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ASSESSING THE PREVALENCE OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE*

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Abstract. States have always used their law enforcement and security organs to ensure that communities are peaceful, liveable and tranquil. These include the police services such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), which serves the same function in the local contexts. In pursuing its mandate, the SAPS uses preventative and curative strategies to establish community peace and calm. These are ensured through various policy and statutory prescriptions, including the Constitution and Code of Conduct. The study uses Adam Smith's theory of Moral Sentiments to unpack and assess unethical conduct within the SAPS. Using the qualitative methodological approach, hinged on an interpretive research philosophy, the study gathered data from written documents. The collected data was analysed using content and thematic analysis techniques. The study established that upholding ethical and professional conduct by police officers within the crime prevention mandate of the SAPS remains problematic. SAPS encountered challenges *like* police corruption, bribery, illegal protection, and extortion. The study thus makes various recommendations, including a professionalised recruitment process for the SAPS.

Keywords: unethical behaviour; police; misdemeanours; South African police service; professionalization

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1. Introduction

Society can only exist with a police service. Bradford, Huq, Jackson and Roberts (2014:248) note that, principally in society, police departments are essential because of their mandate, which is two-pronged, and expressed as 'serving and protecting', which are relevant to community well-being. Locally, the South African Police Service (SAPS) is a vital public entity in the entire Republic since it legitimately enforces laws and engages in crime prevention towards a peaceful and progressive society. Therefore, every member of the SAPS should collectively serve and protect communities in line with such an obligation, something they should always uphold

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subconsciously. Perry and Potgieter (2013:109) observe that South Africa is globally renowned for being a crime hotspot, indicating the humongous challenge that the government faces to ensure peace, safety and order. Furthermore, amidst the high prevalence rate of crime in the community, the SAPS is at the centre of creating and fully maintaining peace, security and order in all communities.

The crime itself is detrimental to human security because it unsettles people and, at times, leads to loss of life (Rahmah, Himam, Riyono & Nurchayo, 2021:123; Roberts, 2013:52). This manuscript notes that there are no other important law enforcement agencies in any state other than its police. Hoeyi and Makgari (2021:374) note that, amidst the need for professional police services in the local context, the police practices of the SAPS have been blighted by numerous challenges. Key to these impediments is the scourge of corruption and cognate unprofessional behaviours by serving members of the police services. Scholars like Kim (2023:1337), Lamb (2021:101), Govender and Pillay (2022:43), and Barker (2011:28) claim that, in all states, there is a requirement for police officers to serve within the confines of professional and ethical behaviour.

In the same vein, Kaptein (2011:845) adds that ethics furthermore shape what society accepts as condonable manners and intolerable conduct. Locally, these are mainly derived from the stipulations of Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) (Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani, 2021:7). Maweni and Steyn (2021:56) additionally construe that intolerable conduct manifests itself in the policing space as corruption, maladministration, unprofessional behaviour, fraud, absenteeism, and agenda-pushing that seek to prioritise personal rather than public gain. This dents both the preventative and curative role of the police in South Africa.

The study acknowledges the significance of crime prevention as a vital cog in maintaining and creating liveable communities. Nonetheless, according to Grobler (2011:13), this is one domain in the SAPS affected by unethical behaviour. The patterns of behaviour that affect the effective delivery of policing service by the SAPS include unprofessional conduct by police officers, police corruption, fraud, lack of police-community synergies, bribery and conspiracies involving some rogue police officers and criminal cartels culminating in the evasion of arrest and the sharing of the loot (Goutte, Peran & Porcher, 2022; Basdeo, 2010:390). South African police service officers have been muddled in high-level corruption, some with politicians involved in the past decades (Hatungimana, 2022:8; Bradford et al., 2014:251). There is also a blatant disregard for professional behaviour dictates in the SAPS. Disoloane (2012) observed a largely deliberate contempt of stipulations in the code of ethics and other related statutes, thereby creating a high prevalence rate of unethical behaviour in the public sector. Thus, unethical conduct in the SAPS is a huge disservice to the communities, many persistently falling victim to petty and heinous crimes. Additionally, unprofessional police officers will not effectively drive the crime prevention agenda of the SAPS, negatively affecting all efforts to create a good image of the country to stakeholders.

2. Research Methodology

This paper is based on a literature study, which is a non-empirical study of existing literature. This qualitative approach under the interpretivism paradigm relied on the desktop study of secondary literature. Data was gathered from the existing records (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, books, government publications, newspapers, and internal documents) on the prevalence of unethical behaviour in the SAPS's crime prevention environment. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis.

Theoretical Framework. This study uses the Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS) by Adam Smith to understand the theoretical underpinnings of unethical behaviour in the SAPS's crime prevention environment. The TMS centres on how morality and virtue impact how one behaves and interacts with others in different societal (or organisational) settings (Haakonssen, 2004: vii). In 1970, Adam Smith postulated that "how selfish soever man

may be supposed, there are some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it" (Haakonssen, 2004:11). According to Beckett and Taylor (2019:42), within society, all patterns of human behaviour are significantly shaped by nature, history and empathy for others with whom one co-exists. Furthermore, Mullins (2016:522) writes that the TMS describes how individual interests drive the desire to push a particular agenda in humans; hence the need to make more profit and achieve personal gain cannot be effectively separated from behavioural patterns. Therefore, the TMS explains why and how somebody considers the impact of their action on others and society before they decide on behaving in a given manner. That consideration is anchored on the morality of behaviour; hence, corrupt police officers always know what they will do. Above all, they are conscious that this kind of unethical behaviour is outlawed by their country's societal norms (and laws).

Aim of research. The study seeks to assess the prevalence of unethical behaviour in the South African Police Service (SAPS). In the process, the study will explore the causes and the manifestation of unethical behaviour in the SAPS. The study is organised as follows: The study captures the introduction and background of the study, and then the methodology follows. The study explores the research aim and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. This section discusses the extensive literature review on conceptualising unethical behaviour in the SAPS and police misdemeanours.

Additionally, the Theory of Moral Sentiments, which serves as the study's theoretical framework, was discussed. The analysis also proceeds to present and discuss the research findings. The conclusions and recommendations then follow the discussion of results.

3. Study of Unethical Behaviour in the South African Police Services

The subject of ethical (unethical) behaviour is critical to this manuscript. Mullins (2016:517) defines ethics as the study of morality, i.e. practices and activities that are considered to be paramount right or wrong, together with the rules that govern those activities and the values to which those activities relate. The study deduces that the consequences of unethical behaviour are so dire that police unethical behaviour must not be condoned under whatever circumstances. Overall, it leads to a lost trust in the police services and the wastage of public funds. According to Lamb (2021:92) there are low levels of public confidence in the SA police. In short, this is the type of conduct considered unacceptable and wrong in a particular setting or community. Munzhedzi (2016:198) noted that unethical behaviour is seen in its divergent styles, which incorporate, among other things, nepotism, corruption, financial misconduct, fraud, expenditure, tender malpractices, sexual harassment, political interference, and favouritism. Accordingly, Govender and Pillay (2022:40) assert that high crime rates, use of violence by criminals, police brutality, corruption, rape by police officials and other forms of criminal misconduct against the police, including the centralisation of specific specialised functions of policing, which was equivalent to taking away policing from the people at police station level, are some of the allegations which affect the image of the police as a legitimate organisation. For this study, unethical behaviour in the SAPS' crime prevention environment is all actions by the police that affect effective policing, including police corruption.

For Stansbury and Stansbury (2005:iii), the environmental context of police corruption needs to be understood from a societal code perspective where no single society or community can condone the personal enrichment of the custodians of law from some unscrupulous activities like bribery, extortion or maleficence. Police corruption is a 'cancer' in the societies in which it is rampant. Police corruption is a form of unethical behaviour by the police involving "any action or omission, a promise of any action or omission, or any attempt of action or omission committed by a police officer or a group of police officers" (Hatungimana, 2022:5; Kempe, 2016:5). Therefore, police corruption goes against the idea that the organs of the state are maned by public servants who seek to promote public good and welfare in a selfless character, attitude and manner (Gans-Morse, Kalgin,

Klimenko, Vorobyev & Yakovlev, 2019:15). Any action that prejudices public good over personal gain is terrible for societal development.

According to Miller (2016:24), the issue of police misconduct is fundamentally a moral, as opposed to a legal, phenomenon. This implies that corruption happens when one breaches their moral-ethical code in the omission or commission of an unethical pattern of behaviour (Miller, 2016:24). Also, Reisig and Kane (2014:304) note that “members of the police services could engage in misconduct by doing something they are not supposed to do, such as releasing information about an upcoming drug house raid to the drug dealer, verbally harassing members of the public, planting evidence on a person, or giving a false testimony”. In addition to the preceding, police officers could commit unethical conduct by failing to do something they are supposed to do, such as by accepting a bribe in exchange for not issuing a speeding ticket to a person caught running a red light or by not executing an arrest warrant on a known drug dealer (Rahmah *et al.*, 2021:125; Reisig & Kane, 2014:301).

In addition, Kempe (2016:4) notes that police corruption, in most cases, seems to be pervasive and generally reflects the failure of state institutions to curb such bribery. In addition, the underlying factor in this is the ill of police corruption is another form of police misconduct or unethical behaviour (Reisig & Kane, 2014:307; Goutte *et al.*, 2022:12). In addition, Porter and Prenzler (2012:10) posit that another consequence of rampant police misconduct and corruption manifests itself as the ‘miscarriages of justice’, which is when the police service deliberately sabotage and fail to prosecute offenders and innocent people are wrongfully convicted. Kratcoski (2018:15) posits that dishonesty, deception, bribery and forgery are some of the everyday corruption forms that currently affect the functioning of governments across the world, especially in developing countries. Furthermore, corruption may involve the commission of various acts defined as criminal, such as bribery, extortion, graft, embezzlement, and multiple forms of fraud (Chilunjika, 2022; Chilunjika, 2021; Kratcoski & Edelbacher, 2018:3). Therefore, in the context of police misconduct, this study deduces that these are the same kinds of the many acts of unethical behaviour that has blighted the operations of the SAPS’s crime prevention environment in South Africa. Acts such as patronage or influence peddling are widely practised by many who hold political offices (Kim, 2023:1335; Chilunjika, 2018; Kratcoski & Edelbacher, 2018:3).

Unethical behaviour as a police challenge also needs an equal commitment from the political and administrative leadership. This is because it is the responsibility of the police leadership to ensure that the entire police service upholds a high standard of professionalism, ethical behaviour, integrity, and performance standards (Maweni & Steyn, 2021:39; Isenberg, 2010:37). Moreover, if there is a political tussle between the government and a police services leader on policies that violate the integrity of the policing, the police leader should resign in principle (Lamb, 2021:94; Isenberg, 2010:107). Furthermore, the existence of police unethical behaviour and other forms of police malpractice can be a testament to the failure in leadership on the part of the police (Isenberg, 2010:xxi). From another angle, although police corruption can be regarded as police misconduct, the corruption of any police service is unique from other forms of police misconduct because of its principal motivation, which is brazenly to seek the attainment of personal, private, or organisational gain or advantage (Kim, 2023:1339; Kempe, 2016:6). Moreover, the need to attain some selfish self-enrichment makes the temptation of being corrupt high amongst police officers who earn poor salaries.

3.1. Police Misdemeanours

In the case of the SAPS, this manuscript makes use of Newham and Faull (2011)’s population of police misdemeanours, which includes the following. Firstly, corruption of authority which is when a police officer gets a type of material gain under their official rank in the police without flouting any laid-down rules or laws (this included free drinks, an invitation for meals or being unfairly favoured when a service is being rendered) (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Secondly, internal payoffs, which are the abuse of perquisites that are ordinarily available to other police officers, such as assigning tasks or shifts, promotions or leave approval. These can be barter-traded, bought or sold, which is unprofessional (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Thirdly, kickbacks are the

getting of cash or goods or services by police officers in return for a police service rendered to individuals or corporates. These may include a police officer demanding a portion of the contract from a contractor in return for them being selected amongst other competitors to offer a service (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). This is misconduct in the realm of supply chain management practices.

Fourthly it manifests in cunning theft, which involves a police officer or official stealing from arrested suspects, crime or accident victims, or crime scenes. This form of behaviour significantly damages police integrity (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Fifthly, there is the challenge of shakedowns, when a police officer or official accepts a bribe from law violators when they want to evade arrest. Additionally, it encompasses the failure of the police officer to confiscate contraband or search premises (Govender & Pillay, 2022:45; Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Sixthly, there are illegal protections which happen when a police officer cushions those undertaking illicit activities in return for cash or goods or services. These activities may include unlawful drug trade, illegal sex workers (brothels), illegal selling of liquor in taverns, or illegal gambling (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Seventhly, there is 'fixing' which takes place when the police services deliberately undermine criminal investigations through sabotage by failing to collect evidence or making dockets 'varnish' (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Eighthly, there is the planting of evidence, when officers deliberately tamper with evidence to increase the sentence and secure a conviction of offenders (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). Lastly, there are direct criminal activities. These are acts of officers abusing their power to commit a crime on a person or property that the police (officer) knows of. These crimes include, among other things, armed robbery, theft, rape or murder (Newham & Faull, 2011:6). From the preceding conceptualisation of unethical behaviour, the study comprehends myriad forms of misconduct, predominated mainly by corruption. This is detrimental to policing, especially since this service is critical for national and community safety and security.

3.2. Causes of Unethical Behaviour in the Police Services

Newham and Faull (2011:11) write that some of the personal push factors that lead officers to behave unethically are greed, inability to manage their finances, a history of violent crime, involvement in narcotics and the lack of a foul-proof police recruitment process that filters those with a high propensity of crime. While at an organisational level, Westmarland and Conway (2020:389) construe that the prevalence of unethical behaviour has been attributed to the 'silence code' where a police officer would instead choose to keep their job rather than be tagged as a snitch and later face retribution from their corrupt bosses. In a country where there is endemic police corruption, the whistle-blowers often find themselves thrown to the deep end and are punished in various ways (Kim, 2023:1340; Goutte et al., 2022:10; Kratcoski & Edelbacher, 2018:5). These retributions including among other things, being skipped for promotion and *per diems*, constructive dismissals after an expose of unprofessional activities in the police, government, corporations of state entities, further denting efforts towards a professionally-upright public service (Kratcoski & Edelbacher, 2018:5).

In South Africa, this quagmire hugely affects how, for example, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) can investigate police corruption cases because police officers choose to be silent rather than be at loggerheads with colleagues or their supervisors (Newham & Faull, 2011:11). An example that this study gives relates to the late former SAPS boss Jackie Selebi who was fiercely defended by several of his colleagues and subordinates during his trial that later secured a conviction and a custodial jail term. Selebi's trial ran between 2008 to 2010 when he was eventually jailed for a fair 15-year jail term (Budhram & Geldenhuys, 2018:26). The study acknowledge the complexity of detecting, prosecuting and securing conviction for police corruption, especially given that a high-ranked police service official is charged. Similarly, the high prevalence rate of corruption in the police at the higher echelons coupled with government-wide corruption may not only undermine trust in the process but furthermore weakens its ability to authorise the activities and status of the police in the present and future (Bradford et al., 2014:253).

There are also social or societal causes of police misconduct. Foremost, these are influences that promote police misconduct, described as a social culture closed to external scrutiny and hostile to those who report misconduct (Porter & Prenzler, 2014:11). Further social influences include promotion of a culture that is supportive of police service members who engage in transgression (or those who do the so-called ‘turn a blind eye’); officers who do not uphold ethical behavioural patterns; and external influences from associations with criminal cartels, informants, or others who may encourage inappropriate behaviour in members (Porter & Prenzler, 2014:11). For Kratcoski and Edelbacher (2018:4), there are high chances that those employed in any public to engage in misconduct since it is usually used to return control and power in society. For instance, in a community where there are weak controls and enforcement of the laws on corruption, contempt of the rules by those engaging in corrupt acts may occur if there is a lack of investigative reporting by the media on known cases of corruption (Kratcoski & Edelbacher, 2018:4).

In addition, this study takes note of scenarios where police and judicial officials are not practically independent from the political control of their operations. Still, under the unregulated influence of some illegitimate groups, corruption is likely to be widespread and accepted by the people as something almost impossible to eliminate (Kratcoski & Edelbacher, 2018:4). Bruce (2014:54) noted that South Africa’s war on unethical behaviour is tainted by how the executive branch of government interferes with the independent functioning of anti-corruption units. An example is how the then president Jacob Zuma had a tussle in and out of courts of law relating to the Nkandla residence upgrades investigation that Thuli Madonsela, the then public protector, was probing (Bruce, 2014:55). The moving of the State Security Ministry which saw it being currently falling within the Presidency by President Cyril Ramaphosa after the July 2021 ‘Free Jacob Zuma’ riots and insurrection is another sign how power, lack of independent officers can affect the elimination of unethical behaviour in public entities (Shumba, Trinos & Gopal, 2023; Duncan, 2023).

Organised criminal syndicates are also another cause of police misconduct. According to Crocker, Webb, Skidmore, Garner, Gill & Graham (2019:438), this, in modern-day phraseology, is termed organised crime, where the police are part of the organised syndicates of crime who do not fear the long arm of the law can one-day catch-up on them and hence continue to commit their crimes with impunity. Organised (police) crime has been defined by Kratcoski and Edelbacher (2018:31) as the profit and power-oriented systematic commission of crimes that are of considerable importance individually or collectively if more than two persons involved cooperate for a longer or an indefinite period. Although this kind of police corruption is complicated, some global conventions and policies outlaw such unethical police behaviours that states can use to draft their local laws to deter these crimes related to the police (Lamb, 2021:98; Crocker et al., 2018:339).

Morris (2019:221) argues that the growth and reliance of many citizens and inhabitants of any developing country on informal jobs is a breeding ground for police corruption. This means that the everyday socio-economic activities that the people will be involved in have a higher chance of being informal and illegal; hence the police can accept bribes and look the other way (Morris, 2019:221). These illegal everyday economic activities include unlawful street vending, the operation of liquor outlets without a licence or illicit pirate taxis and unlawful drug dealing. According to Rajin and Snyman (2020:43), the police looking the other way also include drug peddlers and syndicates who pay up to R10 000 in ‘brown envelopes’ to serve as protection fees, leading to some form of perfect police corruption.

The absence of punitive measures breeds and sustains unprofessionalism. According to Kempe (2016:25), these are practical applications of the deterrence theory to control police corruption. There is a need for an intensified detection, investigation, and punishment of culprits for deliberate misconduct to deter others from engaging in corrupt activities and promote a positive culture of ethics and integrity in the police services (Goutte et al., 2022; Kempe, 2016:25). Furthermore, poor salaries and resources can be a trap for police corruption. In most developing countries, the issue of poor remuneration and the consequent opportunity to make money or extra

income from unethical practices by the officers were identified as the major factors fuelling police corruption, fraud, bribery and unprofessional conduct (Kempe, 2016:10).

Poor training has also been blamed for unethical police conduct. Kempe (2016:9) noted that, in most cases, the police services that have rampant corruption overall have weaknesses in recruitment and training, which subsequently lead some of the recruits to import or easily be initiated into dangerous criminal tendencies that weaken and demoralise the needed confidence in the police or law enforcement agents. Another aspect that needs to be included in police training to minimise police corruption is sensitising recruits and trainers to ethics and human rights issues that are presently absent in police academies and other training institutions (Kempe, 2015:10). For Miller (2016:34), the virtues that need to guide the skilling of police officers include the ability to create and impart onto the police officer among other things, professional expertise, individual autonomy, and internalisation of the moral ends of policing are essential in terms of developing and sustaining the desire on the part of police to do what is right.

3.3. Unethical behaviour in the South African Police Service

Unethical behaviour in the SAPS has been an Achilles heel of the government for a long time. This is credited to how the post-apartheid police service inherited the same malpractices unethically anchored on how the pre-1994 police services were used to suppress citizens on racial lines. Freeman and Mc Donald (2015:27) argue that the SAPS needed to reform after the fall of the apartheid regime for it to gain policing legitimacy. Bradford, Huq, Jackson and Roberts (2014:28) noted that the need to establish legitimacy while effectively overseeing public service is one challenge that the post-1994 police services have grappled with. The pre-1994 SAPS had its mandate and legitimacy shrouded in segregation because its crime control duties were jinxed by its role in maintaining and protecting the regime (Bradford et al., 2014:251). Therefore, the SAPS was affected, in terms of effectiveness, but a concurrent legitimacy and trust deficit, something that it needed to redeem to foster proper ethical and acceptable policing practices (Freeman & Mc Donald, 2015:27).

This historical legacy on policing efficacy, coupled with post-1994 police misconduct cases, has further dented the image of the SAPS and citizens' perception or trust in its preventative and curative role (Spencer, 2020:135). Reports that the SAPS releases on police misconduct are not conclusive but indicate rampant cases of unethical conduct. These are substantiated by citizens' surveys on their experiences with the police services. For instance, an Afrobarometer survey in 2011 revealed that the people in South Africa rate police unethical behaviour prevalence in the SAPS to be worst compared to other state organs. This was shown by 53 per cent of participants in that survey, indicating that the most troubling corruption in the Republic was the bribery, extortion and unethical practices of officers and officials in the SAPS (Wielders, 2013:3). Furthermore, a study by Bradford, Huq, Jackson and Roberts (2014:251) revealed that many citizens had experienced a personal incident with police corruption via petty roadside incidents to significant cases of armed robbery, torture, and sexual harassment at the hands of the SAPS.

According to Kempe (2016:12), the reportage and prevalence of police misconduct in any particular society affect communities' trust in police services. Therefore, people's confidence in SAPS is undermined by many cases of unethical police conduct reported by the SAPS and the media. Porter and Prenzler (2012:9) note that police misconduct undermines the rule of law and often has a catastrophic impact on public attitudes toward the police in any given community. For Newham and Faull (2011:5), the SAPS is a unique case when it comes to the issue of the unethical behaviour of its officers. This is because this is the organ of the state-aligned security that has a monopoly on using force, denies people some freedoms, and has unhindered access to public and private spaces in any society. Therefore, according to Newham and Faull (2011:5), police behaviour and its ethical part are critical to determining the efficacy of the SAPS. This is supported by the postulations of Kempe (2016:8), who argued that at all times, police officers must be to a higher standard of behaviour by society because they are the proper

stewards of the public trust and are empowered to lawfully apply force as well as some rights and statutory privileges as and when required.

In their study, Dlamini and Baloyi (2020:111) established that the SAPS continues to grapple with misconduct despite all officers signing and pledging compliance with the SAPS Code of Conduct of 1997, which regulates the behaviour. This study contends that the engagement in misconduct by officers is a testament to how compliance with the code of conduct is hard to enforce in public service. The manuscript by Freeman and Mc Donald (2015:35) revealed a wide array of challenges that affect the operations of the police services in Khayelitsha (Cape Town). These included, among other things, poor police station performance, overly centralised decision-making and authority within the police services, the lack of consideration for smaller police stations when it comes to resource allocation carried out through a universalised system failing to take into account individual peculiarities (Freeman & Mc Donald, 2015:35).

Further inhibitions to the SAPS's effectiveness included poor police service welfare and support programmes such as counselling (leaving the police to cope with the trauma of high crime on their own), rampant police corruption and unethical practices by especially high-ranked or senior police officers, thus disturbing the police station of entire services' integrity (Freeman & Mc Donald, 2015:35). Freeman and Mc Donald (2015:35) also established in their study that the efficacy of the police services was affected by the militarised and strictly confined organogram that affected the easy flow of feedback and information. The SAPS is challenged by unethical behaviour in its ranks, which affects how it can effectively detect, deter, and control crime in local communities.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Police services are critical to any society, and the prevalence of unethical behaviours in the SAPS's crime prevention environment is a cause of great concern. The efficacy of this police service is greatly affected by the high prevalence rates of unprofessional behaviour amongst members of the SAPS. The lack of professionalism and ethical behaviour in the SAPS has led to negative connotations for both citizens and businesses as far as police services efficacy is concerned. Furthermore, this study argued that this prevalence of unethical behaviour is a failure of the police service to uphold Section 195 Basic Values and Principles Governing Public Administration, especially the one on the need to promote and support professional ethics. The study has also argued that police misconduct harms society because the citizens entrust the police with their safety and security. However, the custodians of the law are the ones that break it. Furthermore, these types of police misconduct have affected the fluency of criminal investigations and public confidence in the SAPS's crime prevention activities.

The article also conclusively valued the importance that the crime prevention activities of the SAPS play towards the realisation of the police mandate. Thus, crime prevention has an equally if not hugely important role in modern communities because of the anticipatory role it helps to detect and forecast crimes. Another widely discussed issue in this manuscript is that police have the tools and legal power to use force and detain people, which can be easily abused without concrete checks and balances. Therefore, the SAPS's crime prevention environment has to be served by men and women who are honest stewards of society. Thus, this study concludes that police misconduct cannot be separated from the officers being humans who sometimes struggle with income and managing their salaries as police officers. Employing poorly paid officers is a challenge because they will be susceptible to corruption. Furthermore, other causes of police corruption have been discussed as a history of violent crime (blamed on the lack of rigorous background checks, recruitment and selection of officers).

The crimes that the politically connected and political appointees in the SAPS commit with impunity have come to the spotlight in this study, highlighting how political interference can affect the efficacy of police services. Furthermore, the levels of empowerment and independence of the DPCI have been one challenge that has affected

how the problems of unethical behaviours can be eradicated. The DPCI had become a metaphorical ‘toothless bulldog’ in contrast to its predecessor, the Directorate of Special Operations (DSO), also known as the Scorpions. The DSO has successfully pursued police misconduct cases to maximum efficacy compared to the DPCI. Therefore, the challenge of the increasing dwindling powers and efficacy of the current DPCI is a cause of concern regarding the need to eradicate unethical behaviours in the SAPS' crime prevention environment. Largely, in the professionalisation of the SAPS, the following strategies are proposed:

Firstly, there is a need to establish police counselling and support structures. These are crucial Employee Wellness Interventions. The SAPS must introduce mandatory counselling and other welfare support structures for its employees. These can aid even in the traumatic stress of crime scenes, debt traps and other socio-economic stressors. These services can also provide a reliable cushion for junior officers who will need whistle-blower protection if they have raised the alarm on the unethical conduct of their superiors.

Secondly, there is a need to demilitarise the SAPS. There is a need to do away with the military reporting hierarchy structures and liberalising the flow of information, thus creating some form of an ‘open door’ policy in the SAPS. Such a strategy can make a leaner organogram that creates, promotes, generates, and utilises feedback. It will be more accessible for the top management of the police services to pick in cases where there will be disgruntlement over conditions of services by junior officers, the rise in emotional trauma affecting motivation and other cases that need to be attended to restore police integrity through ethical conduct.

It is recommended to introduce scientific tests on recruiting and promoting officers. The study suggests that the SAPS's selection, recruitment and training processes must be longer, include scientific instruments such as psychometric, and polygraph tests. These can help isolate and grade out the 'bad apples' being let off the hook in the current training, recruitment and selection regime. These tests can look deep down inside a trainee's character rather than relying on some superficial mechanism.

Fourthly, there is a need for robust whistle-blower protection mechanisms. The study proffers the need for a more rigorous whistle-blower protection system that is tailor-made for the SAPS to ensure responsible officers who raise red flags over their bosses or colleagues are given the ample legal protection they deserve. Granting proper and adequate protection can help mitigate the effects of unethical misconduct as a robust deterrent and corrective measure (Chilunjika, 2022; Chilunjika, 2021; Chilunjika, 2018). This whistleblowing is an excellent service to the nation and must be cultivated and maintained.

Fifthly, the political impunity of those serving in the Police Service must end. The SAPS should end political protections and the culture of immunity of the 'top brass' high-ranking officers and political appointees in the police services. Any police officer found guilty and wanting must be investigated and held to account to the furthest extent possible. This begins with the political willingness of the President and Cabinet to end this daring disregard for the laws and codes of the police and the country. If political impunity is completed, the rampant unethical behaviour in the SAPS will be minimised if not eradicated.

Sixthly, the DPCI needs to be made stronger. The DPCI must be capacitated to investigate and prosecute high-profile cases effectively. There is a need for a fully independent priority crime investigator who is not littered with political interference and is fully empowered to pursue any SAPS-related unethical behaviour without fear of favour. If the directorate can be fully capacitated, it will serve as a deterrent to potential criminals in the SAPS and a justice-anchored curative process to bring to book all perpetrators of police misconduct.

The study also recommends that there should be statutory and policy interventions towards eradicating the scourge of unethical behaviour in the SAPS' crime prevention and control environments. These can be through the amendment of existing laws such as the Police Act, the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act,

and the enactment of fresh laws that affect various issues. New laws and regulations are needed in areas like strengthening the DPCI, creation of tailor-made police misconduct laws, incentivisation of whistleblowing, the demilitarisation of the SAPS and the regularisation of the informal markets.

Lastly, the conditions of officers' work must be improved. In an economy that has seen steadily rising costs of living, there is also a need to review the remuneration of police officers commensurate with the national cost of living. Furthermore, the SAPS need to ensure that officers work flexible non-strenuous hours to avoid fatigue and other traumatic experiences that may affect the morality of policing. The government must ensure that the income and sustenance of officers are sustainable to prevent the commission of corruption and other petty crimes by police officers. Improving work conditions for the crime prevention environment can ensure that the detection of crime and preventative measures are effective. Work issues such as overtime and other fringe benefits must be used to motivate and reward those working hard. Prudent human capital management and motivation strategies can aid in re-aligning the officers' conduct with the agenda of the police services, thus restoring long-lost trust between them and the communities they serve.

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