating the detrimental effects of over reliance on a single source of information.

- **Triangulation:** Information obtained was verified using various sources of information and techniques. This ensured that research study makes use of reliable and trusted information by using third-party data in conjunction with information obtained through personal experience and knowledge.

X. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Practical recommendations are clear action-based suggestions that are derived from the scientific research findings, research aim and objectives. The recommendations are intended to alleviate the negative impact that may be caused by the negative research findings of the research study. For the purposes of this scientific research study, the following suggestions are made to address the identified deficit in the research:

- Capacitate the SAPS in terms of human and physical resources to effectively deal with the rising and violent criminal activities in the country. The police have one (1) police officer per over 542 people in terms of the United Nations statistics conducted in the year 2025. These numbers indicated that the SAPS are severely overstretched and struggling to contain the high crime rate in the country. The global average police per population ration stands at one 1.220.
- Introduce mandatory and continuous vetting and screening of members of the police service, with specific attention been the top management of the various law enforcement agencies. This should be compulsory to the new recruits and other levels of the police ranks – where lifestyle audits are conducted to identify potential criminal syndicates.
- The executive authority should consider a constitutional review to explicitly highlight the duties and responsibilities between the political head and that of the operational commander. There seem to have a confusion between what constitute policy directive and operational instruction, which creates a fertile ground for infighting and possible political interference.
- There should be a clear appointment and promotional requirements that are proportional to the level of the responsibility to be assumed. The current academic requirements for new recruits are similar to the ones used for promotional purpose on all levels in the SAPS – which render them prone and vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.
- Introduce a job rotation policy in the top management position where senior managers are subjected to mandatory redeployment to various portfolios based on their knowledge, kills, and expertise. This will assist to deal with potential collusion to commit crime, in particular, fraud and corruption.

- Create a policy that clearly focuses on talent management and retention which should be aimed at curbing the exodus of highly trained and skilled personnel from various specialised units/sections of the SAPS. The high number of resignations of highly skilled specialists in the law enforcement agencies compromises the state's efforts to combat crime in terms of the constitution.
- Consider the introduction of an independent panel to officiate the disciplinary process with a view to maintain fairness and objective outcome. There should be a decisive consequence management to officers who are found to be in contravention of the law and the applicable code of conduct.
- Appoint the appointment of career police personnel to be the General of the SAPS, as opposed to cadre deployment of other professionals who may not have the necessary experience in the operation and culture of the police and other law enforcement agencies.
- Engage relevant stakeholders in the best way to professionalise the SAPS and other law enforcement agencies and the implementation of the identified research's practical recommendations – with a view to enhance public confidence and to establish global recognition.
- In line with the special recruitment project in SAPS where the young graduates were recruited to join the national police agency, the SAPS should ensure that promotions within the ranks in the service follow the same approach; in that academic qualifications should be given preference, in conjunction with relevant experience among others, to promote and appoint members in senior SAPS positions.

The above practical recommendations conform to the key principles for practical recommendations in that they are (a) actionable and specific, (b) based on research findings, aim and objectives, (c) consider various stakeholders in the CJS, (d) realistic and achievable, and (e) consider potential obstacles to implementation. These recommendations have the potential to improve the social standing of the country's law enforcement agencies in South Africa and to re-establish the law enforcement as the best career choice for the youth and graduates in the Republic of South Africa.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The promotion and appointment strategy of the SAPS senior members should be revisited and studied further. The current requirements for appointment and promotion of members in the SAPS leaves a lot to be desired. The basic requirements for appointment in the SAPS include a matric certificate amongst others, similarly, some senior SAPS members in the top management have a matric certificate only as their highest academic qualifications. This phenomenon is unjustifiable considering that some junior

members in the SAPS have higher academic qualifications, including honours, masters, and PhDs – yet they remain at the bottom of the spectrum of ranking system.

There should be a further study and the review of the current system in the SAPS that deals with promotion and appointment of members, in particular, senior members. The appointment of senior members in the ranks of the law enforcement without commensurate academic qualifications and exceptional requirements gives credence to cronyism, favouritism, cadre deployments, and a potential syndicate that have infiltrated the appointment and promotion system within various law enforcement agencies (including the SAPS).

XII. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH VALUE

This research is invaluable in that it addresses the current aspects of professionalising the SAPS, and it provides practical recommendations that will enhance public confidence and establish global recognition. Additionally, the scientific research provides new information that contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of policing and criminal justice. Furthermore, this study promotes further engagement on the conduct of police and other officials in the CJS and provides a platform for a healthy discussion with a view to improve the national security.

Most importantly, this research output serves as the mouthpiece for the marginalised forensic scientists who have higher academic qualifications but remain on the bottom of the SAPS structure – where their hard-earned qualifications are not properly recognised, but marginalised. Lastly, this scientific research challenges the status-quo and lays bare the rot in the high echelons of various organisations within the CJS, in particular, the organisation which is the main subject of the study – the SAPS.

The academic community will have an added set of information as this research publication adds to the existing pool of wealth of information. The research outcome will be available online and in hardcopy for the student, researchers and scholars to refer. This research provided the basis for more research to be done pertaining to the subject matter and to augment the existing information and enhance information sharing through scientific research publications.

Finally, this scientific research study is crucial in that it lays bare what may be considered by many as “touching the untouchables”. The law enforcement is known for concealing information under the guise of ‘classified or confidential information’. At some point information is kept out of public domain using technicalities that conceal diabolic decisions and unethical behaviour. This study creates and opens a platform to discuss the appointment of senior members within the law enforcement. As public representatives, top management should be known by the society, and their credentials should not be classified as such is the precursor for corruption and maleficence.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The Continent of Africa is alive with possibilities, and with approximately 30 million square kilometres of geographical land that is filled by enormous, rare-earth minerals, the Continent is well positioned to fund and pioneer its development projects and professionalise the services to her people. The reliance of African countries to the West and the European countries for professionalization has overstayed its welcome, and South Africa and other African countries must take the frontline seats in their development and their future determination – while creating the African standard of professionalization. A Continent that is rich in mineral resources can no longer afford to rely on its former colonisers for supervision and instructions on how to run African affairs.

This scientific research study has alluded the challenges faced by the SAPS and other law enforcement agencies in South Africa and highlighted the potential root-cause to the challenges face, together with the practical recommendations that are aimed at alleviating the negative impact resulting from the identified deficit. The research has contributed to the scientific body of knowledge in the field of Criminal Justice and ignited a debate and further engagement on the controversial subject matter – thus laying the fertile ground for progressive and constructive deliberations.

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