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Editor-in-Chief

Dr Divya Singh

e-mail: DivyaS@stadio.co.za

Editorial Manager

Jeanette Smit

e-mail: JeanetteS@stadio.ac.za

Assistant Editorial Manager

Annalise Kempen

e-mail: annalise@servamus.co.za

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

NAVIGATING BETWEEN COMMUNITY POLICING AND DEMOCRATIC POLICING, DIGITAL SERVICE NEEDS AND THE INFLUENCE OF GENERATION Z ON LEADERSHIP Dr Kobus Schwartz	4
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LEGAL TALK

CASE LAW Dr Marga van Rooyen	6
LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS Dr Marga van Rooyen	9

ARTICLES

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR TOP MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE Dr Thabo E. Mphuti and Prof Flip Schutte	11
THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP PROFILING ON THE PERFORMANCE OF POLICE LEADERS IN THE NAMIBIAN POLICE FORCE Helen C. Gaweses and Dr Shallaine Padayachee	23
DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP FOR INDUSTRY 4.0 IN FORENSIC POLICING: INSIGHT FROM DURBAN LOCAL CRIMINAL RECORD CENTRE COMPONENT Sandile Ngwabe and Prof Cecile Schultz	34
IMPACT AND CHALLENGES IN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLICING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN GHANA Dr Ogochukwu Nweke and Dr Smita Francis	44

BOOK REVIEW

DANGERS IN POLICE CULTURE: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTH AFRICA Book by Gráinne Perkins Review by Dr Stefan Schulz	55
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FOREWORD

Navigating between Community Policing and Democratic Policing, Digital Service Needs and the Influence of Generation Z on Leadership

Dr. (Maj-Gen.) Kobus Schwartz

Head: Research Division
South African Police Service
e-mail: SchwartzG@saps.gov.za

In this issue, we prompt readers, academics and professionals to consider various debates about policing, criminological sciences and criminal justice in today's context. One specific discourse centres on whether or not community policing should make way for democratic policing. While police agencies are grappling with this topic, their challenges are compounded by a changing client base and fast changing policing context.

An important question is whether there is a difference between community policing and democratic policing, because the approaches in the field seem to mean the same thing (Shilston, 2015) and the terms are used interchangeably as if they imply the same methodology. Van Den Broeck and Eliaerts (2003:101-118), as an example, explain that community policing is an approach to policing involving the community to solve crime problems in the community, whereas democratic policing enhances police legitimacy by including the community in identifying appropriate ways of policing in the community. Van Den Broeck and Eliaerts (2003:101-118) state that the "... democratic content of community policing depends on the extent to which it responds to the community's local needs and demands. In the more democratic version, the community participates or contributes to the orientation of police tasks and procedures, in particular to its evaluation". The concepts appear to be similar and related, but still different. This debate remains relevant. To this end, Govender (2015) asks whether democratic policing and community policing are a paradox, and then points out that whichever approach police agencies lean towards, for it to be successful, the elements of participation and equality of citizens are vital.

This topic is further explored at the Durban Local Criminal Record Component, particularly how democratic leadership may enhance organisational flexibility, diversity and digital skills in an era when the Fourth Industrial Revolution is altering global policing environments through automation, artificial intelligence and digital technology. The article explores new types of leadership that go beyond traditional hierarchies.

In such a changing policing landscape where police agencies are confronted by new technologies used by criminals and law-abiding citizens alike, modern policing strategies will need to encompass both virtual police responses and personal interaction. Not only are more and more people using social media platforms to express their opinions about safety and crime, but they are also reaching out to the police to report crime. They expect to access the police digitally to report crime and request assistance. This topic is explored in an article focusing on the impact and challenges of the use of social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana. The article argues that "law enforcement entered an information age where maintaining order is mediated by technology, intelligence and data ..." and that "... law enforcement agencies in several nations use social media in their daily operations". To this end, Joel and Tembo (2016:45-58), who conducted a study on e-policing in Zambia, recommend that accessibility to a police service should be developed around citizen choices to ensure social inclusion. This is a critical step, because not all communication will be from clients in the vicinity of, or in the service area of the police service point that receives the communication. Police agencies are thus challenged to find ways in which they can be accessible to remote clients at a level expected by them.

Challenges such as these require competent leaders, who not only grasp information technology and service delivery platforms and systems, but who are also in touch with the needs and expectations of the younger generations, such as Gen Z, born approximately between 1997 and 2012, and who focus on immediacy, social activism and mental health. These needs are quite different from face-to-face communication prioritised by Gen X (1965-1980), who are more digitally naïve and Baby Boomers (pre-1965) (Fuchs, Lorenz & Fuchs, 2024). Understanding such differences is critical if organisations wish to build teams with strong organisational cultures from mixed workforces, while retaining talent and recruiting new entrants (Fuchs, Lorenz & Fuchs, 2024).

In a South African context, police leaders need to be competent to be in touch with their citizenry, of whom 59% is younger than 36 years of age and 10% older than 60 (StatsSA, 2025). This means that the South African Police Service needs to align its service digitally to 59% of the population while maintaining personal contact with the remaining 41%. Two articles in this issue explore related topics and the questions posed to police leadership. These articles focus on the development of a leadership competency framework in South Africa and the impact of leadership profiling on the performance of Namibian police leaders.

Law enforcement agencies across the world need to learn from each other, specifically how social media influences trust in and attitudes towards policing. A police leadership that comprehends the challenges posed by the digital era can gear its workforce towards recognising different generational service needs, and compassion for the older generations might be the solution and thus worth exploring.

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LEGAL TALK

Case Law

Dr. (Maj-Gen.) Marga van Rooyen

Legal Services, South African Police Service

The importance of procedural aspects relating to the consideration of releasing a person on bail was the topic of two cases heard in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). Both cases dealt with instances where the offences justified the consideration of releasing the arrested persons on police bail.

SYCE AND ANOTHER V MINISTER OF POLICE [2024] ZASCA 30

In *Syce and Another v Minister of Police* [2024] ZASCA 30 (27 March 2024), the Supreme Court of Appeal had to consider whether the detention after an arrest was unlawful when the arrested person is entitled to be released on bail.

The brief facts of the case were as follows:

Police officials arrested the applicant in the driver's seat of his vehicle because of the smell of alcohol on the applicant's breath. A breathalyser test confirmed that his blood alcohol content was over the legal limit. The police officials arrested the applicant on suspicion of drunken driving. He was informed of his constitutional rights. The applicant was transported to the police station, processed and taken to a hospital where a blood sample was taken around 22:00. Thereafter, he was transported back to the station, where he was detained. The following morning, around 08:00, he was charged and around 12:00 released on police bail, with a warning to appear in court on a later date.

The applicant instituted a claim against the Minister of Police. He contended that his arrest and detention were unlawful. He argued that he asked the police official who had arrested him to allow him to walk from the scene to his girlfriend's residence, which was nearby. The arresting officer ignored the request. The applicant argued that the arresting officer therefore failed to exercise discretion whether to arrest, resulting in an unlawful arrest. The police officials denied the claim of the applicant. The arresting officer testified that she would be obliged to arrest a person who is over the legal limit for driving under the influence of alcohol.

The court explained that even if it were accepted that the applicant asked the police officials to be allowed to walk home, the applicant's request would amount to being let off the hook. The applicant neither admitted his wrongdoing nor accepted that he would be charged with an offence. He simply wanted to be let off the hook.

The court held that the breathalyser test confirmed the applicant was over the legal limit, and a police official cannot be criticised for refusing the perpetrator to walk away. The court further explained that the nature of the offence was that the applicant was suspected of driving a vehicle in contravention of the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996 (which prohibits the driving of a motor vehicle on a public road under the influence of alcohol or a drug having a narcotic effect). This required action to be taken within two hours from the time of commission of such an act, is to ensure that an accurate blood test or breathalyser test is performed. This limitation aims to protect the integrity and reliability of the evidence gathered from such tests. The National Road Traffic Act further imposes limitations on the freedom of a person suspected of having committed such an offence. The perpetrator must be detained to ensure that evidence is obtained to prove that the person committed the prohibited conduct and also to ensure the reliability of the test. As a result, the discretion of a police official in these circumstances must be seen in the light of the envisaged detention provided for in the legislation.

On the detention of the arrested person after his blood sample was obtained, the court explained that section 50 of the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977 (CPA) expects that a detained person must be informed of his or her right to bail to allow for the rights to be exercised even before his or her first appearance in court. In this case, bail could be granted by a police official. The court further explained that once the requirements for police bail are present, the police officials have a constitutional duty to determine, as soon as reasonably possible after the arrest, whether the arrested person wishes for bail to be considered. If so, the senior police official must urgently consider bail in consultation with the investigating police official. If the police officials fail to inform the arrested person of his or her constitutional right to apply for bail or to consider bail, the further detention of the arrested person would be unlawful. The same applies if there is an unreasonable delay in processing the arrested person during detention and while he or she is awaiting release on bail. This will be determined by the circumstances of the case.

The applicant argued that his continued detention was unlawful. This was no longer required after he had provided his personal details and a blood sample. Despite a blood sample having been taken around 22:00, he was only released from detention around

12:00 the following day. The applicant contended that the arresting official informed him that he would only be released after four hours and that he had not been informed of his right to apply for bail.

The police officials did not present any evidence to refute the applicant's claim that he had not been informed of the right to apply for bail. The applicant was seen by the investigating officer around 08:00, yet he was only released on police bail around 12:00. The court explained that if the release of the applicant could not reasonably have happened earlier than 12:00, the police officials should have explained the reason, especially in view of their failure to inform him of his right to apply for bail. There was no evidence to justify the prolonged detention of the applicant after his blood sample had been taken.

The court awarded compensation in the amount of R40 000 to the applicant because of his unlawful detention from his return after his blood sample until his actual release some 13 hours later.

NTONI JACOB HLAPE V THE MINISTER OF POLICE [2024] ZASCA 68

In *Ntoni Jacob Hlope v the Minister of Police 2024 (2) SACR (148) (SCA)*, three constables of the South African Police Service were conducting patrol duties in a marked police vehicle. A member of the public attracted their attention and informed them that there were people smoking dagga at a particular address (at the time of the incident, the smoking of dagga in private was still an offence). The police officials responded to the information and found three people in the house, smoking. The police officials introduced themselves and requested permission to enter the shack. Permission was granted. A police official searched one of the people (the appellant) and found dagga in his trousers. The police official enquired from the appellant what he was doing with dagga in his possession. The appellant did not respond. The police official informed the appellant of his constitutional rights and arrested him.

The appellant was processed at the police station after the dagga was weighed. The police official contended that he had informed the appellant that he may apply for bail at court. The appellant denied this. Another police official corroborated the version of the arresting official. The docket was handed to the investigating officer, who conducted a preliminary investigation to compile a profile of the appellant. That included a determination of any criminal record, outstanding cases or warrants that may be linked to the appellant. This is done to prepare for the first appearance of an arrested person in court. However, the appellant failed to provide his name or identity number to the investigating officer and only provided his date of birth. As a result, no profile could be compiled on the appellant.

A warning statement was obtained from the appellant in the pro forma document (SAPS 3M(m)), which also set out all the rights of a person, including the right to be released from custody. The appellant was detained for three days, but the case was withdrawn when he appeared in court on a charge of unlawful possession of dagga.

The appellant argued that the arrest was unlawful because the arresting officer did not exercise his discretion properly. Furthermore, he contended that his detention was unlawful, since he was not informed of the right to be released on bail and should have been released on bail.

The court explained that section 40 of the CPA empowers a police official to arrest a person without a warrant if the person is reasonably suspected of committing or having committed an offence under any law governing the making, supply or possession of a dependence-producing drug. In this instance, the possession of dagga was (at the time) criminalised in terms of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992.

The court highlighted the jurisdictional requirements in terms of section 40(1) of the CPA for such an arrest:

- The arresting official must be a peace officer.
The arresting officer was a police official, and every police official, irrespective of his or her rank, is a peace officer.
- The peace officer must have entertained a suspicion.
- The suspicion was that the arrestee had committed a Schedule 1 offence and that the suspicion rested on reasonable grounds.
In this case, the arresting officer had a suspicion after a member of the public had provided information about the commission of a crime at a certain address.
- The suspicion must be based on reasonable grounds.
In this case, the police officials concluded that whoever was smoking dagga in that shack was in possession of dagga. The suspicion was therefore based on reasonable grounds.

The court further pointed out three principles in the exercise of a discretion when an arrest is executed:

- When the required jurisdictional facts flowing from section 40(1) of the CPA are present, a discretion arises as to whether or not to arrest.
- Where a party alleges the failure to exercise a discretion to arrest, that party must prove that allegation. In this case, the appellant had to prove the allegation.
- The discretion must be exercised in good faith and in a rational manner. This required that the arresting officer must be able to explain and justify the exercise of his discretion on the particular facts of the case.

The court held that the appellant failed to provide any evidence that the arresting officer did not exercise his discretion to arrest rationally. In fact, the appellant confirmed that he had been in possession of dagga. He also did not dispute the testimony of the arresting officer that he (the appellant) remained silent when the officer asked why he was in possession of dagga. By remaining silent, the arresting officer had no facts to exercise discretion or consider factors whether another means, other than an arrest, should have secured the presence of the appellant in court. The court held that no evidence was presented that the arresting officer acted irrationally or arbitrarily by arresting the appellant.

The appellant also claimed that his detention after the arrest was unlawful, since the arresting officer did not inform him of his right to be released on bail and failed to proactively release him on bail.

This resulted in him being detained in circumstances that violated his dignity and health.

The court explained that section 59 of the CPA provides for an accused to be released on "police bail". This must be read in conjunction with section 39, which provides that an arrested person must be detained in custody until he or she is lawfully discharged or released from custody.

The arresting officer and the investigating officer denied not informing the accused of his right to be released on bail. The arresting officer, who was a constable at the time of the arrest, explained that he did not have the authority to grant police bail to the appellant. The arresting officer also presented the notice of constitutional rights (SAPS 14A), which was handed to the arresting person as proof that the appellant was informed of his right to be released on bail.

During cross-examination, the arresting officer was questioned why he did not recommend to senior officers, who were authorised to release the appellant on bail, to grant bail to the appellant. The arresting officer responded that the appellant only provided his date of birth. If the appellant had cooperated by providing his name and identity number, a profile of the appellant could at least have been compiled.

The court inferred that the appellant's refusal to cooperate with the arresting officer resulted in the arresting officer not recommending his release on bail. The court ruled that the continuous refusal of the appellant to respond to the police and his failure to provide basic facts (such as his name and identity number) would allow the officers to exercise a discretion not to release him on bail. The court concluded that the detention of the appellant was lawful and the claim of the appellant was accordingly dismissed.

LEGAL TALK

Legislative Developments

Dr. (Maj-Gen.) Marga van Rooyen

Legal Services, South African Police Service

THE CANNABIS FOR PRIVATE PURPOSES ACT 7 OF 2024

In 2018, the Constitutional Court delivered judgment in the matter of *Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development v Prince; National Director of Public Prosecutions v Rubin; National Director of Public Prosecutions v Acton and Others 2018 (6) SA 393 (CC)* ("the Prince judgment"). The judgment was a watershed moment for the possession of cannabis for private use by an adult person.

The court declared certain provisions of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 and the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act 101 of 1965 inconsistent with the right to privacy, as guaranteed in section 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The essence of the judgment was that the right to privacy was infringed unreasonably by legislation that criminalised the use and possession in private or cultivation of cannabis in a private place by an adult for his or her own personal consumption, in private.

While various public groups and cannabis users welcomed the judgment, concerns were raised on the practical implications of the judgment, especially relating to the policing implications and future enforcement of cannabis-related offences. One of the most obvious questions left unanswered by the judgment was what amount would be considered as possession for personal consumption, and where the line would be drawn between private consumption and dealing. Instead of making any ruling in this regard, the court left it to the legislature to determine the amount of cannabis that an adult person is allowed to possess lawfully for private use.

Legislation was drafted and deliberated in Parliament to give effect to the implications of the judgment. This resulted in the Cannabis for Private Purposes Act 7 of 2024 ("the Act"), which was assented to by the President and published in the *Government Gazette* on 3 June 2024. The Act will only come into operation on a date to be determined by the President by proclamation.

The Act recognises the right to privacy of an adult person to use or possess cannabis. While the Act is a positive step to address the management of cannabis for private use, there are still outstanding matters in the Act that must be clarified.

The term "dagga" has traditionally been used in South African law. However, there is no reference to dagga in the Act. Section 1 of the Act defines "cannabis" as "the flowering or fruiting tops of a cannabis plant and includes products made therefrom, but excludes any seed,

seedling, the stalk, leaves and branches without any fruit or flower, and the roots of a cannabis plant, including products made therefrom".

Other pertinent terms are also defined in the Act. "Cultivate" includes actions such as "plant, nurture, tend, grow or harvest a cannabis plant". Various actions are referred to in the definition of "deal in", including to provide or receive for consideration, sell, buy, offer for sale, offer to purchase, import, advertise for sale, export, cultivate for purposes of dealing, as well as any action to facilitate the selling of cannabis.

The essence of the *Prince* judgment is that personal consumption of cannabis in private by an adult no longer constitutes an offence. To give effect to the judgment, there must be clarity on what is considered "private", especially in the context of a place and purpose. The Act defines "private purpose" as for "exclusive use, possession and cultivation of cannabis by an adult person with the intention to keep, store, transport or be in control of cannabis, in a manner that conceals it from public view". A "private place" includes any place or portion of a building, house, room, shed, hut, tent, mobile home, caravan, boat or land to which the public does not have access.

"Use of cannabis" refers to the consumption of cannabis and includes the self-administering thereof, such as eating, drinking or smoking of cannabis. "Smoke" means to inhale or exhale the smoke produced by ignited cannabis or any device or object that contains ignited cannabis or vapour or aerosol of cannabis produced by a vaping device or controlling of a vaping device producing cannabis vapour or aerosol.

Section 2 of the Act provides that an adult person may use or possess cannabis and may also, without the exchange of consideration per occasion, provide to, or obtain cannabis from another adult person in a private place for a private purpose.

There are exceptions to the use of cannabis by an adult person in a private place. Where a child or non-consenting adult is present, an adult person may not use cannabis, even if it is in a private place and for a private purpose. Such use may also not take place within a reasonable distance from a window, ventilation inlet of, doorway to, or entrance into, another place or where it forms part of any public place (a place to which the public has a right of access) where persons congregate within close proximity of each other and where the smoke is likely to cause a disturbance or nuisance to anybody. However, there is no

prohibition against the possession of cannabis (for private use) in a public place.

A distinction is made on the legal position in respect of adults, on the one hand, and children, on the other hand. Provision is made for particular procedures where a child is found to use, possess or deal in cannabis. The approach corresponds with the judgment of the Constitutional Court in *Centre for Child Law v Director of Public Prosecutions, Johannesburg and Others 2022 (2) SACR 629 (CC)*. In this case, the court held that it is not in the best interests of the child to continue to criminalise the use and possession of cannabis by a child after the *Prince* judgment (which only dealt with the possession and use of cannabis by an adult person). The court pointed out that children found in possession of cannabis could not be punished more severely than adults in the same circumstances.

The court accordingly held that rather than criminalising the conduct of a child, the structures provided for in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 should be utilised to prevent the further use and possession of cannabis by a child. Children found to use or possess cannabis need a social response which recognises the inherent vulnerability of the child and focuses on rehabilitation and support of the child. The Act gives effect to the judgment and highlights the importance of social services to support children who use cannabis. This is supported by the provision that a child suspected of having contravened any legal provision on the use or possession of cannabis should not be dealt with in the criminal justice system (as provided for in the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008). Instead, such a child must be dealt with in accordance with the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the Prevention of and Treatment from Substance Abuse Act 70 of 2008. These statutes aim to address the child as a victim and ensure that social services are provided to the child. The Child Justice Act will only regulate instances where a child is suspected of dealing in cannabis, since this remains an offence in terms of the Act.

The protection of children in support of the principle of the best interests of a child is further highlighted by various offences created in terms of the Act. These include the following:

- An adult person permitting a child to use or possess cannabis, or supplying a child with cannabis or a product containing cannabis. (The offence is limited, as the Act provides that cannabis may be administered to a child where it has been prescribed by a medical practitioner because the child requires this on medical grounds.)
- Possession of cannabis by an adult person, at any place, who fails to store such cannabis in a secure space that is inaccessible to a child.
- Engaging a child to deal in cannabis.
- Using cannabis in a private place in the immediate presence of a child or a non-consenting adult person.

In addition, the Act creates other offences to regulate the possession and use of cannabis (irrespective of whether the perpetrator is a child or an adult person). These include -

- possession of cannabis, either in a private or public place, where the amount exceeds the maximum amount prescribed for private purposes;
- cultivating of cannabis plants which exceed the maximum number prescribed for private purposes;

- dealing in cannabis;
- transporting of cannabis in an amount which exceeds the maximum amount, as prescribed for private purposes;
- use of cannabis in a vehicle on a public road; and
- use of cannabis in a public place.

The offences are at the core of the legislation and will ultimately determine the effectiveness of the enforcement of the legislation. As explained, the determination of an amount as lawful for use or possession was not concluded by the court in the *Prince* judgment or in the Act itself. The maximum amount allowed for private purposes and the maximum amount of cannabis that may be transported must be determined by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development in Regulations. It is now left to the Minister of Justice to determine the amounts in Regulations.

These amounts will have to be carefully considered as they are likely to be challenged in court. For example, some groups in support of the freedom to use cannabis in private may argue that the amount is too low and may challenge it in court, while other groups who are opposed to the private use of cannabis may challenge it on the basis that the amount is too high. The Minister of Justice will therefore have to ensure that any amount prescribed can withstand judicial scrutiny and must furthermore consider the practical aspects relating to the policing of such amounts. To make a rational and informed decision on the amounts, it will be important to consider how other countries, where the private use of cannabis has also been legalised, address the situation and what quantity is allowed for private use and consumption in those countries.

The Minister of Justice may also determine Regulations on the conditions, restrictions, prohibitions, obligations, requirements or standards regarding the transportation of cannabis, by the person transporting cannabis, as well as in respect of the passenger in such transport. The risk of exposure and the need for protecting other passengers, including children, during such transportation will need to be carefully considered. The Act protects the interests of children where an adult person uses cannabis in a private place for a private purpose where a child or non-consenting adult person is present.

The Regulations are critical for the implementation and enforcement of the Act. The date of promulgation of the Act will depend on the finalisation of the Regulations. Sufficient time will also be needed to enable role-players, including the police, to implement proper training and effective awareness campaigns, even for the public, on the legislation.

Section 5 of the Act provides for the expungement of criminal records of persons convicted of possession or use of cannabis or dealing in cannabis based on a presumption. This presumption previously applied and provided that if a person was found in possession of a certain amount of dagga, he or she was presumed to be dealing in dagga. These convictions, as well as convictions relating to the use or possession of the dependence-producing drug or plant of cannabis (dagga), will automatically be expunged once the Act comes into operation. This means a person who previously had a criminal record because of such a conviction will no longer have a record, as if he or she had not been convicted of an offence.

ARTICLE

Leadership Competency Framework for Top Management in the South African Police Service

Dr Thabo Elizabeth Mphuthi

e-mail: thabosaps@gmail.com

Prof Flip Schutte

Head of Institute of PG Studies and Research

STADIO Institution of Higher Education

e-mail: flips@stadio.ac.za

ABSTRACT

There is an increase in the number of experienced, competent people in leadership exiting organisations due to natural and unnatural attrition. This attrition impacts on leadership competency sustainability and is also prevalent in similar leadership competency lost in the South African Police Service (SAPS). This article aims to identify and explore the leadership competencies required by the SAPS to develop a leadership competency framework to assist and support the SAPS's vision and set the requirements for the appointment of top management.

The study employed a qualitative approach aimed at exploring the phenomenon in-depth and thematically interpreting the leadership competency informed by the participants' views. The study purposefully sampled the participants in middle management in the ranks of lieutenant-colonel and colonel and Human Resource (HR) practitioners through a case study design. The study findings largely confirmed that the existing literature aligned well with established theories and models, and contributed to the development of a leadership competency framework for SAPS.

KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

Leadership, competency, leadership competencies, leadership development, succession planning

INTRODUCTION

Literature on leadership abounds with the institutionalised and social status of many organisations. Leadership competency theories have been developed and adjusted, incorporating different organisations and departments to address a specific organisation's competencies. The relevance rests on the environmental context in which it is required. The set-out case study for police leadership competency was a fundamental focus of this research as one of the public service-oriented organisations (Van Dyk, Siedlecki & Fitzpatrick, 2016). This study aimed to position the leadership competencies perspective within the current philosophy, the understanding of police leadership and the broader policing environment.

The regular changes in senior leadership positions in many organisations in South Africa point to the uncertainty about the organisations' future; therefore, workforce competency has become a

priority for many organisations, specifically at the leadership level (Booker, Turbutt & Fof, 2016). The retirement of experienced personnel leads to a severe loss of institutional memory and skills, which poses a challenge in matching the lost skills from the workforce. As such, many organisations are expected to provide services to communities directed through the capability and leadership competency (Park, Jeong, Jang, Yoon & Lim, 2018), as is the case with the SAPS.

The age and years of experience at which the workforce retires result in many departments struggling to implement workforce replacement with matching expertise, experience and leadership competencies as that which was lost (Ben-Hur, Jaworski & Gray, 2015). This aspect is currently applicable to the challenges experienced by the SAPS.

According to Acree-Herman (2016), in a well-managed organisation, the replacement of leaders who resign, retire or are dismissed is directed by its leadership succession plan to withstand the most foreseen challenges. These challenges necessitate the identification of competent leaders for appointments or potentially capable leaders for empowerment and development to inaugurate a smooth transition and retain stability (Marginson, 2019). The identification of leadership skills required to develop a competency framework for the effectiveness of top managers in SAPS was aimed at developing a framework of skills needed for the effective application of leadership by top managers in SAPS. This suggested leadership competency framework aims to make a systematic contribution to operations and transition to executive-level positions in many organisations, and is also applicable to the SAPS.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The looming leadership and competency losses at senior and middle management due to natural and forced attrition posed a competency replacement challenge in matching the organisational competency for operational objectives in the SAPS Ekurhuleni District.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study's main objective was to develop a competency framework with leadership competencies required for the effectiveness of top managers in SAPS.

This objective was guided by the research questions posed in the study:

- What leadership competency skills are required for a competency framework to ensure the effectiveness of top managers in SAPS?
- What academic qualifications should future leaders have for top-level appointments?
- What knowledge and skills do future leaders require?
- What leadership competencies do current managers have?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various sources on competency and leadership concepts were consulted to determine their relevance to the current study. The existing body of empirical research is quite limited in the field of practical police leadership competencies. There are various leadership and competency models in the literature with a limited focus on the policing environment. However, due to multiple definitions of leadership and competency conceptions, Badura, Galvin and Lee (2022) clarify how leadership manifests and affirms the importance of open systems theories as the factor shaping leadership competency. Because of the multiplicity of definitions and conceptions, the definition of leadership depends on a specific organisational objective and vision (Miles & Scott, 2019). Miles and Scott (2019) state that all facets of leadership require meticulous analysis and the appropriate application of the models, styles and types for effective leadership.

In the different theories which the leaders expanded to effective leadership, it was concluded that leaders possess multiple abilities (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015). Hence, this study created a literature-search guide for leadership competency by reviewing schools of leadership thought to direct the study.

The Systematic Literature Review was employed in a global scholarly research context on leadership theories. The various theories were reviewed and selected based on the most cited theories (Singh & Walia, 2020), namely:

- **The Great Man theory:** Historically, the theory positioned men as having authority and influence over others (Johnson & Lee, 2023).
- **Trait theory:** The leadership trait theory is viewed as personal characteristics or leadership competencies, encompassing appearance, intelligence and values (Javagali, Newman & Li, 2024).
- **Behaviour theory:** The theory is multifocal and not limited to elements that influence behaviour skills and values. Henceforward, the views reflect that the best leader is identified based on behaviour (Alkhasawneh, 2018).
- **Situational leadership:** This theory is known as the expectancy and contingency theory due to different situations experienced, requiring different approaches and management skills (Northouse, 2016).
- **Contingency theory:** The theory is associated with the situational leadership style and an organisation's operational need (Northouse, 2016).
- **Transactional theory:** This theory is described as leader-follower associations grounded upon agreements between followers and leaders (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018).
- **Transformational theory:** This is the course of change type of leadership that focuses on beliefs, values and attitudes that enlighten leaders' behaviour and the capacity to lead change (Wadji, 2017).

According to Steward (2017), leadership and competency frameworks have been a field of interest and exploration over the years. Many researchers argue for a competency theory to echo and draw from the more prominent competence theories studied. However, there is no clear motive to prioritise competency beyond similar concepts, such as capabilities. Therefore, various competency concepts are now considered to address several misconceptions and confusion concerning the nature of leadership responding to earlier research attempts in framing a monolithic competence perspective. The most regularly cited competency models and concepts are reconsidered for this study.

Overview of leadership competency frameworks: This covers analytic competencies, personal competencies, communication competencies, positional competencies and organisational competencies (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2019).

The following is the selection of competency models, theories and frameworks covered in the literature review.

- **Main competency theories:** Analytic competencies; personal competencies; communication competencies; positional competencies and organisational competencies.
- **The common concept of competency theories:** knowledge, skills, ability, behaviour, attitude and education/qualifications.
- **Common competency capabilities:** sensemaking, relating, inventing and visioning.

Therefore, leadership became essential to an organisation's ability to function effectively in challenging contexts. For that reason, an extensive literature review is undertaken through search engines that include different sources focusing on leadership competency for senior management.

Literature review strategy

Numerous sources on leadership and competency concepts were consulted to determine their relevance to the current study. The study followed the Preferred Reporting Item for Systematic

Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) approach to understand the research problem, answer the research questions and achieve the study's objectives (Dawes & Topp, 2019). The systematic review was used to identify any published and unpublished literature linked to the research topic. To review the literature available and qualify the literature studied, data extraction and synthesis were used. Some sources were discarded due to the irrelevancy of the leadership competency construct, the language used and the specified publication period (Clark, 2016). See Table 1 for the number of items investigated for possible use.

Table 1: Number of journal articles, theses/dissertations, books & e-books consulted				
Title	1960-1999	2000-2009	2010-2014	2015-2023
Peer-reviewed articles	12-1=11	17-3=14	18	29
Not peer-reviewed articles	2-2=0	9-9=0	11	12
Theses/Dissertations	0	1	2	7
e-Books	0	0	2	3
Books	0	2	4	4
Total	11	36	47	69

RELATED STUDIES

Leadership

There is a vast amount of available literature on leadership, yet not all sources are academic or realistic. However, reading these was critical to cultivating a sophisticated, complete understanding of concepts, styles and cultures on theories that constitute leadership (Banks, Roxanne, Ross, Williams & Harrington, 2018). According to the literature, leadership has become a popular concept for many organisations, but its definition is still unclear, complex, multifaceted and interactive based on role, responsibilities, and the position occupied (Pfeiffer, 2015). The complexity, which requires a substantial mindset change to the management competency of the police organisations (Bayley, 2016), is emphasised. To underscore this dynamism, Park et al. (2018) maintain that leadership is the planning and directing of activities solely by competent leaders who display skills, knowledge and decision-making traits. The meaning of leadership in policing is overshadowed by the emphasis on effectiveness measured through competency and capability (Van Dyk et al., 2016). However, it is embedded in the definition due to its relevance to SAPS leadership in operational command and control structures.

Competency

There are various challenges for police leadership competency (Backman & Hansen Löfstrand, 2021). Police competencies revolve around situational operations, which include numerous activities performed, the various ways to perform those activities and the number of theories to select for the situation addressed (Burcher & Whelan, 2019). In a study conducted by Waxman and Delucas (2014), there is no firm amplification of competence. However, it is correlated to performance and skill. Because of this correlation, performance and skills are embedded in the understanding of competence (Aoun, 2017). Although some scholars see competency as humans' inherent and acquired capacity to interact effectively with their environment, globally, competencies are viewed to encompass personality traits, knowledge, skills and behaviours (Amanchunkwu et al., 2015).

Hence, much of the scholar-practitioner literature identifies competencies without assessing the attributing factors and regards competency as one of those concepts that are hard to define. Therefore, the need arises to ensure that police leaders have well-defined competencies that harmonise with the changing business environment.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

A theory is viewed as a resourceful and methodical means of looking at the world or its features to describe, explain or predict the world. This study provides an overview of the theories fundamental to leadership and competency compared to many organisations' current leadership competencies, including the SAPS. The leadership and competency theories are considered to be the illuminating frameworks or models. Hence, the underpinning theories are reviewed.

Leadership competencies: The overview of these theories embraces common concepts such as organisational competency, behavioural competency, management competency, organisational capabilities, interpersonal intelligence, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence.

The leadership competency theory outlines leadership competency as a key organisational requirement. Furthermore, it acknowledges that competency models have their deficiencies. Henceforth, the human capital theory underpins leadership and competency theories from various frameworks (Stoller, Barker & Fitzsimons, 2013).

Human capital theory: It is viewed to be multidimensional due to the many models it embraces (Schultz, 1961). In support, Zwei and Chunbing (2020) emphasise that human capital is a multifaceted theory with a broad range of behavioural and educational expectations. The study focuses on developing a competency framework of leadership as part of human capital by applying the existing relevant theories (Zwei & Chunbing, 2020). As such, the study adopted Schultz's (1961) human capital theory for its multifaceted theories.

Scholars reflected on the distinct intertwining abilities and their complement to competencies, which necessitate considering capabilities as the contributing factor to competency. As a result, the capabilities are considered and emerge from the concepts of various leadership theories (Ancona, 2005). Leadership roles align with organisational structure, and due to their significance in leadership competencies, this study explores relevant leadership competencies needed for the SAPS. Henceforth, human beings' abilities, expertise and knowledge are considered the primary and substantial assets of every organisation (Aoun, 2017). In that sense, human capital is highly viewed as influencing various theories (Kupe, 2019). According to Boon, Eckardt, Lepak and Boselie (2018) and Ntshoe and Selesho (2014), such theories comprise the perceptible capabilities, educational qualifications, including knowledge and skills of expertise. Even though many theorists differ on what competencies are, the fundamental theme is that all definitions appear to build on skills mastered, capabilities and perceptive intelligence as encompassed in human capital (Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Korzynski, Kozminski, Baczynska & Haenlein, 2021). As such, each organisation requires specific skills and competencies applicable to the background of very imprecise responsibilities. Ruben, De Lisi and Gogliotti (2017), therefore, list the following five major competencies: analytic competencies; personal competencies; communication competencies; positional competencies; and organisational competencies.

Citing the five major competencies listed by Ruben et al. (2017), knowledge, skills, ability and behaviour are emphasised to close the knowing-doing gap (Pfeiffer, 2015). Toliver (2017) reflects the various competencies as common concepts of knowledge, skills and capability in competitive environments. Affirmed by Stoller et al. (2013), the knowledge, skill, attitude, ability and educational attainment are perceived as enabling competencies to effective competent leadership.

THEORETICAL COMPETENCY CONCEPTS

Knowledgeable in the organisational strategy, mission and vision

Visioning provides a starting point for organisational readiness in communicating and implementing programmes and strategies for future goals (Venus, Johnson, Zhang, Wang & Lanaj, 2019). This refers to leadership with knowledge of the organisational objectives to persuade others towards achieving the corporate vision (Marginson, 2019). Therefore, the instances of strategic planning in the police are used to bridge the implementation gap against organisational capacity and ability to comply (Burcher & Whelan, 2019).

According to Burcher and Whelan (2019), the policing environment requires leadership demonstrating the ability and skill to drive and manage organisational change and exhibit clear organisational vision, as applicable to SAPS.

Skills

Several skills exemplify competency and capability factors that contribute to the structure of effective leadership and management, drawing on the ability to apply them (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2019). Many researchers have outlined skills differently.

Ellah (2016) emphasises the knowledge of planning, organising, leading and controlling. Overall, skill is essential for successfully managing and leading the organisation (Valyavskiy, Luckyanenko & Uchevatkina, 2018). So, due to several executives between the ages of 56 and 60 already holding the highest rank and having assumed roles that require different skills for proficiency, clear vision and leadership with the ability to manage the change is considered a critical in-demand competency (Braley, 2021).

Educational

Education is a significant concept of competency that enhances knowledge, skill and ability (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). From an educational perspective, additional knowledge and skills required over the career path are gained by following a long-term plan. These are educational standards required to qualify for recognition and transition to top management levels by lower-level employees (Bryant, Cockcroft, Tong & Wood, 2014). Philosophically, experience and education have the strongest association with competency (Warshawsky & Cramer, 2019). However, gaps in the literature on competency-based education reflect that no study has been conducted incorporating leadership competency into formal education (Kantanen, Kaunonen, Helminen & Suominen, 2015). As a result, Warshawsky and Cramer (2019) emphasise enforcing the objective educational concept addressing the challenges of appointing underqualified and underperforming managers. Thus, this positioned competency-based education as a significant concept for consideration (Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

Ability

Ability is related to motive and personality constructs that influence the frequency and intrinsic affective value of executing specific behaviours and cognitive-affective processes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). These are critical thinking leaders who can manage and lead organisations through practical managerial skills. According to Brown and Williams (2023), these leaders encourage and inspire their employees through an eye-catching vision. As such, these executives' abilities are compared with age, rank, experience and education (Milana & Maldaon, 2015). As a result, these leadership abilities enhance collaboration and cooperation among employees, guiding them towards achieving organisational goals (Barney & Pratt, 2021).

Attitude

Attitude refers to the respect and support provided to employees by management to ensure the achievement of the organisational goals stipulated in the vision (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). The attitude reference drawn to competencies is the "bundles of behaviour" required to deliver the desired outcome (Theron, 2014). However, Parker, Morgeson and Johns (2017) state that attitudinal behaviour originates from scanty knowledge, lack of skills, resulting in inhibiting competencies. According to Alkhasawneh (2018), a positive attitude influences skill and helps people cope easily with daily affairs and brings optimism. Thus, the attitude and behaviour of the police cannot be distinct (Alkhasawneh, 2018) due to description, which includes thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs and assumptions.

OTHER THEORIES

The literature reflected that competency applies to many scientific disciplines, theories and models with a collaborative definition perspective. This means that leadership competencies are leadership theories and not stand-alone theories. As such, leadership theories complement other theories and provide the lenses through which to view leadership competencies. In understanding leadership competencies, specific personalities and behaviours must be considered (Sopow, 2019).

In reflection, the leadership theory encircles four common behaviour theories, whereas in totality, it consists of several different theories cited by many researchers, some of which focus on the content perspective of what forms leadership. In contrast, others offer an engaged reflection on the visionary and strategist as a leader. The study is underpinned by a theoretical framework derived from the four key leadership capabilities framework (4 Cap) modelled by Ancona (2005).

Sensemaking

According to Weick et al. (2005), there is an order of operations in sensemaking where the concepts give meaning to perceptions, and perceptions give substance to concepts. In this study, sensemaking is defined as an ongoing process of constructing the meaning from the events using prior experience, knowledge or beliefs embedded in the social context in which people work and provide the understanding of people, issues or events (Ancona, 2005). It is a way of seeking and unifying orders that result in working towards the organisation's goals. These include the ability to outline matters that bring clarity and understanding to the vision and mission of the organisation with relevant, specific directives or frameworks to be enforced (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

Relating

Relating is building significant competency of trusting relationships among co-workers and across networks for the organisation's interest (Ancona, 2005). It is the development of key relationships within and across organisations. Organisations require leadership capable of relating to matters affecting and benefitting the organisation and exhibiting a sense of integrity and trustworthiness (Sarfraz, Qun, Shah & Fareed, 2019). Hence, the capabilities of effective communication, relationship management, conflict management and feedback are regarded as competencies (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Henceforth, effective communication is a crucial leadership competency as it fosters trust and positive change (Gallo, 2022).

Visioning

The vision allows the creation of an exciting, inspirational, future-focused environment (Ancona, 2005). Furthermore, visionary leaders exhibit the ability to craft a coherent future vision for the organisation. Likewise, SAPS's leadership is expected to understand the organisation's vision and mission for proper guidance to the workforce by linking competency and qualifications to performance for the senior post levels.

Inventing

Inventing is the creative approach of solving challenges by developing structures and processes required to fulfil an organisation's vision (Ancona, 2005). Furthermore, invention essentially becomes the process of investigating and testing the range of possible concepts until the right generic combination is identified for practical application in response to security flexibility that meets prospective challenges. The conditions under which SAPS operates require continual analysis and the inculcation of new operational ideas to manage, monitor and combat crime. Lastly, emotional intelligence towards followers is required to achieve organisational effectiveness.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study followed the qualitative method, describing the nature and quality of a subject matter with interpretation, attempting to bring understanding to an event through the application of a distinct philosophical interpretive paradigm category (Creswell, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Larkin, 2016). This philosophy is viewed as a subjective ontological assumption based on reality and underpinned the study (Khan, 2014).

The study was grounded in the case study design as an empirical inquiry to allow the unpacking of the primary focus on the complex circumstances and experiences (Pearson, Albon & Hubball, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2017).

Research population and sampling

This study applied non-probability purposive sampling targeting 19 police stations with a population of 2213, with 13 participants sampled. The managers ranked at the level of lieutenant-colonel and colonel and HR practitioners with a minimum of six months' experience in the middle management (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbin, 2015).

Data collection method

Data collection is a significant technique that embraces scientific methods for various data collection processes, including the interview approach (Yin, 2014). Interviews are a data collection process that requires comprehension and good listening capabilities guided through structured, unstructured or semi-structured format questions (Polit & Beck, 2017). The data were collected by taking notes and audio recordings during interviews with 13 participants.

ENSURING RESEARCH QUALITY AND RIGOUR

The qualitative data must adhere to the tenets of reliability and validity. Therefore, the researcher views the study's rigour as crucial. Confidence in data interpretation and pragmatic paradigm processes ensured the quality of the study's research methodology (Polit & Beck, 2017). Likewise, the researcher observed the interview guide, taking into consideration the principles of transparency and proper data recording.

Data recording

Transcripts, notes and audio voice recordings were used to capture the interviews, ensuring correct and accurate data capturing. Each participant's verbal responses, audio voice recording and the notes taken were provided with a unique code to protect their identity

and to conduct easy tracking, accuracy and data analysis (Cridland, Caputi, Jones & Magee, 2015).

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis using Atlas.ti software was employed on the data set gathered to identify, analyse and report recurrent patterns described hereafter (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The thematic analysis embraced familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining or naming themes and producing the report.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is one of the popular strategies applied across multiple paradigms and constitutes rigour (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Due to the qualitative, exploratory and interpretive methodological paradigm, the data collected and interpreted represented the participants' responses and had garnered both trustworthiness and credibility for the study. Therefore, the researcher followed the framework positioned by Polit and Beck (2017), emphasising how the epistemology of interpretation contributes towards credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability and authenticity.

FINDINGS

The findings from the current systematic empirical responses from participants, grounded in the collected data, are presented. Thereafter, the themes emerging from the data analysis were evaluated against the required organisational leadership competency framework. Then, the framework with specific competencies required and processes was developed and finalised as the ultimate contribution of the study.

For data collection, the participants were asked the following seven constant questions:

1. What leadership competency skills are required to develop a competency framework to ensure the effectiveness of top managers in SAPS?
2. What academic qualifications should future leaders have for top and executive appointments?
3. What knowledge and skills do future leaders require?
4. What attitudinal competency is the leader required to have?
5. What leadership competencies do current managers have?
6. What kind of competencies are required for the leadership competency framework?
7. What leadership competencies are important in the leadership competency framework for SAPS?

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

The researcher uploaded the information files of the 13 individual participants who were interviewed into Atlas.ti. The 13 transcribed semi-structured interviews were coded and the codes were categorised. The researcher thereafter designated the codes from the 13 uploaded files to highlight the data for coding. The 140 initial codes were highlighted. Consequently, the coding scheme was activated and the coding process proceeded to create distinctive codes of the phenomena. The analysis thus yielded 11 code

categories with similar meanings. The new code categories were then reviewed and grouped into themes and, after that, sub-themes. See Table 2, published on p17, for the themes, sub-themes and codes identified.

PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The data collected was purposively limited to participants at the rank level of six lieutenant-colonels and seven colonels as middle managers with the potential or opportunity to transition to top management, and two HR practitioners in the SAPS Ekurhuleni District.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The presentation of this study's findings comes from the themes identified below.

Theme 1: Intellectual and professional development: This theme encompasses educational qualifications and ongoing learning. It emphasises the importance of academic knowledge and continuous professional growth.

Academic qualifications play a crucial role in equipping leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate through these challenges. A strong academic background in fields such as criminology, criminal justice, public administration and leadership can provide leaders with a solid foundation to understand the complexities of law enforcement, analyse data and trends, and develop effective strategies to combat crime. Academic qualifications can also help leaders in the SAPS to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities and a global perspective.

Theme 2: Strategic leadership: This theme combines core leadership competencies, strategic thinking and management, and organisational impact and culture. It focuses on the high-level skills needed to guide the organisation effectively.

One of the key leadership competency skills required for developing a competency framework for top managers in the SAPS is strategic thinking. Top managers must be able to think strategically and anticipate future challenges and opportunities to develop effective strategies and plans to address them. Strategic thinking involves analysing complex situations, identifying trends and patterns, and making informed decisions that align with the organisation's goals and objectives.

Theme 3: Emotional intelligence and people management: This theme merges emotional and social intelligence with aspects of stakeholder engagement and communication. It highlights the interpersonal skills crucial for leading and managing people effectively within SAPS.

Top managers in the SAPS must possess strong interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are essential for building relationships, resolving conflicts and motivating employees. Top managers must be able to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and inspire trust and confidence in their leadership abilities.

Table 2: Thematic presentation		
Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Intellectual and Professional Development	Educational qualifications	■ Bachelor's degree ■ Master's degree ■ Doctoral degree ■ Ongoing professional development ■ Lifelong learning
Strategic Leadership	Core Leadership Competencies	■ Decision-making ■ Problem-solving ■ Team leadership ■ Motivational skills
	Strategic Thinking and Management	■ Long-term planning ■ Resource alignment ■ Organisational strategy development
	Organisational Impact and Culture	■ Vision setting ■ Culture shaping ■ Organisational development
Emotional Intelligence and People Management	Emotional and Social Intelligence	■ Self-awareness ■ Empathy ■ Social intelligence ■ Resilience
Ethical Governance and Accountability	Ethical Leadership and Governance	■ Integrity ■ Accountability ■ Transparency ■ Ethical decision-making
Operational Excellence	Technical and Operational Expertise	■ Law enforcement knowledge ■ Criminal Justice understanding ■ Operational procedures ■ Technology proficiency
	Analytical and Problem-solving skills	■ Critical thinking ■ Data analysis ■ Evidence-based decision-making
Adaptive Leadership and Innovation	Innovation and Change Management	■ Adaptability ■ Change management ■ Innovation promotion ■ Creative problem-solving
	Personal Attributes and Attitudes	■ Positive attitude ■ Openness to change ■ Continuous learning mindset ■ Stress management
Community-oriented Policing	Community Engagement	■ Cultural competence ■ Community relations ■ Public communication ■ Collaborative problem-solving
	Stakeholder Engagement and Communication	■ Effective communication ■ Relationship building ■ Conflict resolution ■ Team management

Theme 4: Operational excellence: This theme incorporates technical and operational expertise, analytical and problem-solving skills. It focuses on the practical skills and knowledge needed for effective law enforcement leadership within SAPS.

The top managers in the SAPS require a combination of leadership competency skills, including strategic thinking, communication, interpersonal skills, resilience, adaptability and ethical leadership. By cultivating these skills, top managers can effectively lead their teams, achieve organisational goals and promote a culture of excellence within the SAPS. It is imperative that future leaders in the SAPS possess high-level academic qualifications for top and executive appointments.

Theme 5: Adaptive leadership and innovation: This theme combines innovation and change management with elements of personal attributes and attitudes. It emphasises flexibility, creativity and the ability to lead SAPS in a changing environment.

Managers need to have skills, [as] much as they can because as managers we were expected to lead in front, for other employees to reach their full potential. They also have to know their 'whiskies and hotel' and to understand each other so that he or she has to be able to guide, motivate and make them grow fully by working closer to them. The manager will [be] able to understand each of them and give each of them primary motivation/support and encourage them to develop themselves.

Theme 6: Ethical governance and accountability: This theme is centred on ethical leadership and governance, emphasising integrity, transparency and responsible leadership for the SAPS.

Top managers in the SAPS must demonstrate ethical leadership. Ethical leadership involves acting with integrity, honesty and fairness, and holding oneself and others accountable for their actions. Top managers must set a positive example for their subordinates and uphold the values and principles of the organisation.

Theme 7: Community-oriented policing: This theme draws from stakeholder engagement and communication, focusing specifically on the skills needed to effectively engage with and serve the community.

Top managers in the SAPS must be able to communicate effectively with their subordinates, peers and superiors in order to convey information, provide feedback and build relationships. Effective communication involves listening actively, speaking clearly and concisely, and using a variety of communication channels to reach different audiences.

These themes provide a higher-level structure for organising the competencies, offering a more holistic view of what constitutes effective leadership in SAPS. They serve as the pillars of the leadership competency framework, with specific competencies nested within each theme.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The data analysis reflected some contradictions, similarities, differences and gaps in the participants' responses to interview questions. Some participants, in a similar way, alluded to emotional intelligence, ethical leadership and adaptability as crucial leadership competencies. Most participants emphasised the importance of effective communication skills for leaders. All participants highlighted strategic thinking as a key competency. The analysed data reveal a range of perspectives on the lack of police-specific leadership competencies that are more important than academic qualifications versus practical experience. Jackson and Wilton (2016) emphasise that understanding, mindsets and abilities are significant competencies for organisational survival, providing a nuanced view of this issue in SAPS, namely the disconnect between academic qualifications and practical leadership skills. The data confirms the critical importance of various competencies required for leadership. Equally, a limited focus was placed on change management in police leadership, although the analysed data highlights the importance of change management skills in SAPS leadership.

ALIGNMENT WITH LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORIES, MODELS AND FRAMEWORK

The participants' responses were aligned with the study's theories, frameworks and models. The core knowledge domain aligns with literature emphasising the importance of organisational and contextual understanding (Marginson, 2019), while the correlation of various skill domains (strategic, operational and people leadership) aligns with literature emphasising multifaceted skill requirements (Braley, 2021). Where ability is deemed to be of greater significance than technical expertise or human skills, organisational effectiveness relies upon the capacity of the leaders for conceptual thinking (Boon et al., 2018). Thus, the framework incorporates critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, aligning itself with literature on leadership abilities (Boon et al., 2018). The personal attributes domain reflected in literature on the importance of leadership attitudes and behaviours (Theron, 2014; Marginson, 2019). Lastly, the professional development domain aligns with literature emphasising continuous learning and education (Bryant et al., 2014; Jackson & Wilton, 2016).

How were the research questions answered?

RQ 1: What leadership competency skills are required to develop a competency framework for the effectiveness of top managers in SAPS?

Answers from the analysed data

The data provides a comprehensive set of leadership competencies through several code categories:

- Leadership fundamentals, SAPS-specific leadership requirements, future leadership imperatives and critical skill sets.

These categories collectively outline a range of competencies, including:

- Communication skills, decision-making, strategic thinking, ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, change management, crisis management and cultural competence.

Extent: High: The analysed data offer a detailed and multifaceted view of leadership competencies required by SAPS top managers.

It covers general leadership skills and SAPS-specific requirements, providing a solid foundation for a competency framework.

RQ 2: What academic qualifications should future leaders possess for top appointments?

Answers from the analysed data

This is primarily addressed through the "educational qualifications" code category. The data suggests:

- A bachelor's degree is a minimum requirement but postgraduate qualifications (Masters, MBA or Doctoral) are preferred for top positions. Relevant fields of study include criminology, public administration and business management.

Extent: Moderate to high

While the data provides clear insights into the types of qualifications needed, more specificity regarding the exact degree requirements for different leadership levels could enhance the definiteness of this construct.

RQ 3: What knowledge and skills does the leadership require for future leaders?

Answers from the analysed data

This is addressed through several code categories: core knowledge areas, critical skill sets and future leadership imperatives.

Key knowledge areas identified include the following: organisational vision, mission and objectives; law enforcement practices; socio-political contexts; and governance and ethics.

Key skills identified include strategic thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy (especially the construct of artificial intelligence, hacking practices, cybercrime and cloning), cultural competence and adaptability.

Extent: High: The analysed data comprehensively summarises the knowledge areas and skill sets required for future leaders, considering both general leadership and SAPS-specific requirements.

RQ 4: What attitudinal competency is the leader required to possess?

Answers from the analysed data

This is primarily addressed through the following code categories: emotional and social competencies, ethical leadership attributes and an adaptive mindset.

Key attitudinal competencies identified include the following: emotional intelligence, integrity, resilience, openness to change, empathy and accountability.

Extent: High: The data provides a nuanced view of the attitudinal competencies required, covering a wide range of personal qualities crucial for effective leadership in SAPS.

RQ 5: What leadership competencies are currently possessed by managers?

Answers from the analysed data

This is primarily addressed through the "current leadership landscape" code category. Some of the competencies identified as currently possessed include social intelligence.

- Interpersonal skills, planning skills, accountability and technical proficiency (extending to computer modelling, coding and cybersecurity).

Extent: Moderate: While the data offers insights into current leadership competencies, this area is less developed. More detailed information about the strengths and weaknesses of current leaders, possibly through a comprehensive assessment or survey, could enhance this aspect.

In conclusion, the analysed data answered most of the research questions to a great extent, particularly those relating to future leadership competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudinal requirements. The question about current leadership competencies could benefit from further investigation. Although the data provided a solid foundation for understanding the competencies required for effective leadership in SAPS, it only partially addressed the specific problem of maintaining organisational competency in the face of imminent leadership attrition. The framework is more focused on ideal leadership competencies rather than the urgent need to manage a transition period and rapidly develop new leaders. To fully address the problem, additional research and strategies specifically targeting succession planning, knowledge transfer, retention and accelerated leadership development would be necessary.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

The proposed framework integrates key competencies identified in the literature review and data analysis, tailored to the specific context of the SAPS. It addresses the multifaceted nature of police leadership, encompassing strategic, operational and interpersonal competencies required for effectiveness in top management positions. The proposed framework is presented in Table 3, in which the similarities of participants' responses can clearly be seen.

Table 3: Proposed framework	
Key Competencies	
Core Knowledge (P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 11)	Organisational Vision, Mission and Objectives
	Law Enforcement Practices and Policies
	Criminology and Criminal Justice
	Socio-political Context of Policing in South Africa
Strategic Leadership Skills (P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13)	Strategic Thinking and Planning
	Decision-making
	Change Management
	Crisis Management
	Innovation and Creativity

(Continued on p20)

Table 3: Proposed framework (continued)

Key Competencies	
Operational Management Skills (P 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 12)	Resource Management (Human, Financial, Technological)
	Performance Management
	Quality Control
	Process Improvement
	Technological Proficiency (cybersecurity & criminality)
People Leadership Skills (P 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)	Communication (Verbal and Written)
	Team Building
	Conflict Resolution
	Coaching and Mentoring
	Motivation and Inspiration
Personal Attributes and Emotional Intelligence (P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13)	Ethical Leadership and Integrity
	Emotional Intelligence
	Resilience and Adaptability
	Cultural Competence (including Artificial Intelligence and Coding in the 21 st century)
	Self-awareness
Community Engagement Competencies (P 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12)	Stakeholder Management
	Public Relations
	Community-oriented Policing Strategies
	Cross-cultural Communication
Analytical and Problem-solving Skills (P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)	Problem Identification and Resolution
	Critical Thinking
	Data Analysis and Interpretation
	Risk Assessment and Management
Professional Development (P 1, 2, 4, 6, 9 and 12)	Continuous Learning
	Legal and Regulatory Compliance
	Leadership Development of Subordinates
	Industry Knowledge and Best Practices

SAPS leadership competency framework (Researcher's development)

This conceptual framework guides leadership competency, development, succession planning and performance evaluation of top managers in SAPS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership competency is the individual competency that embraces other external qualities, such as organisational culture and environmental knowledge. It embraces core knowledge on organisational objectives, operational management, people skills and analytic risk assessment. Change in managerial competencies indicates the perceptive competencies that enable adjustment to turbulence from community engagement and external influences. Given the commonalities and change trends in transitions over basic leadership skills, it is advisable to transform the development programmes for future leaders towards improving their competencies.

CONCLUSION

This study has generated new knowledge on modelling leadership competency and supporting potential future leaders. The study significantly enables the SAPS to identify and prepare potential leaders with the competencies for the transition to the top management levels. The study data provided a solid foundation for understanding the competencies required for effective leadership in SAPS, although it only partially addresses the specific problem of matching and maintaining organisational competency in the

face of imminent leadership attrition. The framework is more focused on ideal leadership competencies, equivalent to the urgent need to manage a transition and rapidly build the capacity of new leaders. To fully address the problem, additional research and strategies specifically targeting succession planning, knowledge transfer, retention and accelerated leadership development would be necessary for future research.

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ARTICLE

The impact of leadership profiling on the performance of police leaders in the Namibian Police Force

Helen Charmaine Gaweses

e-mail: tirogaweses@gmail.com

Dr Shallaine Padayachee

STADIO Institute for Higher Education

e-mail: padayacheeshallaine@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores how the profiling of leadership positions affects the performance of police leaders in Namibia. The study involved 12 purposefully selected participants who offered valuable insights through structured interviews by adopting a qualitative research approach. Thematic analysis discovered eight core themes: alignment with the organisation's vision and mission, leadership performance and professional expertise, leadership effectiveness, improved organisational performance, enhanced staff well-being, compromised service delivery due to negative profiling, lack of resources and resistance to change.

The recommendations include implementing dynamic employee participation and performance-based initiatives in outlining and communicating the organisation's vision, mission and goals, adopting a sense of determination and transparency. The findings underline the need for a complex strategy to advance service delivery and organisational performance.

KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

Profiling, leadership styles, employee performance, organisational structure

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how the profiling of leadership positions influences the performance of police leaders in Namibia. Leadership profiling refers to identifying the qualifications, characteristics and capabilities required for sophisticated positions. In the police context, this process is dynamic for ensuring that the most skilled and experienced individuals are appointed to critical leadership roles. Organisational achievement and public trust must align leadership capabilities with organisational goals and public service expectations, although profiling can be complex (Bard, 2023). It influences job satisfaction, enthusiasm and self-esteem by determining organisational culture, decision-making and liability. Effective leaders must have a strong foundation in the police, demonstrate motivational capabilities, manage pressure, communicate a clear

vision and build strong relationships with communities and stakeholders.

The Namibian Police operate in terms of the Police Act 19 of 1998, which mandates their role in maintaining public safety. Therefore, enhancing leadership profiling is a critical step towards optimising service delivery and overall police performance. Despite extensive international research on police leadership and performance, there is limited empirical evidence from African policing contexts, particularly in Southern Africa, on how leadership profiling influences the performance of police leaders, a gap this study seeks to address within the Namibian Police Force.

BACKGROUND

In modern Namibia, a police official is regarded as a fairly sensitive person who should act from an unbiased perspective. The Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL) is the eyes of the government concerning the protection of human rights, the issues of enforcing and maintaining internal law in Namibia and the protection of the Namibian borders. NAMPOL can therefore be regarded as the frontline to promote the State's safety and security. NAMPOL, as an organisation, works on the highest level of performance to show a positive ethical image of their departments to the public, whom they are sworn to serve and protect. Therefore, NAMPOL needs leaders who inspire and uphold the Namibian Constitution. NAMPOL was established following Namibia gaining independence on 21 March 1990. The establishment of NAMPOL is endorsed in Article 115 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, 1998, First Amendment Act (1998:52), together with the Police Act 19 of 1990, which defines the powers and functions of the Police. The Act states that NAMPOL functions are to maintain law and order, preservation of internal security in the country, investigate any offence or alleged offence, prevent crimes and protect life and property. The highest authority appointed by the President of Namibia to guide the Police is the Inspector General, who, in terms of section 3(2) of the Police Act of 1990, is entrusted with the function to lead the Police Force (Administration Manual, NAMPOL, 1990).

The Namibian Police Force has a total number of 14 800 employees as provided by the Human Capital Directorate - they are deployed in 14 regions across the country (E-policing system, 2023). Considering the public outcry, which is apparent from the surveys that were carried out as well as from newspaper reports, leadership profiles and performance require a dedicated focus. Public trust in the police as well as police morale and productivity, are declining, while research on police performance and the overall crime rate in the country indicates major concerns (Management Meeting Minutes, 2023).

Bosworth (2016) states that a leadership profile designates the attributes of a leader within a company. It becomes not only the checklist used during the recruitment or promotion process but is also used to evaluate current leaders and predict talented up-and-coming future leaders within the company. When recruiting a customer service representative, that person should be friendly, have effective communication and conflict resolving skills, be able to manage stress and be able to mitigate confrontation. Bosworth (2016) narrates that inadequate profiling could result in mismatches between the leadership capabilities, roles, expertise, decision-making processes and the leader's overall performance. Arguably, fallacious profiling can also contribute to operational inefficiencies, mismanagement of the position, resources and decreased public confidence.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

NAMPOL needs strong leadership to live up to its functions of maintaining law and order, preserving the internal security in the country, investigating any offence or alleged offence, preventing crimes and protecting life and property. Such leadership must be exemplary to young and upcoming leaders taking over in future.

NAMPOL members are expected to comply with the functions of the police. To execute the functions successfully and competently, leadership positions must be filled by qualified leaders.

In the Namibian Police context, selection and appointment of proficient officers in leadership roles are crucial in consistently achieving the desired performance. Performance to achieve the strategic objectives, outlined in the reviewed strategic plan, is as follows: To improve organisational performance from 67% to 80% through capacity building, implementation of Performance Management System (PMS) and Customer Service Charter, Business Process Re-engineering, talent management, maximal utilisation of resources and Financial Management (Reviewed strategic plan 2023-2028).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Bosworth (2016), understanding the underlying causes of effective police leadership is crucial to developing more effective ways to select and develop police leaders. This author further argues that the potential consequences of not selecting the right leaders might cause decreased morale and productivity. When employees do not have confidence in their leaders, they are less likely to be motivated and productive. Increased turnover is compounded when employees are unhappy with their leaders, as they are more likely to leave the organisation. Poor decision-making is generated by ineffective leaders making poor decisions that can have negative consequences for the organisation. When leaders make mistakes or behave unethically, it can damage the organisation's reputation. The author further states that by carefully selecting and developing leaders, organisations can avoid these problems and improve their performance (Bosworth, 2016).

Similarly, Lau, Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) argue that the absence of a strong leadership profiling mechanism can have several negative consequences, including leaders being placed in roles that they are not qualified for; leaders not being developed to their full potential; leaders not being held accountable for their performance and employee morale suffering due to a lack of confidence in the organisation's leadership. A strong leadership profiling mechanism is essential because of reasons that leaders are placed in roles that match their skills and competencies; make informed decisions about leadership development; hold leaders accountable for their performance; and boost employee morale by demonstrating that the organisation is committed to developing its leaders (Lau, Fullan & Hargreaves, 2017).

Gupta (2020) reports that there is a serious concern about the challenges and outcomes regarding leadership profiling and performance. The author argues that aspects of Namibian law, set out by the Constitution, the Police Act of 1990, the Correctional Services Act 9 of 2012 and the Defence Act 1 of 2002, do not allow for the leaders of the forces to be held accountable. Gupta (2020) further states that holding police accountable for their actions in Namibia can be difficult and best efforts have been made to amend the law to mitigate such issues. The source of this tension during discussions surrounding the apparent misuse of force by law enforcement officials in Namibia, including in Operation "Hornkranz" and Operation "Kalahari Desert". There, several officials were on the defensive and somewhat unwilling to take

responsibility for instances where the police and/or armed forces failed to act uniformly, using violence (in some cases, lethal) unnecessarily (Gupta, 2020). Arguably, leaders of the operations should be held accountable for the misuse of force by their subordinates by upscaling the use of leadership profiling for the placement of future leaders based on experience and leadership style as considerations for handling police and community conflicts.

Helao (2022) concomitantly argues that the leadership of the retired Inspector General (IG) after 17 years in the position was under scrutiny from the public and the media reporters. The Namibian Police has been transformed since independence; however, the impact of policing in this crime-prone and vulnerable society, remains questionable. The author further states that focusing only on the police's traditional "main functions" may not be sufficient. The conventional policing approach failed the nation in the past 32 years, therefore the author further narrates that "policing should be accepted, embraced and recognised by the society it serves" (LAC Booklet, 2020:1-5). Against this backdrop, successors have huge shoes to fill if NAMPOL is to remain relevant and make an impact in a society already succumbed to poverty, crime and known imperceptible social phenomenon. Arguably, innovative policing is certainly the primary option now. However, this could be limiting and not produce the capacity needed in a transformative society. It has not built the prerequisite policing skills, competencies and knowledge to prove policing comparability. NAMPOL still lacks expertise in forensic analysis, intelligence-based policing and evidence-based policing (Helao, 2022).

This study seeks to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation for leadership profiling and the accompanied performance outcomes. There is limited African, particularly Southern African, literature on the influence of leadership profiling on police leaders' performance, which this study seeks to fulfil within the Namibian Police Force. The current issue that can be explored as it relates to how leadership profiling influences the performance of police leaders in Namibia is centred on ensuring that selection is carried out in accordance with choosing the most competent and qualified leaders for their roles.

Microenvironment

In police contexts, the microenvironment is a significant influencer of leadership behaviours (Wang & Liu, 2022). Micro environmental elements impact on how a business operates and how well management can achieve the objectives of the enterprise. These variables include the company's customers, resellers, suppliers and competitors (Zhao, Jiang and Yang, 2021a). Wood and Wood (2020) use a qualitative approach to examine the capabilities of first-line supervisors within the police force, emphasising the influence of the micro-environment on police leadership. Although Zhao et al. (2021a) focus on police stress and coping mechanisms, they delve into micro-environmental factors within the police force. This can be a valuable source for understanding the internal dynamics that influence leadership behaviours. Both references provide recent and relevant insights into the micro-environment within police organisations and their connection to leadership.

The microenvironment focuses on the internal activities and stakeholders of the organisation (Moynihan & Wolfe, 2020). It includes the elements that directly impact on an organisation's capacity to meet customer needs and accomplish its goals. Businesses must understand the microenvironment to see opportunities, assess risks and build winning strategies. Moynihan and Wolfe (2020) explore the microenvironment within public service organisations and its influence on motivation for the public service. While not directly related to police forces, the concept of a microenvironment impacting internal dynamics in a public service setting can be relevant.

Organisational leadership of the police in Namibia

An Inspector General (IG) with the rank of Lieutenant-General is in charge of the force. There are two primary general-level deputies to the Inspector General. The two Deputy Inspectors General are in charge of Operations and Administration by the core values of accountability, integrity and accessibility.

Swanson & Holton (2009) emphasise that Human Capital Management focuses on improving the performance of an individual, team and organisational levels. The Human Capital Management Directorate has been both assisted and delayed by several variables, including globalisation, changing economic conditions and changes in the makeup of the workforce.

The 21st century workplace is characterised by a union of transformative trends. Technological advancements, like artificial intelligence and automation are reforming industries (Autor et al., 2015). The shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-oriented one demands a more skilled and adaptable workforce (Bell, 2012). The organisational workforce is developing with increased cooperation among the teams and sectors (Wageman, 2022) while also upholding a competitive edge. Organisations must prioritise both efficiency and flexibility to navigate the changes. Swanson and Holton (2009) stress that fundamental components such as performance enhancement and skill enhancement are important for organisational leadership in the police context. Finally, increased female participation in the workforce requires a more flexible and inclusive work environment (Catalyst, 2023).

The study concluded that developing intellectual capacity helps employees become more self-aware of their capability to take on difficult activities on their own, in addition to fostering organisational competitiveness. In companies of all sizes, intellectual capacity is seen as essential to change management by profiling leaders for suitable positions. However, without staff training, firms cannot become globally competitive in terms of service efficiency, even though budgetary limitations prevent them from investing in the intellectual ability of their employees (Rothermel & Lamarsh, 2012). Different approaches can be used by organisations to assess performance based on the contributions of individual employees.

Rothermel and LaMarsh (2012) conducted a study in Italy to examine the impact of intellectual practices on organisational performance. It was concluded that in non-performing organisations

aiming to change their culture, altering employees' mindsets was deemed crucial. The recruitment of employees possessing a blend of knowledge, experience and skills not only enhanced organisational performance but also facilitated sustainable change implementation.

High crime prevention

It is impossible to misjudge the relationship between effective crime prevention efforts in the police and the calibre of leadership techniques and approaches used (Lum & Koper, 2017). As leaders to uphold the peace, protect the public and allocate resources competently, police officials must possess strong leadership qualities.

Implementation of effective strategies for crime prevention often depends on the competent leadership abilities and behaviours demonstrated in a group or community.

In the police context, leadership behaviours and abilities significantly influence the success of crime prevention efforts. Strong leadership skills are essential for police officials to maintain order, protect the public and allocate resources. There are contrasting views about general agreement on the importance of leadership in policing: One viewpoint stresses the limitations of focusing solely on police leadership. These scholars argue that addressing broader societal factors, such as poverty and social inequality, is crucial for dealing with crime at its root causes (Daly & Wilson, 2024).

The optimal leadership style for police in high-crime areas remains a topic of debate. Proponents of a collaborative and community-oriented approach emphasise building trust and legitimacy with residents, fostering information sharing and addressing the root causes of crime (Smith et al., 2020). Conversely, advocates of a stronger command-and-control style emphasise the need for immediate action, proactive law enforcement and police visibility to prevent criminal activity (Maguire & Bennett, 2020).

Police officials need essential leadership skills such as clear communication, quick judgments, problem-solving, strategic thinking, empathy, flexibility, integrity, team building, conflict resolution and leading by example (Maguire & Bennett, 2020). These skills help them coordinate operations, foster trust and make sound judgments under pressure. They must also understand the needs and viewpoints of both police and community members, adapt to changing circumstances, maintain high moral standards and foster a unified team.

Internal leadership competencies

Honesty and integrity are believed to be the most important qualities for effective leadership (Hasan, 2019). According to Maak et al. (2019), factors upholding cordial relationships and good terms with others, honouring promises and commitments, fulfilling one's obligations and duties in the workplace, being aware of external and internal environmental factors, maintaining focus, striking a balance between one's personal and professional lives, providing factual information to others, instilling morality, ethics, diligence and conscientiousness, and treating subordinates with respect and consideration. While Avolio et al. (2019) highlight the role of

charisma and inspirational leadership in motivating and influencing supporters. This perception is about the leader's ability to have a shared vision and enthusiasm, which can be regarded as a different approach compared to the focus on fulfilling obligations and commitments mentioned by Maak et al. (2019). In contrast, Maak et al. (2019) stress leader identity, proactive behaviours and fulfilling responsibilities.

Avolio et al. (2019) focus on charisma, inspiration and motivating followers towards a shared vision. While both perspectives contribute to effective leadership, they highlight different aspects that a leader should possess.

Evidently, leaders need to possess the requisite talents and abilities to carry out their duties effectively and gain the respect and admiration of their colleagues. Police must possess interpersonal, organisational, time management, leadership, analytical, critical thinking, decision-making, technical, work ethic and conflict resolution skills.

Effective leaders likely possess elements of both perspectives. Strong character combined with a robust skillset is key to success for a police official. Effective leadership goes beyond just skills. As highlighted by Ciulla (2020), leaders with strong character and ethical principles inspire trust and build a positive work environment. Leaders can unceasingly develop both their skill set and character through ongoing learning and professional development opportunities.

External leadership competencies and team collaboration

According to Gratton et al. (2017), leaders in various organisations encourage their staff to work in teams, be dedicated and pursue a common objective. Leaders need to balance collaboration with individual accountability to achieve optimal team performance. There is a view that focuses on creating an environment where collaboration thrives and another that emphasises the need for individual accountability alongside collaboration.

Effective leaders are likely to use a balanced approach by fostering collaboration while ensuring individual members are held accountable for their contributions. However, effective teamwork also requires individual accountability to ensure each team member contributes effectively (Lencioni, 2002). Leaders can foster a collaborative environment while still holding individuals accountable for their work.

Wageman et al. (2018) highlight the core aspects of effective teamwork, including the service benefits and incentives. The authors emphasise how teamwork fosters knowledge sharing, problem-solving through diverse perspectives and skill development by contributing to team's success. This aligns with the concept of teamwork, promoting positive interactions and developing understanding among team members from various backgrounds. Fostering teamwork creates a sense of belonging and shared purpose, aligning the concept of loyalty and friendly culture. This atmosphere motivates employees to go the extra mile for each other and the team's success.

Effective teamwork and collaboration within groups lead to better task completion and improved individual performance (Salas, Sims & Burke, 2005). While Klein and Kozlowski (2000) argue that strong leadership within groups provides direction, facilitates communication and helps manage challenges, ultimately contributing to group success, it provides a good foundation.

Therefore, there is a link between teamwork and a loyal and friendly culture: A setting where teamwork is valued creates a loyal and friendly culture. Employees are more motivated to work hard and responsibly and to support and help one another because of these close-knit relationships (Shantz & Elliott, 2019). It is a common misconception that when two or more people collaborate on a project, their tasks and responsibilities would be distributed solely according to their qualifications (Wageman, Hackman & Lehman, 2018).

Leadership skills

To address the difficulties police leaders face in upholding the law and providing the services called for by the current reforms. According to Northouse (2019), demands for participation, accountability, responsibility, transparency, technological innovation and advancements, emergency response to new forms of crime, both traditional and non-traditional, austerity measures, organisational restructuring and reforms, growing need for community engagement and communication, and a host of other issues and unpredictable phenomena have all increased. In such a complicated state and circumstance, the question arises of how an organisation functions? One response has to do with leadership.

Historically, leadership involves generating ideas or integrating existing ideas to improve the situation. When referring to police operations, the term "leadership" can refer to the ability to exercise command and order during emergencies and crises (Zhao, Jiang and Yang, 2021b). This sets the police, public safety, public security, social safety and police-military apart from a wide range of other professional domains and activities where gathering input, reaching consensus and articulating justifications were nearly constant tasks.

Successful police leaders must balance these responsibilities with knowing when to provide split-second instructions. Similarly, proficient law enforcement officials or subordinates must possess the capacity to recognise the instances where their primary responsibilities involve enforcing rigid adherence to their colleagues, teams or superiors (Swanson, Territo & Taylor, 2016). This ability to navigate conflicting demands and make quick decisions under pressure is a hallmark of effective police leadership.

Employee talents, knowledge and skills were proven to have a considerable favourable impact on a leader's performance (Mumford et al, 2000). Multiple regression studies revealed that companies that did not invest in developing their employees' potential were more likely to suffer large losses and make less progress in creating new goods and services.

Rajala et al. (2012) establish a direct correlation between individualised practice and service delivery in public universities. The

authors' study concluded that a leader's performance was significantly influenced by employee training. In addition, it was observed that fostering creativity and innovation within the organisation was not solely achieved through training but by motivating workers using both financial and non-financial incentives. However, it is important to acknowledge that the study was limited to the higher education sector in Australia and did not explore the NAMPOL context.

Leadership profiling

Leadership within law enforcement agencies plays a critical role in shaping organisational culture, effectiveness and ultimately, public safety outcomes. Understanding the characteristics and behaviours associated with effective police leadership is essential for optimising the performance of these organisations (Zhao et al., 2022). This study aims to explore existing research on leadership profiling in the police by highlighting key findings, methodologies and implications for practice and processes.

Understanding the nuances of police leadership profiling has practical implications for recruitment, selection, training and performance evaluation within law enforcement agencies (Smith et al., 2020). By identifying and cultivating the traits and behaviours associated with effective leadership, police organisations can improve their capacity to address evolving challenges and serve their communities more effectively.

This aligns with our study's focus on understanding how cooperation and effective teams can enhance performance within complex environments. By filling the gaps, the police can gain important knowledge about how police officials' performance is affected by profiling those in leadership roles. This knowledge can be used to develop more effective leadership practices that enhance police officials' performance, improve community relations and ultimately contribute to a safer environment for everyone (Haarr, 2023). On the other hand, by exploring leadership profiling of leaders and the performance of NAMPOL, this study seeks to close these research gaps.

Leadership profiling in the police is a multifaceted area of inquiry with significant implications for organisational effectiveness and public safety. By synthesising existing research and identifying key themes, this literature review contributes to the understanding of the factors shaping leadership dynamics within law enforcement contexts and highlights avenues for future research and practice (Haarr, 2023).

Leadership styles

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Research has explored how distinct attributes or profiles of leaders, like their qualifications, experience, personality and leadership style impact their effectiveness in law enforcement organisations (Zhao et al., 2022).

This aligns with our study's focus on understanding how collaboration and effective teams can enhance performance within complex environments. By filling in these study gaps, NAMPOL can gain important knowledge about how police officials' performance is affected by the profiling of those in leadership roles. This knowledge can then be used to develop more effective leadership practices that enhance officer performance, improve community relations and ultimately contribute to a safer environment for everyone (Haarr, 2023). On the other hand, by exploring the leadership profiling of leaders and the performance of NAMPOL, this study seeks to close these research gaps.

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Leaders who adopt authoritarian leadership prescribe to their employees what must be done and how it should be done without seeking input from their followers. Some people use this tactic as an excuse to rant, use offensive language, threaten others and take advantage of their authority. Different from the authoritarian method, bossing others around is an aggressive and disrespectful way of doing things (Northouse, 2021).

Participative leadership relates to a manager involving one or more team members to make decisions (deciding what to do and how to do it). The leader still has the final say on all decisions (McFarland et al., 2019). When your staff adopts this strategy, it shows strength rather than weakness. This method generally refers to situations where the leader only has some information and the staff has the rest. Participation in the process results in leaders making more informed decisions.

When a leader adopts a laissez-faire leadership style, they delegate decision-making to the group, giving little to no direction to the team members (Pedraja-Rejas & Segovia, 2009). This type of leader sets the general guidelines, priorities and performance standards for the group. They then step back and wait for the tasks to be completed before taking any more action (Kamal, Ridwan & Kesuma, 2024). Agotnes (2018) conducted a study and found that in contrast to contingent remuneration and management by

exception, laissez-faire leaders support neither intervention nor corrective action on their part. This leadership approach may work well when most team members are very skilled, knowledgeable and experienced in their field; yet it frequently results in poorly defined responsibilities and a general lack of motivation (Skogstad, Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2019).

The full-range leadership model of Bass (2006) consists of four transformative aspects, three transactional elements and one laissez-faire element. Idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration are the four transformational components (Avolio et al., 2019). Idealised influence depends on one's capacity to articulate the organisation's mission compellingly. The leader prioritises the organisation's success over his own interests because he is guided by his moral compass. The leader exhibits alignment in actions and ideas while creating a secure atmosphere for the followers to work in (Northouse, 2021).

Encouraging staff workers to solve problems, frame, reframe and innovate, is known as intellectual stimulation. The leader fosters an environment where creativity is valued and followers are challenged to think critically (Yukl, 2022). In addition to acting as a coach, the leader gives followers the freedom to work on projects that will help them reach their goals. Contingent reward, management by exception active and management by exception passive are the three components of a transaction.

Active leadership and role-modelling in policing

In the context of the police, active leadership involves direct engagement, guidance and participation in the daily operations and challenges faced by personnel (Smith et al., 2020). Leaders who actively participate alongside their teams demonstrate a commitment to understanding their experiences and encouraging a sense of shared purpose.

Role-modelling, in particular, is essential for shaping organisational culture and values. Police leaders who represent the desired behaviours and ethical standards set a positive example for their teams, influencing attitudes, behaviours and performance throughout the organisation (Rankin et al., 2020).

Leadership theories and their application in police reform

Classical leadership theories represent consequential attempts to define effective leadership precisely and comprehensively as well as questioning what it means to be an effective leader, and the context of leadership and organisational theories (Hibbert, Sillince & Diefenbach, 2014).

Using NAMPOL and Cambodian police force as examples are explored as:

Effective teamwork or group dynamics is facilitated by leaders who exhibit consideration and initiative characteristics. Consideration, which involves empathy and support for subordinates, fosters a positive work environment and motivates team members (Northouse, 2021). Initiating structure, on the other hand, focuses on providing clear goals and ensuring tasks are completed

efficiently (Yuki, 2022). Clarifying roles, establishing performance expectations and holding subordinates responsible for meeting those expectations are a few examples. The statement about Cambodian police focusing on functional theories has limited supporting evidence readily available. However, the researcher can address effective teamwork and leadership characteristics with recent references. Leaders who exhibit characteristics that facilitate group dynamics are essential for success. Studies emphasise the importance of transformational leadership in fostering collaboration and motivation (Zhao et al., 2022).

Examining the role of leadership within the police force sheds light on the factors shaping police behaviour, even when those influences originate from unconventional or informal channels. In Cambodia, where police officials typically adhere to commands without question, a shift in leadership practices involves soliciting input from subordinates in decision-making processes. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership among officials regarding service-related matters, potentially mitigating resistance to reform initiatives (Smith, 2023).

The police leader or supervisor can leverage their power to control rewards and punishments for police officials or subordinates. This control can influence police officials' behaviour and departmental culture. The effectiveness of this approach depends on the leader's ability to ensure fairness and transparency in the reward system (Goff, 2017). Haarr (2023) argues that police leaders or supervisors also possess coercive power, allowing them to influence police officials' behaviour through disciplinary measures or threats of punishment. However, relying solely on coercive power can be detrimental. Effective leadership also requires the support of operational services, which can provide resources and facilitate the successful execution of police work.

This shift towards a more inclusive leadership style holds promise for police reform. Yukl (2022) explores leadership styles and highlights how participative leadership, where followers contribute, can increase ownership and engagement. Arguably, by fostering a sense of ownership among police officials through inclusive leadership, NAMPOL reform efforts may encounter less resistance and relate to the core argument about leadership in the NAMPOL police force.

Transformational leadership emphasises inspiring and motivating followers to achieve ambitious goals. It focuses on aspects like idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Bass & Avolio, 2019).

This aligns with transformational leadership theory, which emphasises the leader's ability to inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests and work towards a shared vision that benefits both the organisation and its clients (Judge & Kerr, 2020).

Transformative leaders are regarded as more progressive than transactional leaders, who focus mostly on rewarding individual behaviours. According to Rotherme and LaMarsh (2012), transformative leadership greatly depends on the personality attributes of the leader to motivate followers and successfully convey the company's vision, mission and objectives.

Similar leadership style transformations are being explored in Namibia. Studies (Scott, 2014) suggest that transformational leadership, where leaders inspire and motivate their followers, can improve police performance. Understanding how leadership styles influence police forces in both Cambodia and Namibia can provide valuable insights for improving law enforcement practices across Africa.

SUMMARY

The 21st century grants complex challenges for NAMPOL, including fast expansion, population growth, increasing violent crime, economic downturns and developing crime trends, creating an irregular environment. Economic limitations may lead to reduced police workforces, necessitating more efficient human resource utilisation. Frameworks for human resource development underscore the importance of enlightening leadership competencies at all levels for organisational effectiveness. Promoting participative leadership empowers police officials to take the initiative, solve problems and foster a positive organisational culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory research design to gain an in-depth understanding of leadership, organisational change and human resource capital management within the Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 12 senior NAMPOL officers selected through purposive and stratified sampling to ensure that participants possessed relevant experience and knowledge related to the research focus. Open-ended interview questions guided by a discussion script allowed participants to freely express their views and experiences, enabling the researcher to capture rich and detailed data relevant to the study objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Table 1 presents a concise summary of the key characteristics of the study participants. It highlights the ranks, years of service, departmental representation, gender distribution and inclusion criteria relevant to this study. This overview provides a clear understanding of the composition of the sample and ensures transparency regarding the diversity and representativeness of the participants, which strengthens the credibility and context of the research findings.

Table 1: Summary of participant characteristics (n = 12)	
Category	Description
Ranks	Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners
Years of Service	4-6 years; 10 years and above
Region/Department	Senior leadership from key NAMPOL departments
Gender distribution	Predominantly male (8), with female (4) representation
Inclusion criteria	Senior police leaders in leadership roles and with relevant experience

Data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently, allowing the researcher to continuously reflect on emerging patterns in the data. As interviews progressed, responses from participants began to show a high level of consistency, with similar views, experiences and issues being repeatedly expressed. A saturation table was maintained to record emerging codes per interview; saturation was confirmed when no new codes/themes emerged across the final two interviews. The point of data saturation was reached when additional interviews no longer generated substantively new insights relevant to the research objectives. On this basis, the decision to conclude data collection after 12 interviews was methodologically justified by the depth, coherence and sufficiency of the data obtained, rather than by adherence to a predetermined sample size (Saunders et al., 2023).

Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol comprising open-ended questions aligned with the study's objectives, focusing on leadership profiling practices, performance outcomes and organisational challenges. Participants were senior NAMPOL officers with extensive leadership and operational experience, representing diverse functional areas within the organisation. Data analysis followed a systematic thematic coding process, beginning with familiarisation, followed by initial open coding, theme development and refinement. Manual coding was supported by qualitative data analysis software to ensure consistency and traceability of analytic decisions. This transparent approach enhances the replicability of the study and allows future researchers to apply similar procedures in comparable policing contexts.

The semi-structured interviews lasted an average of 10-15 minutes and were conducted at participants' workplaces in private offices to ensure confidentiality. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. The interview guide consisted of 23 questions, including demographic items and open-ended questions focusing on leadership roles, performance, challenges and leadership development. Data were analysed using NVivo software, while the coding process was reviewed by an independent reviewer to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the audio-recorded and transcribed interview data, with coding conducted manually and supported by qualitative data analysis software to organise and manage the data systematically. This approach enabled the identification of recurring themes related to leadership profiling and police performance. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through peer debriefing, careful documentation of the research process and consistent engagement with the data during analysis. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, were strictly observed throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2023).

Researcher positionality and reflexivity

The researcher acknowledges that prior exposure to public sector governance and leadership discourses may have shaped expectations regarding effective leadership within law enforcement institutions. This positionality necessitated a reflexive approach throughout the research process to minimise interpretive bias. To address this, interview questions were framed neutrally,

participants' responses were analysed inductively and interpretations were grounded firmly in the empirical data rather than pre-conceived assumptions. Peer debriefing further supported reflexivity by providing an external check on emerging interpretations. This reflexive engagement enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study by ensuring that findings reflected participants' lived experiences rather than the researcher's subjective positioning. Interviews were conducted in private settings; no supervisors were present; participants were reminded there were no right/wrong answers.

DATA FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

Comprehending the organisation's vision and goals

The participants emphasised the importance of alignment with the organisation's vision and goals. There was a strong consensus that the Namibian Police Force places significant value on ensuring that its leadership aligns with the goal of providing high-quality services to the community.

The Namibian Police Force employs a systematic framework to discover individuals with leadership potential, contributing to performance evaluations, skills assessments and supervisor feedback to ensure placement with the organisation's vision of providing excellent law enforcement services. (Participant 1)

Our leadership profiling is competency-based and merit-driven, discovering that those selected for leadership positions are aligned with the organisation's mission to maintain public safety and confidence. (Participant 3)

Leadership performance and professional expertise

Participants stressed the importance of fostering leadership skills within a well-defined organisational structure. Leadership profiling focuses on key characteristics such as professional experience, educational qualifications, leadership skills and personal values. Participants also noted that the profiling process involves continuous assessments to ensure effective leadership development.

We consider a series of factors when profiling individuals for leadership positions in the police, comprising their professional experience, management skills, educational background and placement with the organisation's values and mission. (Participant 8)

Regular performance reviews are vital in identifying high-potential staff members who consistently demonstrate leadership qualities, initiative and a willingness to grow. (Participant 10)

Leadership effectiveness

Participants consistently highlighted that leadership effectiveness is determined by the organisation's culture, leadership style and the leadership theories employed. Effective communication and a positive organisational culture are crucial for fostering leadership effectiveness.

Leadership theories like transformational leadership are central to the development of effective police leaders. They promote transparency, collaboration and empowerment, which are critical for a cohesive workforce. (Participant K)

Improved organisational performance

Most participants agreed that effective leadership in the police positively impacts on the overall performance of the organisation. Leaders who abide by practices and procedures, demonstrate ethical principles and communicate strategically contribute to the enhanced performance of NAMPOL.

Effective leadership in the police is evident when leaders not only achieve organisational goals and strategies, but also foster a milieu where employees feel supported and motivated to perform at their best. (Participant 7)

Compromised service delivery due to negative leadership profiling

Participants identified numerous challenges, including worrisome operational capabilities, financial constraints and biased leadership profiling. These factors negatively impacted on service delivery and public confidence and trust.

Leadership challenges such as insufficient manpower and financial constraints are significant obstacles, affecting our ability to deliver high-quality services to the public. (Participant B)

Lack of resources

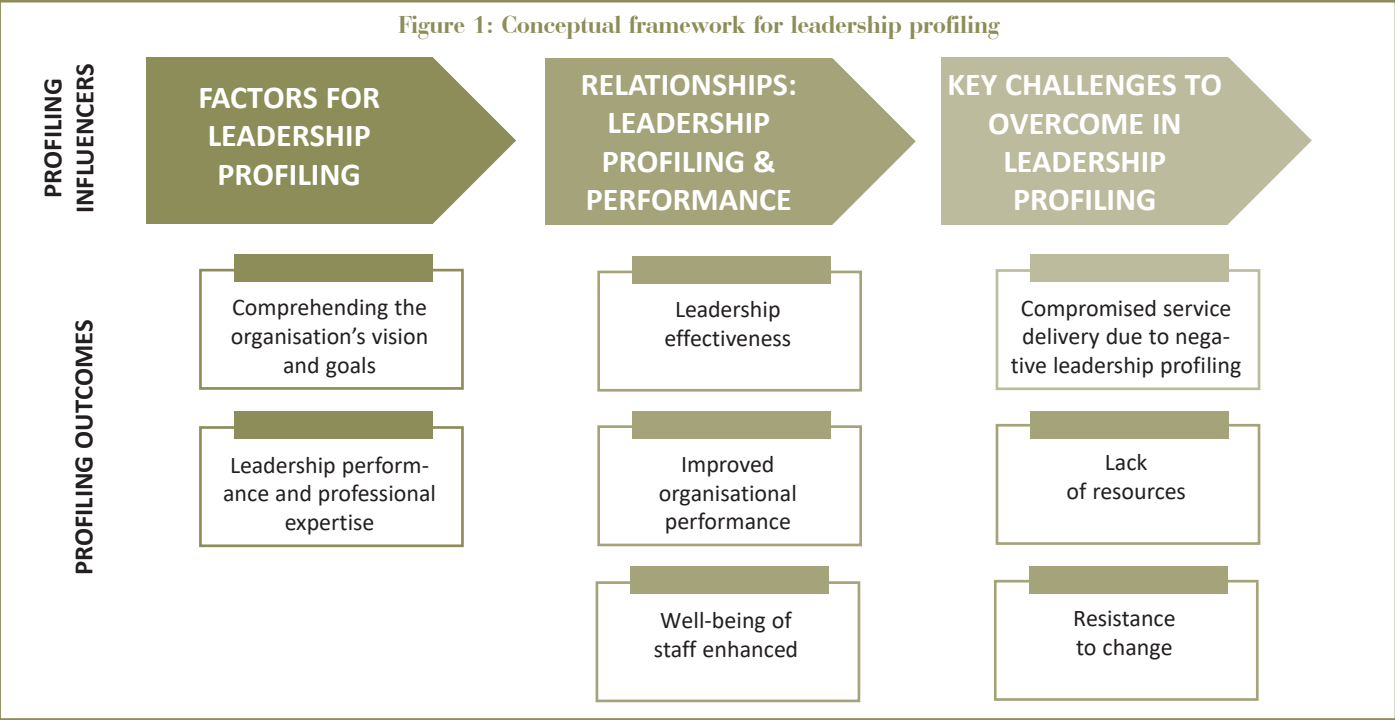
The lack of resources, particularly manpower and equipment, which hindered the ability to perform key duties effectively, was a major concern raised by participants.

The shortage of personnel and resources severely limits our ability to fulfil our duties efficiently. In addition, inadequate and shortage of transport facilities in rural areas further complicate our tasks. (Participant K)

Resistance to change

The resistance to change within the police, especially in adapting to new technologies and shifting priorities, was regarded as another significant challenge.

Organisational resistance to change in the police often stems from a lack of understanding of the need for change. This, in turn, obstructs our ability to address new challenges in policing. (Participant H)



Conceptual framework for leadership profiling

The participants unanimously emphasised the importance of aligning with the organisation's vision and goals. Their insights reflect a shared understanding that leadership profiling is critical to achieve alignment with organisational objectives, particularly in providing high-quality services to the community. The framework derived from the study supports the notion that leadership profiling is integral to improving organisational performance and enhancing the well-being of police personnel.

Factors influencing profiling

■ Comprehending the organisation's vision and goals

This theme highlights the critical importance of defining and communicating the organisation's vision and goals to all employees. Employees gain clear guidance that informs their daily actions by understanding the goals. Leadership profiling plays a

significant role in ensuring that individuals with the required capabilities and understanding are placed in positions where they can uphold the organisation's values. This also directly impacts decision-making, organisational culture and public safety.

■ Leadership performance and professional expertise

Leadership performance is shaped by the professional expertise that leaders possess. The study revealed that current and emerging leaders must focus on developing key skills and traits to succeed. Effective leadership profiling ensures that the right individuals, equipped with the necessary competencies, are in leadership positions, which significantly influences organisational success.

Leadership profiling and performance

■ Leadership effectiveness

Effective leadership in the police involves realising the organisation's vision and mission by setting the tone and fostering a strong

organisational philosophy. Profiling leadership positions ensures that individuals who are most qualified for these roles are identified for effective leadership. This, in turn, upholds positive individual and organisational performance. The participants argued that effective profiling directly results in better leadership, driving overall success.

■ Improved organisational performance

Organisational performance depends on resources such as tools, systems and skilled personnel to accomplish set goals. A clear vision and well-defined goals provide a roadmap for improving performance. Participants noted that effective leadership profiling positively impacts performance, aligning resources and goals with the capabilities of the leadership. As a result, the organisation achieves its objectives more efficiently and effectively.

■ Enhanced well-being of staff

Employee well-being is directly linked to productivity. Effective leadership profiling helps ensure that leaders prioritise the welfare of their teams. A leader who understands and supports the well-being of their subordinates can improve job satisfaction, reduce workplace stress and foster a healthier work environment. This enhances overall organisational performance, with a significant positive impact on the well-being of police leaders and staff.

Key challenges to overcome in leadership profiling

■ Compromised service delivery due to negative leadership profiling

When leadership profiling is biased, it can result in poor leadership placement. This mismatch leads to operational inefficiencies, mismanagement and finally, compromised service delivery. The study found that undesirable leadership profiling can damage public confidence in the police force. In contrast, effective profiling ensures that the right leaders are placed in key positions, driving improved service delivery and better outcomes.

■ Lack of resources

A lack of resources undermines the efforts of most capable leaders in the force. Without important tools, systems, processes and procedures, leaders' ability to implement their vision and goals is limited. Participants in the study emphasised that profiling leaders effectively, while ensuring that they have access to sufficient resources, is crucial for success. Leadership profiling is not a stand-alone factor and is inadequate without the necessary support structures.

■ Resistance to change

In many organisations, the fear of the unknown results in resistance to change and is a common challenge. This resistance can hinder progress and adaptation in the force. Profiling leadership positions ensures that the right leaders are chosen to manage the change process, fostering adaptability within the organisation. Effective leadership profiling is identified as a solution to this challenge, as it helps identify leaders who are open to change and capable of driving innovation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce existing scholarship that emphasises the strategic importance of leadership profiling in law enforcement organisations. Participants' emphasis on alignment with organisational vision and goals closely mirrors Bosworth's (2016) argument that effective police leadership selection is fundamental to organisational legitimacy, morale and productivity. Similarly, the competency-based and merit-driven profiling

practices described by participants resonate with Lau, Fullan and Hargreaves' (2017) assertion that leadership profiling mechanisms are essential for accountability, role-fit and sustained performance. In this regard, the study does not merely confirm prior research but contextualises it within the Namibian policing environment, thereby extending its applicability to African law enforcement institutions.

The prominence of professional expertise, leadership effectiveness and organisational culture in shaping performance further aligns with transformational leadership theory, as articulated by Avolio et al. (2019) and Northouse (2021). Participants' references to transparency, collaboration and empowerment reflect the core elements of transformational leadership identified in the literature. This theoretical alignment suggests that leadership profiling within NAMPOL implicitly favours leadership styles associated with higher trust, motivation and organisational commitment, supporting earlier findings by Zhao et al. (2022) on the role of leadership styles in police performance.

This study extends competency-based profiling models by demonstrating how institutional constraints (resources, culture, bias) moderate profiling performance in African policing. Simultaneously, the study's identification of negative leadership profiling, resource constraints and resistance to change adds a critical dimension to existing debates. These findings corroborate concerns by Gupta (2020) and Helao (2022) regarding accountability deficits and structural limitations within Namibian policing. By demonstrating how biased profiling and insufficient resources undermine service delivery and public trust, the study advances theoretical discussions on the interaction between leadership selection, organisational context and institutional performance, rather than treating leadership effectiveness as an isolated variable.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that leadership profiling plays a pivotal role in shaping leadership effectiveness, organisational performance and staff well-being within the Namibian Police Force. Consistent with prior studies (Bosworth, 2016; Lau et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2022), the findings confirm that aligning leadership profiles with organisational vision, professional competence and ethical values enhances institutional performance and public confidence. The study therefore provides empirical validation of transformational and competency-based leadership frameworks within an African policing context.

However, the findings also highlight that leadership profiling alone is insufficient without complementary support systems. Resource limitations, resistance to change and biased profiling practices were shown to undermine even well-intentioned leadership initiatives, reinforcing Gupta's (2020) and Helao's (2022) concerns about structural constraints in Namibian policing. These insights extend existing theory by illustrating how contextual and institutional factors mediate the relationship between leadership profiling and performance outcomes. Findings confirm Bosworth (2016) on role-fit and morale, but extend Gupta (2020) by showing how profiling bias and resource constraints jointly undermine service delivery.

Future research could examine leadership accountability mechanisms, longitudinal leadership development outcomes and the effectiveness of profiling tools across different public service institutions. From a policy perspective, the study recommends the

institutionalisation of transparent, performance-based leadership profiling frameworks, supported by continuous leadership training, adequate resourcing and change management strategies. Such reforms would strengthen leadership accountability, enhance service delivery and align policing practices with community expectations, thereby contributing to sustainable public sector performance. Implementation that could be considered: Develop a competency framework for leadership roles (core competencies + behavioral indicators) aligned to strategic plan; introduce assessment methods: structured panel interviews + scenario testing + 360 feedback + performance history weighting; implement a transparent scoring rubric and publish selection criteria internally and establish a leadership development pipeline (training modules tied to competency gaps; annual re-assessment).

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ARTICLE

Democratic Leadership for Industry 4.0 in Forensic Policing: Insights from Durban Local Criminal Record Centre (LCRC) Component

Sandile Ngwabe

Criminalistic expert - Durban LCRC

Doctoral Student - Graduate School of Business & Leadership

University of KwaZulu-Natal

esngwabe@gmail.com

Prof Cecile Schultz

STADIO Institution of Higher Education

email: ceciles@stadio.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) is altering global policing environments through automation, artificial intelligence and digital technology, necessitating new types of leadership that go beyond traditional hierarchies. This study explores how democratic leadership may enhance organisational flexibility, diversity and digital skills at the Durban Local Criminal Record (LCRC) Component. Fifteen participants were purposefully chosen for the study. An interpretive phenomenological design was used to document their lived experiences during this phase of organisational and technological change. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and processed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. The results show that democratic leadership promotes fairness, inclusivity, trust and employee participation, which improves creativity, operational effectiveness and workforce preparedness for Industry 4.0. However, issues limiting its efficacy included persistent bureaucratic structures and communication gaps. The findings indicate that democratic leadership is the most appropriate approach for forensic services' digital transformation. However, it must be supported by proactive communication, equality-driven policies and hybrid leadership techniques, striking a balance between inclusivity and strategic vision. Institutionalising participatory decision-making, bolstering leadership development and improving the development of digital skills, including transparent communication systems, are examples of practical suggestions. The study contributes to the academic content available on policing leadership by presenting democratic leadership as a driver of digital readiness and providing practical advice for handling technology transformation in high-stakes forensic situations.

KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

Democratic leadership, forensic policing, industry 4.0, digital transformation, organisational change, employee empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Within the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Durban Local Criminal Record (LCRC) Component is essential to the credibility of the legal system. Its duties include investigating crime scenes, managing evidence and keeping criminal records. However, policing settings worldwide are changing because of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), driven by digitalisation, automation, artificial intelligence and data analytics.

Traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership paradigms, while effective at ensuring procedural consistency, are increasingly unsuited for such rapid, technologically driven change. According to recent studies, models based on justice, flexibility and involvement are desperately needed. As demonstrated by Mayer (2024), as an example, leaders must encourage skills development sensitive to Industry 4.0 problems. Democratic leadership has been demonstrated to improve accountability and innovation in the public sector in South African contexts (Naidoo & Botha, 2024), while inclusive leadership approaches support the development of digital resilience in settings that rely heavily on technology (Choi, Park & Lim, 2025).

Consequently, democratic leadership is considered the most appropriate approach for guiding forensic policing during the transition to Industry 4.0, which is the primary focus of this research. The study examines how employees at the Durban LCRC view and understand the potential of democratic leadership principles to promote fairness, trust and creativity in an organisation undergoing rapid changes due to digitalisation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite their vital role in contemporary policing, the Durban LCRC of the SAPS operates under traditional hierarchical leadership models that focus on procedural control, accountability and adherence to established forensic standards, such as ISO-based quality frameworks. While these structures are crucial for preserving the integrity and validity of forensic analyses, they can hinder flexibility and innovation, especially in response to the swift technological changes linked to Industry 4.0.

The issue at hand is not merely the presence of hierarchical or compliance-driven systems, but rather the insufficient incorporation of participatory and adaptive leadership practices that foster creativity, teamwork and digital skills within these frameworks. Current research indicates that democratic and participative leadership strategies can improve inclusivity, innovation and employee involvement in public service settings experiencing digital transformation (Naidoo & Botha, 2024; Choi et al., 2025). Such leadership models facilitate collaboration and learning, which are essential for cultivating digital competency and organisational resilience in rapidly evolving technological landscapes.

However, it remains uncertain how well these leadership principles can be integrated into the existing hierarchical and procedurally focused forensic environment. This study aims to investigate employees' perceptions and experiences of leadership amid digital transformation and to assess whether democratic leadership principles could be employed to boost organisational adaptability,

inclusivity and technological preparedness without compromising procedural compliance or quality assurance standards like those dictated by ISO protocols.

Consequently, this research does not assume that democratic leadership is currently practised or inherently superior; rather, it explores its potential relevance and adaptability within the specific operational and regulatory framework of forensic policing in the context of Industry 4.0.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do forensic officials view and understand the concepts of democratic leadership in relation to digital transformation in forensic policing?
- In what ways do forensic officials think that the principles of democratic leadership can enhance innovation, inclusivity and adaptability in their workplace?
- What obstacles or organisational limitations could hinder the effective implementation of democratic leadership in the structured and procedure-driven environments of forensic settings under Industry 4.0?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership in the Industry 4.0 landscape

The convergence of cyber-physical systems, artificial intelligence, big data analytics and the Internet of Things is driving Industry 4.0, representing a major transformation in organisational processes (Ullah, Arshad & Malik, 2021). As a result, organisations need to be agile, innovative and responsive to technological advancements. Kilicoglu (2018) argues that traditional hierarchical leadership models, dependent on top-down decision-making, can hinder the innovation and adaptability required to navigate swift technological changes.

In contrast, democratic leadership encourages collaborative problem-solving, employee engagement and shared governance. By involving employees in strategic and operational discussions, particularly during the deployment of advanced digital tools in forensic services, leaders can cultivate accountability and ownership. For example, involving staff in decision-making helps them develop the confidence and skills needed to effectively utilise digital case management systems or biometric recognition technology (Ullah et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, in a hierarchical policing context like the SAPS, ultimate accountability lies with the commander, while staff are responsible within established reporting structures. This structure does not eliminate participatory dialogue but suggests a blended or situational leadership model. In this model, specialised personnel might temporarily take on leadership roles in their areas of expertise, while the commander retains overall strategic oversight. Leadership in forensic policing is complex and interwoven, necessitating flexibility to balance procedural authority with inclusive participation. Thus, the study posits that democratic leadership in this scenario does not replace hierarchical accountability but complements it, enhancing communication, knowledge sharing and responsiveness to technological progress.

Using digital tools in forensic services is directly related to procedural integrity and operational precision. Democratic leadership ensures that staff members actively contribute to the deployment of technology rather than being passive recipients thereof, improving organisational effectiveness and lowering errors in delicate investigative procedures.

Democratic leadership in the public sector and forensic contexts

Democratic leadership in the South African public sector has been linked to greater employee participation, accountability and creativity (Naidoo & Botha, 2024). These traits are crucial in forensic services, where following legal and procedural standards is key to operational effectiveness. Democratic leaders encourage collaborative decision-making, enabling employees to engage in policy formulation, procedural creation and technology adoption, which enhances organisational performance and builds public trust.

While transactional leadership may occasionally seek employee input to boost efficiency or clarify tasks, it primarily emphasises adherence, rewards and performance metrics, with decision-making authority remaining with the leader. In contrast, democratic leadership genuinely values staff contributions, allowing them to have a significant impact on policies, operational processes and technology use, thus fostering innovation, engagement and adaptability in the fast-changing Industry 4.0 landscape.

According to Choi et al. (2025), organisational resilience during technological transitions is also improved by democratic leadership. Employees are more likely to embrace and effectively use new digital technologies when they are included in the adoption process, lowering resistance to change. In addition, democratic leadership encourages cross-unit cooperation, which is crucial in forensic services since investigations constantly require the participation of several specialised teams. Leaders ensure that a broad range of knowledge is incorporated into decision-making by encouraging communication and collaborative problem-solving, enhancing investigation results and ethical compliance.

Leadership, agility and communication in South Africa

Beyond participative leadership, agility and communication are critical for achieving organisational transformation. Leadership agility, according to Ringson and Matshabaphala (2024), is the ability to quickly address new issues, reallocate resources and modify processes without sacrificing service quality. In the forensic services industry, where organisational reactions to technology disruptions, like changes in digital forensics software, must be swift and efficient, agile leadership is especially crucial.

Agile leadership and democratic leadership are enhanced by effective communication. According to Chukwuma and Zondo (2024), timely, transparent and consistent communication guarantees that staff members are aware of organisational objectives, technology advancements and procedural changes. Clear communication is essential in forensic services to avoid misconceptions that can jeopardise investigations and operational integrity.

Employee development is supported by the interaction of democratic leadership, agility and communication. Leaders ensure that workers maintain their proficiency with cutting-edge technologies by promoting knowledge sharing and skills development through open communication and participatory decision-making (Kilicoglu, 2018; Choi et al., 2025). In addition to improving operational performance, such an integrated approach develops a workforce that can maintain innovation and meet Industry 4.0 needs.

Digital competence and employee empowerment under democratic leadership

In addition to new technology tools, Industry 4.0 changes in forensic services require a team that can use them efficiently. Democratic leadership is essential to employees' development of digital competency because it creates an atmosphere that promotes experimentation, learning and collaborative problem-solving (Kilicoglu, 2018).

Digital competency in forensic services goes beyond fundamental operational abilities. Workers must know how to use cutting-edge digital technologies, including secure data-sharing platforms, automated case management systems and biometric analysis software. Democratic leaders enable staff to properly use these tools by facilitating focused training programmes and cooperative knowledge-sharing sessions. According to Choi et al. (2025), employees who believe their opinions are appreciated and that they have a stake in the success of digital efforts are less likely to oppose the adoption of new technologies.

Improved creativity and problem-solving are also associated with democratic leadership and employee empowerment. According to Naidoo and Botha (2024), employees are more likely to suggest solutions that increase workflow correctness, efficiency and compliance when they are allowed autonomy and opportunity to share ideas. This can result in more rapid case resolution, fewer procedural mistakes and more rigorous adherence to ethical norms in forensic services.

A culture of learning is fostered by combining the development of digital skills with democratic leadership. According to Ringson and Matshabaphala (2024), nimble and technologically-savvy teams are better equipped to handle emerging issues like new forensic standards or rapidly changing cybercrime tactics. Likewise, good communication guarantees that all employees understand training goals, technology advancements and procedural modifications (Chukwuma & Zondo, 2024). Under democratic leadership, this blend of empowerment, digital proficiency and open communication improves operational effectiveness and fortifies organisational resilience against Industry 4.0 upheavals.

The literature review shows that promoting innovation, operational correctness and workforce resilience in South African forensic services requires democratic leadership in conjunction with agile techniques, good communication and employee empowerment. In addition to promoting involvement and collaborative decision-making, democratic leadership fosters digital competency, which empowers staff members to successfully embrace and utilise cutting-edge technical tools in high-stakes operational settings (Kilicoglu, 2018; Choi et al., 2025).

The significance of responsive and transparent leadership is emphasised by complementary insights from the literature on organisational agility and communication. This ensures that technological transitions are implemented effectively and welcomed by employees at all levels (Ringson & Matshabaphala, 2024; Chukwuma & Zondo, 2024). In combination, these elements provide a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce; elements essential for handling change and maintaining innovation in Industry 4.0 settings.

The study incorporates democratic leadership theory and organisational change theory into its theoretical framework, building on these discoveries. The conceptual framework for comprehending how employee involvement and participatory decision-making promote empowerment, engagement and procedural legitimacy in forensic policing is provided by the democratic leadership theory (Kilicoglu, 2018). The organisational change theory describes how structured methods to change can sustainably incorporate technical breakthroughs, using models like Kotter's eight-step change framework and Lewin's unfreeze-change-refreeze process (Lewin, 1947; Kotter, 1996).

This integrated paradigm offers a rationale for exploring the impact of democratic leadership on organisational adaptation and talent management within the forensic services industry by connecting the reasons behind change management to the methods of participative leadership, such as collaborative decision-making, empowering employees and fostering digital skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Democratic leadership theory

The democratic leadership theory emphasises equity, inclusion and participatory decision-making. It highlights that when workers feel empowered, heard and valued, organisational outcomes increase (Kilicoglu, 2018). This theory emphasises the value of shared responsibility in operational decision-making in the context of forensic policing, especially when implementing cutting-edge technological systems like automated evidence-tracking software, digital case management platforms and biometric recognition tools.

Democratic leadership encourages a culture of cooperation, information exchange and ongoing learning, which promotes employee engagement. This empowerment improves digital competency, guaranteeing that employees have the know-how and self-assurance to use technological advancements efficiently. Incorporating participative leadership approaches can help forensic services create a staff complement that can adjust to the demands of Industry 4.0 while boosting morale, improving procedural compliance and establishing organisational legitimacy (Choi et al., 2025; Naidoo & Botha, 2024).

Organisational change theory

Foundational models that emphasise structured methods for incorporating new norms, practices and technologies in organisations include Lewin's (1947) unfreeze-change-refreeze model and Kotter's (1996) eight-step change framework. Lewin's model encompasses three main stages: unfreezing current behaviour and

mindsets to prepare for change; implementing new practices, technologies and roles during the change stage; and refreezing to integrate these changes into the organisational culture. In a similar vein, Kotter's framework outlines sequential steps like creating a sense of urgency, forming a guiding coalition, developing and sharing a vision, empowering action and making new approaches a lasting part of the organisation.

In the forensic services sector, democratic leadership facilitates these change processes by involving employees at every stage of transformation. By promoting participatory decision-making, leaders motivate staff to offer their input during the unfreezing phase, collaborate on implementing digital and procedural innovations during the change phase and share responsibility for adopting new norms, technologies and practices during the refreezing or consolidation phase. This inclusive method ensures that reforms in technology and procedures are systematically introduced and accepted by employees, enhancing commitment, ownership and the long-term success of organisational change.

Organisations can execute Industry 4.0 initiatives, including sophisticated digital forensics systems, while maintaining employee engagement, operational correctness and ethical compliance by coordinating leadership approaches with structured change models (Ringson & Matshabaphala, 2024).

Integration of frameworks

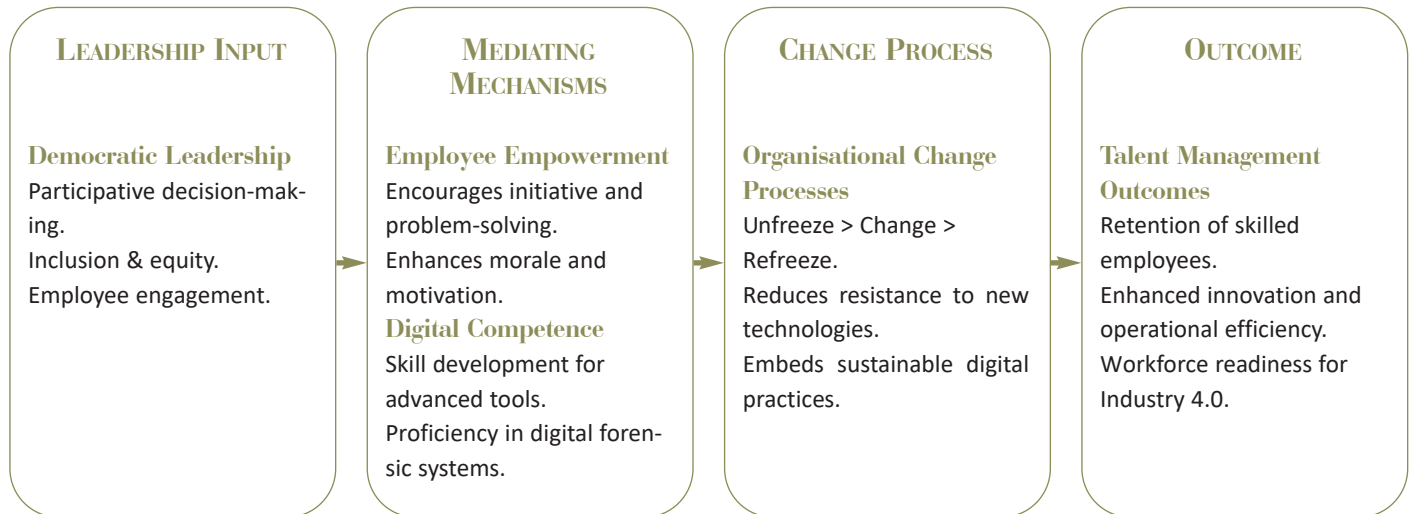
A combination of the organisational change theory and democratic leadership theory offers a thorough lens to examine how leadership affects digital transformation and talent management in forensic services. The "how" of organisational performance is addressed by democratic leadership, which emphasises employee empowerment, digital competency development and participatory decision-making. The "why" is explained by the organisational change theory, which offers organised procedures that sustainably integrate procedural and technical improvements.

Through this integrated framework, democratic leadership is positioned as a crucial mechanism for maintaining technological adoption, promoting innovation and allowing workforce preparation. The concept demonstrates how forensic services may create a resilient, engaged and digitally savvy staff that can thrive in the Industry 4.0 era by tying structured change management and participative approaches together.

Figure 1 presents a diagram for the conceptual framework to illustrate the impact of democratic leadership in Industry 4.0 (see p39).

Lewin's (1947) model suggests that organisational change unfolds through distinct phases: unfreezing existing practices, implementing and integrating new methodologies, and then refreezing these into the organisation's culture. However, it is recognised that such changes take time to fully develop. In this study, data were gathered during the "change" phase, when digitalisation and participatory leadership practices were being introduced but had not yet been fully established. This timing enabled participants to share their experiences as democratic leadership practices began to take shape within the Durban LCRC.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study



As a result, the research examined both the tangible and perceived aspects of democratic leadership, focusing on employees' interpretations, experiences and reactions to participatory decision-making and the processes of digital transformation as they occurred. The analysis was not confined to observing a completed change cycle; it aimed to interpret the participants' experiences and views of democratic leadership as a developing phenomenon within the Industry 4.0 framework.

Data collection took place over three months, between August and December 2022, coinciding with the component's ongoing implementation of digital tools and workflow restructuring. This timeframe was chosen to accurately reflect genuine experiences of organisational change in progress. The research did not presume that democratic leadership was already a fully embedded practice. Instead, participant narratives were examined to uncover patterns and indicators related to democratic leadership behaviours, such as participative decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, and empowerment, to improve an understanding of how these practices affected adaptability and digital readiness.

While the analysis was based on democratic leadership theory, the researcher remained receptive to emerging themes that represented other leadership styles (such as transactional or transformational elements), thereby ensuring the thorough interpretation of information and minimising theoretical bias. This methodology allowed for a holistic understanding of how leadership practices were experienced during the digital transformation process, rather than applying a single theoretical framework in advance.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the viewpoints and experiences of employees in the Durban LCRC regarding democratic leadership in an Industry 4.0 environment. A qualitative method was found to be the most suitable due to the intricate and subjective nature of leadership experiences in forensic settings, increasingly shaped by technological advancements. As democratic leadership is not yet fully implemented in this area, the research concentrated on employees' perceptions, expectations and interpretations of how

this leadership style could function in evolving technological forensic contexts. This approach allowed the researcher to collect in-depth, context-rich insights into how democratic values, such as participation, inclusivity and collaborative decision-making, could potentially improve leadership effectiveness and organisational adaptability in the future.

Research design

An interpretive phenomenological method was employed to investigate how participants perceive and interpret democratic leadership as a possible strategy during the current digital transformation in forensic services (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Sixsmith, 2013). The foundation of this design is the idea that personal experiences and interactions with the organisational environment shape meaning. The study sought to explore how democratic leadership practices, namely participative decision-making, collaborative problem-solving and inclusive communication, impact on employee engagement, digital skills and the adaptation to Industry 4.0 technologies, as reflected in the personal stories of participants. Although these traits can also be found in other leadership styles, like transformational leadership, this research specifically links them to democratic leadership due to its focus on shared authority, collective accountability and transparent communication. These principles are fundamental to the ethos of democratic policing and are crucial for building trust and cooperation in forensic service settings.

This approach is especially well-suited for investigating democratic leadership in forensic services, where integrating technology with operational responsibility, procedural accuracy and staff empowerment intersects. In a workplace that is changing digitally, the design enabled the researcher to find both facilitators and obstacles to inclusive, participatory behaviours, revealing complex views of leadership.

Data collection

Fifteen participants were purposefully chosen, while semi-structured interviews were used to gather detailed information from them. To ensure that they had pertinent insights on leadership

practices in the context of digital transformation, participants were selected based on their jobs, professional backgrounds and involvement in operational or leadership functions within the unit (Creswell, 2013). To collect a range of viewpoints from different levels of the hierarchy, the sample comprised both junior and senior employees.

The purpose of the interview protocol was to learn more about the participants' views of leadership effectiveness amid technological change, their experiences with democratic leadership, their participation in decision-making and the difficulties they had adjusting to Industry 4.0 activities. By encouraging participants to consider how inclusion, teamwork and shared responsibility influenced their engagement, morale and competency, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to stay on the topic while examining emerging themes.

Private interviews were recorded with informed consent, followed by verbatim transcriptions. Throughout the data collection process, rigorous adherence to institutional research norms, voluntary involvement and anonymity were adhered to as with all other ethical considerations.

Data analysis

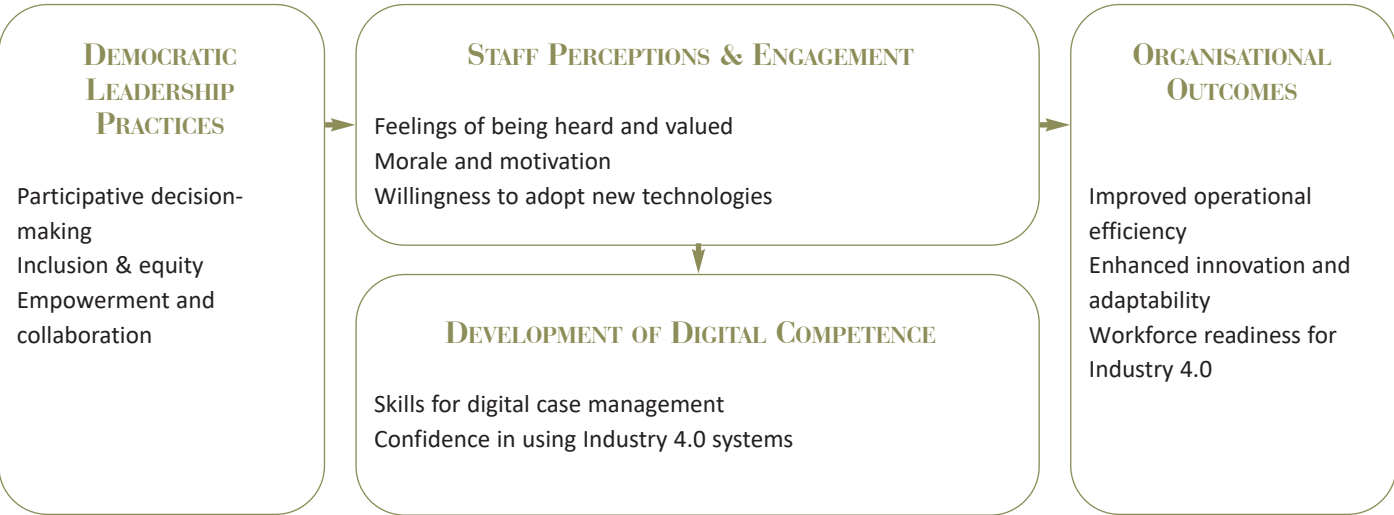
Following Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase methodology, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The breadth and complexity of participants' experiences with democratic leadership in a technological setting were perfectly captured by this approach.

The steps included the following:

- 1. Familiarisation: getting a comprehensive grasp of participants' viewpoints by immersing oneself in the facts through repeated readings of the transcripts.
- 2. First coding: finding textual units relevant to democratic leadership, like communication, empowerment, inclusion, participation and technological adaptation.
- 3. Looking for themes: combining codes into more general themes that represented trends in ways that democratic leadership affected competence, engagement and organisational transformation.
- 4. Examining themes: verifying that themes appropriately reflected the data and complemented the study's goals.
- 5. Identifying and characterising themes: elucidating the core of each theme, especially as it relates to employee empowerment, democratic leadership and Industry 4.0 adaptation.
- 6. Writing the report: combining ideas into a logical story that connects democratic leadership approaches to the experiences, difficulties and results of the staff in the component that is undergoing digital transformation.

While maintaining transparency and rigour, this approach allowed the researcher to investigate how staff adaptation to technological change is impacted on by democratic leadership practices, which include empowerment, engagement and inclusive communication. Identifying obstacles and facilitators was also made easier through thematic analysis, which provided insights into leadership tactics that promote digital preparedness and personnel management in forensic services.

Figure 2: Methodological flow of the study



In Figure 2, the study's methodological flow is presented as exploring democratic leadership in Industry 4.0.

FINDINGS

The preferred leadership style for managing the transition to Industry 4.0 at the Durban LCRC, identified through thematic analysis, was democratic leadership. Participants consistently noted that involving employees in decision-making improved fairness, inclusivity and adaptability in a rapidly changing technological environment. This aligns with the work of Naidoo and Botha (2024), who argue that democratic leadership fosters participatory

governance and innovation in the South African public sector, especially during times of technological change.

Participation and shared decision-making

The significance of participation in leadership emerged as a common theme in the interviews. Participants valued leaders who sought input before making critical decisions, particularly regarding new technologies and procedural changes.

Leaders take, make or cancel decisions democratically. The working team is involved in all decisions. (Participant 3)

This reflects a collaborative governance style where power is exercised inclusively rather than hierarchically. Similar findings were reported by Bhatti, Akram, Usma and Bashir (2021), who discovered that participatory decision-making enhances ownership and adaptability in organisations experiencing digital transformation. In forensic contexts, such inclusion promotes procedural fairness and accountability (Crosby & Bryson, 2018), which are crucial for ethical and transparent policing.

Fairness and legitimacy in leadership

Participants indicated that democratic leadership improved perceptions of legitimacy and fairness. Leaders who solicited input before making decisions were regarded as more open and trustworthy.

This helps management or leaders make the final decision correctly and fairly. (Participant 1)

These insights echo Tyler's (2017) procedural justice theory, which suggests that fair and transparent leadership enhances compliance and institutional legitimacy. Similarly, Pillay and Kahn (2023) contend that fairness in decision-making nurtures trust and a willingness to accept organisational change, particularly in high-stakes contexts like forensic policing.

Inclusivity and open dialogue

Many participants noted that democratic leadership fostered inclusivity and facilitated open discussions, especially during the introduction of new technologies.

This leadership style encourages participation in the decision-making process within the organisation. It allows for freedom of discussion regarding new policies and processes that will affect daily operations. (Participant 6)

This is consistent with research by Zhu, Chou, Qu and Zhu (2022), which highlights that inclusive leadership practices promote psychological safety and lessen resistance to technological change. In the South African public sector, inclusivity has been recognised as a key factor in improving employee morale and cohesion during organisational reforms (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2023).

Employee buy-in and organisational commitment

Participants frequently linked employee commitment and ownership to democratic leadership.

This leadership style benefits the organisation by securing employee buy-in, as they feel involved in the decision-making process. (Participant 5)

These findings are supported by Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2019), who showed that participative leadership results in greater motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. In forensic policing, buy-in is especially crucial since the successful adoption of digital technologies relies on cooperation, precision and adherence to protocols (Ullah et al., 2021).

Equality and respect in the workplace

Democratic leadership was also associated with the principles of equality and respect.

This style of leadership ensures everyone is treated equally, and if a rule is proposed, it applies to everyone, regardless of race or gender. (Participant 10)

This finding resonates with Kgatle (2020), who found that equitable leadership fosters organisational unity and fairness, reinforcing democratic values within public institutions. In policing scenarios, equality not only supports constitutional principles but also boosts internal cohesion and employee well-being (Naidoo & Botha, 2024).

Communication and leadership responsiveness

While participants praised democratic leadership, they also identified areas needing enhancement, particularly in communication and proactive planning.

Leadership needs to adopt a more democratic or strategic approach. They should be proactive in decision-making and planning. Communication within the office requires improvement. (Participant 3)

This aligns with research by Yukl and Gardner (2020), who argue that participative leadership must be supported by effective communication systems to maintain engagement. Ahmad and Karim (2019) similarly found that transparent communication plays a key role in mediating the relationship between leadership style and employee performance during digital transitions.

Summary of findings

In summary, democratic leadership was regarded as crucial for fostering ownership, trust, collaboration, fairness and inclusivity. These are key elements for successfully navigating Industry 4.0 transformations within forensic policing. These findings also reinforce earlier research (Naidoo & Botha, 2024; Bhatti et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2022), collectively suggesting that participatory and inclusive leadership strategies enhance adaptability, legitimacy and morale in organisations undergoing technological evolution. This study thus positions democratic leadership not just as a current practice, but as an appealing and contextually relevant model for guiding digital transformation in South Africa's forensic services.

DISCUSSION

The findings validate that the basis for organisational adaptation to Industry 4.0 in forensic services is democratic leadership. Participants continuously emphasised its function in promoting equity, inclusivity and ownership of organisational change. It is important to highlight three key findings that are backed up by participant narratives and literature.

■ Democratic leadership fosters participation and fairness

The study revealed that when leaders actively involved staff members in decision-making, they felt more committed. Workers connected this inclusivity to increased morale, credibility and justice. Fair procedures guarantee that operational and ethical criteria are fulfilled in forensic policing, where handling evidence necessitates precision and responsibility.

This supports the claim by Naidoo and Botha (2024) that institutional accountability in South African public services is improved by participatory governance. Crucially, the forensic setting emphasises the importance of fairness because choices regarding new

technologies or rules have an impact on staff performance, legal compliance and evidence integrity. As a result, democratic leadership increases confidence in institutional results as well as in leadership.

While fairness was underlined, some participants also mentioned the continuation of hierarchical disparities between management and teams, which have the potential to undermine participation efforts. This implies that, while democratic leadership ideas are widely accepted, their practical application still requires structural support.

■ Democratic leadership enhances innovation and adaptability

To comply with Industry 4.0, businesses must implement technologies like predictive analytics, biometric systems and digital case management. These technologies require employee flexibility and ongoing learning. The results demonstrate how democratic leadership fosters flexibility by creating an environment of candid communication and collective invention ownership.

According to Choi et al. (2025), employee resistance to technological change is decreased by the promotion of digital resilience through inclusivity and participative decision-making. Participants corroborated this statement, emphasising that their commitment to new procedures increased when they were included in the decision-making process.

Democratic leadership decreased the possibility of passive opposition and improved the component's capacity for group learning by fostering discussion and feedback. As a result, innovation was co-created rather than imposed top-down, guaranteeing greater sustainability and acceptance.

■ Communication as a cornerstone of democratic leadership

Participants emphasised that, despite the advantages of democratic leadership, communication gaps are a major obstacle. Leaders need to improve proactive communication and reduce the perceived gap between frontline employees and management.

During the digital transformation process, open communication lowers levels of uncertainty and increases trust. Similarly, Decker (2022) highlights that open-door policies encourage assistance and responsiveness during times of transition. According to the results, democratic leadership runs the risk of being weakened by misunderstandings, misinformation or a sense of managerial distance if intentional efforts are not made to maintain constant communication.

Therefore, communication is both a vital facilitator and a possible vulnerability of democratic leadership. Leaders must set up organised routes for input, give frequent updates on technology advancements, and set an example of transparency in their own actions if they want it to reach its full potential.

■ Synthesis

When combined, these revelations show that democratic leadership offers a dual benefit. Through equity and diversity, it ensures employee involvement while fostering creativity and flexibility in the context of Industry 4.0. However, consistent structural support and effective communication techniques are critical to its success.

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that democratic leadership could be an effective strategy to address the changes brought into forensic policing by Industry 4.0, according to the views of employees in the Durban LCRC. Participants emphasised that democratic values, like participative decision-making, inclusivity, fairness and transparent communication, may improve employee engagement, digital skills and the organisation's ability to adapt in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. While these advantages align well with democratic leadership principles, it is important to note that similar benefits might also be attained through other modern leadership styles, such as transformational or inclusive leadership. The study does not assert that democratic leadership is definitively the best option; instead, it positions it as a relevant and promising framework for enhancing engagement, trust and operational efficiency amid digital transformation.

Future research could empirically assess various leadership styles in forensic contexts to determine which methods most effectively facilitate the adoption of Industry 4.0.

The practice of community policing should be strengthened to improve partnerships with the community and develop various programmes to educate people about crime and the consequences thereof.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several practical recommendations are offered in light of the findings to improve democratic leadership and assist the Durban LCRC in navigating Industry 4.0:

■ Institutionalise participatory decision-making

Digital feedback platforms, staff forums and joint decision-making committees are examples of organised consultation methods that must be used to formalise democratic leadership. This guarantees that involvement is ingrained as an organisational norm rather than relying on specific leaders.

■ Enhance transparent communication

Leaders should use digital communication channels, open-door policies and frequent briefings to close the gap between frontline employees and management. Clear communication lowers uncertainty regarding technological change, increases trust and explains the reasoning behind decisions.

■ Promote equality and inclusivity

Decisions, rules and policies must be enforced uniformly for all people, regardless of rank, gender or colour. Participants placed a high value on equality as the cornerstone of democratic governance. Leadership techniques that incorporate diversity will promote unity and equity, boosting morale, discipline and cooperation.

■ Strengthen leadership training

The main objectives of leadership development programmes should be communication, conflict resolution and participatory practices. To prepare leaders to handle technological changes while upholding accountability and fairness, training for the forensic policing environment must be customised.

■ Support staff empowerment

Training in digital skills and ongoing professional development are essential for preparing staff for emerging technology. Employee capacity will be in line with Industry 4.0 objectives since

empowered employees are more inclined to welcome innovation and are less likely to oppose change.

■ Encourage hybrid leadership practices

Democratic leadership must continue to be the foundational approach, seamlessly incorporating strategic foresight into its execution. Leaders work together to anticipate resource needs, prepare for technological advancements and ensure that participative decision-making is in line with the institution's long-term objectives. This synergy between inclusivity and strategic vision allows the organisation to proactively navigate the changes of Industry 4.0 while fostering engagement, trust and operational efficiency.

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ARTICLE

Impact and Challenges in the use of Social Media in Policing and Law Enforcement in Ghana

Dr Ogochukwu C. Nweke

School of Policing and Law Enforcement, STADIO

Email: bravellb@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6956-5345>

Dr Smita Francis

Postgraduate Supervisor, STADIO

Email: smitafrancis@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6974-4911>

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 21st century, law enforcement entered an information age where maintaining order is mediated by technology, intelligence and data. In keeping with this development, law enforcement agencies in several nations use social media in their daily operations. The Ghana Police Service also uses social media to enhance law enforcement in Ghana. This study aimed to enhance the effective use of social media for law enforcement by exploring the benefits, disadvantages and challenges that face the use of social media by the Ghana Police Service. The study applied the qualitative case study design and gathered data from 21 participants with a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data for the study. It was observed that some of the benefits of social media use for policing include enhanced public engagement, crime prevention and intelligence gathering, improved transparency and accountability, and community support and collaboration. However, some challenges that emerged from the interviews include technical and digital literacy gaps, poor internet connections and cybersecurity threats. The Ghana Police Service can ensure that it safely uses these opportunities by investing in digital infrastructure, establishing clear ethical standards, enhancing cybersecurity technologies and providing regular training for officers.

KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

Digital communication ethics, Ghana Police Service, law enforcement strategies, public engagement, social media policing

INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement refers to the policies and procedures used by various official and informal institutions and groups within the community to regulate social interactions and practices, guarantee the safety of its members and compel them to uphold the standards and values that the community expects of them (Akella & Cannon, 2017). It is acknowledged that the police department is the primary organisation in charge of maintaining community law enforcement across several countries globally (Cordner, 2023). Policing is defined as systematic methods for maintaining peace, enforcing the law, investigating and preventing crimes, conducting various investigations and coordinating related information sharing, some of which may entail the deliberate use of force (Zulyadi, 2020).

At the beginning of the 21st century, law enforcement entered an information age where maintaining order is mediated by technology, intelligence and data (Brunson & Miller, 2023). Police and law enforcement officers are increasingly seen as knowledge workers who process and assess risk-based information rather than mere crime fighters committed to sporadic patrols and quick reactions (Brunson & Miller, 2023; Haggerty & Ericson, 1999). In keeping with this shift, law enforcement agencies in several nations use social media to disseminate intelligence, perform online monitoring, reconstruct incidents and gather official information regarding the whereabouts, personalities and motives of suspects and victims (Huang, Wu, Huang & Bort, 2017). Social media consists of web-based platforms that promote and facilitate interaction, communication and the production and sharing of content within online communities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Fallik, Deuchar, Crichlow and Hodges (2020) define social media as a collection of open-source, computer-mediated networking sites, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp and YouTube. Kepios (2025) shows that there were 5.24 billion social media users worldwide at the start of January 2025, equating to 63.9 per cent of the total global population. As of January 2024, Ghana registered 7.4 million social media users (Sasu, 2024). Most users of these platforms access them several times daily and many refer to them daily (Fallik et al., 2020). As a result, social media is typically where the general population gets most of their information about current events. Thus, social media, whether it be through microblogging (Twitter), photo and video sharing (Instagram, YouTube), or social networking (Facebook), has completely changed the dynamics of the creation, consumption and distribution of information (Fallik et al., 2020). Police agencies can effectively disseminate relevant information to the public through social media technology (Meijer & Thaens, 2013). Police departments may, therefore, benefit from using social media since information can spread more quickly and reach a wider audience through these platforms than through conventional channels like the traditional media (Fallik et al., 2020).

Social media is used by law enforcement for two primary purposes: to support criminal investigations and manage public opinion and disseminate information. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) polled 800 United States police departments and discovered that nearly three-quarters (71.1%) of them used social media most frequently to assist with investigations (IACP,

2019). Police departments in other affluent countries also use these tools. As an example, Dzieza (2011) notes that Scotland Yard uploaded images of riot protectors to their Flickr account in 2011 to aid in the capture of riot suspects. Influencing public opinion and spreading information is the second most popular use of social media. Goldsmith (2015) states that law enforcement uses social media for recruitment, agency branding, reputation management, community involvement and virtual scene control.

Despite these international perceptions, there are scant Ghana-specific empirical studies that critically analyse how the Ghana Police Service uses social media in its operational and communicative functions. Although the research in other jurisdictions is instructive, it lacks sufficient suitable lessons in the individual sociocultural and institutional contexts upon which Ghanaian policing has been practised. The unique problems of the country, including weak technological infrastructure, scarce resources, the challenge of public distrust, etc., require a contextual understanding. Although a few scholars, such as Nutsugah, Essandoh, Kuranchie and Kuupuolo (2022) and Nweke and Francis (2024), have explored police-citizen engagement and technology adoption in Ghana, their work has not focused specifically on how social media influences policing outcomes, transparency and community trust.

The current study thus bridges that gap by examining the advantages, disadvantages and issues that are related to the application of social media in policing and law enforcement in the Ghanaian setting. It contributes to the general debate of digital policing by presenting evidence-based research relying on the feedback of officers, local advocates and communication experts, which will add both theoretical and practical value to the role of technology in community safety.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media in policing: An overview

One of the most significant reforms in the communication aspect of law enforcement and interaction with the public in the past several decades is the use of social media in policing. It has redefined how police agencies interact with citizens, share intelligence and respond to public concerns in real time. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites, a form of social media, as "... web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (John, Egbeyemi & Oniyide, 2020:76). In policing, the networks have turned out to be information centres and accountability arenas.

Studies, globally, indicate that police organisations use social networking sites, including Facebook, X (previously Twitter), YouTube and WhatsApp to share information, monitor suspects and establish relationships with the communities (Meijer & Thaens, 2013; Fallik et al., 2020). Social media enables the transmission of official messages and crowd-sourced information within a short time, thus bridging the gap between the police and the citizens. According to Cordner (2023), policing in the 21st century

has become more reliant on the massive application of intelligence, technology and data-driven insights. Such tools allow law enforcement officers to do more than merely fight crime, although they also give officials leverage to control perceptions and generate legitimacy in their jurisdictions.

However, the use of social media by the police is not without its complications. Goldsmith (2015) cites the emergence of what he refers to as the phenomenon of "Disgracebook policing", in which an ill-timed or an insensitive post could easily result in a reputational crisis. Although the digital space allows uninterrupted communication, it presents law enforcement with unprecedented scrutiny, misinformation and ethical dilemmas. These tensions illustrate the fact that social media is both an empowerment instrument and a point of institutional weakness, depending on how the media is handled.

Technology acceptance and diffusion of innovation theories

Understanding how the Ghana Police Service adopts and integrates social media requires a theoretical lens that explains behavioural and organisational readiness. Two frameworks stand out as relevant, namely, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory.

The TAM, which was postulated by Davis (1989) and later expanded by Alsharida, Hammood and Al-Emran (2021), indicates that the acceptance of new technology among people is influenced by two variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the context of policing, social media platforms are more likely to be used by police officials who believe that the tools will enhance their efficiency, communication or investigation outcomes. In the Ghana Police Service, with high operational requirements and varying digital literacy, perceived usefulness dominates the ease of use. This is why some officials are excited about engaging in social media, while others are hesitant or do not want to engage.

Complementing this is the DOI theory of Rogers (2003), which is further discussed by Dearing and Cox (2018). The theory explains the spread of new ideas and technologies in organisations in stages. It starts with the early adopters and extends to the laggards. In policing, diffusion is influenced by leadership support, access to resources and organisational culture. In the case of the Ghana Police Service, regional connectivity, hierarchy and training opportunities vary and influence the speed of the spread of digital practices. Officials in urban command centers may be better motivated and more exposed to using new technology than those in rural or resource-constrained areas.

All these theories, together, point to the fact that institutional readiness, perception and culture are not technical decisions, but social phenomena that must be considered when it comes to the implementation of technology in law enforcement. They provide a foundation for understanding why the benefits of social media are unevenly realised across different parts of the Ghana Police Service.

Community policing and digital engagement

The concept of community policing (COP) has long been recognised as a pillar of democratic law enforcement. It prioritises

collaboration, transparency and mutual trust between the police and the communities they serve. According to Awoyemi, Attah, Basiru and Leghemo (2025), community policing aims to change the function of the police from an autonomous power to an accessible partner in the process of solving social problems. Social media is now a new development in this philosophy, with digital spaces where community safety issues, complaints of the people and civic dialogues take place in real time.

The use of social media has been discussed by researchers such as Meijer and Torenvlied (2016) and Walsh and O'Connor (2019) as a logical continuation of community policing ambitions, since it enhances the degree of interaction and generation of safety outcomes through co-production. Online interaction enables the police officials to access some sections of the population that the use of traditional patrols or townhall meetings may not be reaching. As an example, the dissemination of real-time crime notifications or data on missing persons will promote a spirit of collaboration, while the reaction of the public will contribute to the development of responsive policies.

In Ghana, where there has historically been fluctuation between suspicion and cooperation between police and citizens, digital platforms present new opportunities towards rebuilding trust. Yet, such opportunities rely heavily on the consistency, tone and transparency of online communication. One insensitive post or delayed response can easily destroy goodwill. The success of community-oriented digital policing, therefore, depends on technical competence and emotional intelligence on the part of the officers handling public-facing accounts.

Empirical studies and identified gaps

Existing empirical studies show that the use of social media by African police services is on the rise, but with mixed results. In their study, which focused on the police-citizen interaction in Ghana, Nutsugah et al. (2022) found that despite making the police more accessible and responsive, the cyberbullying of officials and their misinformation has emerged because of the internet. Similarly, Mustapha and Gama (2024) studied the application of social media by the police in Malawi and discovered that resistance to change and infrastructural barriers were the biggest challenges.

Nweke and Francis (2024) further argue that the integration of technology, including social media and mobile data systems, can go a long way in improving operational efficiency and public accountability within the Ghana Police Service. Their work, however, is much more about the technology adoption and less about social media as a phenomenon per se. Consequently, there is a paucity of focused empirical studies seeking to examine how social media, in particular, is enhancing or limiting the performance of law enforcement in Ghana, particularly in terms of community engagement, transparency and institutional trust.

This gap is of utmost importance considering the particular combination of urban-rural digital inequalities, policy shortcomings and cultural perceptions of policing in Ghana. While there are lessons to be learned from other global literatures about digital policing, there is a lack of an adequate sociotechnical understanding of the law enforcement situation in Ghana. Hence, the purpose of this

research is to fill that vacuum by investigating the benefits, disadvantages and challenges of the use of social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana. The findings offer both theoretical knowledge and pragmatic information to strengthen the digital capacity and public accountability of the Ghana Police Service.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

This study used the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach helped the researchers explore the Ghana Police Service's use of social media in law enforcement practices. The researchers used the case study design, which aids the thorough understanding of a current problem or incident in a confined system (Starman, 2013:33). The qualitative case study design was used because it facilitates a detailed exploration of the use of social media in policing and law enforcement in the case of the Ghana Police Service. It allowed the researchers to gather rich contextual information from different stakeholders (e.g. the Public Affairs Department (PAD) officers and members of the public) and examine positives and negatives within an actual environment.

Participants

Twenty-one participants were included in the study's sample size. The researchers' requirements and viewpoints played a major role in determining this sample size. The researchers' judgment, informed by the study's goals, was used to set the sample size. The participants were selected from three regions: Greater Accra, Ashanti and the Northern regions, which represent the southern, middle and northern belts, respectively. The choice of samples from these areas ensured that the information gathered and the study's conclusions accurately reflect the benefits, disadvantages and challenges of using social media in the Ghana Police Service. Purposive sampling was used to choose the study's participants. The purposive sampling technique, as opposed to random sampling, ensures that the final sample includes certain cases of people who might be included in the research study. The goals and purpose of this investigation justified the adoption of a purposive technique as the sample was supposed to comprise distinct groups of persons with strong and divergent opinions regarding the use of social media in policing in Ghana (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020).

This study received ethical approval through the Ethics Review Committee of STADIO Higher Education South Africa (Unique reference number: Stadio-202302-23414434) and the Ghana Police Service (Ref: PAD/RP/VOL.1/14). The research was also conducted in accordance with the principles of voluntary participation, the principles of confidentiality and informed consent. The participants were informed of the objective of the research, their right to quit at any stage and the steps that would be taken to protect their anonymity. The transcripts and the presentation of the findings were not conducted using personal identifiers. The process served as an important part of the research to uphold the integrity of the research project and secure the comfort and trust of all the participants during data collection.

Table 1 displays the specifics of the population and sample that were part of this investigation.

Table 1: Description of study population and sample size

Population	Sample size
Ghana police officials	13
Community safety advocates	4
Cybersecurity consultant	2
Digital communication consultant	2
Total	21

Source: Authors' construct

Data collection and analysis

The study employed an interview guide to collect information for the study. The interview guide had three main components. The first section gathered data on the benefits of social media in policing, the second section focused on the disadvantages of social media use in policing, while the third section gathered data on the challenges faced by the Ghana Police Service in the utilisation of social media for law enforcement. Before the interviews, the guide was shared with colleagues for peer review to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant and capable of eliciting the type of information needed to address the study objectives. Their feedback was used to improve the wording and order of questions which improved the overall quality of the instrument. The researcher was granted permission by the Ghana Police Service and other relevant entities to collect data from the targeted individuals. The interview guide was physically handed over to the participants through face-to-face interaction at their workstations. Some participants requested that the researchers conduct their interviews from their workstations at a time that works for them. During scheduled interviews, participants were asked open-ended questions as contained in the interview guide. To ensure the accuracy of the data gathered during the analysis stage, some interviews were recorded with the participant's consent. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process, while participation was completely voluntary. Interviews with each participant lasted around 30 minutes.

The six-step thematic analysis method created by Braun and Clarke (2006:15) was used to examine the data. The interview recordings were first meticulously examined and transcribed for familiarisation. Secondly, pertinent codes concerning the three objectives of the study - benefits, disadvantages and challenges of employing social media in policing - were identified during preliminary coding. The identified codes were then grouped into potential themes to ensure that these codes reflected important trends in the data. These themes were explained and their alignment with the dataset was checked. Key findings were summarised and the final themes were narrated with supporting direct quotes from the participants.

FINDINGS

The study sought to achieve three main objectives, namely identifying the benefits of using social media in policing and law enforcement, the disadvantages of social media use in policing and law enforcement and challenges that impede the effective use of social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana. The findings have been presented as follows:

Benefits of using social media in policing and law enforcement

The study explored the benefits of using social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana. The themes that emerged from the interview with the participants include enhanced public engagement, crime prevention and intelligence gathering, improved transparency and accountability, and community support and collaboration.

Enhanced public engagement

Enhanced public engagement emerged as a significant benefit of using social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana. Some of the participants indicated that the Ghana Police Service uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, which help the police service to issue timely information, warn and start positive discussions with the people. It was revealed that the timely release of information and communication with the public through social media generates increased affection, encourages more public trust in the service and promotes teamwork towards the maintenance of security and order. One of the interviewees stated the following.

Social media has transformed how we engage the communities we work with. Nowadays, we can respond immediately to their challenges, disseminate life-saving information and even seek feedback that guides our work to become better. That interaction was not in place before and has also played a major role in how the people interact and engage the police. [Participant 1, Ghana Police Service]

Another stakeholder also referred to the benefits of social media in sharing information promptly.

Social media enables us not to rely on the conventional media to bring crucial messages. Social media helps us to reach thousands of people simultaneously on issues such as traffic warnings, public safety advice or crime prevention tips. This has not only raised our profile but empowered the public to be more connected and informed. [Participant 2, Ghana Police Service]

It was further shown that the use of social media has improved the trust of the public in the Ghana Police Service. This is what one of the participants stated:

The direct contact channels of reaching out to the public have shortened the gap between the people and the police. The community appreciates how the police have become open and reactive on social media, which has increased their trust in the police and even helped our investigations by providing helpful information to the police. [Participant 3, Community Safety Advocate]

Transparency and accountability

The findings also showed that social media facilitates transparency and accountability of the Ghana Police Service. The participants indicated that the Ghana Police Service uses social media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram to provide constant updates on cases, release results of investigations and manage issues to show transparency and enhance trust and confidence in members of the public. The participants highlighted that pre-emptive sharing of information silences misinformation,

dissolves rumours and shows members of the public that law enforcement agencies are committed to the maintenance of justice and integrity. One of the participants asserted:

We inform the public and make them understand what we do through social media. When people view reports on investigations and how cases are handled, they perceive that we are open and honest. It is very powerful to be trustworthy and credible - that is the policing secret. [Participant 4, Ghana Police Service]

A second respondent also contributed the following regarding the impact of transparency on police-public relations.

How we utilise social media to broadcast the arrest of criminals, missing persons and even issues we're dealing with changes people's perception about us. They see we have nothing to hide, and that openness makes them more willing to cooperate with us because they feel like they own the process. [Participant 5, Ghana Police Service]

The following alternative perspective came from a community leader.

I have witnessed the way police use social media to release ongoing investigations and bring people in. We feel included, respected and informed, and the result is more citizens stepping forward to provide information and tips. That kind of trust only builds with transparency. [Participant 6, Community Safety Advocate]

These results position social media platforms and transparency as means by which the Ghana Police Service can be trusted by the citizens and be able to respond to their oversight.

Community support and partnership

According to some of the participants, social media brings the community and the Ghana Police Service together as partners, enabling citizens to become active contributors to policing. With its open lines of communication, reporting and suggestions, social media levels the playing field to the extent that the public is now able to have a direct input into crime prevention and securing their communities, turning law enforcement into a partnership. This dynamic was explained by one official in the Ghana Police Service.

When we ask the public for help on social media - whether it's to identify a suspect, report suspicious activity or give information about a missing person - the response is immediate and overwhelming. This kind of cooperation was difficult to get in the past, but now the public feels that they are part of the solution. [Participant 7, Ghana Police Service]

One of the participants also focused on the fact that social media makes people more responsible and trustworthy.

As a result, people are realising that their voices are heard, and this has increased the number of anonymous tips we have received on social media and neighbourhood-based policing. They have ceased to be just observers; they are active partners who help us to ensure that communities are safe. [Participant 8, Ghana Police Service]

One community leader expressed an impactful view:

The police cannot do it alone to fight crime, and through the use of social media, they've made that clear. Having consulted us, seeking our input on issues, and enabling us to know how our information is being utilised, they are establishing a culture of trust and shared responsibility that is of benefit to all. [Participant 9, Community Safety Advocate]

These findings demonstrate how social media transforms policing from a top-down enforcement system to a partnership-based system, which improves community relationships and safety among residents of Ghana.

Crime prevention and intelligence gathering

Social media has also been an effective tool for crime intelligence gathering and crime prevention for Ghana's security agencies. It was revealed that the Ghana Police Service has been aided in investigation and proactive response to threats trending on the Internet, following criminal trends and public reporting. Law enforcement respondents from across the ranks spoke about how social media is used in intelligence gathering. One senior official explained it as follows.

Social media is part of the everyday toolkit in searching for crime. We track suspicious postings online, see where individuals are and even detect threats before they occur. It's predictive and this has helped us to prevent rather than react to crime. It's having an extra eye everywhere. [Participant 4, Ghana Police Service]

A second official added the following to the success of public collaboration in supplying intelligence.

We get an absolute multitude of tips on our social media pages, which result in some tangible breakthroughs in investigations. People feel free reporting online and this reporting anonymously has enabled us to solve crime effectively and efficiently. [Participant 5, Ghana Police Service]

The community safety advocate affirmed the above, stressing the collaboration of policing today.

The police can't be everywhere, but with social media, they now have millions of virtual informants. Being able to receive information through the Internet hasn't only closed the cases but even prevented crime as well by making criminals feel or know that someone is always watching them. [Participant 6, Community Safety Advocate]

Thus, social media increasingly becomes a means of crime prevention and a means of intelligence gathering and, thereby, a means of policing effectiveness enhancement in Ghana.

Disadvantages of social media use in policing and law enforcement

The study further investigated the disadvantages of social media use in policing and law enforcement. The emerging themes included the spread of misinformation, privacy and ethical concerns, operational security risk and public scrutiny and backlash.

Spreading of misinformation

The dissemination of misinformation is among the greatest shortcomings of social media in policing for the Ghana Police Service. The interview showed that misinformation and rumours circulate easily through social media, which discredits the efforts of the police and causes unnecessary panic among the population. One of the top officials stated the following:

Our biggest problem with social media is misinformation. We have witnessed several false reports of crime or security, which cause fear among sections of the people, before we can even address the fact. We are always denying or clearing misinformation within the public space about security and crime prevention. [Participant 10, Ghana Police Service]

Another participant hinted at difficulties in working when there are rumours.

There are instances where a single viral message has sent panic and the populace has phoned the police lines in such large numbers. Even when we enlighten or clear the facts, the image takes time to rectify. It's a two-edged sword that we have to walk with care. [Participant 11, Ghana Police Service]

A community leader gave their observation regarding public engagement.

Whereas social media allows the police to put out facts in real time, social media also creates room for bizarre rumours to hover. The police and the people need to be more vigilant in terms of what they are posting and reading. [Participant 12, Community Safety Advocate]

These discoveries affirm that social media has effective modes of communication and exchange, but that misinformation continues to present a daunting, complicated task for Ghanaian law enforcement agents.

Privacy and ethical concerns

One of the disadvantages of social media use by police and law enforcement in Ghana is the thin line between efficient policing and upholding the right to privacy of the citizens. As the Ghana Police Service employs social media to gather intelligence and interact with the public, there are issues around boundaries of ethical practice, privacy of data and misuse. The balance is critical in upholding public confidence and providing security and order. A senior police official highlighted this problem by stating that:

Though social media assists us in getting information and cracking cases, there is always a thin line between tracking criminals' behaviour and trespassing into individuals' privacy. We must be careful that we do not cross our limits; otherwise, losing the trust of the people would negate what we are trying to do. [Participant 13, Ghana Police Service]

Another participant mentioned ethics.

Among the things we always talk about is how to responsibly use social media. Just because it is accessible on the Internet does not mean that we can use it without permission. We have to make sure that our lines of questioning are [in] good taste and in deference to the law and dignity of the people we serve. [Participant 14, Ghana Police Service]

One of the community rights activists concurred with the following views:

The public embraces police presence on social media, but it is always preceded by the threat of surveillance and misuse of information. Being open about how the police are handling social media interaction is very important in avoiding ethical failure and maintaining public trust.

[Participant 15, Community Rights Activist]

These facts indicate that, although social media is offering law enforcement agencies powerful tools, privacy and ethical concerns ought to be raised so that public faith and judicial honour are not lost.

Operational security risk

Social media use by the police and law enforcers in Ghana is also at a high level, but with enormous operational security issues, like the leaking of confidential information or tainting of ongoing investigations. According to some of the participants, social media is a platform through which the Ghana Police Service interacts with people and receives information, but the incidence of involuntary disclosure is high, which is a grave issue to be addressed carefully.

A senior official quoted the issue:

One of the most terrifying to me is that one posting alone, which is meant to enlighten the public, can inadvertently expose informative data about an ongoing operation. That's out there on social media; it's no longer possible, very hard to be contained, and that is going to undo months of work or investigation done by the police.

[Participant 16, Ghana Police Service]

A consultant from an independent cybersecurity expert panel made the following comment:

Ghana Police Service has come a long way with social media, but operational security would never be compromised. Training officials in managing digital risk and safe internal communication channels is the answer to prevent costly errors.

[Participant 18, Cybersecurity Consultant]

This feedback emphasises the fact that social media is years ahead in communication and public outreach, but operational security requires constant vigilance and a good system to keep secrets under wraps.

Public scrutiny and backlash

While it has advantages, the use of social media by the police and security agencies in Ghana subjects the Ghana Police Service to a lot of public scrutiny and disapproval. Faux pas on such websites - ill-crafted posts, untimely responses or appearing insensitive - have often readily become reputational crises. The speed with which issues play out on the Internet makes even small errors attract massive audiences of criticism and translate into gigantic losses of public trust.

One of the ranking officials explained that fear as follows:

Social media is something to beat our chests with, but at the same time, it is double-edged. A misstep or an unchecked posting catches on fire, and before you know it, we are dealing with a public relations issue. In a matter of minutes, people are ready with their opinion, and it's always a matter of trying to deal with managing that perception.

[Participant 4, Ghana Police Service]

Another participant remembered a past experience:

We once published a story of an ongoing investigation on social media that the public perceived as too obscure and the response was quick. They accused us of hiding information and [a] lack of transparency. That was a lesson in the importance of transparent, careful communication - even when we can't publish every single detail on social media.

[Participant 5, Ghana Police Service]

An outside opinion came from a media consultant:

The police have managed to seize social media, but they must understand that now the public demands ongoing interaction and accountability. Anything that appears like defensiveness or silence in the middle of a controversy is going to be interpreted as guilt or incompetence and will further exacerbate the backlash.

[Participant 17, Media Consultant]

These exposures highlight that while social media is an interactive public communication medium, public criticism requires strategic communication, rapid response and respect for transparency, even in trying situations.

Challenges that impede the effective use of social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana

The challenges that emerged from the interviews include technical and digital literacy gaps, poor Internet connections and cybersecurity threats.

Technical and digital literacy gaps

One of the Ghana Police Service's major challenges in using social media in policing and law enforcement is the digital literacy and technology gap between its police officials. It emerged that some of the police officials, especially the older ones, do not have the required skills to properly use such digital technologies and social media professionally and respectfully, thus possibly breaking communication and discrediting the police's social media image. The following was noted by one senior police official:

We understand that social media has become part of policing, but the concern is that not all persons in our police service are computer savvy. Others are unable to write good messages or reply promptly to queries on the Internet, and that will lead to delay or even misinformation publicity.

[Participant 7, Ghana Police Service]

One of the participants stressed the need for ongoing digital training.

Social media change[s] so rapidly that even officials who are highly trained grow out of date. We require ongoing training initiatives to educate our officials not just on using these platforms but also on relationship dynamics and opinion online.

[Participant 8, Ghana Police Service]

A third-party digital communications specialist offered a further perspective:

Ghana Police Service are highly advanced online, but unless they keep upskilling, then technical discontinuity will derail what they're trying to achieve. Being first-class at online engagement is not just about being technically skilled, though, and is also [about] having a strategic

brain for understanding how to make effective use of the various social media platforms. [Participant 20, Digital Communications Consultant]

These findings highlight that closing technical and digital literacy gaps through collective capacity development and training is essential to tapping into the full potential of social media use in policing without jeopardising possible mistakes.

Cybersecurity threats

The increased use of social media by the Ghana Police Service is an equally grave cybersecurity threat. The ongoing hacking of and cyberattacks on police accounts and personal information are a priority category in operational security and public trust. The participants highlighted that drastic measures should be taken to enhance cybersecurity so that social media sites do not become liabilities rather than assets. One of the top IT officials was anxious to make it clear:

More official Facebook and Twitter (X) are lucrative targets for cyber-breach and, should they be hacked, exclusion is a costlier price. Misinformation gets spread in the police banner, fear-inspiring and eroding years of public trust-building. Complex digital screening needs to be done, but we're perpetually underfinanced. [Participant 16, Ghana Police Service]

Another recent experience was related by another official:

Last year, we experienced a coordinated attack on our communications system. We detected it early enough, but it was an eye-opener on how ill-prepared we were for top-level cyberattacks. Without regular cybersecurity training and support, we are exposed every day. [Participant 1, Ghana Police Service]

A cybersecurity expert noted the following as prevention measures:

For police officials, obtaining electronic evidence is just as important as protecting hard turf. To lose one would compromise sensitive investigations, discredit witness protection efforts, or even, in a worst-case scenario, put compromising officials' lives at risk. No longer an option - but a necessity - to invest in cybersecurity infrastructure and a trained response team. [Participant 18, Cybersecurity Consultant]

Such exposures reinforce the need for the Ghana Police Service to step up its cybersecurity to try and guard its operational integrity as well as public trust in its online outreach programmes.

Lack of access or poor Internet connection

One of the key issues facing social media operations of the Ghana Police Service is the limitation of Internet access, particularly in rural areas. The participants highlighted that the ability to interact with people using social platforms and communicate with the police is severely affected when there is no Internet connection or it is available only intermittently. The digital divide, therefore, leads to a communication disadvantage, making some groups less informed and cut off from public safety activities.

A district police commander had this to say:

In the rural areas, like where I am, Internet access is extremely poor to the extent that even putting up a simple update takes hours. It does not pay to be online, and the locals in that regard miss important safety updates and outreach opportunities others in urban postings take for granted. [Participant 19, Ghana Police Service]

One official identified a work challenge as:

We are encouraged to use social media for public education and crime prevention, but where there is no stable Internet, it becomes a virtual impossibility. Sometimes, we must travel to the next town just to post a message or respond to questions. It makes our work difficult and brings social media as a policing tool down. [Participant 5, Ghana Police Service]

A media specialist highlighted the broader significance:

[The] digital divide in Ghana is a reality. It is a barrier to effective and inclusive enforcement of the law through communication. There will always be excluded groups as long as we do not solve the Internet infrastructure problems, and that is the contradiction to the widespread endeavour to provide people with public safety and trust. [Participant 21, Media and Communications Specialist]

The findings confirm the significance of rural Internet connectivity, with the priority of realising the maximum use of social media in Ghanaian policing.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal the potential and challenges of social media use in law enforcement and policing in Ghana. The results will need to be placed in an expanded theoretical and academic context to release the maximum potential. The use of social media for increased public engagement, as shown by the participants, is in line with the COP model. The COP model emphasises

Table 2: Summary of findings		
Benefits of social media use	Disadvantages	Challenges
❖ Enhanced public engagement ❖ Crime prevention and intelligence gathering ❖ Improved transparency and accountability ❖ Community support and collaboration	❖ Spread of misinformation ❖ Privacy and ethical concerns ❖ Operational security risk ❖ Public scrutiny and backlash	❖ Technical and digital literacy gaps ❖ Poor internet connections ❖ Cybersecurity threats
Source: Authors' construct		

cooperation, openness and mutual development of trust between police and the public. The benefit of using social media such as Facebook and X for posting real-time public safety messages, prompting debates and alerts makes it possible for the Ghana Police Service to achieve such ideals as openness, cooperation and trust, which creates a feeling of collective ownership of public safety. Meijer and Thaens (2013) assert that the public may have more opportunities to interact with and hold the police responsible because of police agencies' increased social media accessibility. Studies have shown that social media can improve public opinions about the legitimacy and efficacy of the police (Meijer & Thaens, 2013).

Similar studies have shown a strong correlation between public compliance with the law and perceived police legitimacy, making positive opinions of police legitimacy crucial (Nix, 2017; Boateng, 2018 & Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2024). Social media platforms help collect and disseminate information on a range of subjects for both the public and law enforcement (Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016). Open interaction with citizens has not only enriched participants but has also encouraged citizens to play active roles in crime prevention. This accords with theoretical expectations that effective community policing strengthens social cohesiveness in addition to reducing crime rates (Awoyemi et al., 2025). The findings also align with the assertion by Walsh and O'Connor (2018), who indicate that social media provides alternative channels for public relations, enabling citizen journalism, the practice of digitally savvy and equipped people documenting abuse, exposing corruption and acting as a check on authority. Social media's viral and networked features can greatly increase the reach and impact of content, making it difficult for the police to seize or control footage and turn local events into globally legible issues.

The findings further illustrate built-in flaws, the most evident one being the dissemination of false information, likely causing public fear. The findings are consistent with a large volume of literature on the "information disorder" paradigm developed by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) that differentiates disinformation from misinformation. Disinformation can be used to subvert the police as well as interfere with the investigations conducted by the police. Complaints expressed by the respondents regarding how rapidly misinformation may spread on social media sites are pointers to proactive online communication exercises, like real-time fact checks and public information campaigns by the Ghana Police Service to combat this evil.

The second overarching issue of concern raised in the findings is a trade-off between quality policing and the privacy rights of citizens. The problem has been identified in literature on surveillance studies that pointed out how new digital technologies threaten to obscure issues of public safety versus citizens' rights (Blocher & Seigel, 2021; Lyon, 2007). Participant observation indicated that although social media is a useful source of information, it is also intrusive, with an attendant invasion of privacy. A consistent policy on the ethical use of social media in policing is thus necessary to reconcile these conflicting interests.

Operational security threats were another concern of the respondents, as they were afraid of being hacked and their police accounts being hacked by cybercriminals. This is in line with the

overall cybersecurity threat to policing agencies across the world, as noted by Holt and Bossler (2015). The danger that police accounts can be compromised and used in disseminating disinformation or revealing secret investigations highlights the need for robust digital security infrastructure and regular cybersecurity training for police officials (Holt & Bossler, 2015).

The study further revealed some challenges that impede the efforts of the Ghana Police Service to effectively use social media to enhance policing and law enforcement in Ghana. Among the real issues extrapolated in the research are the digital divide and the quality of Internet access in rural Ghana. This is in line with technology inequality studies, which affirm that digital exclusion can only serve to widen social inequality in addition to reducing the service delivery that they need (Van Dijk, 2013). For the Ghana Police Service, the gap is not only preventing them from taking their services to the rural towns, but their two-tier model of public safety communication is also under threat. Filling the gap means that efforts should be put in place to establish Internet networks and open up the entire country to be prepared for digital policing programmes. Financial and human resource limitations were also commonly reported as limitations to the responsiveness and activity of the Ghana Police Service on social media. This is corroborated by global research on policing digitalisation that adequate manpower, training and technological assistance must be supplied to facilitate effective online activity (Goldsmith, 2015). In its absence, police use of social media will not reach its full potential. Finally, the research highlights the fact that well-established authoritative, regulative and policy structures need to be created around the regulation of social media use. Non-regulative use is what happens when there are no regulations to enforce, and it even exposes the police service to juridical and public relations crises. It would be in line with international best practice for the Ghana Police Service to formulate new social media rules on ethics and privacy matters, cybersecurity and crisis communication.

In summary, the use of social media in policing and law enforcement increases public engagement, openness and enhances combating crime. However, the Ghana Police Service has to overcome some challenging issues before the Service can harness the full use of social media to support safer and more socially cohesive communities with realistic policy investment in digital capacity building and training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights gained through this study, it is possible to provide several suitable recommendations for consideration to enhance the use of social media in policing and law enforcement in Ghana. These recommendations have been structured to assist in policy formulation, the improvement of the institution and the development of the capacity of the professionals in the Ghana Police Service.

■ Policies and institutional frameworks

The Ghana Police Service and the Ministry of the Interior ought to design an in-depth social media policy clarifying the ethical markers, privacy limits and protocol of crisis-communication issues, as well as duties in controlling content. This kind of framework will assist the Service to strike a balance between transparency and security and ensure that online communication complies with

professionalism. Misuse and incentives of innovative and responsible engagement should also be included in the policy.

■ Capacity building and digital literacy

The research found that a lack of technical skills is a paramount obstacle to the successful use of social media. It is therefore suggested that the Ghana Police Service should create continuous digital skills training programmes for officials of all ranks. These programmes should include platform management, cyber-risk awareness, online etiquette and strategic communication. Training must not be a compartmentalised process but create a learning culture within the institution. It should be regularly updated with the emerging technologies.

■ Cybersecurity and data protection

As hacking and the spreading of misinformation is becoming a greater threat, the Ghana Police Service needs to invest in a robust cybersecurity framework and introduce a specialised digital security department. The execution of regular vulnerability audits, implementing official accounts encryption and multi-factor authentication should be the norm. Cooperation with the Data Protection Commission of Ghana and other agencies in the country will also make it possible to comply with the required standards of data protection in the country.

■ Infrastructure and connectivity improvement

The lack of Internet, especially in rural stations, poses a challenge to equal communication. The government, with public-private collaboration, should intensify the broadband coverage and focus on network reliability for security agencies. Digital policing efforts will continue to exclude marginalised communities without a dependable connection. This problem should be overcome.

■ Community partnership and public engagement

The Ghana Police Service should sufficiently utilise social media by improving the community policing programmes by promoting transparency, ensuring that community issues are addressed in time and announcing success stories to gain the public trust. The ownership of and accountability on the local level can be enhanced by establishing verified regional and district-level accounts on social media. A decentralised vision will introduce citizens to the online nature of the institution and will contribute to the idea of policing as a collective undertaking.

■ Monitoring and evaluation

Lastly, the Ghana Police Service must initiate periodic evaluation processes to determine the efficiency of the social media engagement. Response time, public-trust ratings and quality of online feedback are indicators that may be used to monitor the progress and lead to continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the advantages and disadvantages of social media policing and law enforcement in Ghana and identified existing challenges. The study employed the qualitative approach and interviewed influential stakeholders in the Ghana Police Service and citizens in Ghana. The research identified valuable benefits, which range from enhanced public engagement, crime prevention, intelligence gathering to enhanced transparency and accountability. It also exposed glaring vulnerabilities, such as the dissemination of disinformation, privacy intrusions, operational security gaps and public backlash. The most significant challenges were technical and digital illiteracy, budgetary limitations, policy gaps, cyber intrusions and the lack of Internet access in rural areas for officials and the general public.

In conclusion, social media use has the potential to revolutionise policing but the Ghana Police Service must overcome its internal problems. The Ghana Police Service can ensure that it enhances these opportunities by investing in digital infrastructure, establishing clear ethical standards, enhancing cybersecurity technologies and providing regular training for officers. In doing so, the service should institute a detailed social media policy governing ethical usage, privacy and crisis management; improve digital skills and technology knowledge among police officials; invest in cybersecurity equipment to safeguard confidential information; improve Internet penetration in rural areas for equal public participation; and establish a specialist social media unit within the Ghana Police Service to maintain a permanent and proactive social media presence.

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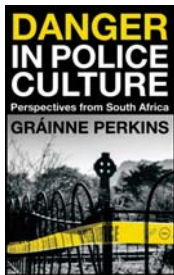
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BOOK REVIEW

By Dr. Stefan Schulz

Department of Social Sciences, Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), Windhoek, Namibia
e-mail: sschulz@nust.na

Danger in Police Culture: Perspectives from South Africa



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Danger in Police Culture: Perspectives from South Africa by Gráinne Perkins, presents her research on danger as a key feature of police work and policing. The author is currently the Chief of Police and Executive Director of Public Safety at the University of Southern Maine, USA. Her professional experience spans three continents (Europe, Africa, North America) and she is working with as many different police agencies.

In eight chapters (see Table 1: Chapter structure), Perkins develops a perspective of how danger, instead of being a monolithic, universally accepted and defined concept, is continuously "constituted and constitutive" (p. 148). She posits that the deconstruction becomes critical for the development of policies and practices to effectively address the danger faced by the police.

Table 1: Chapter structure

1 Introduction	5 Records, reports and respect
2 South African policing	6 Routine danger: avoidance and engagement
3 People and places	7 Memorialising danger
4 Tools of the trade	8 Discussion and conclusion

This perspective emanates from the backdrop of her research, which covers a "critical review of police murder files (dockets); observation of police funerals and memorial services, inspection of material artefacts and over 900 hours of participant observation" (p. 19). The fieldwork provided the foundational ethnographic experience across three different police groups, i.e. uniform (Visible Policing or Vispol), detectives and a Tactical Response Team (TRT) in Baile, a township of approximately 200 000 people, 30 km from Cape Town's central business district (p. 38).

At the beginning of Perkins's explorative study, the reader finds her interest in police culture in the face of high numbers of police murders in South Africa (p. 19), as well as excessive police force and unlawful killings by the police (p. 1) as an associated condition. During her research, however, she became increasingly convinced that these topics are interconnected, and that "understanding police actions requires one to first understand what it is that the police believe they are responding to" (pp. 156f.). In her pursuit of this understanding, Perkins addressed four key questions:

- What do police interactions with the material artefacts of policing reveal about their perceptions and experiences of danger?
- What do official records of police murders reveal about organisational and occupational perceptions and responses to danger?
- How do police dispositions and everyday practices shape, and become shaped by, perceptions and experiences of danger?
- How are police work dangers symbolised and encoded through memorialisation?

The research setting of her study is linked to specific spaces and places of danger at a specific moment in time covered during her fieldwork. Her analysis of the specific and the local stands out, for it equally points towards the general and the global meaning of her findings.

This achievement clearly hinges on the methodological choices the author made for this study, which neither start from any specific theory of (police work) dangers, nor look for any specific conception of danger. The overall objective of "making danger visible" (p. 3), i.e. the danger as perceived by the police, places Perkins's work squarely in the realm of social construction. For her deconstruction and account of danger, Perkins conceives a research

prism which draws on the work of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Theodore Sarbin, respectively (pp. 3-18). Foucault's notions of power and discourse are used in the analysis to reveal how danger is framed and managed through societal structures, discourses and institutions. Bourdieu's concept of habitus and field offers a lens to examine how individuals and groups internalise and react to perceived threats within different social contexts - capital, a form of power, becomes relevant when unpacking habitus in relation to danger. Finally, Sarbin's focus on positionality and narrative psychology, which emphasises how individuals construct narratives about danger based on their social position and subjective experiences, comes into sight.

Ultimately, the author emphasises the interconnectedness of the social and material aspects of life for the advancement of our understanding of policing. The central proposition of the socio-material approach (e.g. Latour, 1991; 2005; Callon, 1998; Law, 2004), that social practices are not solely shaped by human interactions but are also co-constructed by material things, spaces and technologies, is most strongly emphasised in chapters 3 and 4 (see also, below).

As stated above, the book consists of eight chapters, which are briefly discussed hereafter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, the author introduces the topic through the work of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Theodore Sarbin, respectively. Under the heading "The research prism: Making danger visible" the author lays out how each theorist's work opens different angles to approach our understanding of danger. The explication of danger in police culture in terms of these theorists' frameworks provides complementary rather than different points of reference used to understand organisational and occupational police cultures as visible responses to danger. Towards the end of the chapter, Perkins presents her research motivation. The chapter concludes with a short presentation of the organisation of the chapters.

Chapter 2: South African policing

As the heading of this chapter suggests, the author delves into the history of the South African Police Service. Her examination uses the three theoretical lenses in the quest for answers about the face of danger in South African organisational and occupational culture.

Chapter 3: People and places

This chapter concentrates on places (township, police station) and explores how these places, via the people in those places, shape police and community experiences. The focus is first on the township in general, and Baile, the township where Perkins conducted her research, in particular. The text then shifts its attention to the police station and the police officials who work there.

In separate sections, the author describes her fieldwork (participant observation) for her study, alongside members of the three groups (Vispol, detectives and TRT). The chapter ends with a

description inter alia of the author's efforts to bridge the separation between her as a white, Irish woman and the predominantly African males in the working environment.

Chapter 4: Tools of the trade

In Chapter 4, the focus is on the everyday artefacts of policing. Perkins describes how firearms, bullet resistant vests (BRV) and vehicles are not just tools of the trade, but form part of the police "identity kit" (p. 59), which helps to control the public image of their members. In her analysis, they become "interpretive devices" (p. 82). She describes how the fluidity and adaptability of those artefacts' meanings change, depending on context and role, viz., across the three police groups she accompanied and became embedded in during her fieldwork. The subtle shift in the meaning of danger within organisational and occupational culture, as reflected and constructed through the use of equipment, becomes tangible to the reader under the headings "Bullet resistant vests" and "Police vehicles".

Chapter 5: Records, reports and respect

Chapter 5 deals with records of police murders. Three aspects stand out in this regard. Initially, the author looks for answers to the question: what such records reveal about police culture and interpretations of danger. Then she sheds light on how respect and violence intersect in police culture. Finally, she discusses the diverse police perceptions and responses to danger she encountered during her fieldwork alongside the three police groups (Vispol, detectives and TRT). The author concludes the chapter with the realisation that "officers' actions to assert power can exacerbate rather than mitigate danger" (p. 102).

Chapter 6: Routine danger: avoidance and engagement

Chapter 6 continues the exploration of organisational and occupational perceptions and experiences of danger from the previous chapters. Here, the author shows that there are not only contradictions and ambiguities in how danger is dealt with across the three police units, but also critical differences between formal and informal police, i.e. organisational and occupational culture. The organisational culture is not only unable to effectively ensure officials' safety, but also fails to provide an operational environment where officials feel safe. Through the eyes of Bourdieu and Sarbin, the author underlines the importance of the behaviour of the police in their role relationship with the public and acknowledges that "the danger that the police experience or perceive is rooted in the role relationship" (p. 103). With reference to her fieldwork, the author demonstrates and explicates how police across the three police units engage with and avoid dangerous situations and how their perceptions of risk impact on decision-making. In doing so, the author showcases clearly how the police, or better, the variation of the occupational responses to danger, contributes to the very dangers the police encounter in the field.

Chapter 7: Memorialising danger

Chapter 7 is the last chapter where findings from the author's fieldwork are introduced. Here, the author presents how the formal and informal culture of the police, as it relates to

occupational dangers, is epitomised through different types of memorialisation. In her analysis of commemorative acts, such as memorial services and funerals, Perkins adopts a "Foucauldian sense," designating these events as an additional archive of police murders. This strategy reveals multiple, sometimes competing narratives.

Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusion

In the final chapter, the author ties together the main findings of her research. The chapter concludes with a short section pointing to the future of topical research into danger in police and law enforcement settings in general. Here, Perkins offers the theoretical/methodological framework underlining her study as a tool to deconstruct danger, which, through the lenses of the three key thinkers, becomes "historically entrenched, discursively narrated, embedded in time and space, and ... a relational matter" (p. 157).

Summary

In her book **Danger in Police Culture: Perspectives from South Africa**, Perkins offers a fresh perspective on policing and danger. Her research findings hit the discourse about policing and danger at a time when South African police officials are killed at a high rate. The probability of death as a lethal outcome of an encounter with danger varies across time and space, but in comparison with other countries, South Africa ranks among those with the highest murder rates, as well as the highest police death rates (PDR), in the world.

The ethnographic study emanates from the realisation that hitherto danger is mostly taken as if it were a universally accepted and defined concept. Rejecting the taken-for-granted view on danger, Perkins looked for and found cues on how to inform and improve the relationship between the police and the citizenry they serve. Such cues can be found in the contradictions, the juxtapositions and the overlap regarding the potential and actual danger across organisational and occupational cultures in South African policing. Central among the findings is the insight that understanding what it is that the police do and why they do what they do requires one first to understand what it is that the police believe they are responding to.

The insights of this book hold value far beyond the South African Police Service. Perkins's book, which can also be seen as a pilot study in the application of the methodological tools used to unpack how police conceptualise danger, may help law enforcement agencies and policy makers anywhere to develop policies and practical interventions to reduce danger in the ordinary course of police work.

It can be expected that the book will have a wide-reaching international appeal. This major scholarly text is recommended for those involved or interested in policing, police work, policing scholars and policy makers, especially those with a penchant for social construction, and graduate students.