


**SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES**

# *An Exploration of the Support Systems available to South African Police Officers, Visible Policing and the Investigation Division: A study of Durban Central Office, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

A Full Thesis

Presented to

Department of Criminology and Forensic Studies

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Submitted in fulfilment of the

Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology and Forensic Studies

School of Applied Human Sciences

College of Humanities

by

**THANDANANI NGIDI**

213509961

**SUPERVISOR: Prof. Shanta.Balgobind Singh**

**DECLARATION**

This is to confirm that this
thesis is my own work which
I have never previously submitted to any other university for
any purpose. The references used
and cited have been acknowledged.

Signature of candidate…….[redacted]……

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father Sbonelo Wiseman Ngidi and all the South African Police Service members. Thank you for committing yourselves to the creation of a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa.

Growing up I heard amazing stories of how you were involved in the struggle of apartheid and serving the community and the country.

Serving at a young tender age, and you gave up your youth to be of service, participating in endeavours to address the root causes of crime in the community.

Having people chase you and threatening your life, at such a young age and not living at home because enemies are out to get you.

My Daddy Dearest, my hero thank you for dedicating three decades and more of your life as an Honourable Policeman.

I know how much you wanted me to get this PhD before you passed away and it is a milestone because you are still alive and still working as a Policeman.

My Son Lunele during this journey I carried you for 10 months throughout and through my writing you would stay up with me, busy kicking me and that gave me great motivation.

Finally, you arrived and I came to the realisation that I must complete this thesis and make you a proud son.

Your contagious smile and giggles kept me going and motivated me to push hard towards my research.

You are truly one of a kind and giving me the gift of being a mother to you and having the privilege of loving you.

I started this thesis as an individual and I am delighted to end it off with my Son as I am writing this your hugs and kisses are carrying me through and through.

Thank you to all the dedicated Blue bloods.

I dedicate this thesis to the above-mentioned individuals.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my Heavenly Father with **God's** foundation anything and everything is Possible!! Ngiyabonga angiphezi **kwiDlozi** (my Great Ancestor's) ithongo elihle, ithongo labadala. Isithunywa sami esimuhlophe, esihlezi singilondoloza njalo.

***Psalm 51:10-12 ESV**. **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*** This verse carried me throughout my journey and when the going gets tough I always asked that my spirit be renewed within me. I am grateful and forever humbled that through it all I remained resilient and relied on my renewed spirit to give me the willingness to keep on going.

I remember during the years of writing this thesis a lot happened, I faced a lot of challenging times and even lost my Grandmother through the process. I also went through the process of my spiritual journey. This really took a tall on me as I got out of touch with reality and had to concentrate all my energy towards my spiritual journey. I had to go through initiation and ngiyoThwasa. Which is a very confidential process as it touches the spiritual world and ancestors. I then graduated from initiation school and had to adjust to my new reality and my role as a traditional healer (Sangoma) and Umthandazi. The support I received from family, friends and academic colleagues was amazing and I will forever be grateful.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the following for their assistance and support in the completion of this dissertation:

My Son **Lunele** you gave me so much purpose and a reason to make you proud. Without even realizing it you have been my pillar of strength and gave me to much unconditional love and courage to complete my dissertation. I love you forever and always my son **Lunele**, my hearts keeper, my right-hand man and my **General**. Hearing your voice and calling me '**Mooooommmmmmy'** makes my heart skip a beat and puts a spring to my step as I would come running to you and hold you just to tickle you and listen to my **Champion** giggle. Your presence warms everyone's heart because you have such a pure soul and a heart of **Gold**. I love you, **Ngiyakuthanda**!!

My Grandmother **MaMseleku Wami** you believed in me so much and you were a firm believer of education. I am just so shattered that you passed away and you could not witness the

completion of my PhD however I know that your spirit is always with me and you are watching over me. "**MASIMBONGE MASIMBONGE ONOMSA KANGAKA SIMUTHANDA SIMUKHONZE IMIHLA NGEMIHLA HALLELUYAH MUKHULU UMUSA KAJESU SIMENYIWE NAMHLANJE UKUYA KUYE**". This family song also got me through challenging times, and giving thanks to the Lord, and how great he is. **Gogo, Ngikuthanda Kakhulu, Kakhulu**.

My Dearest supportive parents **Sibongile** (*Mommy Dearest*) and **Sbonelo Wiseman Ngidi** *(Daddy Dearest)* my two pillars of strengths to pursue this qualification and for the endless support and encouragement to always do my best. My Siblings Nompilo and Khethelo (Boy) thank you for loving me and supporting me and always asking me "When are you completing this PhD?" Yes, that did encourage me to push hard. My Mah ***Nompumelelo Zulu***, for always motivating me and praying for me and reminding of my strength and how God's timing is always the right time. Mah wami weThongo ***MaNgidi Ntombi kaMzomunye*** ngiyabonga mah ngiyakuthanda and uhlezi ubuza "kanti ulithola nini leliJazi lakho elibovu sengaze ngife?" Mah usaphila and sizobungaza mase nglitholile leliJazi.

To my family at large, koZulu, Mseleku and Ngidi with no particular order I truly appreciate my cousins and aunties, uncles noBaba bami. I love you all and thank you for the phone calls, text messages and for always believing in me.

**Oluwatobi Joseph Alabi** "**Coolest kid in Africa**". I am forever grateful for the establishment of our friendship and mentorship that begun in 2016, outside Memorial Tower Building (MTB) at Howard College Campus. God gave me an academic and career mentor that day, who will guide me into the direction of believing in myself as a scholar when all odds were against me. Through my trials you always told me to trust in God and continue to push through. My prayer warrior, a true brother in Christ with a heart of platinum and a someone who always wants to fill my cup. You always engaged me in opportunities of growth within my academics, career and lifestyle in general. ***"My friend you do well." "No wahala."*** You taught me that no matter what happens in life you need to show up and show off and look good while doing it because one should not wear their problems for the world to see. You taught me so much and I am forever grateful to you. In closing **"*The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."***

**Prof. Shanta Balgobind Singh** (Supervisor: Department of Criminology and Forensic Studies Discipline, University of KwaZulu- Natal) for endless commitment, patience, mentorship and being an awesome academic mother really appreciate you and respect your work ethic.

**Ms. Ayanda Ntuli, Mrs. Sibongile Mthembu**, thank you so much for helping me through the crazy administration and the words of encouragement through the course of my PhD.

My friends from my pre-school, primary, high-school and university all of you one by one you have always given me words of wisdom and have been so supportive. With endless messages, phone calls and even giving cute motivational gifts to complete this PhD. I am forever grateful for this support system.

Last but not least all the ***Blue Bloods*** thank you for always putting your lives on the line and ensuring the safety of all South African citizens.

## ABSTRACT

*Police officers, in particular those assigned to specialised divisions such as the Durban Central Office of the South African Police Service (SAPS), work under immense pressure. They navigate a variety of occupational stressors compounded by socioeconomic and systemic factors. This thesis examines the support systems available to police officers in Durban Central Office's Visible Policing and Investigation Divisions, focusing on their effectiveness, accessibility, and potential barriers to their use. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study uncovers the lived experiences of police officers, revealing the psychological toll of their duties and the complex interplay of factors that affect their well-being.*

*This study situates the discussion within a South African context characterized by high violent crime rates, socioeconomic disparities, and the quasi-military SAPS structure, all of which exacerbate the demands placed upon police officers. Exposure to traumatic incidents, rigid hierarchies, social scrutiny, and inadequate systemic support are among the stressors identified. The stigma surrounding mental health places an additional burden on these officers. While SAPS has implemented programs such as the Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) framework and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), findings suggest that these initiatives often fall short in addressing the multifaceted nature of workplace stress and trauma, particularly within specialized units tasked with handling complex crimes.*

*Utilising social support theory and the Job Demand-Control-Support model, the study critically evaluates existing support interventions. It highlights gaps in the current system, including limited access to resources, hyper-masculine norms, and systemic inefficiencies. Furthermore, the study reveals gendered disparities in male and female officers' experiences. Officers reported pervasive occupational stress tied to prolonged exposure to violent crimes such as homicide, sexual violence, and organised crime. This exposure was compounded by a lack of adequate mental health support. Many cited stigma and fear of career repercussions as reasons for avoiding psychological services. A significant source of stress in SAPS was identified as the rigid hierarchy, which restricted autonomy and cultivated a culture of silence around emotional vulnerability. Gender dynamics also emerged as a critical issue, with female officers experiencing additional barriers, including marginalization and unique forms of stigma tied to seeking support.*

*Moreover, the findings revealed that existing interventions, such as group trauma debriefings and wellness programs, were often viewed as insufficient or inaccessible. Officers frequently described these programs as "one-size-fits-all," failing to account for individual or cultural differences in coping mechanisms. While some participants acknowledged the value of peer support networks, these were informal and inconsistent, leaving many officers without reliable avenues for relief. A recurring theme was the inadequacy of proactive wellness measures, with officers emphasising the need for continuous, rather than reactive, mental health interventions.*

*The findings contribute to the broader discourse on occupational stress and support systems within high-stress professions, offering evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice. These include the integration of holistic wellness programs, the de-stigmatisation of mental health support, and the fostering of an organisational culture that prioritizes officer well-being. By addressing these critical areas, SAPS can enhance the resilience and operational effectiveness of its officers. This will contribute to safer communities and a more robust law enforcement framework.*



***Keywords: Police officers, occupational stress, support systems, mental health support, trauma exposure***

**LIST OF TABLES**

**Table 2.1:** Comprehensive policing excellence framework: strengthening strategies for safety, skills, and compliance
…… 26

## LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 2.1:** National crime rates for major crime categories 2019 – 2023 …… 23

**TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **PTSD** | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| **SAPS** | South African Police Service |
| **DSM-5** | Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders |
| **EHW** | Employee Health and Wellness |
| **CISD** | Critical Incident Stress Debriefing |
| **DPCI** | Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation |
| **DSO** | Directorate of Special Operations |
| **NPA** | National Prosecuting Authority |
| **UK** | United Kingdom |
| **VMBR** | Visual-Motor Behaviour Rehearsal |
| **EAS** | Employee Assistance Services |
| **PFA** | Psychological first aid |
| **SAPU** | South African Police Union |
| **POLMED** | Police Medical Aid |
| **WHO** | World Health Organization |
| **PSWS** | Police Social Work Services |
| **DCPI** | Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation |
| **JDCS** | Job Demand-Control-Support |
| **PE** | Prolonged Exposure |
| **TF-CBT** | Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy |
| **POP** | Public Order Policing |
| **TRT** | Tactical Response Team |
| **CIT** | Cash-in-Transit |

**Table of Contents**

**DECLARATION** ..... **i**
**DEDICATION** ..... **ii**
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... **iii**
**ABSTRACT** ..... **vi**
**LIST OF TABLES** ..... **vii**
**LIST OF FIGURES** ..... **viii**
**TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS** ..... **ix**
**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY** ..... **1**
1.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY ..... 3
1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM ..... 5
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ..... 6
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ..... 6
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY ..... 6
1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION ..... 7
1.7.1 Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study ..... 7
1.7.1 Chapter Two: Exploring the nature of policing, stressors, and support systems: a review of the literature ..... 7
1.7.2 Chapter Three: The theoretical exploration and analysis of support systems, stressors, and resilience among South African police officers ..... 8
1.7.3 Chapter Four: Using a qualitative research design to investigate support systems within SAPS's special crimes division: Methodology, Site and Fieldwork ..... 8
1.7.4 Chapter Five: Behind the badge: Unravelling the demands and complexities of policing in South Africa ..... 8
1.7.5 Chapter Six: An exploration of participants' narratives on the available support systems within SAPS special division ..... 9
1.7.6 Chapter Seven: Conclusion ..... 9
CHAPTER TWO: EXPLORING THE NATURE OF POLICING, STRESSORS, AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS ..... 10
2.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 10
2.2 DIRECTORATE FOR PRIORITY CRIME INVESTIGATION (DPCI) ..... 11
2.3 NATURE OF POLICE WORK ..... 12
2.4 POLICING, STRESSORS, AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF OFFICERS ..... 14
2.5 CATEGORIZING STRESSORS IN POLICING ..... 16
2.5.1. Occupational stressors ..... 16

2.6 AN INSIGHT INTO THE PREVALENCE AND DYNAMICS OF CRIME IN SOUTH AFRICA ..... 22
2.7 PERSONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY POLICE OFFICERS IN SOUTH AFRICA ..... 24
2.8 MANAGING STRESS IN A POLICE ENVIRONMENT ..... 31
2.8.1. Maintaining a healthy police service ..... 33
2.9 SAPS SUPPORT SYSTEMS: ACCESSIBILITY, RELIABILITY, AND EFFECTIVENESS ..... 36
2.9.1 Historical context and evolution of police support systems in South Africa ..... 41
2.9.2 Comparative analysis of police support systems ..... 49
2.9.3 Gender and support systems in policing ..... 53
2.9.4 The role of peer support networks and informal coping mechanisms ..... 57
2.9.5 Burnout and compassion fatigue in policing ..... 60
2.9.6 Police officers, public perception and mental health ..... 64
2.9.7 The impact of institutional policies on police support systems ..... 68
2.9.8 Technological interventions and digital support systems in policing ..... 70
2.9.9 Police training and psychological Preparedness ..... 74
2.9.10 Post-traumatic growth and resilience in police officers ..... 78
2.9.11 Substance abuse and coping mechanisms among police officers ..... 82
2.9.12 Legal and ethical considerations in police mental health support ..... 87
2.10 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMMES ..... 90
2.11 EXISTING TRAUMA INTERVENTION PROGRAMS OFFERED BY SAPS ..... 94
2.11.1 Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) ..... 95
2.11.2 Suicide prevention program ..... 95
2.11.3 Stress management programme ..... 96
2.12 BARRIERS TO USING SAPS SUPPORT STRUCTURES ..... 98
2.13 EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF POLICE WORK ON POLICE OFFICERS AND THE NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT ..... 99
2.13.1 Long-term effects of stress and trauma on police officers ..... 102
2.13.2 Enhancing mental health and job performance in policing ..... 104
2.14 CONCLUSION ..... 107
CHAPTER THREE: THE THEORETICAL EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS, STRESSORS, AND RESILIENCE AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE OFFICERS ..... 110
3.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 110
3.2 SOCIAL SUPPORT THEORY ..... 112
3.2.1 Exploring the effect of police work on police officers and the need for an effective social support ..... 114

3.3 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS THEORY ..... 117
3.3.1 Occupational stress theory application ..... 118
3.4 RESILIENCE THEORY ..... 120
3.5 INTERNATIONAL TRAUMA INTERVENTION MODELS ..... 122
3.5.1 Prolonged Exposure therapy (PE) ..... 123
3.5.2 Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT) ..... 124
3.5.3 Psycho education ..... 125
3.5.4 Marital and family therapy ..... 126
3.5.5 Psycho-social rehabilitation ..... 127
3.5.6 Relaxation therapy ..... 128
3.6.7 The ecosystems perspective ..... 128
3.6 CONCLUSION ..... 129
CHAPTER FOUR: USING A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN TO INVESTIGATE SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN SAPS'S SPECIAL CRIMES DIVISION: METHODOLOGY, SITE AND FIELDWORK ..... 131
4.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 131
4.2 DESIGNING THE STUDY ..... 131
4.3 REFLECTION ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY FOR A QUALITATIVE STUDY ..... 135
4.4 DOING FIELDWORK IN DURBAN ..... 138
4.4.1 Selection of participants ..... 140
4.4.2 Data collection ..... 142
*4.4.2.1 Interview process* ..... 143
4.5 OVERALL DATA ANALYSIS ..... 145
4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ..... 146
4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ..... 148
4.8 CONCLUSION ..... 148
CHAPTER FIVE: BEHIND THE BADGE: UNRAVELLING THE DEMANDS AND COMPLEXITIES OF POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA ..... 150
5.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 150
5.2 UNDERSTANDING THE KEY MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING THE POLICE FORCE ..... 152
5.2.1 Childhood aspirations ..... 152
5.2.2 Interest in community service and crime prevention ..... 154
5.2.3 Influence of family and role models ..... 157
5.2.4 Patriotism and national pride: perceptions of policing as a noble career ..... 158
5.2.5 Employment opportunity ..... 160

5.3 NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX REALITIES OF WORKING IN A SPECIALIZED CRIME DIVISION ..... 161
5.3.1 High risk and challenging work environment ..... 162
5.3.2 Demanding training, preparation and specialization requirements ..... 165
5.4 TYPICAL CRIME CATEGORIES HANDLED AND RESPONSE FREQUENCY ..... 168
5.5 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS IN SPECIALISED POLICING UNITS ..... 170
5.5.1 Wear and tear on the body ..... 172
5.5.2 Exposure to traumatizing events ..... 174
5.5.3 Lack of recognition and support ..... 176
5.5.4 Navigating challenges in specialized police units ..... 178
5.6 CONCLUSION ..... 180
CHAPTER SIX: AN EXPLORATION OF PARTICIPANTS NARRATIVES ON THE AVAILABLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN SAPS SPECIAL DIVISION ..... 182
6.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 182
6.2 HISTORICAL STIGMA AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ABOUT POLICE SUPPORT SYSTEMS ..... 183
6.3 MASCULINITY SCRIPTS, PRESENTING CONCERNS AND HELP-SEEKING ATTITUDE OF OFFICERS IN THE SPECIAL CRIMES DIVISION ..... 189
6.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION AND SEEKING SUPPORT 191
6.5 USE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN SAPS: EXPLORING PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE AND HIGHLIGHTING IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGNING A HOLISTIC HELP-SEEKING SYSTEM IN POLICING ..... 194
6.6 CONCLUSION ..... 204
CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 206
7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY ..... 206
7.2 ACHIEVING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ..... 209
7.3 LIMITATIONS ..... 210
7.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES ..... 211
REFERENCES ..... 214
APPENDIX ONE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE ..... 281
APPENDIX TWO: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER ..... 282
APPENDIX THREE: INFORMED CONSENT ..... 288
APPENDIX FOUR: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ..... 291

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Police work is widely recognized to be one of the most stressful professions in the world (Queirós et al. 2020). Police officers are routinely exposed to high-stakes decision-making, physically and mentally demanding situations that test their resilience and coping mechanisms daily (Kelley, Siegel, and Wormwood, 2019). The inherent stress of policing is rooted in the very nature of the job. This requires officers to confront violence, criminal activities, and emergency situations that can escalate unpredictably. Officers must often make split-second decisions in life-or-death situations, and the cumulative stress from these experiences can lead to significant psychological and physical health issues, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and cardiovascular problems (Keech, Cole, Hagger, and Hamilton, 2020; Sherwood et al. 2019). Police officers in South Africa face a unique set of socioeconomic and organizational challenges. South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world, with violent crimes such as murder, robbery, and assault being particularly prevalent (Jeke, Chitenderu and Moyo, 2021; Mazorodze, 2020). This high crime rate places an enormous burden on the South African Police Service (SAPS), requiring constant vigilance and rapid response. Furthermore, societal issues such as high levels of unemployment, poverty, and social marginalization contribute to a volatile environment where police officers are frequently exposed to traumatic events and hostile interactions (Whiting, 2023; Asquith and Bartkowiak-Théron, 2021).

The quasi-military structure of the SAPS also contributes to stress experienced by officers. This hierarchical and rigid organizational structure often emphasizes discipline, control, and chain of command. This can create an atmosphere of high pressure and limited autonomy for

individual officers (Andreas, 2024; Shane, 2021). Such an environment can lead to feelings of powerlessness and frustration, exacerbating police officers' stress and mental health challenges. Additionally, the stigma associated with seeking psychological support within a quasi-military context can discourage officers from accessing necessary mental health services, further compounding their stress levels (Ray, 2021).

The Durban Special Crimes Division of SAPS operates in this highly challenging context. It addresses some of the most severe and complex crimes, including organized crime, human trafficking, and serious violent offenses. Officers in this division are tasked with investigating and responding to crimes that require specialized skills and knowledge, often involving prolonged and intensive operations. The nature of these crimes not only demands exceptional professional expertise but also subjects officers to extreme psychological and emotional stress. For instance, dealing with cases of child exploitation or homicide can leave lasting psychological scars, and the need for continuous exposure to such distressing situations can lead to chronic stress and burnout (Watson and Andrews, 2018). Moreover, the high expectations placed on the Durban Special Crimes Division to deliver results and maintain public safety add an additional layer of pressure. The scrutiny from the media, the public, and internal oversight bodies means that officers are constantly under evaluation, which can create a relentless cycle of stress and performance anxiety (Landavazo, 2019). The combination of these factors results in a uniquely stressful working environment that requires robust support systems to help officers manage their stress and maintain their well-being.

Considering these challenges, this study explores the support systems available to SAPS officers in the Durban Special Crimes Division. By examining the effectiveness of these systems in mitigating stress and the barriers to their utilization, the study provides insights that

can inform the development of more effective mental health and wellness programs for SAPS officers.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

South Africa's official SAPS crime statistics for 2022/23 reveal a surge in violent crimes, with the murder rate increasing by 10.4%, with 24,091 murders recorded, many involving firearms. A significant number of sexual offenses, including rape, were reported, with over 55,000 cases reported. Aside from assaults and aggravated robberies, such as carjackings and house robberies, violent crime levels tend to increase across a variety of violent crime categories. A surge in crime exposes police officers to a wide range of traumatic incidents. These incidents include murders, rapes, violent crowds, car accidents, hijackings, housebreakings and other severe crimes. Combined with stressful working conditions, such as bureaucratic challenges, hierarchical authority structures, personal issues, and a culture within the SAPS that discourages emotional expression, these factors can have significant adverse impacts on police officers' well-being over time (Mooloo, 2022; Nkosi, 2019; Thaba, 2018).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) states that trauma is not a diagnosable disorder. Those events that meet the criteria for being considered traumatic are those that involve death, severe injury, or sexual violence, regardless of whether they have been witnessed, experienced directly, or experienced repeatedly (Marx, Hall-Clark, Friedman, Holtzheimer and Schnurr, 2024; Domino, Whiteman, Davis, Witte, and Weathers, 2021). Exposure to trauma is strongly linked to psychological difficulties (Hyland, Karatzias, Shevlin, McElroy, Ben-Ezra, Cloitre and Brewin, 2021; McLaughlin, Colich, Rodman and Weissman, 2020; El-Khodary and Samara, 2020). In the aftermath of traumatic events, police officers are often subjected to acute stress reactions. If not addressed, these stress responses can develop

into trauma and stressor-related disorders such as PTSD, acute stress disorder, and others (Marx, Hall-Clark, Friedman, Holtzheimer and Schnurr, 2024).

Under the SAPS Basic Police Development Learning Programme, recruits must be physically and mentally healthy by undergoing fitness, psychometric, and medical evaluations (Masilela, 2013). Despite empowerment efforts through the Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) program, maintaining psychological equilibrium remains challenging for many officers. Individual differences, including personality, culture, gender, and age, influence post-trauma outcomes, with coping resources and strategies being more predictive of personal well-being than individual traits alone (Donovan, 2022).

Statistics from the SAPS Annual Report (2022/2023) reflect significant psychosocial challenges among police officials. 59,378 officials took sick leave, while 14,678 and 7,213 took short and long periods of incapacity leave, respectively. The report also highlights dissatisfaction with the workplace and challenging working conditions, with 2,568 voluntary resignations reported. A total of 3,197 police officers were injured on duty, and 1,154 were permanently disabled. Additionally, 879 officials were declared medically unfit for work, pointing to grave health crises within the force. These figures collectively paint a troubling picture of the psycho-social pressures faced by SAPS officials, necessitating urgent interventions to improve their health, safety, and job satisfaction. Despite efforts by EHW practitioners to support police officials through group trauma debriefing, team building, and other interventions, the SAPS Annual Report 2022/2023 still shows a high occurrence of acute and behavioural problems among officers.

A focus on Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) as a trauma intervention model within SAPS has been criticised. Several studies have demonstrated that CISD may have only minimal effects, or even negative effects on primary trauma victims (Ramatsoma, 2022; Gama, 2020;

Borien, 2020). As a psychological well-being program, which emphasizes cognitive and behavioural factors, it fails to consider societal risk factors and the broader context in which police function. For a holistic approach to trauma intervention, a psychosocial model that considers the interactions between social networks, communities, families, and the environment is essential (Wirihana and Smith, 2019; Woodbury, 2019). Existing EHW programs target various aspects of psycho-social functioning, but there is no comprehensive trauma intervention program within the SAPS. Effective programs should integrate a range of sectors to support healing (Manganyi, Moodley and Shirinde, 2023; Borien, 2020). While no treatment program for PTSD has universal acceptance, effective approaches should address the full range of psycho-social problems caused by trauma (Shimelash Yasegnal, 2023). It is therefore imperative to study and evaluate existing approaches to socio-psychological support within SAPS to develop a holistic program tailored to the requirements of law enforcement officials.

### 1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

SAPS operates within an intricate web of challenges, including pervasive violent crime, socio-economic disparities, and a rigid quasi-military organizational structure. Amidst this backdrop, police officers stationed in specialized divisions like the Durban Central Office grapple with a myriad of stressors. These stressors range from exposure to harrowing traumatic incidents to navigating stringent hierarchical organizational structures and societal expectations. However, despite the recognition of these stressors, the efficacy and accessibility of support systems designed to aid officers in coping with these challenges remain largely uncertain. This study explored the support systems available to police officers by probing three research questions. First, it aims to unravel the multifaceted perceived impacts of police work on officers' psychological and physical well-being. It sheds light on nuanced stressors inherent in their profession. Second, it attempts to dissect the intricate layers that facilitate or impede officers'

access to existing support systems. It considers factors such as pervasive stigma, organizational culture, and resource limitations. Lastly, it evaluates the effectiveness of these support systems. As a result of this study, evidence-based interventions can be developed that are specifically tailored to the unique challenges that SAPS officers face.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What effect does police work have on Police Officers?
2. Do Police Officers have access to support systems?
3. How effective are the available support systems?

## 1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the effect that police work has on South African Police Officers.
2. To determine if South African Police Officers access the support systems.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of support systems available to South African Police Officers.

## 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to develop significant insights into the support systems of South African police officers working at the Special Division of the SAPS's Durban Central Office in KwaZulu-Natal Province. By identifying and examining these support structures and officers' experiences using them, the research has made notable contributions to the understanding of how police officials navigate stressful conditions and utilize available resources. Despite the crucial role police officers play in ensuring citizens' safety every day, there has been little research conducted on this topic in the South African context. Although numerous studies have focused on support systems for professions such as psychologists and social workers, research on the police profession has remained relatively understudied. Consequently, there was a pressing need to investigate this area, given the widely recognized

high-stress nature of police work. Through a comprehensive qualitative exploration of the support mechanisms in place for SAPS officers, this research has addressed this gap in the literature. It has also provided valuable insights that can inform policy and practice. By leveraging these findings, stakeholders within SAPS and other relevant agencies can develop and implement targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being and effectiveness of police officers, thereby fostering safer and more resilient communities.

## 1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This study is structured in the following chapters:

### 1.7.1 Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study

This chapter introduces the study, outlines the research problem, and emphasizes the demanding and stressful nature of police work and its impact on officers' well-being and performance. The chapter provides an overview of the study's objectives, which include identifying, assessing, and understanding the effectiveness of existing support systems. In addition to discussing the rationale for the research, it highlights the importance of the study in improving police welfare and operational efficiency.

### 1.7.2 Chapter Two: Exploring the nature of policing, stressors, and support systems: a review of the literature

The chapter explores policing stressors and support systems. An emphasis is placed on the complexity of policing, the role of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks), as well as stressors such as external, occupational, task-related, and life-related stressors. Stress management interventions, including clinical and coping strategy-based approaches like Employee Health and Wellness programs, CISD, suicide prevention, and stress management programs, are discussed. However, challenges such as stigma, lack of knowledge, and policy complexities hinder their effectiveness. This emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to addressing workplace stress among SAPS officers.

### 1.7.3 Chapter Three: The theoretical exploration and analysis of support systems, stressors, and resilience among South African police officers

The chapter reviews theoretical frameworks and interventions for addressing workplace stress in SAPS. It emphasizes social support theory and the Job Demand-Control-Support model, highlighting the importance of tailored interventions. A number of international trauma intervention models advocate the use of evidence-based approaches such as prolonged exposure therapy and trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapy. Cultural competence and collaboration with community resources were identified as essential components of support. The chapter stresses the complexity of workplace stress in SAPS and the need for comprehensive, evidence-based interventions to support officers' well-being and resilience.

### 1.7.4 Chapter Four: Using a qualitative research design to investigate support systems within SAPS's special crimes division: Methodology, Site and Fieldwork

This chapter outlines an inductive qualitative research methodology utilizing one-to-one in-depth interviews as the means of obtaining data. This chapter discusses the phenomenological research design used in this study. An explanation of the qualitative research methods used and thematic analysis of the data is provided in this chapter. It also addresses ethical issues addressed in the study.

### 1.7.5 Chapter Five: Behind the badge: Unravelling the demands and complexities of policing in South Africa

Research findings are discussed thematically (under the headings of the themes) with reference to the study's methodological approach, theoretical framework, and research questions. Illustrations are used when necessary to convey the findings. In this chapter, the motivations for becoming a law enforcement officer are discussed, including duty and social influences. A detailed description of the demanding environment, training, and responsibilities of SAPS's special crime divisions is provided. According to the findings, specialized officers often

experience strain, distress, and lack of recognition. Understanding and addressing these challenges can enhance officer well-being and effectiveness.

### 1.7.6 Chapter Six: An exploration of participants' narratives on the available support systems within SAPS special division

The chapter discusses mental health support within SAPS, especially the special crimes division. It highlights the considerable progress made despite enduring challenges such as stigma and systemic barriers. By reinforcing traditional masculinity norms, the "cowboy" mentality discourages emotional support-seeking. While advocacy for change exists, systemic shifts are required to address barriers. In order to promote healthy living, proactive wellness measures are advocated for, including mandatory health screenings. Targeted interventions are imperative to address gender dynamics, including the stigma experienced by female officers. For holistic support, it is necessary to provide adequate resources, fair compensation, career advancement, and training. As outlined in the chapter, SAPS must place a high priority on mental health to promote a welcoming and inclusive environment. This enhances officer well-being and operational performance.

### 1.7.7 Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The chapter presents the findings in themes, summarizes salient points, and discusses the implications. Furthermore, it draws upon the literature review (Chapter Two) and a theoretical framework to outline the experiences of SAPS officers in the Special Crimes Division. The chapter concludes the study by summarizing the overall study, identifying research limitations, and proposing research directions for the future.

# CHAPTER TWO

# EXPLORING THE NATURE OF POLICING, STRESSORS, AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African Police Service is empowered by section 205 of the Constitution. The South African Police Service Act (1995) obligates it to protect South African residents' lives and properties (Theletsane, 2014). More specifically, they are expected to prevent, investigate, and tackle crime; ensure public order; protect and secure the lives and properties of South Africa's inhabitants; and uphold and enforce the law (Govender, 2016; Montesh and Basdeo, 2012). These roles and expectations position SAPS as critical first responders across communities in South Africa when any issue threatens lives as well as property.

Police officers in South Africa due to the high rate of crime prevalent in the country carry out their duties in one of the most daunting crime environments in the world (Langa, Kirsten, Bowman, Eagle and Kiguwa, 2020; Chersich et al., 2019). Complicating this terrain is the complexity and increasing spate of crimes like homicide, sexual assault, carjacking, harassment, and non-criminal incidents like accidents (Midgette, Spreen, Porter, Reuter and Hitchens, 2022; Jones, 2021). The scale, scope and intensity of these crimes pressure police officers. This is not to mention the many other challenges and risks they are exposed to in the line of duty. Some of the risks include the pressing dangers of fighting crime (often violent), the prolonged mental strain of depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Christopher et al., 2018; Stanley, Hom and Joiner, 2016). In the face of these risks and challenges, scholars have argued about the urgent need to protect these officers by prioritizing their physical and mental well-being.

Bazana and Dodd (2013) noted that while police officers are expected to protect lives and properties, they work in highly risky and unsafe environments, and as such, they must also be

protected and supported. Police officers face trauma in the line of duty and as such, support systems are crucial for SAPS officers (Prati and Pietrantoni, 2010). This study is one of such empirical attempts to prioritize police wellbeing. While SAPS has extensive policy documents and procedures in place to support officers, this study recognizes that implementation occurs within a policy environment that is complex and plagued by uncertainties, as such the lived experiences of officers must be interrogated and engaged. According to Nkosi (2019) and Borien (2020) certain units within the police department might experience increased exposure to stressors because of the specific demands of their job. As such, this study explores the mandate and objectives of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI). Further, this chapter discusses the work-related stress experiences of SAPS officers, the factors predisposing them to these stresses, and the support systems required for them to cope in this highly demanding work environment.

## 2.2 DIRECTORATE FOR PRIORITY CRIME INVESTIGATION (DPCI)

The Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation was established as an independent agency of SAPS in July 2009 in accordance with section 17C of the South African Police Service Act (Baloyi, 2020). In addition to being colloquially known as "Hawks," the agency investigates priority crimes like serious commercial and organised crimes, serious corruption, and serious economic offences. Section 17A of the Act defines “national priority offence” as: organised crime, crime that requires national prevention or investigation, crime that requires specialised skills in the prevention or investigation thereof, as referred to in section 16(1) of the SAPS Act. The preoccupation of this agency is to contribute to the successful prosecution of offenders by investigating, gathering, and analysing evidence. The DPCI includes departments like the Commercial Crime Unit, Financial and Asset Forfeiture Investigative Unit, Organised Crime Unit, the Priority Crime Management Centre, and Support Services (Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, 2011).

The constitutionality of the DCPI has also been questioned as it relates to its ability to be independent of the state. The Constitutional Court declared on 17 March 2011 that a bare majority of its judges had found the law establishing the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigation to be inconsistent and invalid because it did not secure adequate independence for the agency (Langa, 2017). The DPCI replaced the disbanded Directorate of Special Operations (DSO), which investigated organised crime and corruption within the National Prosecution Authority (NPA). Writing for the majority, Moseneke DCJ and Cameron J held that the Constitution itself imposes an obligation on the state to establish and maintain an independent body to combat corruption, and a failure on the part of the state to create "a sufficiently independent anti-corruption entity infringes a number of rights [in the Bill of Rights]" (Reeves 2012:23). Most of the judges ruled that the DPCI is not sufficiently autonomous structurally and operationally to prevent undue political interference. Therefore, it was determined that the legislation was inconsistent with the Constitution. However, the declaration of constitutional invalidity was suspended for 18 months to give Parliament the opportunity to ‘remedy the defect’. The majority judgment emphasised that "the form and structure of the entity in question lie within the reasonable power of the State, provided only that whatever form and structure are chosen do indeed endow the entity in its operation with sufficient independence" (Reeves 2012:23). There is still fierce debate over the independence of this agency, particularly with respect to political interference.

## 2.3 NATURE OF POLICE WORK

Policing entails a variety of tasks, from routine office duties to risky, life-threatening operations. According to Cox, Massey, Koski, and Fitch (2018), policing is a complex and difficult task with many intricacies. In both criminal and non-criminal situations, police officers are expected to react. Bayley (2016) argues that police officers have a complex role without much guidance and little time for introspection. To intervene and address a wide range of

issues, a police officer must make crucial decisions. Most times, these decisions are made spontaneously. Frequently, the urgency with which they must make life-changing decisions can have highly emotional consequences (Watson and Kerrigan, 2018).

Frequently, police officers must attend to physically and mentally challenging situations like robberies, protests, shootings, homicides; they are also involved in high-speed pursuit, get exposed to violent confrontations among several other germane issues that constantly threaten their physical and psychological wellbeing (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019; Padyab, Backteman-Erlanson and Brulin, 2016). Also, it is imperative to note that police officers are required to kill, further strengthening the argument that policing requires mental and physical endurance (Parry, 2018; Miller, 2015). Police officers' personalities, general well-being, personal life, and the lives of those close to them are frequently impacted by the hazards they are exposed to on their job. Gutshall, Hampton Jr, Sebetan, Stein, and Broxtermann (2017) argue that every police officer experiences violence at some point in their career, as a perpetrator or victim.

Due to the nature of police work, it is not surprising that there is substantive literature showing that police officers experience heightened stress levels and suffer significant emotional distress (Gutshall, Hampton Jr, Sebetan, Stein, and Broxtermann, 2017; Christopher, et al., 2016). To completely comprehend the nature of a police officer's job, consideration must be given to the environment in which they operate, as it contains additional pressures. The police department as an organization might be one of the environmental stresses. The police organization has a quasi-military structure across most countries including South Africa. This is where they are required to be the 'friend' of the community and at the same time remain firm and deploy force (sometimes extreme) in the discharge of their duties (Makoni, 2017; Govender, 2015). There are also existential problems not uniquely specific to police officers but inherent to their

immediate environment. These may include poverty, inequality, diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis among others. Considering the various causes of stress that are a regular part of the job, police work appears to be extremely demanding. The next section provides more information about some of these stressors.

## 2.4 POLICING, STRESSORS, AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF OFFICERS

In the mid-to-late-twentieth century, research into the causes and symptoms of police stress, as well as the development of interventions to prevent and treat stress, gained traction (Banks, 2018). And this is because police officers' job performance and personal relationships are significantly affected by stress (Gyamfi, 2014; Wang, Zheng, Hu and Zheng, 2014). According to Cox, Kuk and Leiter (2017), stress is a dynamic cognitive state in which the individual interacts with the environment continuously. Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand, affecting the body, mind, and emotions (Amin, 2019; Panigrahi, 2016; Greeson, Toohey and Pearce, 2015). Stress describes either an external stimulus from the environment or an individual's response. Burnout differs from stress in that it is defined as a specific type of prolonged exposure to workplace stressors (Jimenez and Dunkl, 2017; Maslach and Leiter, 2016). Researchers have also linked police officer stress to job burnout, depression, substance abuse, marital problems, and suicide (Wray and Jarrett, 2019; Violanti, Owens, McCanlies, Fekedulegn and Andrew, 2018; Roz and Raval, 2017; Stanley, Hom and Joiner, 2016).

LeFort (2020) emphasized the importance of dealing with stress to prevent officer misconduct. Stress can negatively impact police organisations if not dealt with. For instance, lawsuits could stem from officer performance in the line of duty (Patterson, Chung and Swan, 2014). Furthermore, officer stress is linked to shift work (Nevels et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2015), job satisfaction (Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Klahm and Smith, 2018; Kula, 2017), and the organizational environment (Trinkner, Tyler and Goff, 2016; Johnson, 2012). Furthermore,

officers' stressor exposure varies according to individual characteristics such as age, rank, years of police experience, gender, and race (Violanti et al., 2016), as well as personality type and coping mechanisms (Sherwood et al., 2019; Clark-Miller and Brady, 2013). Although the literature on police stress is informative, police stress research has several conceptual and methodological issues that have been long debated in the literature. Sherwood et al., (2019) believe that inadequate standardized instruments, few comparisons of stress and outcomes among police officers and other occupational groups, and insufficient theoretical models that explain the relationships between personality and environmental work conditions are among these issues.

South Africa has one of the world's highest rates of crime and violence, and SAPS has been reported to be one of the world's most stressed police organizations (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019; Mushwana, Govender and Nel, 2019). Studies show that South African police officers suffer from extreme stress and trauma (Kaminer, Eagle and Crawford-Browne, 2018; Runciman et al., 2016). Police officers are often the first to arrive at the scene of a murder, suicide, or accident and the last to leave. The reality of death or injury in the process of discharging their duties are frequently evident. As a result of these exposures, Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, (2019) noted that police officers suffer from conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, major depression, panic attacks, and suicidal ideation. Staff shortage, excessive paperwork, corruption within the police department that results in the unequal application of the law (seeing some criminals go free), poor equipment, and inadequate pay are some of the other factors debated in literature to exacerbate stress levels among police officers (Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Klahm, and Smith, 2018). When a task becomes too difficult and requires more knowledge, abilities, and resources than the person can mobilise, chaos reigns, and as the person loses control over how well they perform this task, stress becomes

inevitable (Neal, 2018). Also, stress could be a consequence of a work environment that makes it difficult for people to concentrate on the task at hand (Lazarus, 2020).

## 2.5 CATEGORIZING STRESSORS IN POLICING

There are numerous categorisations in the literature explaining stress sources among police officers. These categorisations include external stressors, occupational stressors, task-related stressors, and life stressors. Finn and Tomz (1997) distinguish four types of law enforcement stress: the law enforcement organization (e.g., lack of input into organisational decision-making); police work (e.g., dangerous assignments); working in the criminal justice system and with the public (e.g., officers' perceptions of working in an ineffective criminal justice system and negative images of officers depicted in the media); and personal life stressors (e.g., purchasing a new home).

Similarly, Patterson, Chung and Swan (2014) identified intra-organisational practices and characteristics; inter-organisational practices and characteristics; criminal justice system practices and characteristics; public practices and characteristics; and police work in general as categories of stress. These classifications are comparable when taken together. Traumatic incidents such as the death of an officer in the line of duty or responding to hostage situations are also common among police officers (Papazoglou and Chopko, 2017; Weiss et al., 2010). Patterson (2003) proposed that traumatic incidents be reclassified as a type of stress. This is because they can negatively impact officers' psychological and physical well-being.

### 2.5.1. Occupational stressors

There is a global problem of occupational stress that adversely affects different service providers, including the South African Police Service. Several previous studies have found a similar prevalence of stress among police officers in different countries, suggesting that occupational stress affects not only SAPS officers but is also a global problem (Agola, 2009;

Jonyo, 2015; Roach, Cartwright and Sharratty, 2017). Occupational stress is largely determined by the nature of police work. Kara, Sunger, and Kapti (2015) pointed out that although police work is almost identical in every country, stress and experiences can vary widely. Occupational stress is defined as circumstances in which aspects of or events connected to the workplace can cause illness or jeopardise people's welfare (Sohail and Rehman, 2015). According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), occupational stress is the result of an imbalance between environmental demands and individual capabilities. Most stress theories and stress models conclude that occupational stress is caused by a stressor and ends with a person's reaction. Also, researchers have identified three types of stress outcomes experienced by police officers and recruits: physiological, psychological, and behavioural. Stinchcomb (2004) classified physiological outcomes as headaches, stomach aches, backaches, ulcers, and heart attacks, while psychological outcomes included anxiety, depression, flashbacks, and panic attacks. Drinking alcohol, complaints filed by community residents, and work performance ratings are all examples of behavioural outcomes.

Kara, Sunger and Kapti (2015) conducted a comparative study between the Turkish National Police and United States Law Enforcement Agencies. The study identified occupational stressors among American and Turkish police officers (Kara, Sunger and Kapti, 2015). Results indicated differences in stressors experienced by Turkish and American policemen, and that these differences were influenced by economic resources. As compared to American police officers, Turkish officers are more exposed to stressors such as high violence, crime, and a lack of financial resources. There is a difference in police officers' economic status in advanced countries and in developing countries. As a result of the resources and economic status police officers in developed countries possess, they can afford even external support structures such as private psychologists (Kara, Sunger and Kapti, 2015). According to Kara, Sunger and Kapti (2015), police officers in developing countries experience occupational stress because of

stigma, while their counterparts in advanced countries are better informed about occupational stress and utilise the available support systems. There is ongoing concern about police officers' safety across some developing countries, as well as the stigma attached to occupational stress (Kara, Sunger and Kapti, 2015; Higginson, Mazerolle, Davis, Bedford, and Mengersen, 2013; Suresh, Anantharaman, Angusamy, and Ganesan, 2013). Magwaza (2009) concludes that law enforcement should strive to implement a stigma-free culture, since their work demands highly stressful conditions.

Police officers' experiences of occupational stress have been associated with poor performance (Chikwem, 2017). Suresh et al. (2013) noted that occupational stress experiences among police officers in industrialized countries are less severe than those in developing countries. As an example, the Australian Federal Police reported that 74.7% of Australians were satisfied with the police's work and services (Jonyo, 2015). Reports from developing countries differ. For instance, police officers in developing countries perform poorly because of occupational stress (Suresh et al., 2013). Gachter, Savage and Torgler (2011) conducted a quantitative study of gender variation in physiological and psychological stress among Baltimore police officers. Physiological and psychological indicators were examined to determine how gender affects police officers' stress perception. Physiological stress was not significantly different between males and females. However, the observation indicates that female officers are more susceptible to physical stress while males are more susceptible to operational stress. In a cross-sectional study conducted by Violanti et al. (2011) identified stressors that are highly rated and most frequent among police officers in Buffalo, New York. Officers experienced stressors like exposure to battered children (27%), responding to violent situations, and killing someone in the line of duty. Violanti et al. (2011) found that male officers were more likely to be stressed by working while off duty, such as attending court. In contrast, female officers were more likely to experience stress due to insufficient supervisory support.

Ma et al. (2015) also conducted a study on shift work and occupational stress among police officers in the United States. The study found that officers on night shift reported more stress events than day shift employees. An Italian study conducted by Acquadro Maran, Varetto, Zedda and Ieraci (2015) examined the effects of organisational and occupational stressors on police officers, as well as coping strategies. Stressors experienced by officers working indoors and outdoors were compared searched for, in this study. Findings revealed that both indoor and outdoor police officers experience stress due to organisational and job-related factors. The only difference between them was their coping mechanisms; outdoor officers were more likely to use various coping strategies, whereas indoor officers used avoidance strategies (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015).

Roach et al. (2017) investigated occupational stress among police officers responding to homicide cases in the United Kingdom (UK) and Denmark. Specifically, the study examined the differences between the occupational stress of police officers dealing with child murder cases and those investigating adult murder cases to determine the effectiveness of each investigation (Roach et al., 2017). According to this study, homicide investigators experience cognitive and emotional stress because of their work. However, the effect is pronounced when dealing with child homicides. Furthermore, some studies have reported different findings regarding occupational stress among police officers in developed nations. Van der Velden et al. (2013) conducted a cohort study in the Netherlands comparing occupational stress for police officers with workers from non-risk professions such as bankers and mental health professionals. There was no significant difference. As far as occupational stress is concerned, police officers are as mentally healthy as other types of workers (Van der Velden et al., 2013).

Selokar, Nimbarte, Ahana, Gaidhane and Wagh (2011) examined occupational stress among police officers in India. The stressors observed were superior discipline, high work demands,

no incentives, and inadequate recognition of their skills and commitment. There were various stressors identified in this study related to the police organisation, such as inadequate recognition of workers' skills and commitment. The study was quantitative in nature, so the researchers could categorise participants' stress levels on several levels. The first level was ≤15, suggesting that officers at this level are not experiencing stress in their daily lives (Selokar et al., 2011). A second level of stress was indicated by the range of 16-30, which meant a moderate level of stress. In contrast, the range of 31-45 indicated a problematic stress level. The last level was 45-60, where stress is a major issue. Based on Selokar et al (2011), seventy respondents scored > 15, suggesting that occupational stress is a concern. Kuo (2015) conducted a study among Taiwanese police officers on occupational stress, job satisfaction, and affective commitment to policing. Findings show that police officers' relationships with their colleagues and supervisors contribute to their performance. Their perceptions about promotion procedures within the department also contributed to the stressors.

Similarly, a study conducted among Brazilian police officers found that 43 percent of them suffered from stress symptoms (Lipp, 2009). The study found that police officers had a poor quality of life in terms of their professional and physical conditions (Lipp, 2009). A systematic review by Kapade-Nikam and Shaikh (2014) on occupational stress, burnout and coping strategies among police officers indicated that work overload, inadequate staff and resources, financial crises, long hours, violent arrests, and neglected family lives were among the most common causes of stress for police personnel. The study found that severe stress among police officers can lead to poor job performance, suicidal thoughts, depression, irritability, short tempers, substance abuse, absenteeism and marital problems, nightmares, isolation, and a loss of interest in social activities (Kapade-Nikam and Shaikh, 2014). Studies conducted in African countries also suggest that occupational stress is associated with police work. According to a study by Kabelo (2019), many police officers in Botswana suffer from occupational stress due

to fear of harm on duty. Oweke, Muola and Ngumi (2014) reported that occupational stress among police officers in Kenya was attributed to their working environment. To reduce high occupational stress rates, Oweke, Muola and Ngumi (2014) suggest that the police service commission establish a stress management system to manage recruitment, activities, and counselling for police officers.

Over the past few years, occupational stress research among police officers has gained traction in South Africa. Rothmann (2008) studied occupational stress among SAPS police officers. The study revealed that 19% of cases involved psychological issues and 17% involved physical illness. Wellington (2010) also argued that SAPS officers face high occupational stress levels. According to some of the respondents, they are constantly exposed to situations such as seeing dead bodies in ditches, distorted bodies from accidents, burnt bodies, and having to shoot people or get shot themselves, which is very traumatising for them (Wellington, 2010). Williams, Nicholas, and Bawa (2011) conducted a quantitative study in an Eastern Cape police station on police officers' stress exposure. Police officers in the Eastern Cape reported experiencing stressful incidents in the line of duty, including finding a corpse after a murder (86.4%), responding to a crime scene involving a child (84.8%), and experiencing violence during their duties (84.8%). There are also studies that focus more on occupational stress and coping mechanisms among SAPS police officers (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019; Louw and Viviers, 2010; Myendeki, 2008; Paulsen, 2008; Wassermann, 2016).

According to Boshoff, Strydom and Botha (2015), South African police officers do not have access to adequate support structures to cope with occupational stress. Kara, Sunger and Kapti (2015) argue that police service support structures across most developing countries are hampered by the stigma associated with intervention programmes. Studies have demonstrated that occupational stress is associated with a higher suicide rate among police officers in

developing countries (Perkin, 2016; Tucker, 2015). Essentially, occupational stress has been studied in relation to job performance (Suresh et al., 2013), interventions (Higginson et al., 2013; Anshel and Brintaupt, 2014), and coping mechanisms (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015). There are other studies exploring factors contributing to occupational stress, occupational stress among patrol officers, occupational stress, and gender (Gachter et al., 2011; Acquadro Maran et al., 2015).

## 2.6 AN INSIGHT INTO THE PREVALENCE AND DYNAMICS OF CRIME IN SOUTH AFRICA

Scholars have argued that police officers' wellbeing reflects the broader environment in which they operate (Bacon, 2022; Marder, 2020). This implies that the existential realities within the environment policing occurs speak volume of what is demanded of them. This is in ensuring the safety of lives and properties. This in turn affects their overall wellbeing. South Africa because of the prevalence of crime and its dynamics is considered by scholars and policy actors as presenting one of the most challenging policing environments in the world (Shaw, 2013; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2004; Gastrow and Shaw, 2001). Crime, including violent crime is widespread across South Africa and difficult to abate. In fact, crime has been described as endemic in South Africa (Breen, Lynch, Nel and Matthews, 2016; Eagle, 2015; Kynoch, 2005). The implication is that violence has become deeply rooted in social structures. This is due to social marginalisation and high unemployment levels complicating the landscape and making it difficult for traditional policing methods to effectively combat.

A longitudinal analysis of the national crime prevalence for contact crimes, contact-related crimes, property-related crime, and other serious crimes showed that crime in South Africa has remained unusually high as improvements in some areas only offset the deteriorating conditions of others without any significant overall changes to the spate of crime in the country.

**Figure 2.1: National crime rates for major crimes categories 2019 – 2023**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Crime situation

| CRIME CATEGORY | July 2019 to September 2019 | July 2020 to September 2020 | July 2021 to September 2021 | July 2022 to September 2022 | July 2023 to September 2023 | Count Diff | (%) Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONTACT CRIMES (CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON) | | | | | | | |
| Murder | 5 446 | 5 107 | 6 163 | 7 004 | 6 945 | -59 | -0,8% |
| Sexual offences | 13 730 | 11 423 | 11 964 | 13 283 | 13 090 | -193 | -1,5% |
| Attempted murder | 4 856 | 4 941 | 5 157 | 6 155 | 6 911 | 756 | 12,3% |
| Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm | 39 807 | 34 890 | 35 625 | 41 251 | 42 297 | 1 046 | 2,5% |
| Common assault | 38 993 | 36 851 | 37 137 | 44 389 | 45 348 | 959 | 2,2% |
| Common robbery | 13 201 | 9 864 | 9 619 | 12 024 | 12 467 | 443 | 3,7% |
| Robbery with aggravating circumstances | 37 617 | 32 745 | 31 480 | 38 412 | 38 851 | 439 | 1,1% |
| Contact crime (Crimes against the person) | 153 650 | 135 821 | 137 145 | 162 518 | 165 909 | 3 391 | 2,1% |
| SEXUAL OFFENCES - BREAKDOWN | | | | | | | |
| Rape | 10 985 | 8 922 | 9 556 | 10 590 | 10 516 | -74 | -0,7% |
| Sexual assault | 1 964 | 1 758 | 1 753 | 1 895 | 1 847 | -48 | -2,5% |
| Attempted sexual offences | 498 | 451 | 400 | 536 | 559 | 23 | 4,3% |
| Contact sexual offences | 283 | 292 | 255 | 262 | 168 | -94 | -35,9% |
| SOME SUBCATEGORIES OF AGGRAVATED ROBBERY | | | | | | | |
| Carjacking | 4 882 | 4 803 | 4 973 | 6 149 | 6 009 | -140 | -2,3% |
| Robbery at residential premises | 5 308 | 5 760 | 5 372 | 5 825 | 6 045 | 220 | 3,8% |
| Robbery at non-residential premises | 5 394 | 4 937 | 4 867 | 5 294 | 4 910 | -384 | -7,3% |
| *TRIO Crime* | *15 584* | *15 500* | *15 212* | *17 268* | *16 964* | *-304* | -1,8% |
| Robbery of cash in transit | 40 | 64 | 52 | 56 | 64 | 8 | 8 counts higher |
| Bank robbery | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | -3 | 3 counts lower |
| Truck hijacking | 312 | 411 | 410 | 561 | 542 | -19 | -3,4% |

*Source: Police Recorded Crime Statistics July – September 2023*

The data provides an overview of South Africa's crime situation between July 2019 and September 2023. It focuses on contact crimes and sexual offenses. It appears from the data that overall crime trends present a mixed picture. Although murder rates have generally increased over the observed periods, they have recently declined marginally. While this reduction might suggest positive developments, it is crucial to examine the contributing factors in more detail. During this time period, sexual offenses have shown a fluctuating pattern, with an initial rise followed by a decline. A decrease in rape and sexual assault cases over the last few months is encouraging. However, the persistence of such crimes remains concerning, necessitating ongoing efforts in prevention and law enforcement.

The substantial increase in attempted murder cases raises questions about the underlying factors contributing to this surge in violent incidents. Similarly, assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm has seen a steady rise, indicating potential challenges in addressing interpersonal violence. Robbery rates vary across subcategories. While common robbery and robbery with aggravating circumstances have increased, certain specific types, such as

carjacking and robbery at non-residential premises, have declined. Examining the breakdown of sexual offences reveals a decline in contact sexual offences, which is a positive development. However, the increase in attempted sexual offences signals the need for preventative measures and support mechanisms for potential victims. The variations in aggravated robbery subcategories are significant. Despite a decrease in carjackings, residential robberies have increased. Furthermore, the data covers specific crimes such as truck hijacking, trio crimes, robberies of cash in transit, and bank robberies. Truck hijackings and bank robberies have decreased, indicating success in targeted law enforcement efforts. However, thefts of cash in transit warrant attention and intervention.

The data provide valuable insights, but they also have limitations that should be acknowledged. Understanding how these numbers may impact policing and the protection of life and property requires consideration of context, socioeconomic dynamics, and complexity. As a result, the figures alone do not provide a comprehensive understanding of contextual factors that influence crime rates. Socioeconomic conditions, law enforcement strategies, and cultural dynamics play integral roles and should be considered in a comprehensive analysis. It is apparent from the nuanced nature of these trends that it is essential to offer targeted interventions in response to subtypes of crime. It is essential to understand the specific dynamics of each subcategory to develop effective prevention strategies.

## 2.7 PERSONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY POLICE OFFICERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prioritising police officers' physical and mental wellbeing is inherently crucial for an effective and functional police service, and this is because policing works better when its primary agents feel safe and are adequately protected in the line of duty (Mumford, Taylor and Kubu, 2015). When police officers doubt their safety and overall wellbeing, they are usually less willing to take on difficult and risky situations. There is a paucity of literature on police officers' safety

partly because many of the challenges faced by police officers – including the mental health strain of operating in a complexly knit policing environment – are not easily quantified. As such, this study empirically investigates some of these challenges to provide recommendations for effective support.

A major point to be considered in the analysis of police wellbeing is the possibility that SAPS officers could get injured or lose their lives in the line of duty. What are the chances and how does this impact on officers' perception of wellbeing? Preventing these injuries or deaths is fundamental to police wellbeing and requires detailed attention. Ensuring officers' wellbeing and safety has been argued in the literature to reduce stress levels in the police force (Gumani, 2019; Jorgensen, 2006). A SAPS report for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 indicated that 3345 people suffered injuries in the line of duty (SAPS, 2020/21). Of this number, 345 sought medical attention but did not face temporary disability, while 2,762 required medical attention and faced temporary disability. During this period, 123 officers suffered permanent disability, while 115 were fatally injured in the line of duty. Analysis of death causes on and off duty revealed that vehicle accidents and murder ranked top. These unnatural deaths were more prevalent in provinces with large urban centres that are usually more susceptible to a broader scale of violence. These provinces are Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Many of the officers who lost their lives were killed in the line of duty while responding to incidents (SAPS, 2020/21). Officers' propensity to injury in the line of duty must be taken seriously. Mechanisms/policies consistently seeking to improve their work environment and limit dangers must be put in place for better protection in the future. Currently, SAPS has a Police Safety Strategy that specifies approaches to ensure the safety of officers. Implementation is guided by the Police Safety Implementation Plan and the Tactical Response Plan.

**Table 2.1: Comprehensive policing excellence framework: strengthening strategies for safety, skills, and compliance.**

| s/n | Strategy | Details |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Situational Analysis and Awareness | Assessment of environment, Profiling of suspects and risks of areas, adequate equipment, early warning signs of health concerns, ongoing research. |
| **2** | Skills development and maintenance | Identification of skill gaps, training, and reskilling |
| **3** | Raising of awareness | Awareness of personal and operational safety and security. |
| **4** | Contingency planning | Enforcement of contingency planning for medium and high-risk situations |
| **5** | Investigations and convictions | Prioritising and centralising investigations, involvement of NPA |
| **6** | Hosting of multidisciplinary police safety committee meetings | Quarterly and special meetings to analyse incidents and make proposals on corrective measures |
| **7** | Risk management | Identification and analysis of risks and the development of a risk plan |
| **8** | Reporting of incidents of unnatural deaths on and off duty | Implementation of information management framework requiring all attacks on police members to be reported within 12 hours and captured in a national database |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | Policy safety assessments | Multi-disciplinary assessment teams conduct on-site assessments to determine level of compliance by members |
| **10** | Employee health and wellness | EHW programmes |
| **11** | Operational compliance | Compliance inspections, and Compliance board |

*Source: ISS Africa Crime Hub, Crime Statistics*

The strategies outlined above seem relatively robust and comprehensive, but it is challenging to evaluate because of the paucity of information on the implementation of this policy. Also, important oversight records on basic conditions for safety – such as holding of meetings included in the strategy document, or on the extent to which police officers can implement the recommendation on profiling and planning – are not readily available (PSC, 2017). For effective implementation, efficient monitoring and evaluations plans must be put in place, and this is because it creates a system of genuine responsibility and accountability.

No doubt, protection in the line of duty is an urgent concern; however, it is also critical for the police organisation to take a holistic technique to the health of officials, one which additionally examines demanding situations to bodily and intellectual fitness. South African police officers are not exempted from the many public health issues facing the broader society. These issues include managing HIV, infectious illnesses like tuberculosis, or life-style related illnesses like obesity. Police officers particularly are frequently susceptible to a lot of these conditions, due to the specific pressure in their workplace. Long hours with abnormal breaks can bring about negative nutritional options and may make managing chronic medication more difficult. Stress and work strain can worsen underlying health conditions and may compel officers to coping mechanisms like alcoholism (Richardsen, Burke and Martinussen, 2006). The wellbeing of

police officers is not just of serious concern, it must be viewed broadly and considered an issue of intersecting consequence.

Scholars have noted that there is paucity of literature exploring the health dynamics of police officers in South Africa and this implicitly means that not much is known beyond generic statistics on this issue (Jorgensen and Rothmann, 2008). Nevertheless, the general statistics available through SAPS review gives an important insight into the severity of the health and wellbeing of police officers. Beyond mental health issues as discussed in the previous section, another major health challenge confronting police officers in South Africa is HIV/AIDS. The police medical aid program, POLMED, reported[1] that 27,246 officers were enrolled in their HIV programme in the 2014/2015 financial year. And of this number, 69.72% (18,995) were primary members and implicitly accounts for the number of police officers who were HIV positive in 2016. These data also showed the HIV prevalence rate of just under 10% of all SAPS personnel, as against the 11.2% of the general population. While HIV can be managed within a comprehensive antiretroviral treatment scheme, it must be considered within the broader context that the lifestyle and exposure that police officers are confronted with on a daily basis. Unhealthy work environment with limited support systems for adequate nutrition complicates the management of HIV and may require more attention.

The current work environment for police officers in South Africa makes them vulnerable to certain lifestyle issues and this include substance abuse, obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and hypertension (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019). These lifestyles associated issues are difficult to quantify and there is little data available on the diagnosed, and many others do not get diagnosed with these chronic conditions. Notwithstanding the scarcity

[1] SAPS, "SAPS Employee Health and Wellness (EHW)", presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Police, 17 February 2016.

of literature in this area, this specific cluster of health concerns signals an urgent need to pay attention to the lifestyle facing police officers because of their duty. It has been reported that police officers usually have limited access to healthy food, time for the required amount of training, and assistance on healthcare related matters (PSC, 2017). All of these produces consequential mental strain that affects the wellbeing and motivations of police officers. A review of the physical fitness programs within the SAPS suggests that a more comprehensive approach is required that takes into account both historical and structural factors within the workplace (Ngema, 2021; Mona, Chimbari, and Hongoro, 2019). Despite the growing awareness of the importance of physical fitness, current programs do not appear to take into consideration the challenges officers may face in sustaining a healthy lifestyle (Lyoka, 2011). This points to the necessity of implementing proactive schedules that allow sufficient time for exercise and addressing dietary options at police stations, where necessary. Aside from physical fitness, mental health is another pressing issue under-addressed within SAPS (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019; Mona, Chimbari, and Hongoro, 2019). SAPS identifies the top five mental health problems faced by officers as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), generalised stress disorder, substance abuse, and attempted suicide (Wassermann, Meiring and Becker, 2019). The intersectionality of these mental health issues underscores the complexity of officers' challenges. The police service commission reported in 2017 that there were alarming numbers of psychiatric treatment cases in 2014/15. According to the PSC, 89% of police officers who seek help suffer from depression, 22% from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and 5% from substance abuse. These figures are not unique to SAPS and reflect a global trend where the nature of police work, characterized by fear and constant threats of violence, takes a significant toll on officers' mental well-being (Tuttle, Blumberg and Papazoglou, 2019; Blumberg, Papazoglou and Creighton, 2018).

Comprehensive mental health treatment is an absolute necessity for a police service that cares for its members and is committed to providing an enabling environment for officers to serve the communities they are meant to serve. And yet the available evidence seems to indicate that mental health care in SAPS still has a long way to go. This is partly due to the sheer lack of and resolute commitment to mental health care, which is very unequally distributed across the country. Public Servant Association union (2017) reports that in 2016 there are fewer than one clinical psychiatrist per 4.5 Police stations in KZN, with similarly low rates in Mpumalanga, and the absence of a physical therapist at the 70 police stations in the North Cape. While these rates are much better in places like Gauteng, treatment is often stifled by widespread stigma about officers seeking mental health support. The stigma of mental health problems discourages the diagnosis of these challenges but, worse, prevents the creation of an environment that can support treatment. A supportive environment characterized by open discussion about mental health problems is essential to building a responsive policing culture that can respond quickly to mental health issues and work with officers to address these challenges before they become very threatening.

While many of these challenges are typical of a police officer's work, there is a risk that several workplace and lifestyle challenges are exacerbated. The National Credit Regulators South Africa reported that police/defence personnel accounts for about 20% of public sector debt counselling, a number that has been growing steadily over the past three years (National Credit Regulator, 2017). Rising debt may indicate a broader financial strain on officials and is unlikely to reflect actual growth in unofficial lending or those who have not sought advice, which may be easily related to the mental strain of the broader work of policing.

## 2.8 MANAGING STRESS IN A POLICE ENVIRONMENT

Stress management interventions for police officers are typically divided into two categories: clinical interventions based on techniques such as psychological counselling, and interventions aimed at improving coping strategies based on training or other methods utilising stress reduction techniques ranging from exercise to transcendental meditation (Patterson, Chung and Swan, 2014). Training police officers to recognize signs of stress and improve coping strategies is one of the most common stress management interventions on the job (Papazoglou and Andersen, 2014). The literature describes a wide range of such interventions. Positive self-talk, deep breathing, anchoring, cognitive rehearsal and desensitisation, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, imagery, and biofeedback, goal setting, stress debriefing, time management, financial planning, visual-motor behaviour rehearsal (VMBR), and critical thinking are some examples.

Coping is a process of making cognitive and behavioural adjustments to stress management to reduce the impact of the stressor (Meichenbaum, 2017). According to recent research, managing stress is a process that develops over time as an individual evaluates the circumstances to determine whether and how much it will affect his well-being (Van den Bergh, 2021). Depending on the evaluation of the coping resources that are available, people's assessment of the situation may change (Meichenbaum, 2017). The results of the coping strategy are influenced by the situation in which it is used as well as the technique used to implement it (Ptakauskaite, Cox and Berthouze, 2018; Seaward, 2017).

Numerous studies have revealed that specific coping mechanisms help police officers deal with stress. Problem-focused coping techniques are effective in reducing suicidal ideation (Soravia, Schwab, Walther and Müller, 2021; Mushwana, Govender and Nel, 2019) and enhancing general well-being (Ryu, Yang and Choi, 2020). According to Mostert and Joubert (2005),

officers have also found comfort in turning to religion as a coping mechanism to help them cope with burnout. Although emotion-focused coping strategies have been found to be unsuitable in some situations, they also reduce officers' stress. Supervisor support reduced stress levels (Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Keena and Hogan, 2017; Nelson and Smith, 2016), and seeking social support buffered the effects of stress on police officers (Leppma et al., 2018; Hansson, Hurtig, Lauritz and Padyab, 2017) and reduced burnout (Mostert and Joubert, 2005). Receiving emotional support decreased fatigue in SAPS officers (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019), predicted work engagement (Rothmann, Wiens and Chan, 2011), and moderated stress's effect on professional efficacy (Abrahams and Gevers, 2017). Positive reappraisal is typically viewed as an adaptive coping response, but it can be maladaptive in certain situations (Wassermann, Meiring and Becker, 2019).

The most frequently used strategies for dealing with stress and trauma are reported to be a problem-focused approach (Pienaar, Rothmann and Van de Vijver, 2017), confrontive coping (Cronqvist, Klang, and Björvell, 1997; Gumani et al., 2013), active coping - a form of problem-focused coping (Sundaram and Kumaran, 2012), accepting responsibility (Roth and Cohen, 1986), planful problem-solving (Moller, 2008; Richter, Lauritz, du Preez, Cassimjee, and Ghazinour, 2013; Violanti, 1993), and self-control (Eckelton-Moreira, 2011; Moller, 2008; Violanti, 1993). Most used emotion-focused coping strategies include situational tolerance, responsibility, positive reappraisal, and seeking social support (Gumani et al., 2013; Moller, 2008; Richter et al., 2013). Various studies indicated that many officers use avoidance coping strategies (Myendeki, 2008; Violanti, 1993), especially when the situation is unique (de Wet, 2004). Coping strategies used least include the maladaptive strategies of disengagement, denial, avoidance, distancing (Bishop et al., 2010; Gumani et al., 2013; Richter et al., 2013), seeking social support, self-blame, and tension reduction (Larsson, Kempe, and Starrin, 1988).

Accepting responsibility and a confrontive approach were seldom adopted by police officers (Eckelton-Moreira, 2011; Gumani et al., 2013; Moller, 2008; Richter et al., 2013).

### 2.8.1. Maintaining a healthy police service

Experiencing acute stress is inherent in police work. The inability to cope effectively with stressful events can result in undesirable psychological and somatic outcomes, leading to chronic stress, burnout, and quitting the profession. Surprisingly, understanding the coping process in police stress and identifying effective coping strategies and/or support systems in response to stressful events has received only scant attention in the literature. However, with the growing attention on the need to prioritise officers' physical and mental health, Jorgensen and Rothmann (2008) argued that coping with stress among police officers requires more than just policies because managing stress is influenced by marital status, officers rank, age, gender, and years of service. Understanding the complexity of stress management is critical to designing a comprehensive approach.

Penalba, McGuire and Leite (2008) conducted a Cochrane review to assess the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions given to law enforcement personnel (police officers and military police) to prevent psychological disorders, and they highlighted the lack of quality data describing the effectiveness of stress management interventions for police officers. Psychosocial intervention randomised and quasi-randomised controlled trials were included. The authors indicated that only five of the ten studies included in the review had data for analysis. None of the studies met the review quality criteria completely. Many studies lacked relevant data, and effective evidence was scant, leading the authors to conclude that the studies were generally of poor quality. The authors also concluded that a meta-analysis was not feasible and that there was insufficient evidence to determine whether psychosocial interventions provided to law enforcement to prevent psychological disorders were effective.

A systematic review of stress management programs in other worker populations discovered similar findings. Van Wyk and Pillay-Van Wyk (2010) conducted a Cochrane review to investigate the effects of staff support interventions aimed at coping with work stress, reducing burnout, and improving job satisfaction among nurses. The following preventive interventions were investigated: (1) support groups, (2) stress management training, and (3) management interventions provided to support staff. The authors concluded that the majority of the ten primary studies were methodologically deficient and of poor quality. Overall, they discovered that there is insufficient evidence to show whether stress management interventions reduce work stress, prevent burnout, or reduce employee absenteeism. There is limited evidence that stress management interventions improve employee morale and job satisfaction. More rigorous studies, according to the authors, are required.

According to Patterson, Chung and Swan (2014), stress management interventions focused on individual and organisational factors, and few research methods were rigorous. A meta-analysis was conducted by van der Klink, Blonk, Schene, and Dijk (2001) to examine the effects of four types of stress management interventions: cognitive-behavioural interventions, relaxation techniques, multimodal programs, and organization-focused interventions. They discovered that cognitive-behavioural and multimodal interventions had a moderate effect, while relaxation techniques had a minor effect. Organisation-focused interventions were not statistically measurable. Significant effects were discovered on psychological outcomes, complaints, and work-life quality. The authors concluded that stress management interventions work. Van der Hek and Plomp (1997) updated DeFrank and Cooper's (1987) review of stress management interventions (1987). They looked at studies from 1987 to 1994 and concluded that "it is still impossible to determine which specific interventions or techniques are most effective and should be recommended" (p. 140). When significant effects were discovered, it was difficult to determine which components of the intervention were responsible. The basis

for these conclusions was heterogeneity among studies, which made comparing studies difficult, rather than a lack of sufficient studies.

Law enforcement often provides resilience enhancement training or similar programs such as stress management interventions, which should help officers perform their duties while minimising potential negative consequences (Andersen et al. 2015; Weltman, Lamon, Freedy and Chartrand, 2014; Papazoglou and Andersen, 2014). Several intervention programs, including mental imaging training (Arnetz, Arble, Backman, Lynch and Lublin, 2013), resilience training (Devilly and Varker 2013), and Heart math stress techniques, have been developed to date (Patterson, Chung and Swan, 2014). These programs teach police officers techniques to deal with stressful situations before they occur, while they are actually occurring, or in the days and weeks that follow. These mental strength training domains are challenge, control, and confidence (Dagnall, Drinkwater, Denovan and Walsh, 2021). Some other scholars include commitment as a vital domain of building mental toughness in law enforcement officers (Yau, Ping and Kuan, 2021; Weiss and Halupnik, 2013). Mental toughness is a concept rooted in sports psychology and is a characteristic of people who perform well under pressure (Gucciardi, Gordon and Dimmock, 2008). It is a concept related to psychological resilience. In fact, Kobasa's hardiness inspired mental toughness (McCraty, Atkinson, Lipsenthal and Arguelles, 2009; Ranta and Sud 2008).

However, it is unclear whether these interventions can improve psychological resilience or reduce mental health symptoms in law enforcement. Several studies on the effects of officer training programs yielded no promising results (Van der Meulen et al. 2018). Peñalba, McGuire and Leite (2008), on the other hand, report psychological and psychosocial benefits found in small-scale studies, but emphasise the need for more well-designed studies to establish more thorough proof of the efficacy of these programs. Furthermore, Patterson, Chung and Swan

(2014) systematic review of police stress management interventions refrain from drawing conclusions due to the limitations of the research designs. Patterson, Chung and Swan (2014) and Peñalba, McGuire and Leite (2008) both emphasise the need for more rigorous designs that use larger sample sizes, among others. Another systematic review of resilience enhancement training for the police and other occupations, such as teachers, managers, and soldiers, yielded ambiguous results; both effects and non-effects on a variety of outcome measures, such as psychological resilience and mental health, were found within and between studies (Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar and Curran, 2015). These reviews show that evidence of resilience enhancement training for law enforcement is ambiguous in its outcomes, and previously used study designs lack robustness.

## 2.9 SAPS SUPPORT SYSTEMS: ACCESSIBILITY, RELIABILITY, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Seaward (2017) asserts that stress is an integral part of human life that continually resurfaces. However, what is imperative is to ensure that there are programs and support structures in place to minimise its prevalence. It is therefore important to discuss SAPS support structures that help reduce occupational stress among officers, given the dangers of unmanaged stress. In the past, SAPS used to have Employee Assistance Services (EAS) which consisted of different parts, such as psychologists, social workers, chaplains, and others (SAPS, 2013). As described by Grobler and Joubert (2012), described EAS as a set of work-based services designed to improve worker productivity. At the beginning of the EAS program, workers with substance abuse problems were the focus of the services, but the scope of the program gradually broadened to include all workers' problems that adversely affect productivity at work (Rajin, 2012). These include financial concerns, occupational stress, psychological concerns, family problems, and physical health issues (Sipon and Yaacob, 2014). SAPS adopted this program

as an initial measure to ensure personnel well-being and productivity. In 2016 SAPS revised this program and established it as Employee Health and Wellness (SAPS, 2016).

In its annual report, SAPS describes the EHW program as an integrated program. This program aims to provide a healthy and productive workforce by establishing and implementing health and wellness programs and strategies (South African Police Service, 2016:4). The mental stress that may occur because of the work of police officers is addressed through this program. A variety of support services are provided to officers who may be experiencing difficulties with their personal, emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Four units make up the Employee Health and Wellness department, including psychological services, social work services, spiritual services, and quality of life services. There are still social workers within this program, chaplains within spiritual services, counsellors within psychological services, psychometrists and psychologists within psychological services, but the differences from the EAS program are that now these units operate in a more integrated manner (EHW, 2016). A major component of the South African Police Service's EHW services is the provision of spiritual services, including prayer and devotions, pastoral care, home and hospital visits, aftercare, funeral arrangements, and memorial services (Thaba, 2018; Joubert and Grobler, 2013). Counselling services, resilience and capacity building programs, and support for deployments at national and international levels are offered by social work services (Thaba, 2018). In addition to counselling and therapeutic interventions, trauma debriefing, support groups, crisis intervention and management, psychological assessment, suicide and femicide awareness, organizational diagnosis, and team development are included in psychological services (Thaba, 2018).

According to Lillard (2020), police officers experiencing occupational stress should speak with a trusted individual. Social workers are usually employed in SAPS to provide officers with the

opportunity to confide in someone they can trust. Boshoff, Strydom and Botha (2015) reported that officers have difficulties accessing social workers. This indicates that there is an acute shortage of EHW staff in SAPS and those who are available deal with heavy workloads. However, there are other studies indicating that some police officers are satisfied with SAPS support services (Rajin, 2012; Thaba, 2018). Rajin (2012) reported that 55% of respondents were satisfied with SAPS support services while 28% did not utilise them because they did not trust EHW workers. Besides helping its members, the Employee Health and Wellness Centre also help their families (Grobler and Joubert, 2012). There is 24-hour staff available to assist employees in the Employee Health and Wellness program and confidentiality is an imperative aspect of the program (Grobler and Joubert, 2012). By reducing stress effects such as absenteeism and improving productivity among employees, the Employee Health and Wellness program benefits not only the individual but also SAPS as an organisation (Cornelius, 2016). In contrast, Boshoff and Strydom (2015) believes that SAPS interventions are ineffective at reducing stress. Despite having stress interventions in place within the SAPS, officers have continued to show high levels of post-traumatic stress reactions which are the main symptoms of occupational stress.

It is pertinent to note that there are strategies in place aimed at minimising occupational stress in SAPS. To minimise occupational stress on SAPS officers, primary prevention programmes are adopted to implement interventions at the earliest possible stage (Patterson, Chung and Swan, 2014). These programs include pre-deployment briefing, pre-selection screening, induction training, life skills programs and sport activities (Maabela, 2015). Secondary prevention strategies prevent serious health consequences associated with chronic stress, such as chronic illness. This is after a person has been traumatised. It may include psychological first aid (PFA), a trauma debriefing model developed by SAPS, an emergency response and standby service 24 hours a day, health education, and resilience building (Maabela, 2015).

Tertiary interventions are used for post-traumatic stress disorder in individuals with long-term stress (Maabela, 2015). Several tertiary strategies are implemented, including internal and external referrals for psychiatric and medical treatment to SAPS workers, trauma counselling, clinical counselling, trauma support groups, and a call centre for SAPS employees, health, and wellness (Maabela, 2015).

The South African Police Service also uses a method called critical incident stress debriefing to deal with trauma caused by critical incidents (Wessermann, 2016). During critical incident stress debriefing, police officers attempt to reduce the negative effects that may ensue following traumatic incidents. Wessermann (2016) describes debriefing in SAPS as a method of venting emotions in a controlled and safe environment. SAPS personnel are encouraged to engage in debriefing after being involved in an abnormal situation, as they are likely to experience psychological symptoms and feelings of stress and anxiety. Though debriefing is highly emphasised, Mokgobu (2010) found that even police officers exposed to graphic and traumatic situations may not participate in debriefing sessions. This is due to the stigma and shame associated with mental health counselling. According to Maabela (2015)'s study on perceptions of SAPS members regarding debriefing services, some SAPS members did not view debriefing as beneficial to them since they perceived it as a process for reliving their traumatic experiences that they wanted to forget about. In some cases, participants viewed debriefing as a helpful and effective means of providing psychological support and reducing stress. However, the EHW however provides a variety of interventions aimed at supporting SAPS personnel's health and well-being. A portion of this program focuses on emotional support, including interventions that address issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, grief, and loss (EHW, 2016). EHW also addresses employee concerns as they ensure healthy workplace relationships among SAPS employees. Due to the increasing number of police officers under stress who have committed suicide and killed their spouses, EHW likewise offers

intervention services for problems related to marriage and family relationships (Thaba, 2018). Also, the program provides interventions regarding healthy living and substance abuse to help police officers suffering from stress.

As part of SAPS Employee Health and Wellness (EHW), a variety of purposes are served. Its goals include suicide prevention and this is primarily achieved through increasing awareness and stress management skills within the SAPS workforce (EHW, 2016). Due to the nature of police work, Van Lelyveld (2008) argues that such programs are vital to police officers' success in the field. As a result of the high incidence of incidents in which police officers are involved, it is imperative that such programmes exist. Considering the high suicide rates among police officers, the South African Police Union (SAPU) expressed concern and recommended that a study be conducted on SAPS support structures and how they may be improved to reduce suicide rates among police officers (SAPS Detective Dialogue, 2012). Boshoff and Strydom (2015) found that 33% of police officers participated in suicide prevention programs and 20% had never participated. The study revealed that police officers do not even realise they need psychological assistance, which is why the consequences of severe stress continue to increase. Boshoff and Strydom (2015) investigated trauma interventions among SAPS officers in the North-West Province, South Africa. The study examined police officers' experiences with trauma intervention programmes within SAPS. It found that 44% of the participants were familiar with stress management programs, but others had never used trauma management programs. Among the least used programs are psychotherapy, crisis intervention, and suicide prevention. Many respondents (17%), however, said they had never taken part in SAPS support programs (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015).

Similarly, Grobler and Joubert (2012) investigated police officers' expectations regarding SAPS support services. This study indicated that SAPS officers have high expectations for

support services, indicating that such services are most needed. SAPS officers know the available support services; however, some have no experience using them for various reasons. It is imperative that SAPS develop effective and innovative ways to make their support systems attractive to officers (Grobler and Joubert, 2012).

### 2.9.1 Historical context and evolution of police support systems in South Africa

The evolution of support structures for police officers in South Africa has been shaped by the increasing recognition of occupational stressors inherent in policing. Police work necessitates adaptive coping mechanisms, and SAPS has refined its support systems. However, despite these efforts, gaps remain in addressing officers' psychological needs comprehensively. Research on stress and coping strategies within SAPS highlights significant shifts in police officers' coping responses over time. Initially, officers largely relied on planful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, and confrontive coping strategies to manage stress (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). While planful problem-solving and positive reappraisal are considered adaptive, confrontive coping efficacy varies, often depending on the specific policing context. Notably, confrontive coping, which involves direct, sometimes aggressive engagement with stressors, may yield mixed results, particularly in high-risk law enforcement scenarios where emotional regulation is crucial.

The observed transition in coping mechanisms suggests an adaptive response to evolving occupational pressures. Over time, officers have exhibited a decline in confrontive coping and acceptance of responsibility, alongside an increased reliance on planful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, and escape avoidance (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). While the reduction in confrontive coping may indicate a shift towards healthier coping mechanisms, the rise in escape avoidance is concerning. Avoidant coping strategies, which often involve disengagement or emotional withdrawal, undermine psychological resilience and contribute to

long-term mental health challenges. This underscores the need for sustained institutional support that prioritises proactive mental health interventions rather than reactive crisis management.

Critically, the reliance on individual coping strategies without a corresponding transformation in the organisational environment may create a dissonance between personal resilience and systemic demands. The SAPS organisational culture, characterised by hierarchical structures, rigid command chains, and a historically entrenched "macho" ethos, often perpetuates stigma around seeking psychological support. This culture not only discourages help-seeking behaviours but also reinforces maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as emotional suppression and hyper-masculinity, which are detrimental to long-term mental health. Moreover, chronic exposure to violence, trauma, and operational stress without adequate psychological debriefing increases the risk of burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other stress-related conditions.

The implications for support structures within SAPS are profound. While emotional competence training has been recommended as a means to bolster officers' emotional resilience, its effectiveness depends on consistent implementation and institutional commitment (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). Additionally, the broader structural and cultural challenges within SAPS—such as stigma surrounding mental health support, limited access to mental health services, and the high-pressure nature of policing—must be addressed to ensure that support interventions yield meaningful outcomes. Without a holistic and well-integrated approach, individual coping strategies alone may be insufficient in mitigating the cumulative psychological toll of police work. Furthermore, resource constraints and policy gaps within SAPS exacerbate the structural barriers to effective mental health support. Mental health services are often underfunded, with inadequate staffing of

psychological professionals relative to the size of the police force. This scarcity limits the availability of timely interventions, follow-up care, and specialised trauma counselling. Additionally, policies on mental health often lack clarity regarding confidentiality protections, leading to fears among officers that seeking support may jeopardise their careers. Addressing these policy gaps requires a comprehensive mental health framework that integrates prevention, early intervention, and long-term support, embedded within the broader organisational policies and practices.

Ultimately, while the evolution of support structures for South African police officers reflects an increasing awareness of occupational stress and mental health needs, existing measures remain inadequate at fully addressing law enforcement's complex psychological demands. A comprehensive approach—one that integrates robust institutional support, culturally sensitive mental health interventions, and a shift away from reliance on avoidant coping—remains essential in fostering sustainable well-being among officers. This necessitates not only the enhancement of existing support programs but also a transformative shift in organisational culture, leadership commitment to mental health, and policy reforms that prioritise police officers' holistic well-being.

Given the demanding and often perilous nature of their work, the well-being of police officers in South Africa has long been under scrutiny. Exposure to high levels of stress, trauma, and occupational hazards has been a persistent reality, with historical accounts revealing systemic neglect in addressing these challenges. Mona, Chimbari, and Hongoro (2019) highlight the multifaceted risks associated with policing, including physical injuries and psychological stress, exacerbated by organisational constraints. This neglect is not merely a reflection of operational oversights but also indicative of deeper structural inadequacies embedded within the historical and political evolution of South African law enforcement.

The transition to democracy in 1994 marked a pivotal change in the structure and function of the South African Police Service, introducing reforms aimed at aligning policing practices with democratic principles. However, these reforms have also generated increased pressures, particularly in enforcing democratic rights and navigating the evolving public perception of law enforcement (Brooks, 2020). The dual role of officers as both enforcers of the law and protectors of civil liberties has created a paradoxical work environment, where the expectations placed upon them are often contradictory. This has been compounded by the complex socio-political dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa, where historical grievances and contemporary inequalities converge to influence public-police interactions. These transformations have not necessarily translated into substantive improvements in officers' well-being, as the tension between maintaining law and order and upholding human rights continues to shape their professional experiences.

Historically, police officers' well-being was largely overlooked, with minimal institutional support for mental health. Policing in South Africa is characterised by a culture of resilience and toughness, which discourages officers from seeking psychological assistance. Perkins, Howell, and Shearing (2020) argue that this lack of support was compounded by the stigma surrounding mental health interventions, effectively isolating officers in their struggles with occupational trauma. As a result of the entrenched "macho" culture within the police force, officers are discouraged from seeking treatment for mental health issues due to the perception that vulnerability is a sign of weakness. Instead of structured interventions, coping mechanisms were primarily individualistic, relying on personal resilience strategies such as planful problem-solving and positive reappraisal (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). Such strategies, while useful to an extent, placed the burden of managing stress solely on individual officers, rather than addressing the root causes within the policing environment. This individualised approach neglects systemic and organisational factors that significantly

contribute to occupational stress. Some of these factors include poor leadership, a lack of resources, and exposure to violence.

Contemporary approaches reflect a more structured and holistic understanding of police officers' well-being, emphasising psychological resilience and institutional reforms. Research has shown that it is important to address not only direct occupational stressors, but also the broader organisational culture that influences the mental health of officers. Mushwana, Govender, and Nel (2019) point to management-related stressors, including inadequate leadership support and excessive bureaucratic pressures, as key determinants of officers' well-being. This highlights the critical role leadership and organisational climate play in mitigating or exacerbating work-related stress. Recognition of these factors has led to initiatives aimed at promoting emotional competence training and adaptive coping mechanisms within SAPS (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019; Mushwana, Govender, and Nel, 2019). Such interventions mark a departure from past reliance on individual resilience, signalling an institutional acknowledgment of structural dimensions of well-being. However, the efficacy of these initiatives is often undermined by inconsistent implementation, lack of follow-up support, and insufficient integration into the broader organisational framework.

In addition to psychological support, recent discourse highlights the need for comprehensive policy reforms that prioritise occupational health and safety. Comparative studies suggest that South Africa's policing strategies can benefit from adopting international best practices in officer well-being (Mona, Chimbari, and Hongoro, 2019). However, the translation of global models into locally relevant policies requires careful adaptation, considering the distinct socio-political landscape within which the SAPS operates. In order to effectively address the unique challenges faced by South African police officers, such as high crime rates, community mistrust, and the legacy of apartheid-era policing, context-specific interventions must be

implemented that address both structural and cultural factors. Furthermore, the push for improved police-community relations has been recognised as a crucial factor in mitigating work-related stress. Research by Scheibe et al. (2016) illustrates the impact of strained interactions with key populations. It suggests that fostering trust and reducing stigma between law enforcement and the public can create a more supportive working environment for officers. Positive community relations not only enhance public safety but also contribute to officers' sense of purpose and job satisfaction, which are critical components of psychological well-being.

The trajectory of well-being initiatives within SAPS illustrates a gradual yet significant shift from individualised coping mechanisms to structured institutional support and policy interventions. However, persistent challenges remain, particularly in dismantling entrenched stigmas and addressing systemic organisational stressors that contribute to officers' psychological strain. The intersectionality of these stressors, encompassing personal, organisational, and societal dimensions, necessitates a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond superficial reforms. While contemporary reforms acknowledge the multifaceted nature of police well-being, their effectiveness depends on sustained implementation and a commitment to cultural transformation within law enforcement agencies. This includes fostering an environment where mental health is destigmatised, support systems are readily accessible, and leadership actively promotes subordinate well-being. The evolving discourse reflects a growing awareness of the intersection between occupational demands, organisational culture, and the broader socio-political climate shaping police officers' experiences in South Africa. Addressing these complexities requires not only policy reforms but also a fundamental shift in the organisational ethos that governs the SAPS.

The South African Police Service has undergone multiple reforms, reflecting broader shifts in governance, policing strategies, and social expectations. These reforms have sought to improve the institution's functionality and legitimacy, yet the mental health challenges faced by officers remain a persistent and underexplored concern. The psychological effects of policing in South Africa are exacerbated by high levels of violence, chronic stress, and a lack of structured support systems. This review critically examines how SAPS reforms have shaped mental health support for officers, highlighting persistent gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Policing in South Africa is inherently high-risk, with officers frequently encountering violent crime, trauma, and occupational stressors that significantly impact their emotional well-being. Despite this, SAPS lacks a comprehensive and sustainable mental health support structure. Officers often operate in environments where post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety are prevalent, yet access to care remains limited (Perkins, Howell, and Shearing, 2020). The prevalence of these conditions among officers is not merely an individual issue but indicative of systemic failures within the institution to provide adequate psychological support. Furthermore, cultural and institutional barriers discourage officers from seeking psychological help. The stigma surrounding mental health within SAPS is deeply ingrained in policing culture, where resilience and toughness are often equated with professional competence. This problematic association fosters an environment where vulnerability is pathologised, and help-seeking behaviours are stigmatised, leading officers to suppress their struggles out of fear of being perceived as weak or incapable (Perkins, Howell, and Shearing, 2020).

Post-1994, SAPS reform has been framed within a broader democratic transformation of South Africa's governance structures. However, these reforms tend to place a high priority on accountability, crime reduction, and organisational restructuring at the expense of officers' well-being (Govender and Pillay, 2021). Performance metrics and crime statistics often

overshadow the human cost borne by police officers, who face immense psychological pressures without adequate support. While legislative changes and policy shifts have sought to professionalise SAPS, mental health programs have been inconsistently implemented, lacking coherence and sustainability. While the centralisation of policing functions was intended to improve efficiency, it has resulted in a disconnect between officers and the communities they serve. This detachment erodes the sense of social cohesion and purpose that can act as protective factors against occupational stress, thereby increasing feelings of isolation and emotional burnout (Govender and Pillay, 2021).

The South African Mental Health Care Act (No. 17 of 2002) has had unintended consequences for SAPS, as officers frequently serve as the first point of contact for individuals experiencing mental health crises. While this legislation aimed to facilitate access to care, its implementation has led to an increase in unnecessary police referrals. A significant proportion of mental health care users (MHCUs) referred by SAPS are not admitted to hospitals, suggesting inefficiencies in the screening process and a need for alternative intervention strategies (Jonsson, Moosa, Jeenah, and Musenge, 2013). This legislative framework inadvertently expands the scope of police responsibilities without equipping officers with the requisite skills or resources. The reliance on SAPS to handle mental health crises without adequate training or support places additional strain on officers. This not only diverts their focus from core policing functions but also exposes them to secondary traumatic stress, further compounding their psychological burden.

Addressing the mental health crisis within SAPS requires a multi-faceted approach that transcends tokenistic interventions. A proposed four-phase model of primary intervention seeks to integrate mental health support into policing structures, providing officers with preventative care, early intervention, crisis support, and long-term rehabilitation services. Such

an approach could mitigate the adverse effects of occupational stress while fostering a more resilient police force. However, the success of these models depends on addressing cultural stigmas surrounding mental health and ensuring sustained institutional commitment to psychological well-being. This necessitates not only policy reforms but also a fundamental cultural shift within SAPS, where mental health is normalised as an integral aspect of professional competence rather than a sign of personal failure.

There is an urgent need for a more structured and proactive approach to mental health support within SAPS in light of the ongoing challenges. While reforms have brought some improvements, they have failed to address officers' deep-seated psychological challenges. Legislative changes such as the Mental Health Care Act have expanded SAPS's role in mental health referrals. However, the lack of appropriate training and resources hinders effective implementation. Moving forward, SAPS must prioritise mental health as a critical component of police reform. This includes integrating structured support systems, comprehensive training programs, and cultural shifts to foster a healthier and more effective police force. Only through such holistic and sustained efforts can the mental health of SAPS officers be safeguarded. This will ensure not only their well-being but also the efficacy and legitimacy of the policing institution in South Africa.

### 2.9.2 Comparative analysis of police support systems

The South African Police Service operates in a complex socio-political environment that exacerbates officers' stress, requiring a nuanced approach to support structures. The police in South Africa are shaped by historical inequalities, persistent violent crime rates, and public distrust, all of which are deeply rooted in the country's colonial and apartheid past. These factors place SAPS officers under immense psychological and operational strain, as they

navigate the dual challenge of addressing crime while managing community perceptions that often view them with scepticism and hostility.

These stressors are not only caused by operational duties, such as exposure to violent crime, traumatic events, and the constant risk of fatal encounters, but also from organisational weaknesses. The lack of adequate management support, bureaucratic inefficiencies, poor leadership, lack of clear communication, and limited career advancement opportunities contribute to an environment where stress is not only inevitable, but also frequently unaddressed (Mushwana, Govender, and Nel, 2019). Furthermore, the militarisation of SAPS, a legacy of apartheid-era policing, perpetuates a culture that prioritises control over care, discouraging officers from seeking mental health support due to stigma and fears of professional repercussions.

While officers rely on problem-focused coping mechanisms—such as suppression of emotions, reliance on camaraderie, and tactical disengagement—these strategies often fall short of addressing cumulative stress and vicarious trauma (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). The rigid policing culture, which valorises stoicism and emotional detachment, further limits the effectiveness of such coping mechanisms. Over time, this can lead to burnout, substance abuse, aggressive behaviour, and even suicidal tendencies among officers. The absence of comprehensive and culturally appropriate mental health services exacerbates the situation, highlighting a critical gap in SAPS's approach to officer well-being (Gumani, 2022).

In contrast, international policing models in countries such as the UK, USA, and Canada demonstrate a strong emphasis on structured stress management and institutionalised support networks. These models incorporate proactive strategies, including psychological resilience training, peer support programs, mandatory debriefing sessions following high-stress incidents, and access to confidential counselling services. Moreover, these countries have successfully

incorporated mental health practices into their policing cultures, normalising psychological support as part of professional development rather than as a sign of weakness. Exposure to such global best practices has been shown to benefit SAPS officers, particularly through international training programs that introduce more effective methods of stress regulation (Mofokeng and Grootboom, 2023).

However, the challenge remains in adapting these practices to the unique socio-political and economic constraints of the South African context. Unlike their international counterparts, SAPS officers often work in under-resourced environments with limited access to basic mental health services. Due to the disparity in resource allocation and the high crime rate, as well as the socioeconomic inequalities within South Africa, direct transplantation of international models is not possible. While international frameworks emphasise emotional competence training as a core component of officer well-being, SAPS's existing interventions remain reactive rather than preventative, often failing to provide sustained mental health support (Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019).

Efforts to integrate stress management programs within SAPS have been uneven. Initiatives such as the "Managing Stress Effectively" program highlight the necessity for targeted interventions but lack institutional consistency and long-term commitment (Williams and Weyers, 2014). It should be noted that, unlike international models that have incorporated stress management into their broader police culture, SAPS remains constrained by structural inefficiencies, resource limitations, and leadership gaps, all of which undermine the effectiveness of such programs. Furthermore, there is a disconnect between policy formulation and program implementation, with many programs failing to reach frontline officers who need them most.

Best practices from international models suggest that a holistic approach—combining organisational support, peer-based coping mechanisms, and individual resilience-building strategies—is essential in mitigating the long-term psychological toll of policing (Williams and Weyers, 2014). This includes not only the provision of formal mental health interventions, but also the establishment of a work environment that promotes open communication, leadership accountability, and an understanding of the emotional demands of policing. However, there is a significant disparity between SAPS and international policing institutions regarding policy implementation, resource allocation, and cultural attitudes towards mental health.

Despite some progress in incorporating international best practices, SAPS's approach to stress management remains fragmented and insufficiently adapted to South African policing realities. Officers often deal with stress on an individual basis due to the lack of a fully integrated support structure. Moreover, the socio-political dynamics of post-apartheid South Africa, characterized by high levels of community-police tension, further complicate efforts to address officer stress holistically.

While international models provide valuable frameworks, their direct application to SAPS is limited unless contextualised within the country's unique policing landscape. Future interventions must prioritise not only the adoption of effective stress management strategies but also the institutional capacity to sustain these programs in a manner that is both practical and culturally relevant. Systemic issues within SAPS, such as leadership development, organisational culture reform, and the de-stigmatisation of mental health support, should be addressed. Only through such comprehensive and contextually grounded reforms can SAPS effectively support the psychological well-being of its officers, ultimately enhancing both their performance and the quality of policing in South Africa.

### 2.9.3 Gender and support systems in policing

There are numerous stressors that officers face in the South African Police Service, which vary significantly according to their gender. To support police officers' mental health and well-being, it is essential to understand these differences. Research has shown that male and female officers experience different levels of stress in their roles. Female officers often report higher stress intensity scores compared to their male counterparts, particularly in relation to safety concerns and lack of support from supervisors (Mushwana, Govender, and Nel, 2019; Violanti et al., 2016). This lack of support is a significant stressor for female officers, who experience a 37% higher prevalence of this issue than male officers (Violanti et al., 2016). Conversely, male officers tend to report stressors related to time management, such as court appearances and working second jobs, which interfere with their time off duty (Violanti et al., 2016). The relationship between work-role overload and stress is stronger for male officers, while family-role overload is more pronounced for female officers (Duxbury and Halinski, 2018).

Both male and female officers face organisational stressors, such as inadequate equipment, poor salaries, and seeing criminals go free, which are common across gender lines (Pienaar and Rothmann, 2006). However, female officers are more affected by non-supportive work cultures and pressures to perform tasks outside their mandate, which contribute to work-role overload (Duxbury and Halinski, 2018). There is a high incidence of operational stress among SAPS members, including exposure to violent situations and vicarious trauma. The stressors are compounded by cultural prescriptions and personal trauma histories, which affect officers differently according to their gender (Gumani, 2022).

Coping strategies also differ by gender. Positive coping strategies are more likely to be used by female officers in stress response, which may mitigate some of the negative effects of their higher stress levels (Bonner and Brimhall, 2021). According to Mushwana, Govender, and Nel

(2019), SAPS members often use problem-focused coping strategies to manage stress. A significant gender difference in the stressors faced by SAPS officers has been documented in the literature. There is a higher level of stress experienced by female officers related to safety and support, while male officers are more affected by issues relating to time management. Understanding these differences is essential for developing effective support systems and interventions tailored to the unique needs of male and female officers in SAPS.

The South African Police Service has faced significant challenges in addressing gender inequity despite post-apartheid reforms aimed at creating a more inclusive environment. Studies indicate that systemic gender discrimination persists within the SAPS, with women often underrepresented in leadership roles and facing barriers to advancement (Khosa, 2022; Khosa, 2021; Ulicki, 2012). As stereotypes and cultural norms continue to hinder the advancement of women in the police force, there is a persisting male-dominated culture in law enforcement (Khosa, 2021; Singh and Khan, 2020). Female officers in the SAPS encounter numerous barriers, including limited access to mental health services and support systems. The stigma associated with seeking help and the lack of organised mental health services within the SAPS exacerbate these issues, leaving officers to cope with the trauma of their work with minimal support (Perkins, Howell, and Shearing, 2020). Additionally, police units often reinforce gender divisions, making it difficult for women to access the same opportunities and support as their male counterparts (Marks, 2008).

Gender-based violence remains a critical issue in South Africa, with the SAPS playing a crucial role in addressing this problem. However, the response to GBV is often hampered by inadequate training and resources, as well as a lack of collaboration between the SAPS and other stakeholders (Nortje and Hull, 2024; Hellen, Adewale, and Modipa, 2023). Efforts to reform the SAPS and improve its handling of GBV cases are ongoing, but challenges remain

in effectively implementing these changes (Nortje and Hull, 2024). To overcome these barriers, several strategies have been proposed, including the development of leadership frameworks for women in policing and the review of human resource practices to promote a more inclusive work environment (Khosa, 2022). Legislative reforms have also been introduced to support gender equality, although their impact has been limited by entrenched cultural and structural barriers (Khosa, 2022; Singh and Khan, 2020). The literature highlights the complex interplay of gendered experiences, support systems, and barriers within the South African Police Service. While reforms have been initiated to address these issues, significant challenges remain in achieving true gender equity and providing adequate support for female officers. Continued efforts are needed to dismantle systemic barriers and foster an environment where all officers can thrive.

Women in the South African Police Service (SAPS) face significant challenges in advancing to leadership positions. Despite legal frameworks promoting gender equality, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles within law enforcement agencies. This underrepresentation is attributed to persistent gender stereotypes and a lack of strategic policies to support women's advancement in leadership (Khosa, 2022a; Khosa, 2022b; Khosa, 2021). Historical male dominance in policing has created a culture that marginalises women, considering them incapable of handling the physical demands of police work (Khosa, 2022b; Singh and Khan, 2020).

Stereotypical perceptions of women as physically weaker and less competent than their male counterparts contribute to workplace discrimination. Female officers are often relegated to administrative duties rather than active policing roles, reinforcing gender biases and limiting their career progression (Khosa, 2021; Singh and Khan, 2020). This discrimination is further exacerbated by a lack of effective policy implementation to address these biases, despite the

existence of numerous laws and regulations aimed at promoting gender equality (Khosa, 2022a; Khosa, 2022b). Law enforcement's male-dominated environment poses unique challenges for women, impacting their psychological well-being. Women in SAPS often face hostile work environments, which affect mental health and job satisfaction. However, studies have shown that women who maintain a sense of authenticity and self-awareness can better cope with these challenges, suggesting the importance of empowering women to develop their best-self characteristics (Jacobs and Barnard, 2023; Jacobs and Barnard, 2022).

Women in custody and female officers are not immune to police brutality and gender-based violence, which remain significant issues within SAPS. Female officers and women in custody often experience physical and verbal abuse, highlighting the need for improved training and policies to protect women from such violence (Hellen, Adewale, and Modipa, 2023; Hesselink and Häefele, 2015). Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including better training for law enforcement officials and stronger collaboration with community stakeholders (Hellen, Adewale, and Modipa, 2023). To overcome these challenges, it is recommended that SAPS review and revise human resource practices and policies to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women. Implementing existing policies effectively and promoting fair treatment and tolerance among male officers are crucial steps toward gender equality in law enforcement (Khosa, 2022a; Khosa, 2022c). Additionally, empowering women through leadership development frameworks and authenticity interventions can help them navigate the challenges of a male-dominated profession (Jacobs and Barnard, 2023; Khosa, 2022b). Women in the South African Police Service face numerous challenges, including underrepresentation in leadership, workplace discrimination, and exposure to violence. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy reform, cultural change, and empowerment initiatives. SAPS can achieve gender

equality in law enforcement by fostering an inclusive environment and supporting women's advancement.

### 2.9.4 The role of peer support networks and informal coping mechanisms

Peer-support programs in policing are designed to provide mental health support and reduce stigma associated with seeking help among police officers. These programs are crucial in addressing the high rates of mental health issues and suicide within police forces, as evidenced in various international contexts (Ward and Belkin, 2024; Milliard, 2020). The effectiveness of these programs is often evaluated based on their impact on mental health outcomes, stigma reduction, and the cultivation of a supportive organisational culture. Although their benefits are widely acknowledged, the nuanced interplay between program structure, cultural factors, and individual officer experiences remains underexplored, necessitating a more critical evaluation.

Research indicates that peer-support programs can significantly enhance mental health literacy and reduce stigma among police officers. In Ontario, Canada, peer-support initiatives have shown positive contributions to officers' mental health by normalising conversations around mental health issues, thereby challenging the entrenched "toughness" culture within policing that often discourages emotional vulnerability (Ward and Belkin, 2024; Milliard, 2020). Similarly, in the UK, programs focusing on domestic abuse have successfully challenged the stigma surrounding help-seeking behaviours, encouraging officers to disclose their experiences and seek support (Ward and Belkin, 2024). Peer-support programs play an important role in fostering an environment where mental health issues can be openly discussed, thereby facilitating early mental illness detection and treatment. Nonetheless, it is important to examine how these programs navigate the inherent power dynamics within police hierarchies, which may inadvertently reproduce the very stigmas that they seek to eradicate.

An organisation's peer-support programs play a symbolic role in promoting its commitment to its members' well-being in addition to the mental health benefits they provide for individuals. They help create a culture of support within the police services, which is essential for morale and mental health. In addition to contributing to a sense of organisational justice, peer-support initiatives indicate that the institution values the mental health needs of its employees (Ward and Belkin, 2024). This supportive environment can improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover rates, and enhance overall productivity within police organizations. However, this organisational endorsement of peer-support raises questions about the potential co-optation of these programs as managerial tools rather than genuine support mechanisms, potentially compromising their authenticity and effectiveness.

However, despite these benefits, peer-support programs face several challenges. A significant issue is the lack of standardised procedures and the absence of provincial or national standards to ensure best practices (Milliard, 2020). This inconsistency can lead to variations in program quality and effectiveness across different police departments. Additionally, most current research focuses on the experiences of peer-support providers, with limited attention given to the perspectives of officers receiving support (Grauwiler, Barocas, and Mills, 2008). For peer-support programs to be more effective and relevant, comprehensive evaluations that include feedback from all participants are needed. Moreover, critical reflections on the intersectionality of identity factors such as race, gender, and rank within peer-support dynamics are conspicuously absent, limiting the programs' inclusivity and responsiveness to diverse officer needs.

Informal networks, including colleagues and unions, are equally vital in helping South African Police Service (SAPS) officers cope with occupational stress. The SAPS faces significant challenges related to occupational stress, which affects its officers' well-being and

effectiveness. Social support is a critical factor in managing stress, with studies showing that perceived support significantly influences post-traumatic stress symptoms. In the Western Cape, research indicates that both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, combined with social support, substantially mitigate stress levels among officers (Jones and Kagee, 2005). However, reliance on informal networks can perpetuate exclusionary practices, particularly for marginalised officers who may not have equitable access to these support systems.

The social support provided by SAPS extends beyond professional networks and includes community-based services. In the Vhembe District, communal living values inform social support networks, suggesting that SAPS should tailor support systems to fit both organisational and community contexts (Gumani, 2014). Coping strategies also vary significantly based on gender and race. African-American officers often rely on bonds with other minorities, while Caucasian officers typically depend on camaraderie with coworkers (Haarr and Morash, 1999). Women are more likely to use escape strategies and maintain written records to manage stress (Patel, 2013). These demographic differences highlight the need for tailored support programs that address diverse coping mechanisms. Moreover, critical engagement with how these demographic factors intersect with institutional cultures of masculinity and authority within the police force is necessary to fully understand and address officers' mental health needs.

Community-based approaches to officer well-being in SAPS are essential for addressing unique stressors and mental health challenges. Mental health promotion programs targeting police officers can significantly improve well-being and reduce mental disorders (Santre, 2024). Social support networks enhance psychological health by providing stable, socially rewarding roles within the work and life domains (Schantz et al., 2020). A holistic approach that considers the entire support network, rather than isolated stressors, can increase well-being

and reduce occupational strain. However, the integration of community-based strategies with formal organisational policies remains a complex challenge, often hindered by bureaucratic inertia and resistance to cultural change within police institutions.

Stress management programs implemented by the SAPS aim to address high levels of occupational stress, which can lead to various psychological disorders (Williams and Weyers, 2014). Proactive stress management is critical due to police work stress's direct impact on society. Work-related well-being is influenced by job demands, burnout, and engagement levels, with high demands and inadequate resources contributing to burnout (Rothmann et al., 2007). Addressing organisational and systemic factors, such as job demands and resource allocation, can enhance community-based interventions and support police officers' overall well-being. It is important to consider not only the content and delivery of these programs, but also the structural conditions that shape officers' experiences of stress and support, as well as the broader socio-political context within which policing takes place.

### 2.9.5 Burnout and compassion fatigue in policing

Identifying signs and symptoms of burnout among officers in the South African Police Service is pivotal to enhancing their mental health and operational effectiveness. Burnout is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a constellation of psychosocial factors, including occupational stress, coping strategies, and organisational culture. Research indicates that high job demands coupled with insufficient resources significantly contribute to burnout, manifesting through emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Mostert and Joubert, 2015). These manifestations are not merely isolated psychological experiences but reflect systemic organisational shortcomings that neglect officers' holistic well-being. Stress levels are further exacerbated by role ambiguity and conflict, which leads to a higher level of emotional exhaustion and cynicism among officers.

This trend has been confirmed by Ruiz-Ruano García et al. (2023) and Burke (2016). This highlights structural issues within SAPS, where unclear job roles and conflicting demands can undermine both individual performance and collective efficacy.

Additionally, the perception of social support plays a critical role; lower levels of perceived support correlate with increased burnout, emphasising the importance of a cohesive and supportive work environment (Ruiz-Ruano García et al., 2023). Social support within law enforcement is not merely about camaraderie but encompasses institutional mechanisms that validate officers' experiences and provide tangible psychological resources. The absence of such support structures can create an isolating environment, compounding stress and emotional fatigue. This dynamic suggests that burnout is not just a personal issue but a symptom of broader organisational dysfunctions that fail to prioritise mental health as integral to operational readiness.

Coping strategies significantly mediate the relationship between stress and burnout. Active coping mechanisms, such as seeking emotional support and problem-solving, have been shown to mitigate burnout's effects, whereas avoidance coping strategies tend to exacerbate stress and emotional exhaustion (Mostert and Joubert, 2015). This dichotomy underscores the critical role of psychological resilience training within SAPS. An effective psychological intervention that promotes constructive coping can significantly reduce burnout levels (Turgoose, Glover, and Maddox, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these interventions depends on their integration into the organisational culture, rather than being treated as ancillary programs. Emotional and psychological symptoms of burnout among officers often include emotional lability, irritability, and a pervasive sense of personal alienation, which collectively impair job performance and personal well-being (Bocheliuk et al., 2020). These symptoms reflect not just individual struggles but also the failure of systemic support mechanisms within SAPS.

Furthermore, reliance on non-constructive coping behaviours can deepen psychological distress, creating a cyclical pattern of stress and maladaptive coping (Bocheliuk et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, some officers exhibit resilience, highlighting stress responses variability and the potential for targeted interventions. This variability necessitates tailored interventions that account for individual differences in stress responses and coping efficacy. The resilience observed in some officers also points to the potential benefits of peer support programs. By leveraging the experiences of resilient officers, these programs can be used to support their colleagues.

The link between exposure to violent crime and emotional exhaustion is well-documented, with repeated exposure to traumatic events serving as a significant predictor of burnout. Officers regularly encountering violent crime are at an increased risk of emotional exhaustion due to the cumulative psychological toll of such experiences. Burnout is often characterised by chronic stress, intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, and blunted emotional responses. The persistent nature of these stressors can erode psychological resilience over time. This makes it imperative to address both the immediate and long-term impacts of trauma exposure on officers' mental health. Research indicates that police officers frequently encounter traumatic events, which can lead to significant psychological distress and emotional exhaustion. Police officers are often exposed to violent crime scenes, which can lead to emotional overload and trauma. For instance, murder detectives reported high levels of stress due to the nature of their work, particularly when dealing with cases involving children and women (Sibisi et al., 2022). Exposure to potentially traumatic events significantly impacts psychological well-being, with officers experiencing higher levels of anxiety and disengagement (Deschênes et al., 2019).

Increased exposure to violent crime correlates with higher depression rates among individuals, including police officers. A study found that a one standard deviation increase in violent crime

was associated with an 8.7 percentage point rise in depression symptoms (Tsaneva and LaPlante, 2023). Emotional exhaustion is often a consequence of chronic exposure to police stressors, leading to burnout and decreased job performance (Santa Maria et al., 2018). This correlation emphasises the need for trauma-informed care within SAPS, where mental health support is integrated into the organisation's fabric. The literature emphasises the necessity for institutional interventions to support police officers' mental health. Preventive measures and health promotion strategies are crucial to mitigating emotional exhaustion and trauma (de Oliveira Santiago et al., 2023). Conversely, while the focus is often on the negative impacts of violent crime exposure, some studies suggest that resilience and coping mechanisms can also develop among officers. This can lead to improved mental health outcomes in certain contexts. This dual perspective highlights the complexity of the relationship between violence exposure and emotional well-being in law enforcement, suggesting that interventions should not only focus on mitigating negative outcomes but also on fostering resilience.

For SAPS to maintain efficiency and officer well-being, prevention and management of burnout are critical. Effective interventions include stress management programs designed to equip officers with robust coping mechanisms (Sahin and Homberg, 2024). Adjusting workloads to prevent excessive demands is also crucial, as is fostering a supportive work environment that mitigates feelings of isolation and stress (Sahin and Homberg, 2024). Enhancing social support within the workplace and involving officers in decision-making processes can significantly bolster their sense of control and reduce burnout (Sahin and Homberg, 2024). Moreover, police organisations bear a substantial responsibility for addressing burnout by promoting mental health awareness, implementing supportive policies, and creating an environment conducive to psychological well-being (Turgoose, Glover, and Maddox, 2022).

While these strategies are vital, it is essential to acknowledge the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health issues in policing. This stigma often discourages officers from seeking help due to fears of judgment or professional repercussions. Addressing this cultural barrier is crucial for fostering an environment where officers feel safe and supported in accessing mental health resources. Stigma is not just an individual issue but embedded within organisational culture, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards mental health. Overcoming this barrier requires a concerted effort to shift cultural norms within SAPS, promoting mental health as a sign of strength rather than weakness. Ultimately, a comprehensive approach that integrates individual coping strategies, organisational support, and cultural change is necessary to effectively prevent and manage burnout in the South African Police Service.

### 2.9.6 Police officers, public perception and mental health

Public perceptions and media scrutiny of the South African Police Service have a profound impact on its members' stress levels. This stress is exacerbated by the inherent challenges of police work, which include exposure to traumatic incidents, high-stakes decision-making, and the constant pressure to maintain public trust in a complex socio-political environment. The multifaceted nature of these stressors demands a critical exploration beyond surface-level analysis, as they intertwine with broader societal issues such as systemic inequality, historical legacies of mistrust, and institutional accountability.

Negative public perception often stems from high-profile incidents of police misconduct, corruption, and perceived inefficiencies in crime prevention and response. Such perceptions are amplified by media scrutiny. This frequently focuses on sensational stories of police failure or abuse, overshadowing the daily efforts of officers who perform their duties with integrity. The media's tendency to frame police narratives through a deficit lens contributes to the stigmatisation of law enforcement, creating a feedback loop where negative portrayals diminish

public trust, which in turn increases SAPS pressure. Continuous exposure to these portrayals can lead SAPS members to experience demoralisation and alienation, affecting their psychological well-being and job performance. Modise (2023) highlights that the erosion of public trust in police leadership and accountability mechanisms exacerbates these stress levels, as officers feel increasingly scrutinised not only by the public but also by internal oversight bodies, creating a pervasive environment of pressure and distrust. This dynamic reflects a broader societal discourse on authority and legitimacy, where the police are both enforcers of law and symbols of state power.

As a result of the nature of policing, which involves long hours, exposure to violence, and the risk of physical injury, SAPS officers experience unique occupational stressors. Sibisi et al. (2022) note that these stressors are compounded by negative media portrayals that often neglect the broader context of the systemic challenges faced by the police, such as resource constraints, inadequate training, and policy ambiguities. Detectives, in particular, report high levels of stress from dealing with emotionally challenging cases such as violent crimes and child abuse. This can lead to chronic mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Moreover, the stigma surrounding mental health within law enforcement culture often prevents officers from seeking the necessary support, perpetuating a cycle of unaddressed psychological distress.

The phenomenon of vicarious trauma further complicates the mental health of SAPS members. Gumani (2022) explains that officers internalise trauma experienced by victims, leading to secondary traumatic stress. This condition, if unaddressed, can result in emotional numbing, burnout, and diminished empathy capacity. This, in turn, affects their interactions with the public and colleagues, potentially reinforcing negative stereotypes about police behaviour and attitudes. Singo and Shilubane (2022) emphasise the importance of effective coping

mechanisms, noting that while some officers rely on support systems such as peer networks and family, others may resort to maladaptive strategies, including substance use, to manage their stress. This underscores the critical need for comprehensive mental health interventions within SAPS, aimed at promoting resilience and providing accessible psychological support services. The integration of mental health education into police training programs could play a pivotal role in normalising help-seeking behaviours and reducing stigma.

While the focus on negative perceptions and media scrutiny is crucial for understanding stress in SAPS, it is equally imperative to consider the potential for positive community engagement and reform initiatives. Effective community relations can serve as a buffer against the detrimental effects of negative public perception, fostering mutual respect and collaboration. Modise (2023) underscores the role of inclusive leadership in enhancing officer morale, suggesting that leadership practices that prioritise transparency, accountability, and community involvement can rebuild trust and improve SAPS' public image. This approach aligns with procedural justice principles, which emphasise fairness, respect, and legitimacy in law enforcement practices.

Community policing perspectives offer valuable insights into the dynamics between police officers and the communities they serve. Dlamini (2024) notes that officers who actively participate in community-oriented policing initiatives report higher morale and job satisfaction, as these programs promote positive interactions with the public and a sense of shared responsibility for community safety. The legitimacy of Community Police Forums (CPFs) is also critical, as their perceived effectiveness and fairness influence both community trust and officer morale. When CPFs are seen as legitimate and representative, they can facilitate constructive dialogue and cooperation, reducing the adversarial nature of police-community relations and mitigating stress among officers. However, the success of these initiatives often

hinges on sustained commitment from both police leadership and community stakeholders, highlighting the need for institutional support and policy frameworks that prioritise community engagement.

Social support from communities plays a multifaceted role in officer well-being, encompassing emotional, physical, and informational dimensions. Venville et al. (2022) highlight the importance of emotional support from peers and community members in mitigating stress and enhancing resilience. Physical support, such as wellness programs and health initiatives provided by community organisations, can improve officers' overall health outcomes (Kapaon et al., 2024). Informational support, including access to mental health resources and coping strategies, is crucial for officers navigating psychological demands of their work (Nugraheni and Febriyana, 2024). The availability and accessibility of these support systems can significantly influence officers' capacity to manage stress and maintain psychological well-being.

Strong social support networks correlate with lower rates of mental health issues, including suicidal behaviour, among police officers. Conversely, unethical behaviour within SAPS can erode community trust, diminishing officers' social support and exacerbating their stress (Haurovi and Chilunjika, 2023). This highlights the need for ethical reforms within the police service to foster a culture of integrity and accountability. Implementing robust ethical training programs, establishing clear codes of conduct, and promoting a zero-tolerance approach to misconduct can strengthen community support and contribute to a healthier work environment for officers. Additionally, transparent disciplinary processes and public accountability mechanisms can enhance reform efforts' credibility, reinforcing the alignment between police practices and community expectations.

The interplay between negative public perception, media scrutiny, occupational stressors, and social support availability significantly influences the stress levels experienced by SAPS members. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes promoting ethical leadership, enhancing community engagement, and providing comprehensive mental health support to build a resilient and effective police force. Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of these stressors on officer well-being, the effectiveness of current intervention strategies, and the potential for innovative approaches to stress management within the unique socio-political context of South Africa.

### 2.9.7 The impact of institutional policies on police support systems

The structure of mental health and wellness policies within the South African Police Service reflects an evolving understanding of the unique psychological demands placed on law enforcement personnel. These policies are crafted to address the specific stressors inherent in police work. These stressors include exposure to violent incidents, high-risk situations, and emotional toll of crime scene investigations. They aim to promote psychological well-being, foster resilience, and mitigate stigma surrounding mental health issues within the policing environment. Research indicates that police officers experience disproportionately high rates of mental health disorders compared to the general population, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Kerridge, 2024). Intense operational stress and frequent exposure to traumatic events are significant contributors to these mental health challenges. This underlines the need for comprehensive mental health frameworks tailored to law enforcement.

The SAPS mental health policy framework incorporates a variety of interventions aimed at fostering psychological resilience and providing support to officers. Effective mental health promotion programs are pivotal to enhancing officers' well-being and mitigating psychological distress (Santre, 2024). Initiatives such as the Police Department Wellness Survey (PDWS) are

designed to assess mental wellness comprehensively, enabling data-driven improvements to support structures (White, 2022). Despite these efforts, numerous barriers impede mental health services accessibility and efficacy within SAPS. Organisational culture often perpetuates stigma around mental health, discouraging officers from seeking the help they need due to fears of perceived weakness or career repercussions (Casas and Kegel, 2023). Additionally, concerns about confidentiality and a lack of a supportive workplace culture further deter individuals from utilising available resources. To counter these challenges, recommendations emphasise the necessity of cultural competence and targeted education initiatives to improve mental health literacy and normalise help-seeking behaviours among police personnel (Casas and Kegel, 2023).

The bureaucratic landscape within SAPS presents additional hurdles to the effective implementation of mental health support programs. Historical legacies, particularly those rooted in the apartheid era, have engendered systemic inefficiencies and deep-seated distrust both within the force and among the public (Bezuidenhout and Kempen, 2021). This historical baggage, coupled with ongoing political interference and high crime rates, exacerbates operational challenges and undermines efforts to build a cohesive, emotionally healthy workforce. Resource limitations are another critical impediment; insufficient funding, inadequate training facilities, and a shortage of specialised mental health professionals restrict SAPS's capacity to deliver comprehensive mental health services (Moitsadi et al., 2024). Moreover, the absence of robust accountability mechanisms fosters a culture of inefficiency and, in some cases, corruption, further complicating reform efforts (Modise, 2023). There remains an inconsistency in leadership commitment to mental health reform and proactive community engagement, often stalling the momentum of promising initiatives (Modise, 2023)

Evaluating the effectiveness of SAPS policies in addressing PTSD, anxiety, and depression reveals a complex interplay of systemic strengths and weaknesses. Public policies aimed at mitigating mental health issues among police officers are crucial, yet their success hinges on effective resource allocation and officers' active participation in the policy implementation process (de Santana et al., 2024). Therapeutic interventions have shown varying degrees of success. For instance, Online Solution Focused Hypnotherapy (SFH) has demonstrated promising outcomes, with 78% of police personnel reporting recovery from anxiety and depression following treatment (Barney et al., 2024). Similarly, digital tools like the Vimbo app have proven effective in alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety, highlighting the potential for technology-driven mental health support (Schriewer and Bulaj, 2016).

Legal and ethical considerations also play a significant role in shaping mental health outcomes within SAPS. A recent decision of the Constitutional Court in the case of AK v. Minister of Police illustrates how systemic negligence within the police force can have profound psychological effects on both officers and members of the public (Young et al., 2022). This case illustrates how institutional failings can exacerbate mental health challenges, reinforcing the need for comprehensive, ethically grounded support systems. While these findings underscore the potential effectiveness of targeted policies and interventions, systemic barriers such as entrenched stigma, resource constraints, and leadership gaps continue to hinder their full implementation. Ongoing research is essential to explore the long-term impacts of these interventions and to refine support systems, ensuring they are both comprehensive and responsive to police personnel's evolving needs.

### 2.9.8 Technological interventions and digital support systems in policing

The integration of mobile apps, virtual therapy, and AI-driven counselling presents significant potential for enhancing police wellness, addressing police personnel's unique challenges, such

as high stress, exposure to trauma, and irregular working hours. These technologies offer tailored support and resources that can be accessible anytime, providing flexibility for officers who often work unpredictable shifts. This flexibility is critical as traditional mental health services often fail to align with law enforcement personnel's dynamic and demanding schedules, thereby limiting their efficacy in this context.

It has been demonstrated that mobile health (mHealth) technologies promote both physical and mental health among police officers. Applications like Fitbit® and Bupa Boost have demonstrated efficacy in encouraging physical activity, monitoring vital health metrics, and enhancing mental well-being (Buckingham et al., 2019). These apps support self-monitoring, goal setting, and behaviour modification, crucial for officers managing stress and maintaining fitness under demanding conditions. Multifunctional apps that encompass activity tracking, dietary management, sleep monitoring, and hydration tracking are particularly valuable, as they align with police work's irregular shift patterns (Swanston et al., 2021). The adaptability of these apps enables officers to receive continuous feedback on their health, promoting proactive well-being management. However, the reliance on self-monitoring raises questions about sustained engagement and the psychological impact of constant health tracking, which may inadvertently contribute to stress rather than alleviate it.

AI-driven counselling systems, especially those utilizing advanced large language models, offer structured mental health support tailored to individual needs. These systems have proven effective in enhancing well-being through personalised resources, fostering emotional resilience, and facilitating introspective practices (Jain et al., 2024). AI-driven platforms analyse user input to deliver customised coping strategies, mental health exercises, and crisis intervention resources. AI's capacity to process large volumes of data allows for the identification of behavioural patterns indicative of psychological distress, enabling early

interventions. Additionally, AI-driven tools can provide anonymity, reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health support, which remains a significant barrier within police culture. Nonetheless, concerns regarding data privacy, algorithmic biases, and the potential dehumanisation of mental health support must be critically examined. The risk of over-reliance on AI solutions may inadvertently marginalise the human elements essential to therapeutic relationships, such as empathy and contextual understanding.

Virtual therapy, including virtual reality (VR) interventions, represents an innovative approach to addressing mental health challenges in policing. VR therapy combines immersive environments with cognitive processing to create interactive, responsive experiences tailored to individual psychological profiles (Karthikeyan, 2024). This technology simulates stress-inducing scenarios in a controlled setting, allowing officers to develop and practice coping strategies without real-world risks. VR therapy has shown potential for treating PTSD, anxiety, and depression, common among law enforcement personnel. Although ongoing research is necessary to validate its effectiveness across different policing contexts, preliminary findings suggest VR therapy can significantly enhance emotional regulation, stress management, and resilience (Karthikeyan, 2024). However, ethical considerations surrounding the potential for re-traumatisation, the high cost of VR equipment, and the need for specialised training to facilitate VR-based interventions must be addressed to ensure equitable access and effective deployment.

In addition to these technologies, the use of data analytics for tracking stress levels and predicting burnout risk within police services has become prominent. Leveraging big data and machine learning techniques, researchers have identified key predictors of burnout, including demographic factors like age and gender, work environment stressors, and work-life balance issues (Zamani, 2024). Predictive models have achieved accuracy rates of up to 85%,

highlighting their potential for proactive mental health management. Profiling police officers to understand distinct risk and protective factors for burnout and PTSD has emphasised the importance of personality traits and coping strategies in mitigating these risks (Anders et al., 2022). Effective leadership, particularly transformational leadership styles, has been identified as a critical factor in buffering the negative impacts of occupational stress (Russell, 2014). Training programs focused on developing functional coping mechanisms further reduce burnout risks among officers (Anders et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the ethical implications of predictive policing technologies, including potential surveillance overreach and privacy infringements, necessitate rigorous oversight and clear guidelines to balance officer support with individual rights.

E-mental health initiatives also play a pivotal role in supporting police wellness. These initiatives improve accessibility to mental health services, reduce stigma, and enhance crisis intervention outcomes. Over 90% of officers in distress have been reported to utilise available e-mental health services, reflecting their growing acceptance and effectiveness (Drew and Martin, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of telehealth in forensic mental health, leading to cost savings and increased service efficiency (Kois et al., 2021). Co-responder models, integrating mental health professionals with police responses, reduce force and improve connections to community resources (Blais et al., 2020). Furthermore, e-mental health initiatives contribute to stigma reduction by normalising help-seeking behaviours and fostering a culture of wellness within law enforcement agencies (Drew and Martin, 2023; Taylor, 2021). However, digital literacy barriers, inconsistent internet access, and the risk of depersonalised care present ongoing challenges. Additionally, while e-mental health platforms increase access, they may inadvertently exacerbate disparities if not carefully implemented with attention to inclusivity and equity.

While the potential of these technologies is vast, several challenges must be addressed to maximise their benefits. Issues related to usability, engagement, data privacy, and the integration of evolving technologies into traditional police structures require careful consideration. Resistance to change within police culture, the need for high-quality research to validate the effectiveness of these interventions, and ensuring personalised approaches to mental health support are critical factors for successful implementation. Addressing these challenges will be essential for leveraging mobile apps, AI-driven counselling, virtual therapy, data analytics, and e-mental health initiatives to enhance police personnel's overall wellness. Moreover, a holistic approach that combines technological solutions with robust policy frameworks, continuous professional development, and organisational cultural shifts will be key to sustaining long-term improvements in police mental health outcomes.

### 2.9.9 Police training and psychological Preparedness

Police academies must prepare officers for the psychological challenges within the South African Police Service to develop competent, resilient, and emotionally intelligent officers. This is particularly significant given the complex dynamics of policing in South Africa, characterised by high crime rates, socio-political tensions, and the historical legacy of apartheid-era policing, which continues to influence contemporary practices. The integration of psychological training into police academies is not merely an adjunct to physical training but a critical component in fostering emotional regulation, stress management, and effective community relations.

Psychological skills training is foundational to equipping officers with the ability to manage stress and maintain professionalism under pressure. Emotional regulation, as highlighted by Blumberg et al. (2022), is essential in enabling officers to control their emotional responses during high-stakes situations, thereby reducing the likelihood of reactive behaviours that could

escalate conflicts. Techniques such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural strategies, and stress inoculation training have been identified as effective in promoting emotional stability. Furthermore, social competence and impulse control are indispensable for community relations, where officers must navigate diverse and often volatile social environments. The capacity to engage with the public empathetically and constructively can significantly reduce police brutality and foster trust within communities (Blumberg et al., 2022).

Despite the recognised importance of psychological competencies, current SAPS training programs exhibit notable limitations. The predominant focus on physical training overshadows the development of psychological and linguistic skills, which are critical for holistic officer preparedness. Kekana and Montle (2022) argue that this imbalance restricts officers' ability to manage stress effectively and communicate proficiently, both within the force and in community interactions. The deficiency in English language proficiency further exacerbates communication barriers, potentially leading to misunderstandings and escalating confrontations during policing activities. Considering this linguistic gap, a comprehensive language training program is a vital component of the curriculum to enhance clarity, reduce misinterpretations, and support procedural justice.

Addressing these training limitations requires a systemic overhaul of the SAPS training framework to balance physical, psychological, and linguistic competencies. A comprehensive approach would not only improve individual officer performance but also contribute to broader organisational effectiveness and public trust. Incorporating resilience training, emotional intelligence (EI) development, and coping strategies into the curriculum is crucial. Moreno et al. (2024) demonstrate that resilience training mitigates the psychological impact of police work, with interventions such as mindfulness and neurobiological approaches enhancing officers' coping mechanisms. These programs enable officers to maintain mental well-being

despite chronic exposure to stressors inherent in policing. Emotional intelligence development is equally critical, with Mofokeng (2023) emphasising its role in managing emotionally charged situations and fostering effective crime prevention strategies. Higher EI levels correlate with better interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and conflict resolution skills, all essential in high-pressure law enforcement contexts. Community-based initiatives that leverage EI can strengthen collaboration between SAPS and local organisations, enhancing public safety and community relations.

However, the effectiveness of these training programs is contingent upon adequate resources and tailored methodologies. Moitsadi et al. (2024) highlight gaps in resource allocation and the need for training models that address both current and emerging challenges in the policing landscape. Meta-analyses by Lu and Petersen (2023) indicate that psychological skills training, including resilience and coping strategies, moderately reduces depression and anxiety among police personnel, underscoring the potential for significant mental health benefits when such programs are effectively implemented. Despite these promising interventions, significant gaps remain within SAPS training that contribute to mental health struggles among officers. Resource limitations, as identified by Moitsadi et al. (2024), impede the delivery of comprehensive training programs, resulting in inadequate preparation for policing psychological demands. Additionally, outdated training models fail to keep pace with the evolving nature of crime and community expectations, leaving officers ill-equipped to manage complex, dynamic situations.

The mental health consequences of these gaps are profound, according to Sibisi et al. (2022) documenting high levels of occupational stress among officers, particularly murder detectives, due to repeated exposure to traumatic events. This chronic stress exposure can lead to burnout, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological disorders, significantly

impairing officers' operational effectiveness and personal well-being. Compounding these issues is the pervasive police culture that stigmatises help-seeking behaviours for mental health concerns. Edwards (2023) notes that this cultural barrier discourages officers from accessing necessary psychological support, exacerbating their struggles and fostering a climate of silence and resilience at the expense of mental health. Leadership and governance within SAPS play a crucial role in addressing this issue, with a need for proactive mental health initiatives and supportive policies that encourage help-seeking and normalise mental health care (Edwards, 2023).

Furthermore, the historical context of policing in South Africa cannot be overlooked when considering current practices and officer well-being. The legacy of militarised, apartheid-era policing has left an indelible mark on organisational culture, training paradigms, and public perceptions of the police (Pillay et al., 2023). This history influences contemporary challenges, including community mistrust, aggressive policing tactics, and internal resistance to reform initiatives aimed at promoting psychological well-being and human rights-oriented practices.

Another critical issue is the disconnect between theoretical training and practical field experiences. While police academies may offer structured psychological training modules, the real-world application of these skills often encounters barriers due to inadequate mentorship, unsupportive field environments, and lack of continuous professional development. The gap between academy-based knowledge and on-the-job realities creates cognitive dissonance for officers, diminishing psychological training's long-term impact. Continuous professional development programs, periodic mental health evaluations, and peer support systems can bridge this gap. This ensures that psychological competencies are not only learned but consistently reinforced throughout an officer's career. Moreover, the evaluation metrics for police training programs predominantly focus on physical competency and operational success,

ignoring indicators of psychological well-being. This narrow evaluative lens perpetuates the undervaluation of mental health training and its significance in effective policing. Integrating psychological health metrics into performance assessments would incentivise officers and management to prioritise mental well-being, fostering a more balanced approach to professional development.

Police academies play a multifaceted role in preparing officers for psychological challenges within SAPS, requiring an integrated approach that addresses emotional regulation, resilience, emotional intelligence, as well as systemic training gaps. By prioritising psychological competencies alongside physical and linguistic skills, SAPS can cultivate a more resilient, effective, and community-oriented police force capable of navigating the complex demands of modern policing in South Africa. This holistic approach must be supported by continuous professional development, resource allocation, leadership commitment, and systemic reforms that acknowledge the deep-rooted historical and cultural contexts influencing South African policing today.

### 2.9.10 Post-traumatic growth and resilience in police officers

A combination of personal attributes, organisational dynamics, and targeted interventions influence how officers in the South African Police Service cope with stressors inherent to their roles. A person's personality traits play an important role in determining their level of resilience. Research indicates that personality dysfunction is a significant predictor of poor resilience, with emotional regulation and self-reflection identified as pivotal factors in fostering psychological robustness (Angehrn et al., 2023). Self-reflection facilitates continuous development and the re-evaluation of coping strategies in response to continuing challenges, while emotional regulation facilitates adaptive coping mechanisms, enabling officers to maintain composure under high-stress conditions. Moreover, gender differences in resilience

are evident, as men often report increased difficulties related to personality traits, whereas women face higher incidences of sexual harassment, each posing distinct challenges to resilience (Angehrn et al., 2023). Gendered experiences affect not only individual coping mechanisms, but also the systemic issues within the SAPS that perpetuate differential stress responses between males and females.

Organisational support and commitment significantly influence officers' capacity to adapt to stressful environments. The presence of a supportive work environment, characterised by strong organisational commitment and job embeddedness, has been linked to enhanced resilience, suggesting that officers who feel emotionally attached to their organisations are better equipped to handle occupational stressors (Mujajati et al., 2024). However, the mere presence of organisational support structures is insufficient if they are not effectively implemented and perceived as genuine by officers. The resilience frameworks developed within the South African private sector emphasise the critical importance of emotional bonds to the organisation as a critical factor for resilience, demonstrating that these principles can be applied to a variety of professional settings (Mujajati et al., 2024). Though, the hierarchical and paramilitary nature of SAPS may restrict the extent to which such private sector models can be seamlessly integrated, necessitating adaptations that consider the unique stressors of law enforcement.

Training programs designed to bolster resilience among police officers have yielded mixed results. Mindfulness interventions and resilience training programs have demonstrated efficacy in reducing stress and enhancing psychological well-being, although their direct impact on resilience remains inconclusive (Moreno et al., 2024; Reitsema, de Hoog, and De Snoo, 2023). This inconclusiveness may be attributed to variability in program content, delivery methods, and the absence of longitudinal evaluations to measure sustained outcomes. A systematic

review of such programs highlights considerable variability in their effectiveness, pointing to the necessity for tailored interventions that address the specific occupational stressors encountered by police officers (Moreno et al., 2024). This variability suggests that while training can be beneficial, it must be context-specific and continuously evaluated for long-term effectiveness. Moreover, resilience-building should not be viewed as a one-time intervention but as an ongoing process that requires regular reinforcement through refresher courses and integrated support mechanisms within the organisational culture.

Another critical aspect of resilience among SAPS officers is the ability to transform traumatic experiences into personal growth. This is known as post-traumatic growth. Police work inherently involves exposure to traumatic events, leading to significant occupational stress (Sibisi et al., 2022). The concept of post-traumatic growth challenges the traditional focus on pathology by emphasising the potential for positive psychological change following adversity. Officers in specialised units, in particular, face intense emotional challenges due to frequent encounters with violent crime scenes (Tsirimokou et al., 2024; Sibisi et al., 2022). Additionally, vicarious trauma from engaging with victims can exacerbate stress levels, creating a cumulative effect that undermines resilience if left unaddressed (Gumani, 2022). The interplay between direct and vicarious trauma underscores the necessity for comprehensive trauma-informed approaches within SAPS that address both immediate and secondary stressors.

Officers employ various coping mechanisms to manage these experiences, including seeking support from their organisations and fostering collegial relationships (Tsirimokou et al., 2024). By creating a psychologically safe work environment, officers are able to mitigate the adverse effects of trauma, allowing them to process their experiences in a constructive manner (Tsirimokou et al., 2024) Psychological safety not only facilitates open discussions about mental health but also reduces the stigma associated with seeking help, which remains a

significant barrier within law enforcement cultures. In spite of the prevalence of trauma, many officers report experiencing post-traumatic growth, characterised by an increased self-awareness, increased job satisfaction, and a positive re-evaluation of their personal and professional lives (Paterson, 2021). Interviews with officers reveal that, although their work is challenging, it often contributes to their personal development and sense of purpose (Paterson, 2021). However, persistent exposure to trauma without adequate support can lead to burnout and mental health issues, emphasising the need for continuous intervention and support mechanisms within SAPS (Gumani, 2022; Sibisi et al., 2022). The dual potential for growth and deterioration highlights the importance of proactive mental health strategies that can tip the balance towards resilience rather than psychological decline.

Mentorship and career development also play pivotal roles in fostering resilience among police officers. As a critical support system for underrepresented groups, mentoring has been shown to enhance resilience by fostering emotional attachment and job embedding (Biljohn et al., 2024; Mujajati et al., 2022). Effective mentoring relationships can improve coping strategies, reduce stress, and enhance job performance (Moreno et al., 2024). Mentorship is not merely a professional development tool but a relational process that can buffer the adverse effects of occupational stress through the provision of guidance, affirmation, and role modelling. Furthermore, continuous employee training is essential to career advancement within the SAPS, as stagnation can adversely affect employee morale and resilience (Ngema, 2021). Training programs that are structured have been associated with improved resilience, stress management, and decision-making skills (Moreno et al., 2024) These programs, when aligned with clear career progression pathways, can enhance officers' sense of agency and control over their professional trajectories, further contributing to resilience.

Despite these benefits, challenges persist regarding the satisfaction with and effectiveness of current mentorship and training opportunities within SAPS. Many officers' express dissatisfaction with the available programs, indicating a need for enhancements to meet their specific needs (Ngema, 2022). The reason for this dissatisfaction is often attributed to a perceived disconnect between training content and the real-world challenges faced by officers in the field. Additionally, the sustainability of resilience-building programs is often questioned, as short-term benefits may not translate into long-term resilience without ongoing support and adaptation to evolving occupational demands ("Deepening Resilience in Youth: Learning from an Impact Evaluation of a South African Youth Development Programme", 2023). With the dynamic nature of policing, characterised by changing crime patterns and societal expectations, resilience training must be flexible and able to adapt as new stressors and challenges arise.

Resilience among SAPS officers is influenced by the complex interplay of personality traits, organisational support, training programs, mentorship, and career development. Although these factors collectively contribute to resilience, the persistent nature of occupational stress and trauma underscores the need for comprehensive, context-specific, and sustainable interventions to support the mental health and well-being of police officers. A holistic approach that integrates individual, organisational, and systemic strategies is essential for fostering resilience, reducing burnout, and promoting psychological well-being within SAPS.

### 2.9.11 Substance abuse and coping mechanisms among police officers

The relationship between stress and substance abuse in law enforcement is a critical area of study, revealing how occupational stressors can lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms, including substance use. Research indicates that law enforcement officers experience significant job-related stress, which correlates with increased rates of substance abuse, particularly alcohol and sedatives. This literature review synthesises findings from various

studies to elucidate this connection, while critically examining the nuanced interplay between individual, organisational, and systemic factors that influence substance use behaviours.

Law enforcement officers are subjected to a variety of stressors, including administrative pressures, exposure to critical incidents, and psychological demands associated with maintaining community safety. Dougherty et al. (2024) highlight those administrative burdens, such as performance evaluations, policy changes, and internal politics, combined with frequent exposure to traumatic events, significantly increase the likelihood of binge drinking among officers. These stressors, compounded by irregular working hours and inadequate recovery time, lead to mental health challenges, resulting in officers turning to substance abuse. However, beyond individual experiences, the structural conditions within law enforcement institutions—characterised by hierarchical rigidity, lack of emotional support, and cultural norms that valorise stoicism—further entrench substance use as an accepted coping strategy.

Correctional officers, a subgroup within law enforcement, experience similar levels of occupational stress in the volatile environment of correctional facilities. Jayawardene et al. (2024) report that 70.8% of correctional officers used alcohol, and 17.2% used sedatives in the past month, underscoring a direct link between job stress and substance use. The controlled, high-risk environment of criminal justice institutions often fosters a culture of hyper-vigilance and emotional suppression, which can catalyse substance misuse as a coping strategy. The normalisation of such behaviours within correctional settings reflects an institutional failure to provide adequate mental health resources and de-stigmatise help-seeking behaviours, perpetuating a cycle where officers are more likely to self-medicate rather than seek professional support.

Chronic stress disrupts the body's adaptive stress response, leading to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance abuse. Sinha (2024) explains that prolonged stress alters

neurobiological pathways associated with reward, motivation, and stress regulation, increasing vulnerability to substance use disorders. This disruption affects the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, leading to heightened cortisol levels and reduced stress resilience. The stress pathophysiology of addiction suggests that stress-induced alterations in brain chemistry can increase craving and relapse risk, creating a vicious cycle that entrenches substance use disorders among officers. Furthermore, the interplay between neurobiological vulnerabilities and environmental stressors illustrates the inadequacy of interventions that focus solely on individual-level factors without addressing the broader systemic and organisational contributors to stress.

There are several implications for intervention. Occupational stress can be mitigated and substance abuse can be reduced by providing stress management training, peer support programs, and mental health services to officers (Dougherty et al., 2022). Resilience-building initiatives should focus on enhancing coping skills, emotional regulation, and social support networks. However, the effectiveness of these interventions often hinges on organisational buy-in and cultural shifts within law enforcement agencies. As a result of deeply ingrained stigmas surrounding mental illness, resistance to mental health interventions may be a result of leadership-led efforts to normalise mental health discourse and model adaptive coping strategies. It is also essential that treatment and prevention programs are tailored to address the specific needs of law enforcement personnel. According to Jayawardene et al. (2024), it is important to develop culturally competent, context-specific programs tailored to the stressors and occupational culture of law enforcement personnel.

Conversely, while stress is a significant factor in substance abuse, not all officers resort to substance use as a coping mechanism. Individual differences in resilience, personality traits, social support, and coping strategies can lead to varied outcomes. It is possible for officers to

adopt adaptive coping mechanisms, such as physical exercise, mindfulness practices, or seeking professional support, in order to buffer the adverse effects of stress. Accordingly, one-size-fits-all approaches to intervention may not be effective for every officer, emphasising the need for customised strategies that take individual differences into consideration. Moreover, understanding the protective factors that foster resilience in certain officers can inform the development of preventative programs aimed at promoting mental well-being and reducing substance abuse across law enforcement populations.

The effectiveness of rehabilitation programs within the South African Police Service (SAPS) for addressing substance abuse among officers is a multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive understanding of various intervention strategies. Research indicates that tailored rehabilitation programs, when integrated with ongoing support and training, can significantly enhance recovery outcomes for officers struggling with substance abuse. Holistic approaches that incorporate psychological support, skills training, and community involvement are particularly effective. For instance, aftercare interventions that include faith-based support and counselling have shown promise in maintaining recovery post-rehabilitation (Braaf and Roman, 2024). However, critiques of such programs argue that reliance on faith-based models may overlook the secular needs of diverse officer populations, potentially limiting accessibility and engagement.

Programs utilising cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing have been effective in addressing substance use issues, suggesting that similar methodologies could be beneficial within SAPS (Sousa et al., 2024). These therapeutic approaches help officers identify and modify maladaptive thought patterns and behaviours associated with substance abuse. A successful rehabilitation program requires adequate resources and specialised training for SAPS personnel. According to Moitsadi et al. (2024), improved training environments and

access to resources contribute significantly to the effectiveness of these programs. Nevertheless, the sustainability of such interventions is often compromised by systemic barriers, such as budget constraints, leadership turnover, and inconsistent policy implementation.

Ongoing support post-rehabilitation is essential to prevent relapse. Structured aftercare programs that provide continuous monitoring, peer support, and access to mental health services are critical components of successful recovery (Erliyani et al., 2024). Despite the potential effectiveness of these programs, challenges such as resource limitations, stigma, and a lack of tailored interventions specific to the police context remain. It is necessary to address these gaps in order to improve the overall effectiveness of SAPS's rehabilitation efforts. Furthermore, some claim that the focus on rehabilitation may take priority over addressing systemic issues within SAPS, including organisational culture, leadership practices, and work-related stressors that contribute to substance abuse. It emphasises the importance of a dual approach to rehabilitation that not only rehabilitates individuals but also reforms the underlying environment that encourages substance abuse. Organisational changes that promote a supportive, stigma-free culture around mental health and substance abuse can complement individual rehabilitation efforts. Preventing substance dependence within SAPS requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates community engagement, evidence-based interventions, and policy reform. There is evidence that evidence-based policing strategies, such as Brief Interventions (BIs) that employ motivational interviewing and psychoeducational principles, are effective at addressing substance use issues. These interventions can be tailored for police officers to enhance their coping mechanisms and reduce substance dependence (Jaguga et al., 2024). However, the transient nature of brief interventions raises questions about their long-term efficacy without integrated follow-up and support mechanisms.

Strengthening community relations through community policing initiatives can foster trust and cooperation between the police and the communities they serve, thereby reducing substance-related issues (Modise, 2024). Policy and structural reforms, such as the establishment of a unified liquor policy across provinces, can enhance compliance and reduce alcohol abuse, a significant contributor to substance dependence (Manamela et al., 2024). Providing specialised training for SAPS personnel on substance use and its impacts can improve their ability to manage substance-related incidents effectively. Harm reduction approaches, such as those implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, can create safe spaces for vulnerable populations and address substance use without stigmatisation (Marks and Wood, 2024). As a result of these strategies, an increased emphasis is placed on minimising the negative health, social, and legal consequences of substance abuse rather than emphasising abstinence alone. While these strategies present a comprehensive framework for preventing substance dependence, it is essential to recognize the challenges posed by socio-economic factors, organisational culture, and community distrust of law enforcement. The successful implementation of preventative measures requires a holistic, integrated approach that integrates interventions at the individual, organisational, and community levels. Ultimately, the path towards mitigating substance abuse within law enforcement necessitates not only evidence-based interventions but also systemic reforms that prioritise mental health, resilience, and organisational well-being.

### 2.9.12 Legal and ethical considerations in police mental health support

The legal framework governing police mental health policies within the South African Police Service is influenced by historical, socio-political, and organisational factors, creating a complex environment that shapes mental health support and interventions for officers. There is a significant legacy of apartheid in the forensic mental health system of South Africa, which perpetuates inequities in service delivery, particularly among marginalised groups (Pillay et

al., 2023) These historical disparities have contributed to systemic challenges within SAPS, where mental health support structures are often inadequate to meet the diverse needs of officers exposed to high-stress environments. Police officers face heightened risks for mental health issues due to their routine exposure to traumatic events, violent crimes, and operational stressors, necessitating a robust legal framework to safeguard their well-being (Diamantis, 2023). The mental health policies within SAPS often fall short of addressing the underlying causes of psychological distress among officers despite the recognition of these risks. Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety are all conditions that are exacerbated by the lack of comprehensive legal protections and structured mental health programs.

Effective mental health promotion programs are critical to mitigating psychological problems among police personnel. Research indicates that structured interventions, including resilience training, peer support networks, and access to mental health professionals, can significantly reduce mental health issues (Santre, 2024). In addition to enhancing police interactions with individuals experiencing mental health crises, Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs) are also recommended to support the mental health of officers (McGuire et al., 2021). Despite this, SAPS faces numerous obstacles to the effective implementation of mental health policies. Organisational stigma surrounding mental health issues discourages officers from seeking help, as disclosure is often perceived as a sign of weakness, potentially jeopardising their careers (Diamantis, 2023). As well, limited resources, such as a shortage of mental health professionals and limited access to specialised services, further restrict the availability of support for officers. The legal framework must evolve to address these barriers by promoting a culture of acceptance, ensuring confidentiality, and mandating access to mental health resources (Weston and Trebilcock, 2020).

Ethical concerns related to confidentiality and forced psychiatric evaluations add another layer of complexity to the legal framework. Managing mental health crises often requires police officers to strike a balance between the need for immediate intervention and the protection of individual rights. Individuals with mental illnesses frequently report feelings of dehumanisation during police encounters, which can exacerbate their conditions and lead to negative outcomes (Morgan, 2024). The use of force in such situations, including measures like tasering or pepper spraying, has been criticised for its traumatic and long-lasting impacts (Randall et al., 2024). Co-response models, involving collaboration between police and mental health professionals, have emerged as effective strategies for addressing these challenges. A model such as this facilitates more appropriate responses to mental health crises, improving outcomes for affected individuals while reducing the burden on police officers (Eaton et al., 2042). Developing interprofessional partnerships between SAPS and mental health services enhances the quality of care and reduces the use of coercive measures (Wood, Watson, and Barber, 2021). Training initiatives focusing on mental health awareness, crisis de-escalation, and ethical considerations are essential components of these collaborative approaches (Cohen, 2023).

Within this legal framework, the rights of police officers to seek mental health support are equally important. Officers face unique challenges in accessing mental health services due to the stigma associated with psychological distress and the perception that mental illness is a personal weakness (Perkins et al., 2020). Police officers are significantly more likely than the general population to suffer from mental disorders, as a result of factors such as exposure to violence, operational stress, and organisational pressures (Santre, 2022). Despite this, the lack of structured mental health support systems within SAPS limits officers' ability to seek help without fear of professional repercussions. This issue requires the implementation of comprehensive mental wellness programs that place a high priority on the mental health of

police officers. Such programs should include formal policies that protect officers' rights to confidential support, leadership commitment to mental health promotion, and the integration of culturally sensitive mental health professionals (Taylor, 2021). The development of a positive organisational culture that normalises mental health care and reduces stigma is crucial to fostering resilience and enhancing the effectiveness of police officers.

The SAPS has made progress in recognising the importance of mental health, but significant gaps remain in the legal and policy frameworks. There is a need to continue developing comprehensive mental health strategies to address the unique challenges that police officers face, promote ethical practices, and provide effective support systems. The changes are not only important for the well-being of officers, but also for the safety and trust of the communities they serve.

## 2.10 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMMES

The South African Police Service also uses a method called critical incident stress debriefing to deal with trauma caused by critical incidents (Wessermann, 2016). During critical incident stress debriefing, police officers attempt to reduce the negative effects that may ensue following traumatic incidents. Wessermann (2016) describes debriefing in SAPS as a method of venting emotions in a controlled and safe environment. SAPS personnel are encouraged to engage in debriefing after being involved in an abnormal situation, as they are likely to experience psychological symptoms and feelings of stress and anxiety. Though debriefing is highly emphasised, Mokgobu (2010) found that even police officers exposed to graphic and traumatic situations may not participate in debriefing sessions. This is due to the stigma and shame associated with mental health counselling. According to Maabela (2015)'s study on perceptions of SAPS members regarding debriefing services, some SAPS members did not view debriefing as beneficial to them since they perceived it as a process for reliving their

traumatic experiences that they wanted to forget about. In some cases, participants viewed debriefing as a helpful and effective means of providing psychological support and reducing stress. The EHW however provides a variety of interventions aimed at supporting SAPS personnel's health and well-being. A portion of this program focuses on emotional support, including interventions that address issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, grief, and loss (EHW, 2016). EHW also addresses employee concerns as they ensure healthy workplace relationships among SAPS employees. Due to the increasing number of police officers under stress who have committed suicide and killed their spouses, EHW likewise offers intervention services for problems related to marriage and family relationships (Thaba, 2018). Also, the program provides interventions regarding healthy living and substance abuse to help police officers suffering from stress.

As part of SAPS Employee Health and Wellness (EHW), a variety of purposes are served. Its goals include suicide prevention and this is primarily achieved through increasing awareness and stress management skills within the SAPS workforce (EHW, 2016). Due to the nature of police work, Van Lelyveld (2008) argues that such programs are vital to police officers' success in the field. As a result of the high incidence of incidents in which police officers are involved, it is imperative that such programmes exist. Considering the high suicide rates among police officers, the South African Police Union (SAPU) expressed concern and recommended that a study be conducted on SAPS support structures and how they may be improved to reduce suicide rates among police officers (SAPS Detective Dialogue, 2012). Boshoff and Strydom (2015) found that 33% of police officers participated in suicide prevention programs and 20% never participated. The study revealed that police officers do not even realize they need psychological assistance, which is why severe stress consequences continue to increase. Boshoff and Strydom (2015) investigated trauma interventions among SAPS officers in the North-West Province, South Africa. The study examined police officers' experiences with

trauma intervention programmes within SAPS. It found that 44% of the participants were familiar with stress management programs, but others had never used trauma management programs. Among the least used programs are psychotherapy, crisis intervention, and suicide prevention. Many respondents (17%), however, said they had never taken part in SAPS support programs (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015).

Similarly, Grobler and Joubert (2012) investigated police officers' expectations regarding SAPS support services. This study indicated that SAPS officers have high expectations for support services, indicating that such services are most needed. SAPS officers know the available support services; however, some have no experience using them for various reasons. It is imperative that SAPS develop effective and innovative ways to make their support systems attractive to officers (Grobler and Joubert, 2012).

A stress management program is also available to SAPS personnel through EHW. A key objective of the program is to provide SAPS workers with information on how to identify stress symptoms (EHW, 2016). Boshoff and Strydom (2015) found that some police officers do not even recognise when they require psychological assistance because they are unaware of these symptoms. Besides equipping members with stress recognition skills, this programme also teaches them how to cope with stressful situations (EHW, 2016). SAPS offers another program that addresses substance dependence (EHW, 2016). Numerous studies document the prevalence of substance abuse among police officers (Livingston, Milne, Fang and Amari, 2012; Waters and Ussery, 2007). According to Pastwa -Wojciechowska and Piotrowski (2016), police officers tend to use alcohol or drugs to escape stress. It is generally believed that police officers misuse alcohol as a means of dealing with and coping with stress. As part of the substance dependency programme, police are provided with facts and myths regarding drug dependence and how it can affect their physical, psychological, social, and emotional well-

being (EHW, 2016). The program also provides information about how to cope with substance abuse. The programme also offers resources to deal with this problem.

There is also a relationship enhancement programme offered by the EHW (Mbuyisa, 2019). The literature identifies that stress reasons may not always be linked to their jobs. Instead, they may be linked to police officers failing to maintain healthy relationships. This programme teaches police officers how to build and maintain healthy relationships (EHW, 2016). Considering that unhealthy relationships are also a contributing factor to police suicides, homicides, and femicide. Therefore, it is crucial that police officers are well informed about how to deal with their stress and relationships in a healthy and effective way. According to Violanti et al. (2011), these high suicide rates among SAPS officers demonstrate the need to revisit and improve the available programs so that they can be more effective in the future. According to Oweke, Muola and Ngumi (2014), some occupational stress causes are related to the nature of police officers' relationships with one another. An environment with negative energy can negatively affect an individual's emotional and psychological well-being, affecting their productivity. Employee Health and Wellness offers a colleague sensitivity program (Thaba, 2018). It provides police officers with the skills needed to maintain positive and healthy relationships with their co-workers. They learn effective communication, which involves considering their colleagues' needs and challenges (EHW, 2016).

Researchers have found high levels of burnout among SAPS officers; therefore, it is essential that they have access to programs that empower them (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019). EHW also offers self-improvement programmes aimed at improving SAPS police officers' performance (EHW, 2016). This program empowers police officers to accomplish their tasks, since different researchers have shown that when officers experience stress, they tend to become demotivated about their work; therefore, it is important for them to possess skills that

will enable them to cope with such challenges (Mbuyisa, 2019). It also reduces police officers' psychosocial problems. In keeping with the principle that prevention is better than cure, SAPS must develop programmes to eliminate stress factors before they become a problem. SAPS promotes health through various programs such as health awareness, monitoring, and maintenance (EHW, 2016). This program trains police officers to identify hazards, assess health risks and analyse trends (EHW, 2016). Additionally, there are programs based on lifestyle management that promote SAPS officers' physical, psychological, and social well-being (EHW, 2016). It aims to encourage healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, fitness, and emotional competence as some of the elements of a healthy lifestyle. As Queirós et al., (2020) assert, a healthy lifestyle can reduce stress, so this programme is vital to reducing stress among SAPS police officers.

Finance concerns are a source of stress for police officers. Many studies have indicated that police officers are dissatisfied with their salaries, and this is one of the reasons for their dissatisfaction with their jobs (van Lelyveld, 2008). SAPS officers are provided with financial management training by EHW (EHW, 2016). This initiative aims to alleviate police financial challenges as officers are often stressed and dissatisfied with their jobs due to financial challenges.

## 2.11 EXISTING TRAUMA INTERVENTION PROGRAMS OFFERED BY SAPS

This section reviews key interventions and services piloted by EHW to provide pro- and re-active support. Trauma intervention programmes are short-term and focus on immediate trauma following a crisis or disaster. This program is designed to respond to the urgent psychosocial needs of people. McNally (2012) says this process of rendering help or providing assistance is confined within a programme. Some of these programs are discussed below.

### 2.11.1 Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

According to Mitchell and Everly (1997), the SAPS Psychological Services developed a stress debriefing model to reduce the impact of trauma on officers. Boshoff and Strydom (2015) likened CISD to peer support programs conducted during or after a traumatic event, for example, an accident or disaster. Typically, this program is administered within 72 hours to two weeks following a traumatic event. It is not intended to replace mental health services, but rather to be part of the continuum of care in general (Bride and Figley, 2012). Debriefing may be mandatory or voluntary. Police officers who are instructed to attend usually do so because their superiors identify the event as distressing. The critical incident stress debriefing model was discredited by six research studies, as described by Saunders (2012). When improperly employed, Saunders believes they could worsen mental illness. For example, PTSD risk may increase after secondary trauma as the event is repeated over and over (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015). Debriefings of critical incidents are commonly used as standalone therapies without follow-up, leaving patients to deal alone with the long-term effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (Foley and Massey, 2019; Mitchell and Everly, 2018).

### 2.11.2 Suicide prevention program

Müller, Abrutyn, Pescosolido, and Diefendorf (2021) argue that preventing suicide requires a strong support system. In order to provide the necessary support to an emergency employee, each agency should have a plan in place. A national suicide prevention programme, designed by psychological services, has been designated for the EHW in SAPS to prevent suicide. SAPS officers must develop awareness and skills to deal with suicide. They must also develop mutual support and solidarity among members in suicide prevention activities. They must offer assistance with related problems, and develop expertise in available resources. This program provides suicide prevention workshops for members. SAPS has a responsibility to create an environment where suicide prevention and intervention training is a routine component of

employee performance. According to Edwards, Patterson and Griffith, (2021) the availability of active suicide prevention services may provide a sense of hope. It illustrates that life is not so narrow and that death does not need to be the only solution (Smith, 2021; Platt, Arensman and Rezaeian, 2019).

As reported by Boshoff and Strydom (2015) the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that suicide prevention programs that focus on prevention have been shown to be effective in reducing risk factors, including depression, hopelessness, anxiety, stress and anger, as well as enhancing protective factors, including personal control, problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and support from a supportive network for individuals at high risk. As a consequence of suicide prevention programmes, suicidal tendencies were lowered, ego identity was improved, and coping capabilities were improved. Nevertheless, Platt and Niederkrotenthaler (2020) believe that multi-component interventions should be implemented in military personnel, and for the purposes of this study, police officials, to decrease suicide risk. However, critics argue that suicide prevention narrowly focuses on identifying proximate, individual-level risk factors, rather than thinking about population mental health in terms of complex social and ecological relations (Swanson and Rosenberg, 2023; Mueller, Abrutyn, Pescosolido and Diefendorf, 2021). As part of the ecological perspective, individuals, families, groups, and communities will be considered constituents of a psychosocial matrix, which should also be applied to suicide prevention programs (Gómez-Carrillo and Kirmayer, 2023; Foley, 2021).

### 2.11.3 Stress management programme

There is an urgent need to understand the nature of occupational stress within the policing profession (Shane, 2021; Stogner, Miller, and McLean, 2020). Sustained and intense stress can lead to errors, accidents, or disproportionate reactions, which undermine officers' professionalism and compromise their safety (MacLean and Densley, 2023). Police Social

Work Services (PSWS) decided to emphasise proactive stress management by developing a needs-based stress management program. Program objectives include developing personnel's skills in stress management strategies, coping mechanisms, and techniques, which enhances their resilience to stress. The overarching goal of the stress management initiative is to empower participants to comprehend the intricacies of stress and the significance of refining stress management behaviours (knowledge), fostering a commitment to embrace enhanced stress management practices (attitude), and equipping them with the ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills in devising and implementing personalised stress management programs (behaviour) (Romas and Sharma, 2022; Vallis et al., 2018; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Through the program participants will have the opportunity to accomplish the following goals: Identify the core nature of stress during a small group discussion; Provide feedback on the issue by using a symbolic display to identify the physiological aspects of stress by way of a body drawing exercise; and Identify their stress profile by completing a checklist of causes of stress, typical stress reactions and type A or B personality styles after participating in a group activity (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015).

The stress reduction program employs a structured approach whereby participants are provided with handouts containing stress reduction exercises following a demonstration and practice session (Shearer, Hunt, Chowdhury and Nicol, 2016; Wolever et al. 2012). This is coupled with facilitative group discussions aimed at fostering stress management strategies and techniques. Additionally, participants are encouraged to develop personal stress management programs utilising a standardised format provided to them. This structured format is designed to facilitate the achievement of specific outcomes, ultimately enabling participants to comprehend the program's full impact and empowering them to implement appropriate personal stress management strategies (Ansley, Houchins, Varjas, Roach, Patterson and Hendrick, 2021; De Angelis et al., 2020; Rousseau, Long, Jackson and Jurgensen, 2019). However, Patterson,

Chung, and Swan (2012) highlight two major shortcomings inherent in stress management programs within police services. Stress symptoms are short-lived. Secondly, these programs often neglect the significant root causes of stress by predominantly focusing on individual officers rather than addressing systemic environmental factors. The authors assert that initiatives aimed at reducing job stress should prioritise organisational changes to enhance working conditions. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that even comprehensive efforts to improve working conditions may not entirely eliminate stress for all police personnel. Therefore, they advocate a combined approach involving both organisational change and stress management strategies as the most effective means of preventing workplace stress.

## 2.12 BARRIERS TO USING SAPS SUPPORT STRUCTURES

There has been extensive research on the coping strategies used by SAPS officers to manage or cope with stress. Studies have shown that police officers tend to avoid using SAPS support structures and instead focus on dealing with stress in their own way by using a variety of coping mechanisms. As a result, it is important to understand the reasons behind the avoidance of SAPS support structures. The SAPS Employee Health and Wellness documented a strategy draft, and it identified that confidentiality, which prioritises respects for human dignity and rights, accessibility, and availability, and voluntary participation are the main principles of the Employee Health and Wellness program to ensure SAPS employees feel comfortable utilising the available services. The EHW is making efforts to improve accessibility and make their services more friendly, but previous studies indicate that some police officers are not taking advantage of these services. Boshoff and Strydom (2015) found that police officers do not participate in SAPS support services due to their perceptions of EHW employees. Their primary concern is that they believe employees of EHW fail to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, police officers feel uncomfortable participating in these structures due to a fear that their personal data will be documented, and this may jeopardise their promotion prospects

(Mbuyisa, 2019). Since their files are still part of the SAPS records, they believe they can be evaluated based on the report from their therapists if they open-up to EHW employees about their experiences and how they are dealing with stress (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015).

Numerous studies have established that police officers suffer from occupational stress, and the reports from EHW demonstrate an increasing number of police officers who suffer from stress-related illnesses (Perkins, 2016; Jojo, 2016). There is, however, a larger issue that some police officers choose to avoid seeking professional help from the available support structures due to the stigma associated with using such services (Rajin, 2012; Boshoff and Strydom, 2015). Rajin (2012) contends that police officers view seeking counselling or other support services as an indication of weakness. It is believed that some police officers feel that seeking counselling would be an indication of weakening and a sign that they are no longer fit. According to Boshoff and Strydom (2015), police culture can be a barrier to utilising the support structures available to them. According to Dipela (2016), some police officers do not utilise support services due to their religious beliefs. Some officers for religious reasons might prefer the solace they find in their religious affiliations when going through stressful episodes.

## 2.13 EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF POLICE WORK ON POLICE OFFICERS AND THE NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT

Police work involves inherent stressors, including exposure to violence, danger, and societal conflicts. There has been substantial research conducted in South Africa demonstrating the socio-psychological toll on police officers, which contributes to high levels of burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health issues (Puranda, 2022; Van Lelyveld, 2008). The demands of the job can affect officers both personally and professionally, influencing their overall well-being. Psychological well-being of police officers is a critical area of study that draws on social support theory to improve understanding of the role of relationships and networks in reducing stress. As the police force in South Africa faces unique

challenges, social support theory is an effective method of understanding the nuanced dynamics of support. This is in a society shaped by complexity. Several studies have demonstrated the profound psychological effects of police service in South Africa. These studies emphasise the prevalence of burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues within the profession. This background allows for an examination of how social support theory can be applied to enhance police officers' well-being facing distinctive stressors.

Emotional support in police work cannot be overstated. Exposure to violence, danger, and societal conflict can cause officers to experience psychological distress as established in the literature. Consequently, colleagues and supervisors who provide empathy serve as a vital buffer against the emotional effects of the workplace. Furthermore, tangible assistance, such as access to mental health resources, training programs on stress management, and support for work-life balance can contribute significantly to officers' ability to manage their profession's demands. As a proactive strategy towards dealing with SAPS officers' unique stressors, resources and practical assistance should be made available (Borien, 2020; Dipela, 2016).

Informational support is equally critical, especially in a dynamic and ever-evolving field like law enforcement. As a result of the multifaceted nature of societal conflicts and challenges, police officers may benefit from exchanging information and advice on coping strategies, conflict resolution, and community engagement. Therefore, it is crucial to have a repository of contextually relevant institutional knowledge that is continually reviewed and discussed among officers. The findings of this study are consistent with those of social support theory, which suggests that informational support enhances decision-making and adaptive coping strategies (Guan, Han, Shah, and Gustafson, 2021; Huang, Chen, and Wong, 2020). Moreover, social support theory recognises that support mechanisms differ according to their context. The nature and impact of social support within the police force is shaped by social, cultural, and

institutional factors unique to South Africa. Consequently, interventions and policies aimed at improving officers' mental health must take into account the contextual nuances. Additionally, social support theories emphasise accessibility in all support initiatives. An important determinant of police support systems' effectiveness is their accessibility. There are a variety of support mechanisms available to officers, but barriers often prevent them from utilising these resources to their fullest potential. Govender (2019) provides insight into the challenges related to accessibility. The research points out that even though support services are available, officers may not know their availability. This illustrates a critical gap in information dissemination within police organisations. The study found that even when participants are aware, factors such as stigma, historical, and sociocultural barriers may affect their participation. Furthermore, concerns about confidentiality and possible career repercussions are significant deterrents to these support systems. It is essential to recognise that the mere existence of support programs does not guarantee their use. Understanding the barriers, both organisational and cultural, is vital to tailoring interventions that bridge the gap between support systems availability and utilisation.

Emotional support becomes evident as a key component of promoting officers' well-being in the context of police work's emotional toll. A supportive organisational culture, peer support programs, and counselling services can all contribute to emotional support. Emphasising the positive impact of emotional support on mitigating stress and improving mental health outcomes for police officers in South Africa highlights the nuanced ways in which emotional support mechanisms within the police force can be structured to address the unique challenges officers face (Singh, Gupta, and Mishra, 2021; Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). Providing emotional support reduces the burden of policing on the individual. It is important to establish an organisational culture that encourages open communication, destigmatises seeking help, and fosters camaraderie among officers. This will contribute significantly to their

psychological well-being. Further, police officers must receive tangible assistance to address their physical and mental health challenges. This includes access to mental health resources and comprehensive healthcare. It is imperative that officers have access to practical support services, such as regular health check-ups, counselling, and wellness programs. Providing instrumental support ensures that police officers are able to deal with the tangible aspects of their well-being. This contributes to their overall resilience and coping abilities. Additionally, providing officers with information about available support services and ensuring that tangible and intangible barriers, as mentioned in this discussion, are addressed is an important aspect that is frequently neglected. According to Govender (2019), it is crucial to investigate the communication channels used by organisations to disseminate information about support systems. A lack of awareness and a safe environment that encourages help-seeking behaviour can hinder officers from seeking the help they need. Providing informational support facilitates the access to resources and ensures officers are aware of them. The ability to effectively communicate information and to be transparent in the way information is conveyed are essential components of establishing a supportive working environment.

### 2.13.1 Long-term effects of stress and trauma on police officers

Police officers operate in environments that consistently expose them to high-stress and traumatic situations, leaving them vulnerable to profound and lasting psychological and emotional consequences. Long-term effects of occupational hazards go beyond mental health concerns, affecting their professional efficacy, interpersonal relationships, and broader social systems. Taking into account the intersection of police work, trauma, and institution responses, as well as the nuanced implications of unaddressed stress and trauma, is essential to critically examining these outcomes. The prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among police officers is alarmingly high, with studies suggesting that exposure to recurrent traumatic events places them at a higher risk than the general population. Notably, complex PTSD emerges as a

significant concern due to its association with prolonged and repeated exposure to traumatic experiences. Beyond singular events, police officers often encounter traumatic visual material, life-threatening situations, and even humiliating interpersonal dynamics, all of which cumulatively heighten their susceptibility to complex PTSD (Brewin et al., 2020).

Burnout, another pervasive issue in law enforcement, compounds these challenges. Characterised by chronic emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished personal accomplishment, burnout often stems from a workplace culture that normalises stress and discourages vulnerability (Ugwu and Idemudia, 2024; Stewart IV, 2021). Research highlights that ruminating on traumatic events amplifies burnout, creating a cycle that erodes mental and emotional resilience (Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński, 2021). These psychological burdens inevitably seep into family life, exacerbating the emotional toll on police officers and their loved ones. Job cumulative stress often results in strained family dynamics, impaired communication, and difficulties maintaining healthy relationships (Schoeman, 2024). Trauma spill over can manifest itself in increased irritability, emotional withdrawal, and a general inability to separate work-related stress from home life, thereby destabilising family systems (Meyer, 2023). Police officers' families frequently bear the weight of this emotional labour, grappling with feelings of isolation and misunderstanding as they attempt to support their loved ones.

Police officers often fail to prioritise or effectively address these issues, exacerbating their long-term effects. While early intervention is frequently touted as a remedy, its implementation remains inconsistent and reactive rather than proactive. Programs focused on mental health support, such as mindfulness-based interventions, have demonstrated promising outcomes in reducing PTSD symptoms and enhancing stress management among officers (Grupe et al., 2019). However, these initiatives often lack sustained institutional commitment and are

insufficiently integrated into police culture, which frequently stigmatises vulnerability and equates mental health struggles with professional weakness. Additionally, preventive measures, such as screening recruits for high-risk personality traits and equipping them with psychological coping strategies, are underutilised despite evidence of their effectiveness in mitigating PTSD and burnout (Anders et al., 2022).

The implications of unaddressed trauma extend beyond the individual and familial domains, impacting professional performance, public trust, and institutional credibility. Officers grappling with unprocessed trauma are more likely to exhibit impaired decision-making, reduced emotional regulation, and an increased risk of misconduct, all of which compromise public safety and erode community trust (Diamantis, 2023). Moreover, these psychological struggles can lead to attrition, as officers may leave the force prematurely or become ineffective in their roles, further straining an already overburdened system.

Addressing the long-term effects of stress and trauma on police officers requires a paradigm shift in how law enforcement institutions conceptualise and prioritise mental health. This entails not only implementing early intervention programs but also fostering a cultural transformation that normalises seeking help, destigmatises vulnerability, and embeds mental health support into the fabric of police work. The focus must extend beyond crisis management to include continuous professional development, peer support networks, and robust policies that prioritise the well-being of officers and their families. Without such systemic changes, the pervasive impact of trauma will continue to undermine both the individuals who serve and the institutions they represent.

### 2.13.2 Enhancing mental health and job performance in policing

Support systems are essential to developing the mental health and job performance of police officers, especially in high-stress environments such as South Africa. However, the

effectiveness of these systems depends on the nuanced interplay of individual, organisational, and societal factors. While peer support programs and workplace social support are often highlighted as solutions, a critical examination reveals both their potential and limitations in addressing police officers' complex challenges. Peer support programs are frequently cited as instrumental in reducing stigma and improving mental health literacy among officers, fostering a culture of openness and mutual assistance (Milliard, 2020). However, these programs alone cannot dismantle the deeply entrenched stigma surrounding mental health within police organisations. Structural barriers, such as hierarchical power dynamics and inadequate peer support training, often undermine their efficacy. For these programs to achieve their intended impact, they must be integrated into a broader, organisation-wide strategy that normalises mental health discussions and ensures confidentiality and accessibility.

Organisational environment itself is a significant determinant of mental health outcomes. High job demands, chronic exposure to violence, and insufficient downtime contribute to widespread stress and burnout among police officers. These organisational stressors, coupled with the lack of adequate support systems, create a pervasive sense of strain (Purba and Demou, 2019). While supportive policies aimed at reducing workloads and promoting work-life balance improve well-being, their implementation is often inconsistent and subject to budgetary and bureaucratic constraints. Furthermore, the absence of a trauma-informed approach within many police organisations exacerbates the psychological toll of the job, leaving officers ill-equipped to cope with cumulative stress (Diamantis, 2023).

Social support, both within and outside the workplace, is another critical factor. Research indicates that officers with robust social networks report better mental health outcomes, as these networks provide emotional sustenance and practical assistance during challenging times (Hansson and Padyab, 2023; Hansson, Hurtig, Lauritz, and Padyab, 2017). Yet, the adequacy

of this support is uneven, often influenced by factors such as rank, gender, and cultural norms. For instance, female officers may face additional barriers to accessing workplace support due to gendered stereotypes and exclusionary practices (Illias, Riach and Demou, 2024).

Job performance is closely related to mental health, which is also influenced by the quality of support systems. According to Louw (2014), social support mitigates burnout and fosters vigour, both of which are essential for sustaining high levels of performance. However, the relationship between support and performance is not linear. Officers operating in unsupportive environments may experience reduced work engagement, even when external social support is strong. The creation of supportive work environments that reduce job strain and promote social support has been found to improve work engagement and job performance (Piotrowski, Rawat, and Boe, 2021). Through comprehensive policies, transparent communication, and fair leadership practices, organisations can promote a supportive climate that prioritises employee well-being. Moreover, implementing structured empowerment models within organisations can significantly enhance organisational functionality and personal adjustment, thereby improving job performance (Gong, Li, and Niu, 2021).

For instance, South African police officers who adopt adaptive coping mechanisms, combined with targeted organisational interventions, demonstrate improved stress management and job performance (Mushwana, Govender, and Nel, 2019; Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). However, such successes are often localised and dependent on individual initiatives, pointing to the need for systemic change. Similarly, studies show that organisational citizenship behaviours—acts that extend beyond job descriptions—flourish in environments with strong workplace social support, which, in turn, enhance overall performance. Yet, these behaviours can also lead to overwork and exploitation if not balanced with organisational safeguards (Mathibe and Chinyamurindi, 2021). Effective support systems require more than piecemeal

efforts; they demand a critical rethinking of how police organisations conceptualise and implement support. Peer support, social networks, and organisational policies must be woven into a cohesive framework that addresses stress root causes and fosters resilience at both the individual and systemic levels. Without such an integrated approach, support systems risk becoming superficial fixes rather than transformative solutions. By critically engaging with structural and cultural barriers to effective support, police organisations can cultivate a healthier, more productive workforce.

## 2.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses critically extant literature on policing, stressors, and support systems. Following the introduction which pointed out how intricately complex and demanding policing is, it was explained that pressures from policing work may differ across departments. This served as a backdrop to the discussion of the role and activities of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DCPI). Known as Hawks, the agency was discussed as an independent body. They investigate priority crimes such as serious commercial and organised crimes, serious corruption, and major economic crimes. Furthermore, police work was explored as complex, physically, and mentally demanding. Because of these demands, physical and mental exhaustion became prevalent in police institutions. Some of the common stressors discussed are external stressors, occupational stressors, task-related stressors, and life stressors. These stressors were conceptualised broadly as occupational stressors. They are defined as circumstances in which aspects of or events connected to the workplace can cause illness or jeopardise people's welfare.

The following is a critical analysis of crime prevalence and dynamics in South Africa. It also discusses its implications for policing, stress prevalence and management. It was argued that because of crime prevalence in South Africa, violence has become deeply rooted in social

structures. This is due to social marginalisation and a high level of unemployment. This complicates the landscape and makes traditional policing methods difficult to effectively combat crime. As such, South Africa's police officers operate in one of the most complex and stressful policing environments in the world. It is therefore imperative to create a healthy police environment. A search through literature revealed that stress management interventions for police officers are typically divided into two categories: clinical interventions and interventions aimed at improving coping strategies based on training or other methods utilising stress reduction techniques. Specifically, SAPS has a system in place called Employee Health and Wellness Programmes. These programs include anger management training, mental health support, training to address substance abuse and foster better relationships between colleagues and families.

This chapter explores SAPS' trauma intervention programs, including CISD, suicide prevention programs, and stress management programs. While CISD aims to address immediate trauma following critical incidents, it has faced criticism for its potential to exacerbate mental health issues if improperly administered. Suicide prevention programs demonstrate promise in reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors, although critiques suggest a need for a broader ecological perspective. PSWS' stress management program emphasises proactive stress management strategies to enhance officers' resilience. However, challenges remain, including the need to address systemic environmental factors alongside individual-level interventions. Ultimately, a holistic approach combining organisational changes and stress management strategies is argued to effectively mitigate workplace stress among SAPS officers.

This chapter recognises that even though these support programs are laudable, their impact is hampered by several challenges that must be addressed. These challenges include stigma associated with police officers seeking mental health assistance; fear that whatever they

disclose might affect their promotion, lack of knowledge of stress symptoms, religion beliefs among others. Also, this study recognises that implementation occurs within a policy environment that is complex and plagued by uncertainties. As such, there must be constant reappraisal of these support programs. The next chapter discusses theories that are instrumental to exploring stress and stressors among SAPS officers.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE THEORETICAL EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS, STRESSORS, AND RESILIENCE AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE OFFICERS

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theoretical exploration and analysis of support systems, stressors, and resilience among South African police officers. This investigation is based on three theoretical frameworks: Social Support Theory, Occupational Stress Theory, and Resilience Theory. Each theoretical perspective provides nuanced insight into the multifaceted challenges faced by law enforcement professionals within South Africa. In this chapter, efforts are made to illuminate the complexities of support mechanisms, the ramifications of occupational stress, and the dynamic attributes of resilience inherent in the South African police environment. To address the specific needs of officers, empirically grounded interventions must address their psychological well-being in the context of societal and organisational influences that are intricately interwoven (Mooloo, 2022; Mangoegape, 2015; Gumani, 2014). These theoretical frameworks contributed significantly to the overarching goal of presenting a qualitative exploration of support systems available to South African Police Officers' special crime units, Durban division. The theoretical constructs are used as analytical tools that guide the investigation in delineating the impact of police work on officers. They also evaluated the effectiveness of existing support systems, and analysing the accessibility of these systems to the officers.

**Table 3.1: Showing key theoretical contributions and links**

| Theory | Primary focus | Key contribution to the study | Conceptual link to other theories |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Social support theory** | Organisational, peer, and community support structures | Explains how external support buffers psychological strain and enhances officers' well-being | Functions as a protective moderator that reduces the impact of occupational stress and reinforces resilience |
| **Occupational stress theory** | Job-related stressors and their psychological effects | Identifies systemic, operational, and societal stressors inherent in policing | Defines the primary source of psychological risk that support systems and resilience mechanisms must mitigate |
| **Resilience theory** | Adaptive coping, recovery, and psychological endurance | Explains how officers sustain functioning and recover under chronic occupational pressure | Converts stress exposure and social support into adaptive coping and long-term psychological stability |
| **Integrated theoretical framework** | Interaction between stress, support, and resilience | Provides a comprehensive model for understanding psychological well-being | Stress generates risk, social support buffers its effects, and resilience determines adaptive outcomes |

*Source: Author's compilation*

Collectively, the theories provided a conceptual framework for understanding police officers' psychological well-being, the inherent stressors of their profession, and the adaptive mechanisms they use to cope. This chapter provided a guiding framework that clarified established theoretical perspectives. It also enabled the study to disentangle the specific

nuances of support, stress, and resilience within the unique operational context of the South African Police Service's Durban Central Office.

## 3.2 SOCIAL SUPPORT THEORY

Through extensive research into the protective effects of interpersonal relationships on people from potentially pathogenic stressors in the 1980s (Caplan, 1974; Cassel, 1976; Cobb, 1976; Heller, Nathan and Perek, 1979; Henderson, 1977; Kaplan, Cassel, and Gore, 1977), social support as a conceptual and/or theoretical framework gained prominence. Despite the various conceptual definitions of "social support," the term has been widely used to refer to the mechanisms through which interpersonal relationships may buffer a person from stressful situations (Cohen and McKay, 2020). Caplan (1974) defined social support systems as ongoing aggregates that offer individuals opportunities for feedback about themselves and validation of their expectations of others. Supportive others in this context provide information and cognitive guidance, tangible resources and aid, and emotional sustenance in times of need (Garg, Kapadia, and Sengupta, 2021).

Social support theory emphasises the importance of relationships and networks in promoting psychological well-being and coping with stress (Cohen and McKay, 2020). Some scholars classify social support into three main types: emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support (Freeman, 2021). Emotional support involves empathy and understanding, instrumental support includes tangible aid or assistance, and informational support offers advice and information. Cohen and Wills (1985) explored the intricate dynamics of human relationships and networks in relation to psychological well-being and stress management. The theory posits three distinct types of social support: emotional, instrumental, and informational. These categories represent the multifaceted nature of assistance individuals seek and receive within their social circles.

Emotional support is characterised by the provision of empathy and understanding (Drageset, 2021; Bender, Berg, Miller, Evans and Holmes, 2021). In times of distress, individuals often find solace in the emotional connection and compassionate presence of others. This type of support plays a crucial role in alleviating emotional burdens, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing overall psychological well-being (Jolly, Kong and Kim, 2021; Cohen and McKay, 2020). The second dimension is instrumental support, which encompasses tangible assistance. As part of this form of support, individuals receive practical actions and resources from their social networks (Drageset, 2021; Klyver, Honig, and Steffens, 2018). Examples of tangible assistance include financial assistance, assistance with daily tasks, or any tangible assistance that addresses specific needs. Instrumental support is particularly critical during challenging circumstances, as it serves as a direct means of navigating difficulties and enhancing an individual's ability to cope with them (Haas, 2020; Harasemiw, Newall, Shooshtari, Mackenzie, and Menec, 2018). Thirdly, informational support involves the exchange of advice and information (Lin, Li, Yan, and Turel, 2018). In the face of uncertainty or adversity, individuals often seek guidance and knowledge from their social networks. Whether it is receiving advice on problem-solving, accessing relevant information, or gaining insights into potential solutions, informational support contributes to effective decision-making and adaptive coping strategies (Jolly, Kong, and Kim, 2021; Uchino, Bowen, Kent de Grey, Mikel and Fisher, 2018). Furthermore, appraisal is also discussed in this categorisation to refer to the provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation (Ta et al., 2020; Toledo, Ochoa and Farias, 2020).

It is imperative to emphasise that a critical examination of social support theory requires the nuanced interaction between these kinds of support and their implications for mental health. A comprehensive understanding of social support necessitates understanding the intricate ways in which emotional, instrumental, and informational support interact and overlap in different

contexts. In addition, it necessitates recognising the role of appraisals in stress management. Moreover, the theory highlights the contextual nature of social support, emphasising that support mechanisms' effectiveness depends on individuals' specific needs and circumstances. What proves emotionally supportive in one situation may not necessarily address instrumental or informational needs in another. Social support theory recognises the multifaceted nature of human relationships and the diverse ways in which individuals draw upon their social networks to navigate life's challenges.

### 3.2.1 Exploring the effect of police work on police officers and the need for an effective social support

Police work involves inherent stressors, including exposure to violence, danger, and societal conflicts. There has been substantial research conducted in South Africa demonstrating the socio-psychological toll on police officers, which contributes to high levels of burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health issues (Puranda, 2022; Van Lelyveld, 2008). The demands of the job can affect officers both personally and professionally, influencing their overall well-being. Psychological well-being of police officers is a critical area of study that draws on social support theory to improve understanding of the role of relationships and networks in reducing stress. As the police force in South Africa faces unique challenges, the application of social support theory is an effective method of understanding the nuanced dynamics of support in a society shaped by complexities. Several studies have demonstrated the profound psychological effects of serving as a police officer in South Africa. These studies emphasise the prevalence of burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues within the profession. This background allows for an examination of how social support theory can be applied to enhance police officers' well-being facing distinctive stressors.

Emotional support is important in police work. Exposure to violence, danger, and societal conflict can cause officers to experience emotional distress as established in the literature. Therefore, colleagues and supervisors who show empathy provide a crucial buffer against the emotional toll of the job. Furthermore, tangible assistance, such as access to mental health resources, training programs on stress management, and support for work-life balance can contribute significantly to officers' ability to manage their profession's demands. As a proactive strategy towards dealing with SAPS officers' unique stressors, resources and practical assistance should be made available (Borien, 2020; Dipela, 2016).

Informational support is equally critical, especially in a dynamic and ever-evolving field like law enforcement. As a result of the multifaceted nature of societal conflicts and challenges, police officers may benefit from exchanging information and advice on coping strategies, conflict resolution, and community engagement. Therefore, it is crucial to have a repository of expert, context-specific institutional knowledge that is continually reviewed and discussed among officers. The findings of this study are consistent with those of social support theory, which suggests that informational support enhances decision-making and adaptive coping strategies (Guan, Han, Shah, and Gustafson, 2021; Huang, Chen, and Wong, 2020). Moreover, social support theory recognises support mechanisms differ across contexts. The nature and impact of social support within the police force is shaped by societal, cultural, and institutional factors unique to South Africa. Consequently, interventions and policies aimed at improving officers' mental health must consider these contextual nuances. Additionally, social support theories emphasise accessibility in all support initiatives. An important determinant of police support systems' effectiveness is their accessibility. There are a variety of support mechanisms available to officers, but barriers often prevent them from utilising these resources to their fullest potential. Govender (2019) provides insight into accessibility challenges. The research points out that even though support services are available, officers may not know their

availability. This illustrates a critical gap in information dissemination within police organisations. The study found that even when participants are aware, factors such as stigma, historical, and sociocultural barriers may affect their participation. Furthermore, concerns about confidentiality and possible career repercussions are significant deterrents to these support systems. It is essential to recognise that the mere existence of support programs does not guarantee their use. Understanding the barriers, both organisational and cultural, is vital to tailoring interventions that bridge the gap between support systems availability and utilisation.

Emotional support becomes evident as a key component of promoting officers' well-being in the context of police work's emotional toll. Supportive organisational culture, peer support programs, and counselling services can all contribute to emotional support. Emphasising the positive impact of emotional support on mitigating stress and improving mental health outcomes for police officers in South Africa, highlights the nuanced ways in which emotional support mechanisms within the police force can be structured to address the unique challenges officers face (Singh, Gupta, and Mishra, 2021; Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker, 2019). Emotional support mitigates the psychological burden of policing. It is imperative to establish an organisational culture that encourages open communication, destigmatises seeking help, and fosters camaraderie among officers. This will contribute significantly to their psychological well-being. Further, police officers must receive tangible assistance to address their physical and mental health challenges. This includes access to mental health resources and comprehensive healthcare. Officers need access to practical support services, such as regular health check-ups, counselling, and wellness programs. Instrumental support ensures police officers can deal with tangible aspects of their well-being. This contributes to their overall resilience and coping abilities. Additionally, providing officers with information about available support services and ensuring that tangible and intangible barriers, as mentioned in this discussion, are addressed is a crucial aspect that is frequently neglected. According to

Govender (2019), it is crucial to investigate the communication channels organisations use to disseminate information about support systems. A lack of awareness and a safe environment that encourages help-seeking behaviour can hinder officers from seeking the help they need. Information support facilitates access to resources and ensures officers know them. The ability to effectively communicate information and be transparent in its conveying is essential components of establishing a supportive working environment.

### 3.3 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS THEORY

Occupational Stress Theory is also known as the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model, which argues that stress in the workplace is caused by the interaction between job demands, job control, and social support (Ricciardelli and Carleton, 2022; Del Pozo-Antúnez, Ariza-Montes, Fernández-Navarro and Molina-Sánchez, 2018). This model was developed by Robert Karasek and Töres Theorell. It suggests that high job demands, low job control, and inadequate social support can lead to increased stress and negative health outcomes among employees (Jackson, 2019; Harper, 2011). The Occupational Stress Theory is particularly useful in understanding how police officers are affected by stress in the context of their current work environment. In addition to the demands of their jobs, police officers are also subject to high workloads, violence, and inherent risks associated with law enforcement. An essential component of creating effective support systems is recognising and addressing these specific challenges, and occupational stress theory provides an empirical framework that facilitates identifying areas in which support is required.

An integral part of occupational stress theory is the idea that it is important not only to address individual stressors but also to create an environment that promotes well-being in the workplace (Toderi and Balducci, 2018; Hui and Aye, 2018). It emphasises the need for interventions that enhance job control, manage job demands, and establish robust social support mechanisms. Additionally, the theory underscores the interconnectedness of these

factors, recognising that a comprehensive approach is essential for effectively managing occupational stress among police officers. In the context of law enforcement, occupational stress theory contributes to the development of a support system that consider the particular challenges and dynamics of their work. Providing job demands, increasing job control, and providing social support can contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of police officers.

### 3.3.1 Occupational stress theory application

This theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding workplace stress dynamics. It asserts that stress is the result of an intricate interplay between individual characteristics and the work environment. In the case of SAPS officers who participated in this study, a combination of internal and external factors determined their occupational stress levels. This consequently shaped their choices to seek support when required. Dipela (2016) provides insight into the profound repercussions of exposure to traumatic incidents on police officers, emphasising the elevated level of trauma experienced by them. In the aftermath of violent crimes and accidents, people may suffer from severe mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Weisburd et al. 2018; Auxéméry, 2018). Police officers, especially those in special crime units, are frequently exposed to violent situations while on duty. Therefore, it is imperative that interventions be implemented specifically designed to address the mental health consequences resulting from high trauma exposure in policing. Research has identified factors such as inadequate resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and ineffective communication within the police force as factors contributing to increased stress levels (Mooloo, 2022; Mushwana, 2017). Organisational issues significantly contribute to occupational stress experienced by officers, emphasising the need to make structural changes to alleviate this stress. Studies have also shown a link between occupational stress and increased workplace hazards, injuries, and diseases, including cardiovascular disease (Mona,

Chimbari, and Hongoro, 2019; Ma et al., 2015). Stress has a substantial impact on physical health beyond the psychological realm. There is a compelling need for an integrated approach that addresses both the mental and physical well-being of officers in light of the holistic impact of stress on officers.

Support systems are integral to mitigating occupational stress. A comprehensive understanding of these systems is essential to use them effectively. SAPS officers in South Africa face unique challenges, which call for accessible, confidential support systems (Rajin, 2012; Chetty, 2011). It is imperative that interventions are designed that are both available and culturally sensitive as they are cognizant of the specific stressors experienced by South African police officers. Understanding stress management social dynamics is enhanced through peer support programs. The development of positive workplace relationships has been shown to protect against occupational stress, and these relationships should be fostered among colleagues or through what is known as peer support (Mooloo, 2022; Gumani, Fourie, and Terre Blanche, 2013). By implementing and cultivating such support systems, police forces will become more resilient and cohesive. In addition, emphasising continuous training and skills development is critical to introducing a proactive approach to stress management and developing sustainable support systems (Meyer, Roodt, and Robbins, 2011). Focusing on building resilience through education and skill acquisition, as well as providing tools and resources for stress management is a sustainable approach to managing stress in SAPS. In retrospect, while support systems are theoretically available, practical access is often hindered by various barriers. Researchers continue to draw attention to South African police officers' challenges in obtaining support services. Significant hurdles include bureaucratic barriers, stigma surrounding mental health, and lack of awareness (Govender and Pillay, 2022; Perkins, Howell and Shearing, 2020). This demonstrates the necessity of not only developing support systems, but additionally addressing systemic and cultural barriers. This prevents officers from taking advantage of services they

deserve. Policymakers and organisational leaders must understand the specific nature of these barriers. In addition to providing support services, we must also actively work to dismantle structural obstacles. We must also foster a culture that encourages officers to prioritise their mental and emotional well-being.

A nuanced examination of the application of Occupational Stress Theory in the context of the South African police force reveals a complex interplay between individual and organisational factors contributing to police officer stress. Despite the importance of the identified support systems, they face accessibility challenges. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that considers both unique stressors faced by South African Police Officers. It also considers the systemic barriers that hinder their access to support.

### 3.4 RESILIENCE THEORY

Resilience theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals and communities negotiate challenges and adversity (Métais, Burel, Gillham, Tarquinio and Martin-Krumm, 2022; Manning and Bouchard, 2020). This theoretical perspective emphasises individuals and social systems' adaptive capacities to recover and adjust in the face of stressors and disruptions (Métais, Burel, Gillham, Tarquinio and Martin-Krumm, 2022). Resilience theory provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of human behaviour and social dynamics. It encompasses both individual and collective factors contributing to rebounding. Among the key proponents of resilience theory are Emmy Werner, Michael Rutter, and Norman Garmezy. In particular, Werner's research focused on identifying factors that lead to positive outcomes for individuals exposed to a variety of risk factors such as poverty, familial dysfunction, and violence in the community (Werner and Smith, 2019). According to her findings, protective factors, such as individual characteristics, supportive relationships, and community resources, contribute significantly to resilience development.

Resilience theory emphasises the complex and interactive nature of risk factors and protective factors (Ungar, 2019; Yule, Houston and Grych, 2019). Resilience is not an immutable trait, but rather a process that evolves over time. As individuals and communities interact dynamically with their environment, the interplay between risk and protective factors shapes their ability to cope with and overcome challenges (Hostinar and Miller, 2019; Ungar, 2019). This perspective acknowledges that resilience is not universally applicable and manifests differently across diverse contexts and individuals. Individual factors that contribute to resilience include cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation, and self-efficacy (Roohi, Noroozi and Yousefi Afrashteh, 2019; Arici-Ozcan, Cekici and Arslan, 2019). Individuals with a high level of resilience often adapt to adversity with a positive attitude and belief that they can overcome their difficulties. Resilience theory also includes social support and relationships. As a buffer against stressor effects, strong connections with family, friends, and the community provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support (Bostean, Andrade, and Viruell-Fuentes, 2019; Pössel et al. 2018). Within the context of police work, this theory is particularly relevant as officers often face significant stressors that impact their mental well-being. The concept of resilience in this context pertains to police officers' ability to cope and recover from challenges inherent to their profession while maintaining psychological well-being.

There has been extensive research conducted globally on the detrimental effects of police work on officers' mental health, and South Africa is no exception. Wassermann, Meiring, and Becker (2019) provide insight into the specific challenges faced by South African police officers, including their exposure to trauma, violence, and high-pressure situations. The occurrence of PTSD, anxiety, and depression among police officers is among the most prevalent conditions, and comprehensive interventions are urgently needed (Nkosi, 2019; Mushwana, Govender, and Nel, 2019). As a result, police work's demanding nature, compounded by societal and economic challenges, causes a significant mental health burden.

Officers' personal characteristics, organisational structure, and peer support structures contribute to their resilience. On a personal level, it is critical to consider officers' emotional intelligence and resilience skills. Nevertheless, recognising emotional intelligence and coping skills as modifiable and trainable aspects provides avenues for targeted interventions to enhance officers' ability to effectively deal with stress. A supportive work environment and mental health resources provided by the organisation contribute to officers' ability to cope with everyday challenges they face. This highlights the need for organisational-level interventions to promote resilience. In addition, peer support has also been identified as a crucial component of mitigating stress effects on police officers (Anderson, Di Nota, Groll and Carleton, 2020; Sadulski, 2017). As officers draw strength from their peers, resilience contributes to a shared sense of camaraderie and understanding. Also, it is imperative to emphasise that to maintain a high level of resilience among officers, a holistic approach should be taken. This should take into account cultural nuances and socio-economic challenges they face. Resilience levels are heavily influenced by factors such as historical contexts, community relationships, and socioeconomic disparities, especially in developing countries such as South Africa. The dynamic nature of resilience, which encompasses personal, organisational, and social aspects, underscores the need for multifaceted interventions tailored to special challenges facing South African police officers.

### 3.5 INTERNATIONAL TRAUMA INTERVENTION MODELS

Boshoff and Strydom (2015) discussed seven therapeutic options, including prolonged exposure therapy, trauma focused cognitive behavioural therapy, marital and family therapy, psychosocial rehabilitation, relaxation therapy, and ecosystem-based approaches. As part of the theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of trauma intervention support within SAPS, these evidence-based trauma intervention models are discussed. Evidence-based

therapy is defined by Cook et al. (2013) as a treatment approach that is supported by research findings.

### 3.5.1 Prolonged Exposure therapy (PE)

The concept of prolonged exposure (PE) uses the long tradition of exposure therapy to help clients overcome excessive anxiety and phobias by confronting safe, and yet anxiety-provoking, situations (Rubenstein, Duek, Doran and Harpaz-Rotem, 2024; Brown, Zandberg and Foa, 2019). The process involves gradually exposing the individual to memories and situations related to trauma that they had avoided previously. PE evolved from the emotional processing theory of post-traumatic stress disorder, which emphasises the role that successful processing of traumatic memories plays in reducing PTSD symptoms (Rubenstein, Duek, Doran and Harpaz-Rotem, 2024). PE includes the following procedures: Education about common responses to trauma; Breathing retraining, i.e., teaching the client how to breathe in a calming manner; Repeated exposure to situations or objects the client avoids because of trauma-related anxiety and distress; and Repetitive, prolonged exposure to traumatic memories through imagery (i.e. recalling and revisiting traumatic memories in imagery) (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015).

The purpose of in-vivo and imagery exposure, as explained to clients in the overall rationale for treatment, is to facilitate the emotional processing of traumatic events by allowing them to confront painful memories and related situations. Through this process, the client learns that the memories connected with the trauma, as well as the situations and activities associated with these memories, are not the same as the trauma itself. During their recovery period, they learn that the anxiety associated with the traumatic event can be safely experienced (Cook et al. 2013; Bride and Figley, 2012). Providing adequate training and supervision to therapists is essential to minimising potential harm and maximising efficiency. Additionally, cultural considerations

and adaptations may be necessary to make PE more acceptable and effective across diverse populations.

### 3.5.2 Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT)

TF-CBT is an evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents who have experienced trauma (Lewey, Smith, Burcham, Saunders, Elfallal and O'Toole, 2018; Cohen and Mannarino, 2017). It combines cognitive-behavioural techniques with trauma-specific interventions to help individuals process and cope with traumatic experiences (Neelakantan, Hetrick and Michelson, 2019). Cognitive models emphasize the role of dysfunctional thinking in all psychological disturbances (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015). Cognitive therapy promotes lasting improvements in patients' moods and behaviours by probing into their fundamental beliefs about themselves, their surroundings, and others. Therapy seeks to evoke lasting transformations by addressing these core, often subconscious, dysfunctional beliefs. For example, if a person consistently underestimates their capabilities, it may be indicative of an underlying incompetence belief. A patient can fundamentally shift their interpretation and approach to the challenges they encounter in their daily lives by changing this deeply ingrained belief. This will encourage a more balanced self-perception that acknowledges both strengths and weaknesses.

Cognitive behaviour therapy is based on several fundamental principles: First, it is built upon an ongoing understanding of patients' issues and tailoring conceptualisations to each individual's cognitive framework. Secondly, it emphasises the importance of establishing a strong therapeutic alliance with patients. Thirdly, it follows a goal-oriented and problem-focused approach. Fourth, it emphasises the present moment. Furthermore, it provides patients with the opportunity to become their own therapists. It stresses the importance of preventing relapses as part of its educational component. Lastly, it provides patients with the ability to

identify and assess dysfunctional beliefs and thoughts and counter them. Cognitive behaviour therapy reshapes the client's thinking patterns, mood, and behaviour (Beck, 2020; Wright, Brown, Thase and Basco, 2017). However, it focuses primarily on the individual's capacity for self-transformation, often omitting the broader systemic or familial factors that have a significant impact on police officers' health and well-being. For police officials to maintain balance in their interactions with family and the community, it is imperative to integrate a psycho-social perspective.

### 3.5.3 Psycho education

Psycho-education involves providing individuals with information about trauma, its effects, and coping strategies (Şahin and Türk, 2021; van Niekerk and Roets, 2017). It aims to increase awareness and understanding of trauma-related symptoms and improve individuals' ability to manage them. It can be tailored to various formats and audiences, including group, family, or individual settings. Topics covered typically include medical aspects of the condition, combating stigma, adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours, stress management, self-esteem, and available treatments. Throughout psycho-education, a non-blaming approach is emphasised, focusing on learning about the condition and strategies for the future (Stanley and Humphreys, 2017; Srivastava and Panday, 2016).

The program has some drawbacks. In some situations, providing diagnosis information may not be helpful and may even be detrimental. This is especially true in contexts such as a police culture where labelling can have negative consequences. For psycho-education to be effective, it should avoid pathologizing individuals, highlight strengths alongside limitations, and stress the inherent challenges of recovery rather than placing blame on them (Bailey, Trevillion and Gilchrist, 2020; Bowley and Bashir, 2015). Furthermore, the current disorder-based model of mental illness may be in conflict with the ecological foundation of psychoeducation, which

emphasises the interaction between an individual and his or her environment (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015). A more ecological approach, taking into account the broader context, may be more appropriate, particularly in public service settings such as law enforcement.

### 3.5.4 Marital and family therapy

Trauma can impact not only the individual who experienced it but also their family members and relationships. Marital and family therapy focuses on addressing trauma impact within the family system and improving communication and support among family members. Marital and family therapy plays a pivotal role in supporting police families navigating the intricate dynamics intertwined with law enforcement demands. Often, these families become accustomed to the inherent stress associated with their loved ones' professions. However, they are not prepared for the abrupt upheaval caused by a traumatic event. Rhein (2020) describes well the initial shock and disorientation experienced by a family member whose job-related trauma has caused acute stress reactions. Family therapy is incorporated within psychotherapy and serves as a beacon of hope for families facing such challenges. It examines the intricate web of relationships and interactions within the family unit and beyond the individual's pathology. Therapists emphasise the interconnectedness of family members and the profound impact of familial ties on psychological well-being through systemic dynamics (Rastogi, 2020; Fiese, Jones and Saltzman, 2019).

A family therapist uses a variety of counselling techniques and theories to assist families in exploring and healing. Rather than dissecting individual traumas or unconscious drives, therapy interventions focus on unravelling relationship patterns and fostering resilience within the family system (Grant, 2023). The approach recognises that distress often lies in intricate relationships within families that must be navigated holistically and collaboratively. Family therapy is not without complexities and limitations. It is imperative to recognise that not all

familial issues are the result of trauma-related mental illness (Matthews, 2020; Marich, 2014). Families may enter therapy anticipating a quick resolution, only to find that tensions are exacerbated and unanticipated challenges arise. Furthermore, therapy outcomes may not benefit all family members, resulting in frustration and disillusionment.

### 3.5.5 Psycho-social rehabilitation

Psychosocial rehabilitation helps individuals with trauma-related disorders reintegrate into society and regain functioning in a variety of areas of their lives regardless of their diagnoses (O'Sullivan, Neale and Mistlin, 2022; Yeterian, Berke and Litz, 2017). The program embodies a collaborative ethos, centred on personalised care designed to facilitate recovery, community integration, and improved quality of life (Chu, 2011). As part of this approach, treatment is not the only objective. Rather, holistic reintegration into community life is also emphasised, as well as strengthening support networks, acknowledging cultural strengths, empowering individuals, engaging the community, and developing meaningful partnerships with recipients and their families (Boshoff and Strydom, 2015). In addition, the program includes vocational training, social skill development, and support for finding housing and other community resources. For police officials striving to navigate community living while managing mental health challenges, psycho-social rehabilitation offers a pathway to resilience and independence. The effectiveness of the program is enhanced by comprehensive support systems that encompass family networks (Jiang, Chen, and Wang, 2024; Virdee, 2015). This deeper involvement should be underpinned by respect for recipients' autonomy, privacy, and confidentiality while fostering growth in essential domains such as self-care, illness management, interpersonal connections, stable housing, and fulfilling activities (O'Sullivan, Neale and Mistlin, 2022; Virdee, 2015). By embracing a holistic approach that encompasses both individual and systemic care, psycho-social rehabilitation can serve as a catalyst for transformative change and enduring well-being within SAPS.

### 3.5.6 Relaxation therapy

Relaxation therapy techniques, such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery, aim to help individuals reduce physiological arousal and manage symptoms of anxiety and stress (Toussaint et al. 2021; Avinash and George, 2018). While relaxation therapy alone may not treat trauma-related disorders, it can be a helpful adjunct to other therapeutic approaches (Michael et al. 2019). However, it's essential to recognise that some individuals, especially those with psychological issues or trauma histories, may experience emotional discomfort during relaxation. Police officials, in particular, may fear loss of control or encounter relaxation-induced anxiety. Therefore, therapists must tailor techniques to individuals' physiological and psychological needs, opting for approaches like passive relaxation or guided metaphors for those with decreased energy reserves (Page, Stritzke and McEvoy, 2022; Csikszentmihalhi, 2020). As relaxation skills improve with practice, individuals can better recognise and manage stress symptoms, preventing escalation and fostering well-being.

### 3.6.7 The ecosystems perspective

The ecosystem perspective is widely embraced in social work and offers a means of understanding the intricate interplay between people and their surroundings. This approach acknowledges the multifaceted nature of humans, which is influenced by a variety of factors, including biophysical, psychological, spiritual, social, and cultural factors (Constant, Bervoets, Hens and Van de Cruys, 2020; Tanhan, 2019). This perspective emphasises the interconnectedness and multi-layered reality of person-environment dynamics, guiding practitioners to individualise interventions across various levels, from individuals to families, groups, and communities (Shamay-Tsoory and Mendelsohn, 2019; Brown, Stoffel and Munoz, 2019).

Central to this perspective is the transactional focus, distinguishing social work by its recognition of continual adaptation between individuals and environments. Interventions target not only individuals or environments but also the transactions between them, recognising their reciprocal influence (Gómez-Carrillo and Kirmayer, 2023; Flechsenhar et al. 2022). This holistic view expands change possibilities, enabling practitioners to help individuals, including police officials, construct more realistic perceptions and responses to events within their eco-systems. However, despite its utility, the ecosystems perspective presents challenges. It lacks prescriptive procedures for assessment and intervention, requiring practitioners to devise their own strategies (Sutton et al. 2020; Smith, Ostinelli, Macdonald and Cipriani, 2020). Additionally, interventions targeting eco-systems may lack clarity on outcomes and could potentially have negative consequences due to their broad scope. Critics argue that this expansive perspective may lead to overly comprehensive planning, jeopardising practice effectiveness.

## 3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of various theoretical frameworks and practical interventions aimed at addressing workplace stress, particularly within SAPS. Social support theory was discussed as a foundational framework for understanding the role of interpersonal relationships in protecting individuals from stressors. It also enhanced their coping abilities. To promote SAPS officers' well-being, barriers to access to support systems and help-seeking behaviours are addressed. As outlined in the Job Demand-Control-Support model, the Occupational Stress Theory sheds light on the intricate relationship between job demands, job control, and social support in influencing the level of stress experienced by officers. Specifically tailored interventions and support systems are considered necessary to mitigate the unique stressors encountered by SAPS officers. In addition, they are necessary to encourage resilience within the organisation as a whole. Factors such as personal characteristics,

organisational resources, and societal norms are highlighted and discussed as influencing resilience. Resilience theory emphasises the dynamic nature of individuals' responses to adversity. SAPS officers especially those in the special crimes division require holistic interventions that recognise cultural nuances and socioeconomic challenges, among other factors.

Furthermore, international trauma intervention models were explored to highlight the importance of evidence-based approaches to addressing trauma within SAPS. Strategies such as prolonged exposure therapy, trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapy, and psychosocial rehabilitation offer diverse avenues for supporting individuals affected by trauma, with a focus on therapist training, cultural competency, and collaboration with community resources. This chapter highlights the complexity of workplace stress within SAPS and the necessity for comprehensive, evidence-based interventions to support officers' well-being and resilience. Through the integration of theoretical insights and practical strategies, SAPS can create an environment that promotes employees' mental and emotional health. This will improve their abilities to serve and protect communities. The next chapter is a detailed report on the research design that guided this investigation. The chapter discusses key information and decisions relating to methodology, site and fieldwork.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# USING A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN TO INVESTIGATE SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN SAPS'S SPECIAL CRIMES DIVISION: METHODOLOGY, SITE AND FIELDWORK

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Police officers face several challenges in their line of duty, particularly in high-stress environments, yet relatively few studies have explored the intricate web of support systems available to them. Law enforcement professionals' capacity to effectively perform their duties depends on their possession of resources and mechanisms to cope with profound traumas and demands they face daily. This study explores critically the support systems provided to the dedicated members of the South African Police Service. It focuses in particular on those affiliated with the Crime Combating and Investigation Division.

This chapter discusses the rationale for qualitative research design. This approach is discussed in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as its relevance in this study. Geographical and demographic details of the study are also discussed, including location and population. Additionally, the various methods used in this study, along with explanations of their relevance to the research process, are described in detail. A review of the data analysis process is presented to conclude the chapter, as well as a reflection on the key arguments presented. This research seeks to shed light on SAPS support systems' inner workings, providing valuable insight into challenges and solutions.

## 4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research design is a method used in the social sciences to explore and understand people's experiences, behaviours, and beliefs (Mohajan, 2018). It focuses on subjective data interpretation and aims to generate in-depth insights into complex phenomena. Qualitative research enables researchers to gather rich and contextualised data, allowing for a

comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Thompson Burdine, Thorne and Sandhu, 2021). This design is also useful for describing, generating, and testing a theory related to certain societal phenomena (Mayer, 2015). In spite of criticism that qualitative research designs lack solid methodological generalisability (Yarkoni, 2022), proponents of the design have argued that qualitative research focuses not on concluding a large population but rather on describing a social phenomenon as experienced by participants and determining the relevance of theoretical propositions (Mayer, 2015). Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) argue that a qualitative approach is appropriate when considering social issues that are relatively unexplored and lack comprehensive theoretical explanations. Therefore, it is imperative to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, particularly from the perspective of those who experience it.

This study examines the efficiency and effectiveness of SAPS support systems as an issue that demands engagement from the subjective perspective of the officers who use them. Understanding what police officers think about the support systems they receive and their impact on crime combating and investigation is critical to gaining insights into the effectiveness of these systems. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to collect rich, contextual data that captures the complexities of support systems as well as their effectiveness. In this way, the topic is thoroughly explored and valuable knowledge is provided to enhance support systems in the South African Police Force.

Accordingly, as Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) state, qualitative research should be used when addressing a social issue that has not been extensively investigated and lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework. As a result, this study will require a method based on objective reality and singular truth. Instead, it will require a methodology that examines this phenomenon, comprehends its dynamics, and considers subjective evaluations of these support

systems. According to Mayer (2015), qualitative research designs offer a means to understand the subjective nature of reality. This qualitative study examined and understood the support systems available to SAPS officers in the Crime Combating and Investigation division of Durban. This research explored how working in the Crime Combating and Investigation division affects officers' well-being. It also explored the effectiveness of support systems available to officers. Nigar (2020) defines qualitative research as a multidimensional research method that adopts a naturalistic and investigative approach to social problems. As a result of this multidimensional nature, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the social phenomenon being studied. Lincoln (2005) argues that some principles of qualitative research can contribute to the development of a multidimensional understanding of reality.

Qualitative research is based on the truth is divergent and deeply rooted in the narrative of the participants. According to Lincoln (2005), the holistic nature of qualitative research involves the consideration of multiple narratives of participants. In exploring the support systems available to SAPS officers, this research in its preliminary phase does not assume that the decision to use or not use any support system is the same for all SAPS officers. Having been immersed in qualitative research, each participant was able to share their perceptions and thoughts on these support systems. This highlighted how they personally experienced them. Furthermore, Kamal (2019) explained that qualitative research's ontological foundation describes truth and reality as multiple and dependent on experience. Therefore, qualitative research can only tell the truth as described by its participants.

Lincoln (2005) discusses how qualitative research can investigate system relationships. This concept refers to the various aspects of the participants' lives and the interaction of these aspects with the phenomena observed. SAPS officers are enveloped in their multiple responsibilities not just as law enforcement officers but as productive members of society. To comprehensively

evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of support systems for police officers in South Africa, it is essential to adopt a holistic approach. Simply analysing the technical aspects of support systems, such as equipment and training, is insufficient. By delving into other aspects of officers' lives, such as their physical and mental well-being, work-life balance, morale, and community relationships, we gain a more complete understanding of the challenges they face and the support they require. Exploring other aspects of police officers' lives helps us identify how these factors may influence their effectiveness on the job. For instance, if officers are experiencing high levels of stress, inadequate rest, or grappling with personal issues, their ability to perform optimally may be compromised. By understanding these influences, support systems can be tailored to address specific needs, enhance officer well-being, and ultimately improve their effectiveness in ensuring public safety. By considering other dimensions of their lives, we may be able to identify potential gaps or areas with which these systems may be streamlined or made more efficient. For example, if officers face challenges accessing mental health services or struggle with work-life balance due to long working hours, adjustments can be made to make support services more accessible and responsive.

Thirdly, qualitative research focuses on understanding a particular social phenomenon without predictions. In contrast to quantitative research, where predictions and generalisations are made, qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret the social construction of meaning in a natural setting. It also seeks to apply these ideas across contexts by recognising emerging complexities and multiple realities (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023). It is imperative to emphasise that the present qualitative study does not represent the holistic viewpoints of all SAPS officers; rather, it is guided by a specific context and thereby represents a specific perspective.

Fourth, qualitative research requires a lot of time and resources to effectively capture participants' detailed narratives. Lincoln (2005) highlighted that qualitative research requires considerable time, particularly at the analysis stage. Similarly, Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) assert that preparing qualitative research findings is more time-consuming and difficult.

Lincoln (2005) discusses a fifth principle of qualitative research: it incorporates informed consent decisions and is highly responsive to ethical concerns. As a precaution, the identities of the participants in this study had to be protected not to expose them to risk. Several measures were taken, including obtaining informed consent and explaining the purpose and objective of the research to all participants prior to each interview. Participants were very pleased to see that no personal information would be disclosed during the study. This was one of the most important clauses in the informed consent document. Participation in this study was voluntary.

## 4.3 REFLECTION ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY FOR A QUALITATIVE STUDY

The implementation of qualitative research design in this study was guided by constructivism. This approach to knowledge inquiry argues that what is considered objective is constantly changing and, as such, is usually subjectively constructed (Bogna, Raineri and Dell, 2020). In constructivism, knowledge is actively constructed by people as a result of their social and cultural environments (Amineh and Asl, 2015). It emphasises the subjective nature of reality, recognising that multiple interpretations and meanings can coexist. Understanding participants' subjective perspectives within their social context is crucial when implementing this approach. It acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and influenced by cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Qualitative researchers adopting this epistemological philosophy aim to explore participants' lived experiences, acknowledging their unique viewpoints and the societal and cultural influences shaping them (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023). Furthermore, phenomenological studies prioritise the in-depth exploration and understanding of individuals'

perspectives, seeking to capture human complexity and nuances. This approach often involves open-ended interviews, observations, and document analysis to gather rich and detailed data. By embracing these epistemological characteristics, qualitative research aims to generate contextually situated, interpretive, and rich knowledge. Qualitative research therefore allows readers to understand the distinct nature of a problem and how it affects participants in building a narrative of the phenomenon.

Qualitative studies offer researchers the opportunity to delve deeply into the social issue being investigated. This enables a comprehensive exploration and understanding of complex social phenomena. Unlike quantitative studies that focus on numerical data, qualitative research provides rich and detailed information that captures the intricacies and nuances of human experiences (Thompson Burdine, Thorne and Sandhu, 2021). Mohajan (2018) suggests that this depth of exploration enables researchers to gain insights that are often missed by other methods, leading to a more thorough understanding of the research problem. Another benefit of qualitative studies is their inherent flexibility and adaptability (Thompson Burdine, Thorne and Sandhu, 2021). This research approach allows researchers to respond to emerging themes and unexpected findings, enabling them to adjust their research design and questions accordingly. Furthermore, qualitative research methods offer flexibility in data collection techniques, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations, allowing researchers to choose the most appropriate method for their research objectives (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017). This adaptability ensures that the research process remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving research context.

Qualitative studies excel at providing contextual understanding of social phenomena. By examining the specific context in which a phenomenon occurs, qualitative research helps to uncover the underlying factors that influence behaviours, attitudes, and experiences (Mohajan,

2018). This detailed contextual analysis allows researchers to identify the complex interplay between various factors, providing a more holistic understanding of the research topic. Such insights are particularly valuable when exploring topics related to culture, social relationships, and subjective experiences (Edward, 2020). Qualitative studies focus on participant perspectives. By actively engaging participants in the research process, qualitative studies aim to capture lived experiences and subjective interpretations. This participant-centred approach ensures that the research findings reflect the diverse range of perspectives and voices within the studied population (Stafford, 2017). By giving voice to marginalised or underrepresented individuals, qualitative research contributes to a more inclusive and equitable understanding of social phenomena. Also, qualitative research plays a crucial role in theory development. Through the inductive process of data analysis, qualitative studies generate novel theories or refine existing ones based on empirical evidence (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach, 2018). This iterative process of theory development helps to build a strong theoretical foundation and contributes to scholarship advancement. As a result, qualitative studies are grounded in real-world contexts, providing practical insights that can inform policy, practice, and future research (Doyle et al. 2020).

Lewis (2015) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015) identified some demerits of qualitative research design. Qualitative designs are generally time consuming, making them difficult to implement. Additionally, the data-collection phase involves a large number of handwritten notes (fieldnotes), which require a cumbersome process to sort and organise, and replicating the study is not a systematised process.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the need to explore SAPS officers' subjective experiences about the availability and effectiveness of support structures necessitated a research approach that was flexible, and participant-centred. It is therefore important to comment further on what

an exploratory qualitative design entails. Exploratory qualitative research is a method used to gain a deeper understanding of a research problem (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger, 2020). It involves an open-ended and flexible approach, allowing multiple perspectives and new insights (Mohajan, 2018). This method is particularly useful when studying complex social problems, as it allows for rich and in-depth exploration. The purpose is that through exploratory phenomenological research, the true meaning of a phenomenon can be uncovered by examining the experiences of individuals who have gone through the same encounter (Vilakati 2009). This study employed an exploratory design to investigate the support systems available to SAPS officers in the Crime Combating and Investigation Division of Durban. Among the objectives of the research is understanding the impact policework has on SAPS officers and the effectiveness of the support systems available.

## 4.4 DOING FIELDWORK IN DURBAN

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the principal method of data collection in this study. This section provides a detailed description of the method and approach used in this study. Fieldwork in Durban, specifically investigating the support systems available to South African police officers in the Crime Combating and Investigation Division of the Durban Central Office presents a unique and complex research opportunity. This study delves into a critical aspect of law enforcement, shedding light on the challenges and resources officers face in their daily fight against crime. Reflecting critically on this experience requires consideration of several significant factors.

Cultural sensitivity and a thorough understanding of research context cannot be overstated. Durban, with its diverse population and rich cultural heritage, is an intriguing backdrop for this study. Engaging in the local context and being culturally sensitive is crucial. It is essential to understand social dynamics, historical influences, and cultural beliefs to interpret data

accurately. It is also imperative to acknowledge the influence of apartheid and its lingering impact on the socio-economic landscape, which likely affects both crime rates and law enforcement responses. In addition, ethical considerations and participant vulnerability must be addressed appropriately and efficiently. Research involving law enforcement agencies necessitates a deep commitment to ethical considerations. Police officers may be vulnerable participants due to their work. Ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality is paramount, as is mindful of power dynamics. Disclosure of certain information may cause ethical dilemmas, particularly if it involves sensitive operational procedures or cases. Therefore, a researcher must remain aware during the research process.

Studying support systems within law enforcement involves methodological challenges. Police departments, by their nature, are hierarchical and cautious about divulging information. Gaining access, building trust, and ensuring transparency in data collection methods are significant challenges. A complex interplay of factors affects police officers' support systems, as revealed by the research. Identifying gaps and strengths in these systems is vital. Engaging in fieldwork of this nature also represents a significant opportunity for personal growth. The experience of navigating a complex research environment, negotiating with stakeholders, and analysing multifaceted data contributes to researcher skills and understanding. It offers insights into law enforcement officers' realities, fostering empathy and understanding of their challenges. Conducting fieldwork in Durban to explore the support systems available to South African Police Officers in the Crime Combating and Investigation Division is a valuable endeavour. It offers not only a chance to contribute to academic knowledge but also to make a meaningful impact on law enforcement practices. This could enhance the support structures for those who dedicate their lives to combating crime. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the complexities of the research process, including ethical considerations, methodological challenges, and the broader implications of the findings.

### 4.4.1 Selection of participants

This section discusses the study population, sample, and sampling technique. A detailed discussion and rationale for every decision leading to research participant recruitment are presented below. The population of this study consisted of SAPS officers from the Crime Combating and Investigation Division, Durban. The Crime Combating and Investigation Division of SAPS Durban plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the police service's mandate of ensuring public safety and combating crime is fulfilled. Participating units were Public Order Policing (POP), Tactical Response Team (TRT), K9 (Dog Unit) and Flying Squad.

A total of thirty (30) SAPS participants were interviewed. Ten (10) of them were from the POP, Ten (10) from the TRT, Five (5) from the Flying Squad and Five (5) from the K9 Squad. When conducting qualitative research, the sampling method is crucial to determining the depth and breadth of the findings. In selecting a sample strategy for this study, it was important to ensure that diverse perspectives within the Special Crimes Division would be represented, including POP, TRT, K9, and Flying Squad. The complexities, challenges, operational dynamics, and requirements of each unit necessitate a comprehensive sampling approach to gain a holistic understanding of how they work. Qualitative research employs purposive sampling to select participants with specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research question (Alabi, 2023).

To ensure that officers from each unit within the Special Crimes Division, representing a variety of roles and responsibilities, the study adopted purposive sampling. By purposively selecting participants based on their affiliation with these units, the research aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives on support systems. Qualitative inquiry emphasises purposive sampling as a means of capturing diverse perspectives and experiences pertinent to a given research question (Alabi, 2023; Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick, and Lavoie-Tremblay,

2020). Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin, (2020) argue that purposive sampling intentionally select participants who possess the characteristics or qualities of interest, researchers can ensure the relevance and richness of the data collected. By purposefully selecting participants who can provide varied insights into the phenomenon under study, researchers can enhance the credibility, transferability, and validity of their findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Furthermore, the inclusion of both senior and junior ranking officers from each unit adds depth and richness to the study's findings. Senior provided insights based on their extensive experience and leadership roles, offering a broader perspective on organisational support structures and policies. On the other hand, junior officers, being frontline personnel, provided first-hand accounts of their interactions with support systems during their daily operational duties.

Participants were recruited through a gatekeeper-mediated process. The researcher's initial entry to the research site was enabled by a gatekeeper. An application was made and access was granted after a thorough review of the study proposal. It enabled formal access to the institution as well as identification of appropriate operational units without granting management control over the selection of participants. Senior management introduced the researcher to the unit heads. Unit heads then connected the researcher with their team members, but participation decisions were made independently and voluntarily, without management intervention. Each potential participant was approached directly by the researcher, provided with comprehensive study details, and given the option to opt out at any time.

The interviews were scheduled at times convenient for participants' schedules to minimise disruption to their routine duties. While most interviews were conducted as scheduled, some were rescheduled due to work-related pressures or unexpected commitments, and flexibility was used to maintain participation while respecting the professional obligations of participants.

This approach navigated the practical constraints of a hierarchical setting while upholding ethical standards of voluntary participation, autonomy, and confidentiality, as well as recognising the potential impact of institutional power structures on the recruitment process.

### 4.4.2 Data collection

The interviews took place between the researcher and the participants (SAPS Officers), at various locations in Durban. For the TRT, K9 and Flying Squad it was at the Durban Central Office. The POP interviews took place at Marianhill (KTT) Headquarters. The procedure was to first engage with the heads of departments of the stated units which included the generals. During the interviews the schedule was very challenging as it happened several times during the interviews that police officers were called out to attend crime scenes. Given this challenge the researcher had to work around it.

The process of conducting in-depth interviews with officers in the special crimes division about support systems revealed a complex interplay of challenges, strategies, and insights. There were some participants who had difficulty understanding the interview questions. Comprehension emerged as a significant obstacle, with some individuals not fully grasping the intricacies of research questions despite efforts to clarify them. Taking on this challenge emphasises the importance of effective communication strategies and the need for researchers to adjust their approach to accommodate participants with different levels of understanding. To address these issues effectively, the researcher conducted some interviews in Isi-Zulu. Also, the interview schedule was translated into Isi-Zulu. Additionally, some participants were unwilling to openly discuss sensitive or risky topics in their workspaces. This highlights the pervasive influence of organisational culture on research processes. These challenges were navigated by implementing a variety of strategies aimed at fostering open communication and ensuring participant comfort. Apart from translating the interview schedule into Isi-Zulu for

easier communication, a detailed explanation of the research objectives, probing techniques, and active listening were used to clarify inquiries and encourage participants to express themselves fully. Furthermore, building rapport and trust with participants and emphasising their confidentiality alleviated concerns about speaking up within organisations. By employing these strategies, the researcher sought to overcome barriers to effective communication and facilitate a more productive exchange of insights.

As the fieldwork for this study progressed, it was imperative to know the moment when saturation of the data had been reached. Saturation refers to a situation in which an investigation's findings have been fully captured; thus, adding new participants would not result in completely different narratives (Saunders et al., 2018). Specifically, Creswell (2007) recommended that phenomenological studies comprise five to 25 individuals. This study interviewed 30 police officers.

Field notebooks are often very helpful when collecting and analysing data (Phillippi and Lauderdale 2018) because they detail information from the fieldwork that is relevant to answering the research questions. Throughout this study, my field notebook served as my closest companion. Throughout the visits to the study location, a research book was kept for a record of all relevant information. Several key topics and issues related to the support systems available to officers in this division were captured in these notes.

#### *4.4.2.1 Interview process*

This study adopted semi-structured interviews to investigate the availability and effectiveness of support systems provided to SAPS officers in the special crimes division, Durban. Creswell (2014: 190) observed that qualitative interviews are characterised by "unstructured and generally open-ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions from participants." It was preferred because it allows for flexibility in the order of questions posed and allows participants

to converse freely with the researcher. Additionally, it allows the researcher to ask supplementary questions to ensure that the research objectives are adequately addressed (Bryman, 2008). To guide the interview process and ensure each all participants were asked the same set of questions, an interview guide containing questions specifically written to address the research objectives was drafted. The interview schedule contained questions that explored the responsibilities of policing, engaged the lived experiences of participants as relating to policing, the impact of the policing job on the well-being of officers, and the availability and effectiveness of support systems. Researcher and participants were not limited by the interview guide, since the interviewer probed beyond the list of questions if participants needed to clarify or expand upon their experiences. The purpose of this further probing was not to ask a new question, but rather to explore a thought shared by a participant. The interview process began with questions regarding participants' biographical information, including 'Please tell me about yourself, who you are, your age, how long you have been a police officer, and why you decided to join SAPS.' Several of these questions were formulated in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees and to create a comfortable environment for them to converse. Before moving on to a more detailed discussion related to the study objective, it was important to get them to say something they might be eager to disclose, such as who they are. Participants' responses to these questions varied greatly. Follow-up questions were asked several times during the interviews based on the narratives of the participants. The probes were used as a form of aide-memoire, as prompts for addressing a range of subjects arising out of the interview process (Bryman 2008). A number of the themes listed under different questions were discussed concurrently by the participants. Over the course of the fieldwork, probes were added to the interview schedule to facilitate the understanding of some of the issues raised by the participants. Following the participants' consent, a digital voice recorder was used to record the interview sessions. Furthermore, notes were taken in order to highlight

the key points raised by the participants during the interview sessions. For the validity of the digital audio recordings, these notes were essential to the research to ensure that no part of the interviews was lost during transcription.

These interviews offer valuable insights into the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of law enforcement officers within the Special Crimes Division. They highlight the complex interplay between professional responsibilities and personal well-being. Participants recount their motivations for joining the division, as well as their strategies for balancing work demands with personal life. Through their narratives, a deeper understanding emerges. Participants discuss their diverse support systems, including institutional frameworks, peer networks, and coping strategies, and how they impact their professional efficacy and well-being. Analysing the differences between relying on support systems and overcoming challenges alone provides nuanced insights. Officers assess their performance, resilience, and mental health under varying circumstances. Furthermore, these interviews serve as a platform for discussing professional identity evolution and negotiation within the Special Crimes Division. Officers articulate how their engagement with support systems influences their agency, decision-making, and job satisfaction.

## 4.5 OVERALL DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Using thematic content analysis, recurrent patterns and themes were identified during an immersion in the data. Recorded interviews were transcribed, and transcriptions were reviewed to identify patterns and generate themes. Parent themes were created based on research questions and objectives, whereas sub-themes were developed based on the generated themes to describe participants' narratives. Bryman (2004:181) defined thematic content analysis as ‘an approach to the analysis of documents and texts [which may be printed or visual] that seeks to quantify

content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner'. Braun and Clarke (2006) identified an effective process for thematic content analysis. This involves familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, seeking themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. An understanding of the participants' thoughts related to the phenomenon being examined requires that the researcher becomes immersed in the data.

## 4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The concept of ethics is extremely important when conducting research, since it ensures that standardised procedures are followed to prevent the exploitation or endangerment of research subjects (Silverman 2009). It is very important to take ethical considerations into account when dealing with vulnerable populations. As stated by Diener and Crandall (1978), in social sciences research it is crucial to consider the following factors: whether there is harm to participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy, and whether there is deception involved. Prior to the commencement of this research, the University of KwaZulu-Natal Faculty of Humanities Higher Degrees Committee approved it (see Annexure). As part of this process, I developed an informed consent document that explains how I will ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of my research participants (see Annexure). There were several steps taken, as highlighted in the informed consent document, including voluntary participation, the option of quitting participation without explanation at any time participants felt discomfort, and the use of pseudonyms in writing the report to protect participants' identities.

A detailed explanation of the research purpose was provided to the participants. They were informed that, if they felt uncomfortable with the interview process, they could withdraw at any time. In addition, permission was sought to record the interviews. It was also emphasised

to the participants that the information they provided was confidential and would not be disclosed at any point in the research, as it would be available only to the researcher and supervisor. I engaged the participants in an informal feedback session at the conclusion of the interview processes. This was to determine how the interview process was conducted and to ensure that no emotional harm or regret was caused by the interview process.

The design of the study and selection of the research instruments were conducted according to stringent ethical considerations. Participants' privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy were ensured throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained and steps were taken to minimise any harm or discomfort they may have experienced. To address potential psychological triggers during interviews, arrangements were made with the department's wellness centre to provide support if needed. Although no significant incidents requiring referrals occurred during the fieldwork, the presence of such support mechanisms underscored a commitment to participant well-being. In addition, the setting of interviews within officers' workspaces may have prevented candid discussion of sensitive topics. This highlights the importance of providing a secure and confidential environment for such interviews.

This study's findings are specific to Durban and may not apply to other regions. Despite this limitation, it highlights the need for further research into how similar support systems function in different parts of the country. In addition, it highlights their potential applicability to other provinces. An observation from the study was that older officers demonstrated more insight into support systems. They could compare past and present experiences more effectively than younger officers. This raised significant questions regarding generational differences within the police force. This emphasises the necessity of considering diverse perspectives and experiences when designing support systems and interventions for law enforcement officers.

## 4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Traditional qualitative research has faced criticism for a perceived lack of rigor and credibility (Shufutinsky, 2020). Unlike quantitative research, which prioritises data accuracy and generalisability, qualitative research challenges the notion of generalising results, asserting that meaning is historically situated and unique to individual experiences (Alabi, 2023; Levitt et al., 2022). Qualitative studies emphasise the diversity of data collected and argue that findings should be contextualised across different settings. Trustworthiness is a critical criterion in qualitative research, evaluating the reliability of information and the process by which findings are obtained (Haq, Rasheed, Rashid, and Akhter, 2023). One of the ways to ensure trustworthiness is through member checking. The purpose of this quality control mechanism is to ensure that the reported experiences accurately reflect participants' own experiences (Knott, Rao, Summers and Teeger, 2022; Motulsky, 2021). Maintaining trustworthiness involves summarising participants' responses at the end of interviews to confirm accuracy and transparency in reporting (Yin, 2015). For this study, trustworthiness was ensured by providing a comprehensive description of the research procedure, allowing for transparency and peer review. Also, this methodology chapter describes in detail how the research process was completed, demonstrating the study's dedication to trustworthiness.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter begins by emphasising the importance of well-defined epistemological foundations in guiding the design and data collection process, thus serving as the driver of the study. This foundation is not just a theoretical construct but a practical necessity that assures the quality and reliability of research findings. This research delved into the intricate web of support systems available to SAPS officers in Durban. To address this, a qualitative research design was adopted. In selecting this methodology, it is necessary to align the research methodology with the precise aims and objectives of the study. In essence, this reflects the

scholarly perspective that research methods should be inextricably tied to the research questions they seek to answer. This is instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.

The discussion justifies Durban's study location. Both practical factors, such as proximity to the research team, and theoretical factors, such as the concentration of SAPS officers and the unique support systems in this urban setting, warrant this choice. The careful consideration of the study location demonstrates the rigor of the research design and ensures the relevance and applicability of the findings. The methodology chapter describes in detail the data collection method. This discussion, replete with nuances, underlines the importance of selecting the right tools and strategies for gathering data. It highlights the appropriateness of qualitative data collection methods for research questions. The chapter then explains the data collection and analysis processes. A great deal of attention is placed on gathering and interpreting the data meticulously, emphasising that the quality of the data analysis directly influences the quality of the results. The use of specific thematic content analysis is explained, further ensuring transparency in the research process.

Finally, the chapter takes an ethical turn, addressing the paramount ethical considerations pertinent to the study. It shows that ethical rigor was a fundamental concern throughout the research. By doing so, the researchers demonstrate their commitment to research responsibly and ethically. The discussion also includes how potential ethical dilemmas were identified and mitigated, further establishing the integrity and trustworthiness of the research. In summary, this chapter comprehensively explains all aspects of research methodology. It discusses the theoretical underpinnings, methodological choices, and ethical implications of each aspect. The next chapter explores the demands, challenges and complexities of police work, particularly in South Africa. The chapter examines how South Africa's contextual and historical peculiarities shape police work.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# BEHIND THE BADGE: UNRAVELLING THE DEMANDS AND COMPLEXITIES OF POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the intricate lives of police officers and the complex nature of policing as a career. It is situated within the Crime Combating and Investigation Division in Durban, South Africa. It critically explores the symbiotic relationship between police officers' professional and personal identities (Objective 1). This careful exploration of the unique and often delicate balance maintained by police officers as both law enforcement professionals and integral community members provokes a discerning reflection on their unique and often delicate role. Through this discussion, the profound intricacies of their roles are brought to the fore, while also exploring the multi-layered aspects of their experiences. There are many intrinsic motivations behind pursuing a career in law enforcement. Aspirations in childhood, a sense of duty toward community service and crime prevention, familial influences, perceptions of policing as a noble profession, and pragmatic considerations like employment opportunities are explored in this nuanced exploration of the motivations that drive this noble profession.

This is followed by an in-depth exploration of the intricate realities faced by officers in the specialised crime division. Operating in a high-risk, multifaceted environment necessitates a profound dedication to the profession, which is evidenced by rigorous training, specialization requirements, and multifaceted roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, this discussion emphasises the importance of team building and fostering a positive working environment. It also emphasises the complexity of handling diverse crime scenarios and the importance of maintaining flexibility. A significant administrative and strategic role is also entrusted to officers in this division, further compounding the complexity of their professional

responsibilities. The needs of specialised police units transcend the professional realm, and therefore it is crucial to enhance officers' physical and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, this chapter examines the frequency of responses to crime scenes, the typical types of cases handled, and the challenges presented. It also discusses the physical impact on the body, the necessity for body fitness, and the long-term effects of violent incidents. An analysis is given of the emotional and psychological dimensions of policing, demonstrating the delicate balance between professionalism and emotional responses. In addition, police work is a high-risk profession and emotional support is essential. Furthermore, the discussion considers the psychological and physical consequences borne by officers, the inadequacies in recognition, and the continuing stigma surrounding the request for assistance. This discussion explores officers' coping mechanisms in the face of such multifaceted challenges. It includes resilience, professionalism, experience, normalization, and adaptation.

Literature shows that police work is associated with inherent stressors (Wassermann, Meiring and Becker 2019; Gumani, 2019). Officers are exposed to potentially traumatic incidents, which affect their psychological and physical health (Manganyi, Moodley and Shirinde, 2023; Koortzen and Oosthuizen, 2012). As such, policing is considered a very demanding profession, characterised by long duty hours and frequent exposure to violence, which contributes significantly to burnout among officers, which ultimately impacts their job satisfaction (Baek, Choi, and Seepersad, 2021; Nkosi, 2019). Police officers face mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Mooloo, 2022; Sibisi, Shumba, Ngcece and Gopal, 2022). This chapter intends to highlight the symbiotic relationship between participants' professional and personal identities through reflective and critical engagement with their narratives. Through the analysis of the intricate complexities inherent in their roles, as well as

a consideration of their geographical and division-specific contexts, the chapter provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges associated with fulfilling their responsibilities.

## 5.2 UNDERSTANDING THE KEY MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING THE POLICE FORCE

The participants discussed a variety of reasons for joining the police force. These motivations encompass childhood aspirations, a profound sense of duty towards community welfare, and a commitment to crime prevention. The discussion is then expanded to include influences borne from familial and role model figures. This sheds light on the intricate dynamics shaping police officers' professional trajectories. A complexity of these combinations of influences is manifested at the intersection of participants' personal convictions, family expectations, and societal views. Further, a detailed analysis of the conceptualisation of policing as an honourable profession was presented and emphasised the importance of the societal constructs that accord police officers such esteem. An integral aspect of the discussion was a critical examination of the disjunction between the idealised perception of police work and the pragmatic challenges participants faced in practice. Through this layer of scrutiny, the discussion gained depth and complexity. This fostered a better understanding of the motivations behind the participants' commitment to law enforcement.

### 5.2.1 Childhood aspirations

Aspirations in childhood are more than fleeting fantasies; they are deeply ingrained in the psyche, often shaped by early exposures and experiences (Breslow, 2021; Goldman, 2020; Cecire, 2019). The vivid recollection of an event involving the flying squad from one of the participants, "Tall guy", illustrates not only the impact of media representations, but also the impact of real-life circumstances on shaping children's world-view in their formative years. Tallguy explained:

*From the time I was a small child/little kid, I have always wanted to become a police officer. Watching Tv shows and watching the guys on the streets because I lived in uhm... Benoni. Opposite our place was a church and one day suspects ran into the church to hide at night. And I was watching from the window, and I saw the Benoni flying squad and that time they had yellow cadets… do you know the cadets? They stormed the place. And when I saw the way, they handled themselves and the way they grabbed the suspects and stuff... I always said I want to be in the flying squad (IDI/TallGuy/2023).*

Another participant, Dell, describes the influence his father's career as a police officer had on his career choice. He noted that: *"Since I was a little boy I have always wanted to join. My dad was in the police and it seemed like a logical path to follow and it was an honourable job. Yes absolutely (he looked up to him) (IDI/Dell/2023)."* These narratives indicate a crucial intersection between external influences and personal experiences and it emphasises the importance of positive role models and visual representations in shaping not only aspirations but also a sense of purpose. The importance of childhood influences in career choices has been discussed extensively in the literature and this idea is philosophically significant to social learning theorists. Learning from role models, plays a pivotal role in shaping individual behaviours and aspirations (Garcia, Restubog, Ocampo, Wang, and Tang, 2019; Olsson and Martiny, 2018). The critical implication here is the need for law enforcement agencies to understand the power of positive portrayals and role models in influencing the next generation of police officers.

Tall guy's anecdote vividly illustrates the influence true-life events have on shaping children's worldviews during their formative years, both through media representation and real-life experiences. He recalls witnessing the Benoni flying squad in action, with their commanding presence and adept handling of suspects. This serves as a poignant example of the power of

such experiences to instil aspirations in young minds indelibly. Furthermore, the Dell experience illustrates the intricate interplay between external factors and personal experiences in shaping career paths. Dell's father's noble profession as a police officer served as a beacon for Dell. This led him on a path he considered honourable and familiar. The importance of positive role models and visual representations in cultivating aspirations and instilling a sense of purpose within an individual cannot be overstated. Dell and Tall Guy's experiences illustrate the enduring impact of early exposures on an individual's trajectory, particularly in law enforcement. To ensure that the next generation of dedicated and principled police officers is nurtured, it is imperative to create an environment conducive to positive representations and role models.

### 5.2.2 Interest in community service and crime prevention

In exploring community service and crime prevention as factors influencing individuals' decisions to join the police force, a profound intersection between personal values and societal imperatives is revealed. Participants such as Enhle and KH demonstrate a deep sense of responsibility, integrating their personal convictions with a commitment to serving and safeguarding their communities. Enhle says policing *"Is to serve and protect the community like since you know that in South Africa we got a lot of crimes, different types of crimes that we are experiencing each and every day. That is what makes me more like a police officer and assists the community (IDI/Enhle/2023)."* Further stressing this KH described motivation to join the police thus:

> *Well I joined as you said the police force, I joined the police force in 1986. I joined because I wanted to serve the community. I wanted to be a servant to the community, I wanted to serve the people of my country that is why I wanted to do it (not join the police because I never was employed, like what is happening in most cases in most government departments). I joined because I had a passion, I had a*

*calling that is why I joined. Within the family, I didn't/don't have anyone in the family who is a police member but I have a lot of subordinates in this unit who look up to me. I am like a role model, like an example for them to follow ja… so uhh that is basically what it is (IDI/KH/2023).*

A nuanced analysis of these narratives brings to the fore the nexus between personal values and societal challenges, particularly concerning community service and crime prevention. Deeply held beliefs are intertwined with the pressing needs of the communities participants seek to serve and protect. This intersection underscores the profound impact of individual convictions and ethical principles on shaping career aspirations in law enforcement. In seeking roles where they can actively contribute to public safety and well-being, participants are motivated by a deep sense of duty and moral obligation towards their communities. For many aspiring officers, joining the police force transcends mere professional ambition; it implies a deeply ingrained commitment to uphold justice and safeguard others' welfare (Ben Romdhane and Babineau, 2023; Schrader, 2019).

Further, it is imperative to examine the broader societal context within which these motivations arise. As community-oriented policing approaches become more prevalent, law enforcement circles are becoming more aware of the importance of proactive engagement and collaborative problem-solving in addressing complex social issues (Scott and Clarke, 2020; Normore, Ellis, Clamp and Paterson, 2019). In addition to fulfilling their mandate to maintain public order, SAPS can also foster trust and cooperation among community members. This is done by prioritising crime prevention and community empowerment initiatives.

The transformation of Magibela's role from addressing minor issues in the community to engaging actively in awareness campaigns demonstrates SAPS' useful civic engagement and advocacy. Magibela noted that:

*Uhm I am a person who used to like assisting the community, I remember at my early age I used to assist the community in KwaNyusa (Bothas Hill) where I was born there were gardens/fields and we had an organisation of whom the founder was another man who with him we assisted the community. If we see a cow going into the garden/fields to eat the crops we would make sure to remove the cow. It is when I started joining in the activities of the community and it went on that way. Then as time went by after school there were organisations within the community and I would work with those to help the community raise awareness about HIV/AIDs. Remember before it was something that was not well known and we get into those organisations to teach the community about HIV/AIDS and Love Life. That is how it happened, then when I went to study at the FET Coastal College I did electrical engineering N1, 2, 3,4 and so on. Then when the opportunity to work in the police force opened up in 2006 I wasn't taken but in 2007 I was hired and began work in 2008 that is how I joined the police force. I ended up leaving everything because the focus was that I am now a police officer (IDI/Magibela/2023).*

These discussions are consistent with the principle of community-oriented policing, a paradigm that emphasises the importance of collaboration and partnership between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve (Kappeler, Gaines, and Schaefer, 2020; Dias Felix and Hilgers, 2020). Through proactive engagement and relationship-building, community-oriented policing addresses crime root causes and enhances public trust in law enforcement. The narratives shared and discussed in this section emphasise that effective policing encompasses much more than enforcing laws; it involves a genuine commitment to promoting community well-being and fostering positive social change.

### 5.2.3 Influence of family and role models

The idea that Talkative Mlu initially studied something else but felt drawn to the force due to parental influence suggests a complex interplay between personal interests and familial expectations. He narrated that:

> *To be truthful it was something I observed at home because both my parents were in the force. So I think every child looks up to his parents so it started there and then I ended up liking it and putting it in my head and then to tell you the truth I was studying something else but the force I don't know whether it was the mere manifesting what I had in my head and watching from my parents you know, because it was also something I dreamt of looking at them wearing that uniform but it was something that they didn't want completely (their child to be the police). While I was studying uhh I impregnated my wife now and it was for me to stop my studies and look for a job. So I was looking and I wanted to actually be in the Navy Seal. That is what I wanted. So the police was something that fell into this because it was part of the forces, yes.. after the navy I wanted to be in the military but then they called me after the police so I ended up being here.*

Talkative Mlu's journey into law enforcement reveals a tapestry of influences, both familial and personal, that intertwine to form his professional path. His introspection reveals a nuanced balance between individual ambitions and parental expectations. Mlu's narrative illustrates the intricate interplay of influences-internal and external-that shape individual paths. From an early age, he was exposed to law enforcement workings due to the fact that both of his parents were law enforcement officers. The exposure he received not only familiarised him with the profession, but also inspired admiration and respect for his parents' profession. Research has shown that children often emulate their parents' career paths due to a combination of

admiration, familiarity, and perceived prestige associated with their parents' occupations (Soleimanof, Morris, and Jang, 2021; Garcia, Restubog, Ocampo, Wang, and Tang, 2019). Mlu's account demonstrates the complexity of balancing individual aspirations with parental expectations. Although his initial inclination was to join the Navy SEALs, Mlu eventually became attracted to SAPS, partly due to the influence of his parents' profession. There is often a tension between individual desires and familial expectations in career decision-making, particularly among those from backgrounds where parental approval is extremely important (Koçak, Ak, Erdem, Sinan, Younis, and Erdoğan, 2021; Akosah-Twumasi, Emeto, Lindsay, Tsey, and Malau-Aduli, 2018). Literature suggests that individuals must often navigate a delicate balance between following their own interests and conforming to familial norms and expectations (Koçak, Ergin, and Younis, 2022). Talkative Mlu's narrative provides valuable insight into the complex interplay between family influence, personal goals, and external circumstances in shaping career paths. His experience highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence individuals' career choices.

### 5.2.4 Patriotism and national pride: perceptions of policing as a noble career

Del and Col describe police as a noble and honourable profession. Del says *"Since I was a little boy I have always wanted to join. My dad was in the police and it seemed like a logical path to follow and it was an honourable job. Yes absolutely (he looked up to him) (IDI/Del/2023)."* Similar narrative is corroborated by Col, who noted that: *"Because I wanted to be a policeman, see my age I am 56 I grew up and I wanted to become a policeman it was a good career, it was an honourable job. That is why they made a difference (IDI/Col/2023)."* According to Del and Col, policing is a noble and honourable profession that contributes to a longstanding cultural narrative that portrays law enforcement as protectors of societal order. However, historical and contemporary issues surrounding police conduct, accountability, and allegations of misconduct challenge the romanticised view of policing as an unblemished noble

endeavour. The notion of noble policing needs to be tempered with a realistic acknowledgment of law enforcement agencies' challenges and controversies.

A strong sense of belonging to a community is deeply ingrained in many societies, reinforced by media portrayals, historical narratives, and familial traditions (Edensor, 2020; Wood, Kamper and Swanson, 2018). Law enforcement agencies have historically played a significant role in maintaining social order and upholding the rule of law (Blair, 2020; Bowling and Sheptycki, 2018). Policing is often associated with notions of duty, sacrifice, and service to the community (Prysmakova and Vandenabeele, 2020; Stancel, Russo, Koskelainen, Papazoglou and Tuttle, 2019). It is true that for individuals such as Del and Col, whose families have a tradition of police service, the profession may hold personal significance. This reinforces their belief that it is one of the noblest professions.

The empirical literature on policing perceptions illustrates a dichotomy between public trust and scepticism. Despite the fact that some individuals, such as Del and Col, consider policing to be an honourable career, others may hold a more critical attitude toward the profession. This is because of discrimination, abuse of power, or systemic bias within law enforcement institutions. Several studies have shown that racial and socioeconomic factors play a significant role in perceptions of police legitimacy and trust (April, Cole, and Goldstein, 2023; Henry and Franklin, 2019). In addition, contemporary concerns regarding police conduct have cast a shadow over the romanticised image of the police force. A number of high-profile cases of police brutality, racial profiling, and misconduct have led to public outrage and eroded trust in the law enforcement community (Peck and Elligson, 2021; Helene'Benjamin, 2020). This is not just in South Africa but across the globe. The Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, has drawn attention to systemic racism within policing and called for accountability and reform (Fagan et al., 2020). It is therefore essential to critically examine the concept of noble policing

in light of these challenges. While Del and Col's admiration for the profession is understandable, it is critical to recognise that policing is a complex and multifaceted profession. Managing public safety and individual rights, as well as navigating political and organisational constraints, are among the challenges police officers face.

Researchers argue that promoting accountability and transparency can enhance public trust in law enforcement (Malone and Dammert, 2021). This requires not only the resolution of specific instances of misconduct, but also the implementation of systemic reforms that promote fairness, equity, and procedural justice. Furthermore, efforts to diversify police forces and improve community engagement can help bridge the gap between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve (Higgins, Overstreet, Coffey and Fisher, 2020; Giwa, 2018). While Del and Col's perceptions of policing as a noble profession are valid, they are only one aspect of a more complex picture. It is imperative that critical discussions on patriotism and national pride acknowledge the challenges and controversies inherent to law enforcement. In addition, it is imperative to emphasise the importance of accountability, transparency, and community trust in creating a positive future for police officers.

### 5.2.5 Employment opportunity

The theme of employment opportunity introduces a pragmatic element to the discussion. Participants 16 admitted there was no particular motivation to join the profession at the beginning, but the enjoyment derived from the work indicates a dynamic and evolving relationship with the profession. 16 noted that, *"at first I would not say uhh I wanted to join but I just applied. I felt like let me just apply and see what is going to happen then eventually I was taken. Now that I am taking I am enjoying working in this environment. There is nothing specific that drove me to join."* As evidence of the malleability of motivation, positive experiences within the police force may help solidify commitment and engagement, even if the initial motivations are unclear or generic.

Further, SAPS needs to consider the role organisational culture and job satisfaction play in officer retention. Organisational culture refers to the values, norms, and practices that shape work environments (Driskill, 2018). Positive organisational cultures that value professionalism, support, and growth opportunities can lead to greater job satisfaction and higher commitment among officers (Sherwood et al., 2023). This suggests that investing in initiatives to promote professional development, mentorship programs, and employee wellness can yield dividends in retention and performance.

Furthermore, the importance of creating a sense of purpose and meaning in police work cannot be overstated. While pragmatic considerations may initially attract individuals to the profession, it is the fulfilment derived from serving the community, upholding the rule of law, and making a tangible difference in people's lives that sustains long-term commitment (Sherwood et al. 2023; Belwalkar, Vohra, and Pandey, 2018). SAPS must therefore strive to cultivate a sense of mission and civic pride among their officers, reinforcing the noble aspects of policing that transcend just employment.

## 5.3 NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX REALITIES OF WORKING IN A SPECIALIZED CRIME DIVISION

As discussed in the previous section, many factors play a role in the decision to join SAPS, and in particular the specialized crime divisions. Narratives presented in this section explore the complexity of police officers' roles as members of the special crime division. This subsequent discourse probes the nuanced dimensions characterising police officers' involvement in these specialised crime units. This includes the exigent operational environment, rigorous training prerequisites, and the multifaceted roles and responsibilities shouldered by officers operating within these specialised crime divisions.

### 5.3.1 High risk and challenging work environment

Cox, Massey, Koski, and Fitch (2018) note that police work includes a wide range of tasks, ranging from routine office duties to dangerous operations. As a result, Bayley (2016) argued that the complexity of the job and the need for rapid decision-making in emotionally charged situations make it both emotionally and physically demanding. Throughout their careers, police officers encounter a variety of physically and mentally challenging situations, such as violent confrontations and the possibility of losing their lives in the line (Mona, Chimbari and Hongoro, 2019; Padyab, Backteman-Erlanson and Brulin, 2016). Further, literature shows that the demand to rely on leather is mentally challenging for some police officers (Parry, 2018; Miller, 2015). As a result, scholars such as Gutshall, Hampton, Sebetan, Stein, and Broxtermann (2017) have demonstrated that increased levels of stress and emotional distress among police officers are likely to be exacerbated by organisational structures and environmental factors within the police department. During his reflection as a SAPS specialised crime division officer, Tall Guy noted that some of the most common challenges they face are traffic, time constraints, as well as the risk of harm to themselves and civilians when responding to a contact crime occurring in progress. He said,

> *Basically uhmm... we respond to all contact crimes in progress: like your housebreaking in progress, armed robbery, house robbery and uhmm… well it is very challenging because obviously you getting there at the response time you need to be there. Taking into consideration the traffic on the road, depending on the time of the day the kids crossing the road from school, pedestrians crossing... and you know in Durban a lot of people do not adhere to the rules of the road. And uhmm it is very challenging not to kill anybody or not to get killed on the way to help somebody else laughs you know (IDI/TallGuy/2023).*

The narrative above shows that Tall Guy humorously acknowledges traffic challenges and violence potential while responding to crimes in progress. This sentiment in Tall Guy's narrative is consistent with arguments in the literature that emphasise the adrenaline-inducing and hazardous nature of police work (Rief and Huff, 2023; Nhan, 2019; Firmin, DeWitt, Ellis, Smith and Tiffan, 2018). Similarly, "Colgate smile" describes the complex and demanding role of the flying squad in responding to high-priority complaints such as hijackings and robberies. He noted that,

> *As to what we are doing at the flying squad? Okay, what we are doing we used to attend like priority complain. Like most of the time we attend progress complaints. If there is a progress complaint they used to call us, we are the ones who used to attend the progress complaint like high-jacking, house robberies, business robberies. That is what we do all the time if those complaints used to call us to attend there first. We are the first attenders to respond on those complaints. They used to say they must allocate those complaints to the Flying squad. So, for those complaints, if we attend those complaints: if you are on the scene as soon as we are standing off we report to the control that we are standing over the radio. We are standing off get the situation report and the situation report to the control so that they can record it down so that they call the patrol van to attend (IDI/ColgateSmile/2023).*

Colgate Smile's narrative highlights the high-risk and demanding nature of policing by illustrating the flying squad's role as first responders to priority complaints involving serious crimes like high-jackings, house robberies, and business robberies. Consequently, these narratives demonstrate that police officers, especially those in specialised crime units, need emotional and mental support. According to another participant, KH, the role of a police officer

can be analogised to that of a teacher, paramedic, psychologist, or more. This is based on the nature of the crime scene.

> *It is very demanding. At times it becomes stressful and it is uhh… you have to be everything. You must be a teacher, you must be a paramedic, you must be a police officer, you must be a psychologist (it is all in one). At certain crime scenes, you must adopt many roles. Like at a murder scene or robbery scene, you have to be a psychologist, you need to be a medic, you need to be a… like a caregiver also. So that is how it is not one scene where you go and be a robot there is so many roles you have to play depending on the type of crime scene you get. Because of my years of experience ( I am 34 years in the flying squad) and I was out prior to me being in the flying squad I also worked on the East Rand in the early 90s it was chaos. So you get accustomed to that type of work (IDI/KH/2023).*

This highlights the adaptability demanded of officers, who must seamlessly transition between various roles to effectively address each situation's needs. Another participant, Col adds another layer of complexity for specialized crime divisions, including extensive administrative responsibility. He noted,

> *Well I am in the management of it so I am very much administrative, strategic administrative and I have got a few units that I am running that is what I am responsible for. So I make sure that the units are compliant and meet the standards, members are available and the equipment is ready and uhmm we can do what we need to do when we are required to. He must be a member who is reliable and can think for himself and doesn't wait for instructions which is very crucial, someone who has some intelligence uhhmm he must be a member who sees the police as a*

*calling because the risk involved is quite high and you pay the price very easily (IDI/Col/2023).*

He describes the administrative and strategic responsibilities of management within the unit, emphasising the importance of intelligence, reliability, and a strong sense of duty among members. Col's emphasis on the importance of "police as a calling" highlights both the inherent risks associated with police work and the dedication required to meet their responsibilities.

It is evident from the narratives provided by the participants that policing as a career is accompanied by challenges and complexities. These challenges demonstrate the high risk and demanding nature of police work. This encompasses a wide range of tasks and responsibilities, from responding to violent crimes in progress to performing administrative functions. The narratives further highlight police work as physically and mentally demanding in nature. Cox, Massey, Koski, and Fitch (2018) and Bayley (2016) emphasise the complexity of policing and the need for rapid decision-making in emotionally charged situations, which can lead to increased stress and emotional distress among police officers. Tall Guy and Colgate Smile humorously acknowledge the adrenaline-inducing and hazardous components of responding to criminal activity, such as traffic barriers and potential harm to themselves and others. The narratives also highlight the multifaceted role police officers are expected to perform. As KH describes, officers must juggle various roles, including teachers, paramedics, psychologists, and caregivers, depending on the nature of the crime scene. This illustrates the diverse skill set and adaptability required of police officers to effectively handle each situation they face.

### 5.3.2 Demanding training, preparation and specialization requirements

According to participants in this study, joining the SAPS special crime division entails extensive training and demands. Enhle in an expansive reflection on her journey as a member of SAPS special division discusses the comprehensive and rigorous training process. She

emphasises that it is crucial that you become proficient in all aspects. She noted that officers are trained to handle various situations, from customer care to high-speed chases and armed confrontations. They must be proficient at communication, paperwork, and technical skills, and are often exposed to traumatic events such as accidents or violent encounters. In her words,

> *Oh okay, before I go to the type of police being flying squad police let me go back. I joined the police but I did not know whether I would be in the flying squad because when you are filling up the forms they just … you put... I can work anywhere as South African police. Luckily, I was chosen to work in the flying squad. Before I even went to college I knew where I was going to work, and where I was going to be (where my permanent station is going to be). My permanent station was going to be in the Durban Central Flying Squad. Then before we went into college in 2003 we had to go for induction, my induction was going to be at Durban Central (the same place as the flying squad). Then a week before we went to our induction there was this course they called customer care (how to handle the customers, how to handle the community). The community handles it the same, and treats them the same (no one is better than the other). Each and every time when you see the person you treat them the same you understand? That was a big challenge for me, I wish all the police would go through that because outside … because people have different behaviour but as police you have to come and treat them equally. Then after that I went to the control room, before I went to the control room before I went to college because it was December time. The control room I think is another foundation I wish all the police for me, I wish all the police they can go to the control room, because the control room is your 10111 centre where all the crime comes through like the whole of Durban reports to 10111 (it is a centre where we report all the crime) (IDI/Enhle/2023).*

As Enhle reflected on her experience in training she provided detailed insights into the dynamics, challenges encountered, and the emotional ramifications of working within the special crime division. In the narrative, emphasis is placed on foundational training and early experiences, including induction and control room operations. Enhle also reflected on their role in apprehending suspects. He stressed that, regardless of the circumstances, it is crucial to adhere to procedural protocols and respect individuals' rights. In addition, this narrative extends to their tenure in the Collision Unit where fatal accidents are a daily reality. As she described the emotional toll of dealing with fatalities, especially those involving innocent victims as mentally straining. Enhle provided valuable insight into SAPS's special crime division realities through her reflections on these experiences. Further, she provided comprehensive insight into the nuanced complexities of safeguarding lives and properties.

Del extends Enhle's narrative by describing the often salient long-term psychological effects of working in units such as the collision unit and dealing with the aftermath of accidents and fatalities. Del says,

> *Well I personally don't feel any effect. I guess uhh it is just that all of us because we are on a daily basis engaged in a high-risk operation and that we tend to have uhh much stronger dealing uhh capabilities to deal with uhh events and uhh shooting incidents that we have been involved in (IDI/Del/2023).*

Enhle and Del's accounts provide insight into some of the challenges associated with pursuing a career in the special crime division of SAPS. Their reflections emphasise the extensive training processes, which range from induction programs to practical interactions in high-pressure environments such as collision units and the control room. As outlined in Enhle's narrative, police training encompasses not only technical skills, but also customer service and adherence to procedural guidelines. According to her, the charge office and the control room

are fundamentally important in shaping an officer's understanding of basic police duties and responsibilities. Del's narrative extends this discussion by providing a detailed account of the long-term psychological effects of constant exposure to high-risk situations, such as shootings and fatalities. While Del may not feel immediate effects, empirical literature suggests that prolonged exposure to traumatic events may lead to adverse psychological outcomes.

A number of studies have shown that officers may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression due to unresolved trauma (MacEachern et al., 2021; Faulkner, Fuss, and Couperthwaite, 2020). According to Dixon (2021) and Miller (2020), exposure to violent crime scenes and traumatic events can have a significant psychological impact on law enforcement personnel. Volanti (2018) also discusses the prevalence of PTSD among police officers and the need for effective interventions to address their mental health needs. In the absence of acknowledgment of the necessity for seeking assistance, officers may develop symptoms indicative of PTSD, such as heightened anxiety, persistent depression, and intrusive recollections of traumatic events (MacEachern, Dennis, Jackson and Jindal-Snape, 2021; Faulkner, Fuss, and Couperthwaite, 2020). Unresolved trauma can gradually weaken an officer's emotional resilience, compromising their professional performance and wellbeing (Faulkner, 2018). Unaddressed trauma poses considerable risks to officers' mental health.

### 5.4 TYPICAL CRIME CATEGORIES HANDLED AND RESPONSE FREQUENCY

Participants in this study report between 2 and 40 criminal incidents per month. This depends on the unit they serve and the location. This indicates that a comprehensive analysis of crime reportage and access frequency is necessary. A similar argument has been made in literature that crime statistics should be analysed within the context of community trust in law enforcement (Ngoveni, Maluleke and Mabasa, 2022; Dlamini and Singh, 2018). Participant narratives revealed crime reporting is influenced by a variety of factors, including demographic

composition, socioeconomic dynamics, and geographical location. Further, seasonal patterns have a significant impact on crime rates, with spikes commonly occurring during periods such as the holiday season and festivals.

There are several prominent categories of crime for which they respond, from property crimes to organized crime. Key crime categories include:

1. **Housebreakings:** Instances involving unauthorised entry into residential premises with the intent of theft or vandalism (Govender, 2018). These violations compromise the sanctity of personal space and instil fear and insecurity within affected communities.
2. **Armed robberies:** Acts of theft or extortion carried out with weapons, posing significant threats to public safety and welfare. Armed robberies frequently entail violence or the threat thereof, necessitating a swift and decisive law enforcement response (Rakubu, 2023; Malatjie, 2023).
3. **Carjackings:** Incidents where vehicles are forcefully seized from their lawful owners, often accompanied by threats or acts of violence (Maluleke and Dlamini, 2019; Kong, Weale, Blodgett, Bruce, Laing and Clarke, 2018). Carjackings result in financial losses and endanger victims' physical well-being.
4. **Illegal gun and drug operations:** Activities associated with unlawful manufacturing, trafficking, or distribution of firearms and controlled substances (Ettang, 2021; Shaw, 2021). These illicit enterprises not only perpetuate criminal activity, but also contribute to societal harm by (re)producing violence and substance abuse.
5. **Cash-in-Transit (CIT) heists:** Coordinated assaults targeting vehicles transporting cash or valuables, typically executed with precision and armed firepower (Thobane,

2019; Burgess, 2018). CIT heists present significant challenges to law enforcement due to their intricate nature and potential for escalating violence.

The dynamic nature of criminal activity and the evolving tactics employed by perpetrators require law enforcement agencies to constantly adapt their approaches to ensure community safety and security. As South Africa continues to suffer from alarming crime, law enforcement agencies must coordinate strategy, allocate resources judiciously, and remain proactive.

## 5.5 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS IN SPECIALISED POLICING UNITS

Specialised policing units operate in high-stakes environments that require rapid, precise, and often life-altering decision-making. The physical and psychological challenges faced by officers in these units are unique and multifaceted, stemming from the demands of their operational environments and the nature of their work. This section critically examines these challenges, emphasising their implications for both individual officers and organizational systems in which they function.

Participants highlighted the physical toll of their duties, with many describing the long hours, irregular schedules, and mentally demanding tasks that contribute to chronic fatigue, musculoskeletal injuries, and other long-term health issues. For example, tactical manoeuvres, carrying heavy equipment, and engaging in high-risk operations such as raids or hostage rescues place significant strain on their bodies. Over time, this physical wear and tear diminishes their operational readiness and reduces their overall quality of life. This leads to premature retirement or disability.

Equally pressing is the psychological toll these officers must endure. Participants recounted exposure to distressing scenes, such as violent crimes, child abuse cases, or the aftermath of natural disasters. This often leave lasting emotional scars. The constant hypervigilance required

to stay alert in potentially life-threatening situations can lead to anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health challenges. The cumulative effect of these stressors is often compounded by the culture of stoicism within policing. This discourages officers from seeking help or expressing vulnerability.

Another challenge raised by participants is the lack of recognition and institutional support for their specialised training and psychological needs. Despite the extensive skills required to perform their duties effectively, officers in specialised units often feel undervalued, both within their organisations and by the public they serve. This lack of recognition can exacerbate feelings of isolation and frustration, further impacting their mental health. Additionally, insufficient access to mental health resources, inadequate debriefing protocols after traumatic incidents, and a lack of systemic mechanisms for addressing burnout contribute to a cycle of neglect.

An analysis of these challenges highlights the interconnected nature of physical and psychological well-being. Chronic physical pain, for instance, intensifies psychological distress. Untreated mental health issues can manifest as physical symptoms, creating a vicious cycle that undermines personal and professional effectiveness. Moreover, cultural and structural barriers within policing organisations (such as the stigma surrounding mental health support and a focus on operational outcomes over personal well-being) further entrench these issues.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that prioritises officer well-being as a cornerstone of organisational effectiveness. Key strategies include implementing regular physical and mental health screenings, creating accessible and stigma-free support systems, and providing targeted interventions such as resilience training, stress management programs, and peer support networks. Additionally, fostering a culture of recognition and

appreciation for the unique contributions of specialised units can enhance morale and reduce alienation feelings. Policymakers and organisational leaders must also advocate for structural reforms, including increased funding for health and wellness initiatives and the integration of psychological support into standard operational protocols.

### 5.5.1 Wear and tear on the body

It is imperative to note that participants in specialised policing units face significant physical challenges due to the demanding nature of their jobs. They often encounter situations involving suspects, shootings, and assaults, leading to wear and tear on their bodies over time. As one participant, Tall Guy, aptly puts it,

> *In this unit yes definitely, physical challenges will obviously be you know over the years we have encountered a lot of suspects, a lot of shootings and a lot of assaults on us and stuff like that. So your body has taken a beating over the years. I joined there when I was 25 or 26 some around there and I'm 41 now. So over all those years, falling, kicking doors your joints and everything get a bit of beating you know. But you keep yourself fit like I train regularly like on my rest days and stuff so I am not saying that I am 100% uhhm but you do try jah.. Well emotionally at certain times where you see certain murders and stuff like that, you can obviously get a bit emotional about that. Especially sometimes when you go to rape scenes in the townships and stuff and if you going to cry about everything you not going to make it. That's not only in the flying squad its everywhere in the police uhmm when you see the brutal ways in which people are being cheated these days especially murder and rape victims and whatever you tend to think how can another human being do that… inflict that pain and harm on somebody else. It takes a kind of special person to do that, you certainly not right in your head. You see thing is*

*with me, my career I also went deep cover, where I had to fire my discharge from the police uhmm I was moved over from the cell system to the secret service account system. I used to get paid cash uhh and I went undercover in Gauteng and Mpumalanga for 3 years where I was dealing with drug dealers and stuff like that there. So emotionally and psychologically uhmm I wasn't always just doing what fly squad members do (this is another aspect of what I was doing as well you see so…) (IDI/TallGuy/2023).*

This illustrates the cumulative effect of repeated exposure to high-stress and physically demanding situations. Moreover, physical fitness is not just desirable but essential for effective performance in specialised units. Participants like Del emphasise the necessity of being physically fit, particularly for rural assignments that may involve long treks with full gear. Tso echoes this sentiment, emphasising the importance of physical fitness in accessing remote locations where vehicles cannot reach. Tso says,

*...for example physically you have to be fit because you find that there are places you have to work at where the car cannot get in so definitely there you have to be physically fit because you will be walking quite a distance towards that target remember you have safety kit, ceramic bullets, vest equipment, bridging riffles, helmets, boots and you are walking and you have to go there and use equipment to enter and you know the person who is inside is waiting and has heard there is a burglary that is happening and is ready with their gun(IDI/Tso/2023).*

For these officers, maintaining physical standards is not just a personal requirement but a professional necessity for efficiency. The narratives provided above provide valuable insight into the physical challenges faced by members of specialised police units. Based on Tall Guy's reflection, repeated exposure to high-stress situations, including encounters with suspects,

shootings, and assaults, can have a cumulative effect. The experience of serving in such a position can take a toll on the body, especially the joints and muscles, over the course of a lifetime. Due to the physical demands of their work, police officers are more likely to sustain musculoskeletal injuries (Lentz et al. 2019; Larsen, Andersson, Tranberg and Ramstrand, 2018). Further, Tall Guy's narrative also touches upon the psychological effects of witnessing violent crimes, such as murders and rapes, which can further aggravate psychological distress. Several studies have shown that trauma can negatively affect law enforcement personnel's mental health, resulting in symptoms of PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Daniel and Treece, 2022; Regehr et al., 2021; Velazquez and Hernandez, 2019). Tso's narrative adds another dimension to the discussion by emphasising the importance of physical fitness for officers assigned to remote areas. According to him, officers must be physically fit to trek long distances with all of their equipment in areas where vehicles cannot reach. Several empirical studies indicate that physical fitness plays a significant role in improving job performance and reducing injury risks among police officers (Tomes, Schram and Orr, 2020; Garbarino et al. 2019; Mona, Chimbari, and Hongoro, 2019).

### 5.5.2 Exposure to traumatising events

The emotional toll of specialised policing extends beyond physical challenges, with participants frequently confronted by distressing scenes such as murders, violence, and critical incidents. Tall Guy acknowledges the emotional impact of witnessing such events, stating, *"Well* emotionally *at certain times where you see certain murders and stuff like that, you can obviously get a bit* emotional *about that (IDI/TallGuy/2023)."* According to KH, attending a murder scene can have an emotional impact, especially when children and the elderly are involved. He noted that,

> *Emotional challenge is when you attend certain scenes like a murder scene uhh it gets to you especially when children are killed, or the elderly are killed. We are first*

*responders at the scene before anybody else so it gets to you depending on the type of scene that you have. Especially like murders, armed robberies, shootings and all the shooting injuries it gets to you also (IDI/KH/2023).*

Participants also discuss the emotional burden of traumatic incidents and injuries within the unit. Magibela reflects on the lasting impact of witnessing a fellow member's injury, describing how such scenes can haunt individuals long after the event.

*Whereby you go into a situation and a member gets injured, those very critical scenes where you find that it forever worries you in life. For example, you see how I am now? I used to look much better and if you saw me you would find me attractive in my times but all the scars you see I got them from TRT you understand? When I came I had no scars and got them here at work and did not get them on my own doing. I have 3 metals in my foot, I was officially on duty when we got into a car accident at Umlazi. In that accident, we lost two members and it was four of us it was me and the first member from an interview we were in the same vehicle on 21 January 2017 so you see when such things happen you have trauma but you do get support. The social workers came, medical wise our employer provided for us and gave us support because we were off work for 1 year and they supported us in every way that you could think of until we were fully recovered to be able to go back to work. What I am trying to say is that there are strains especially if a member is injured, you see that day becomes tough and challenges do not easily pass. I can see other things but some can be sorted out quickly and others are long term (IDI/Magibela/2023).*

Specialised policing has a significant psychological impact that extends beyond physical challenges. Witnessing distressing scenes such as murders, violence, and critical incidents can

profoundly affect officers' well-being. KH and Tall Guy acknowledge the emotional weight associated with witnessing such scenes, particularly when they involve vulnerable members of society such as children and the elderly. These narratives emphasise the lasting effects of traumatic events on officers, both during and after the incident. Magibela's reflections on the emotional burden of experiencing the injury of a fellow member provide insight into the depth of trauma that can result from serving as a member of a specialised unit. The account he provides of the car crash in Umlazi that led to the death of two colleagues and left him with physical injuries and emotional trauma illustrates the sacrifices and challenges officers in these special units must endure. Magibela's mention of support received from social workers, medical services, and their employer illustrates how comprehensive support systems can mitigate the impacts of such life experiences. However, some emotional wounds may persist, requiring ongoing care and attention.

### 5.5.3 Lack of recognition and support

In addition to the physical and emotional strains, participants express concerns about the lack of recognition and support for their specialised training and psychological well-being. TalkativeMlu raises the issue of inadequate compensation and recognition for tactical units' rigorous training and expertise. He noted,

> *Yeah.. the only effect I have is that you see all these units? they should have had a step in, I am saying step in…. oh what you call the…. clicks fingers trying to remember.. uhhh I don't know what you call this thing but maybe they procure some extra funds for these people because they are frontline you know. This when it comes to POP and all these tactical units uhh..you need to have.. ja we should I think.. have a scarce skill allowance for the training that we uhh underwent and the work that we do. It would only be fair if you say people are more trained than other people. That should be a speciality you see. Those are the traumas that we have here.*

*Sometimes it feels unfair because you can see someone is pushing uhh more than the others. Why shouldn't they also get you know.. something/compensation?.. Obviously it won't be done here at work because nothing can be done here and then it is my family that has to try and console me… yes yes yes the only thing that job can console me is to give me this thing: money because that is what I am here for. Yes, I am here to serve the community but also I am here to also serve my family. So now if you say I must serve my community more than my family you are most probably not thinking right because I should serve myself first properly then I will be able to serve the community (IDI/TalkativeMlu/2023).*

Similarly, participant 16 voices fears of police judgment for seeking psychological help. This highlights the stigma associated with mental health support among law enforcement personnel.

*You know the problem with us as members most of us we are scared of what so and so is going to say. Maybe other members will think less of me, like I am a coward or whatever but when you are alone this thing affects you a lot. You think about the operations that you were at that we made it and escaped and succeeded in this situation. In the morning when you go back to work it is like you are normal, you are not thinking about uhh all that happened yesterday. You act like you are normal whereas you are not then you think I really need a psychologist and then they think ah this man is weak and will cost us in the next operation you see. So we try and act and hold in that we are also people and we react to situations in different ways. We all act like we are one person whereas we are all different. We got different personalities and ways of dealing with situations are not the same*

*but we act as if we are all strong whereas when we know that this one is strong in this (strengths and weaknesses) ja.. (IDI/16/2023).*

Furthermore, the challenges extend to personal and family life. Participants like 16 and Mbele discussed the strain of long working hours and extended deployments on relationships. Participants emphasise the importance of maintaining a balance between professional commitments and family responsibilities through regular communication with superiors.

Police officers in specialised units face a variety of physical and emotional challenges that can adversely affect their well-being and ability to perform their duties. From the wear and tear on their bodies caused by their demanding work to the emotional toll caused by exposure to traumatic events, these challenges illustrate the need for comprehensive support systems in law enforcement organisations. It is imperative to recognise and address these challenges not only to ensure the health and resilience of individual officers. In addition, it is imperative to ensure the effectiveness and professionalism of specialised policing units.

### 5.5.4 Navigating challenges in specialised police units

Working in a specialised crime division presents unique challenges that demand effective coping mechanisms to navigate the physical, mental, and emotional toll of the job. Participants in such units employ various strategies to cope with these challenges. These strategies range from personal resilience to professional detachment, from spiritual practices to reliance on support systems within the police force. According to Enhle, she is metaphorically compared to an aloe, which symbolises resilience and endurance. In her opinion, speaking about the challenges officers face on the job can sometimes be difficult, but it can also be very beneficial. As she points out, *"It is* hard, *but you have to deal with it. You have to deal with them, and most of the time when you talk about it it* goes *away...so you must talk about every situation you encounter (IDI/Enhle/2023)."* This demonstrates a fundamental coping strategy:

resilience. As she explains, it is important to speak openly about challenges, suggesting that discussing difficult experiences may alleviate their impact. Several scholars have argued that verbalising emotions can facilitate emotional processing and reduce distress. Sgt Mhlabuyalingana advocates for detachment, emphasising the need to avoid taking incidents personally. This approach reflects a key element of resilience, which is emotional regulation. **"***Yes there is EHW. I remember there was a time when I broke up with someone I loved and* I noticed that I wasn't able to *get past it. I tried to reason with her* and really what *we were arguing about was petty. But eventually I* was able to get *over it (IDI/SgtMhlabuyalingana/2023).***"** Officers like Mhlabuyalingana mitigate psychological distress by letting go of negative experiences.

KH utilizes meditation and religious practices to deal with stress, demonstrating spirituality's role in resilience-building. Studies suggest that religious coping strategies can enhance psychological well-being and buffer against stress. KH's reliance on meditation and prayer aligns with research indicating that mindfulness practices can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Colgate smile attributes resilience ability to experience and professionalism, highlighting the importance of training and expertise in managing challenging situations. This underscores the role of professional competence in bolstering resilience (Southwick et al., 2014). Research suggests that experienced professionals may develop more adaptive coping strategies and emotional regulation skills over time (Kleim and Westphal, 2011). Magibela and Tso discuss normalisation and adaptation. They emphasise the need to acclimate to the physical and emotional challenges inherent in the job. According to Tso,

> *When I am not at work you have to take one or two steps to relax and ease but also counsel yourself that you knew this when you entered this job, what did I expect when I joined here? Because even when a job is dumped on you at night*

*while talking have to drop everything and get equipment (these are our working conditions).*

According to Bonn-Miller et al. (2012), individuals working in high-stress occupations may undergo psychological adjustment processes as they cope with chronic trauma exposure. Violanti and Aron (1993) discussed the importance of supporting psychological resilience within the police force through counselling services and debriefing sessions. This approach is consistent with the recommendations for organisational interventions to promote psychological resilience in law enforcement (Violanti and Aron, 1993). As Del points out, support systems are integral to police operations, with some units taking proactive measures to ensure officer well-being. Regular debriefing sessions and the availability of counselling services represent organizational efforts to mitigate the effects of exposure to traumatic events (Regehr et al., 2018). Research suggests that supportive work environments and access to mental health resources are crucial for fostering resilience and reducing psychological distress among police officers (Violanti and Aron, 1995).

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter explores the multifaceted motivations that drive individuals to pursue careers in law enforcement. It uncovers an interplay of influences ranging from personal aspirations to societal expectations. Individuals often develop a sense of duty and purpose towards serving their communities due to childhood experiences, familial ties, and societal perceptions. The chapter examined the demanding operational environment, rigorous training requirements, and diverse responsibilities confronted by officers in SAPS special crime divisions. From routine duties to high-stakes operations, officers are tasked with navigating emotionally charged situations and making split-second decisions that can have far-reaching consequences. In this chapter, the physical and mental challenges officers face are highlighted, emphasising the

importance of meeting their mental health needs to ensure their well-being and sustained performance.

Further, the chapter provides insight into the diverse crime categories dealt with by the special crimes division. It highlights the significant threats to public safety posed by crimes such as housebreaking, armed robberies, carjackings, illegal drug and gun operations, and cash-in-transit heists. Additionally, the chapter highlighted the difficulties officers in the special crimes division face. These difficulties include physical strain, emotional distress, and a lack of recognition or support for their specialised training and psychological well-being. From the motivations that lead individuals to join the police to the challenges they encounter on the front lines of crime prevention and response, this chapter provides a detailed look at the complexities inherent in law enforcement careers. By understanding and mitigating these challenges, SAPS can better support the well-being and effectiveness of their officers, ultimately contributing to safer communities and a more resilient and professional workforce. The next chapter sheds more light on this study's findings. The chapter brings to the fore and explore the support systems available within SAPS special divisions.

# CHAPTER SIX

# AN EXPLORATION OF PARTICIPANTS NARRATIVES ON THE AVAILABLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN SAPS SPECIAL DIVISION

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the access to, complexities and intricacies of SAPS support systems with a focus on the Durban special crimes division (Objectives 2 and 3). This exploration is significant in the drive towards building and developing a holistic law enforcement support system. The chapter explores the effectiveness of support systems within selected units from the perspective of participants. This chapter examines the historical narratives, evolving perspectives, and current acceptance of support-seeking behaviour among SAPS officers. The literature emphasises the importance of understanding the historical context of law enforcement's support-seeking behaviour. Gough and Novikova (2020) highlight how the traditional culture of policing often promotes stoicism and self-reliance, leaving people with a stigma attached to seeking assistance for mental health issues. It is also important to emphasise the prevalence of organisational norms that prevent officers from acknowledging their vulnerabilities or seeking external support, perpetuating a cycle of silence and reluctance to address mental health issues (Yerk, 2024; Little et al., 2022).

The narratives of the participants in this study provide valuable insight into the continuing impact of historical stigma on SAPS. Participants describe experiences where seeking support was not discouraged but stigmatised. This stigma permeates the organisational culture and overshadowing the career path of individuals who had the courage to confront their vulnerabilities. These narratives serve as reminders of the entrenched barriers that prevent officers from obtaining the support they require to thrive. In addition, this chapter examines the changing perceptions of support systems within law enforcement. This trend reflects broader societal changes as well as changing attitudes regarding mental health. Several studies

have indicated that there is growing recognition of the need for mental health support for police officers, accompanied by efforts to minimise stigma associated with help-seeking behaviours and promote a culture of openness and support among agencies (Yerk, 2024; Cuadro, 2019). The discussion also considers the driving forces behind these shifts. These include advocacy efforts, policy reforms, and the recognition that unchecked mental health issues may harm law enforcement officers. This chapter explores the complex dynamics surrounding support-seeking behaviours found within SAPS special crimes division in Durban, in light of historical stigma, changing perceptions, and factors driving change.

## 6.2 HISTORICAL STIGMA AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ABOUT POLICE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Seeking support within the police force was historically stigmatised, which affected career advancement and perceptions within the organisation (Otu and Otu, 2022; Ricciardelli, Carleton, Mooney and Cramm, 2020). Officers refrained from seeking help, believing it would hinder their professional growth. This stigma was deeply ingrained, as Tall Guy reflects on his initial reluctance to utilise available support structures during his career's early years. He admits to adopting a "macho" attitude, believing he could handle challenges independently. However, with time, he acknowledges the importance of seeking support, especially as he matures and encounters psychological challenges. He narrated his experience thus:

> *Well, coughs the thing is uhmm 18 years coughs excuse me. I would say the first 10 years of my career I did not even want to know about the support structure because I thought I was more than capable of handling everything on my own. but later on I realized you know what I should have actually made use of what was available to me then I might not be in this situation. Situations that I am like at the moment psychologically, I am not saying that I am battling or anything like that but uhmm things might have been a little bit better if I chose to at least talk to EAS at*

*that time. And uhmm and not being so macho. I don't know how it would have changed but I know there might have been a change. I know the policemen when they come into the police in their 20s or whatever they are not going to worry about going and seeing…they just want to get back on the road and carry on doing their normal work. They are not going to sit for an hour and talk to somebody about what is worrying them (laughs) (Tall guy).*

A further inquiry into whether Tall Guy would have sought support during this period in his career revealed that:

*Yes, uhmm now I know the importance of it because I am much older and more mature and I know that they are there for a reason you know they are not just there to sit down and do nothing. They are there for a reason, there to help you. And uhmm the older you get the more that you realize you need them around. Uhmm not as often as you should because you still got that stigma attached to you if you don't go there often then they're going to say that something is wrong with you. And then they say you are not fit to work outside because of psychological problems and you are sitting inside. Any policeman does not want to sit in an office. He wants to be out on the road doing what he needs to do. Now if you go there too much they are going to say take a break now that adds to your psychological problems. If your commander is telling you: you know what you are not fit to be outside you must be inside. that gives… any policeman that is active that just pushes them over the edge. Sitting and doing nothing when your colleagues are doing everything outside and you want to be part of that then you go into depression (you can't believe). So to avoid that you limit yourself to going too often (Tallguy).*

Tall Guy's experience highlights a common phenomenon observed in law enforcement agencies worldwide—the reluctance of officers to seek help due to perceived stigma and fear of professional repercussions. Various studies corroborate this, identifying stigma as a significant barrier to mental health support-seeking among police officers (Newell, Ricciardelli, Czarnuch and Martin, 2022; Britt, Wilson, Sawhney and Black, 2020). In addition, scholars have noted the prevalence of a macho culture in policing, where officers feel pressured to appear resilient and self-reliant, thus deterring them from seeking assistance and emotional support (Khumalo, 2021; Will, Bates, Frost and Monteiro, 2021; Vogel and Heath, 2016). However, Del's perspective indicates a shift in attitudes over time. He notes that the police force has become more "user-friendly," encouraging officers to speak about their traumatic experiences without fear of stigma. As he pointed out when asked if there was still historical stigma attached to seeking support, affecting promotions and perceptions within the force?

> *No absolutely, when we first started in the police it was a case of uhh we must not talk about oh I am traumatized and whatever because then it would affect you uhh detrimentally when it comes to a promotion that is the way it was perceived but subsequently what has happened is the police became more uhh user-friendly so to speak in terms of its employees where they encourage the speaking of your traumatic incidents and stuff. In terms of your question, the support system has radically changed over the years. Now it is more available and there is no stigma attached to going and seeing a counsellor (Del).*

This change in organisational attitude reflects broader societal trends towards recognising the importance of mental health support in high-stress professions. Studies suggest that organisational culture plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards mental health support-seeking among police officers (Newell, Ricciardelli, Czarnuch and Martin, 2022). Positive

organisational cultures that prioritise employee well-being are associated with higher help-seeking rates (Will, Bates, Frost and Monteiro, 2021). Although some participants in this study reported a noticeable change in attitude, as well as policy interventions, stigma continues to exist among some officers. This is exhibited by Tall Guy's apprehension about seeking assistance frequently. He expresses concerns about being perceived as unfit for duty if he seeks support too often, fearing potential repercussions on his career. This highlights the ongoing challenge of combating stigma within law enforcement agencies, where concerns about perceived weakness and professional consequences remain prevalent (Hofer and Savell, 2021; Lucia and Halloran, 2020).

One of the participants, KH in his narrative provides historical context, emphasising the drastic changes in policing practices and attitudes towards officer well-being post-1994. He recounts instances of inadequate support and dismissive attitudes towards injuries sustained during training exercises, contrasting it with the present-day emphasis on member welfare.

> *The past was you know it was a force as I said. The present there is a lot of avenues, there is a lot of assistance, there is a lot of uhh places where you can go for help. In the past there was nothing. Uhh.. after 1994 the whole country changed, the whole system of policing changed. So, they cater more for the well-being of the members as compared to the past. In the past, they never catered for the well-being (I am talking from experience) because I was doing certain courses … in fact I was doing uhh course in Encounter and Insurgency course in 1988 in a farm called Malilaskop and uhh it was a drill that we were doing as casspir stops you jump off with you buddy and you take position and you cover your buddy as your buddy is jumping in double taps R1 Rifle with live rounds and what happened is 2 live shells hit me in my eye (my eye does not work now). I told the instructor listen I can't close my eye; I can't*

*wink my eye. He told me to just carry on, carry on there is no time to see a medic now. My eye was closed for 3 days and what I did was I took a wet handkerchief and made it a patch we were staying in the bush that was a course for survival encountering insurgency. Like if that happened in this day and age there would be referral systems to take it up and see. I also know of another friend we were doing the same course with me and in fact, he is already on pension as of yesterday. He was working with me in an uneven terrain learning how to do a formation regarding certain ways that you work for you to counteract people. He mis-balanced on a stone, to you face value it looks nice, he put his leg in the boot and slipped and fell into a barbed wire fence. From his left thigh from here to there he was cut open in the third week (this was a 6-week course). He told the instructor and the instructor said to him okay go to the uhhh doctor get stitched up. The next day he was back and he was carrying an LMG (Light Machine Gun) and had to continue with the training yes. In the current day and age, it is different ja… so here they are worried more about the welfare of the member than in the past. In the past, there is not such time for you to even book off sick but in at the end of the year you must finish the course (KH).*

This narrative is a candid account of changing attitudes toward SAPS officers' support before and after 1994. From personal experience and that of colleagues, the participant paints a vivid picture of the stark differences in officers' support systems. As KH recounts his own experience of suffering a serious eye injury during a training exercise in 1988, he reveals an unsettling lack of concern for officers at that time. Despite suffering an injury, he was instructed to continue in the absence of medical attention. This illustrates a systemic failure to prioritize officers' health and safety. According to KH, there has been a significant improvement in the availability of support avenues for officers compared to this. There has been a notable shift

post-1994 towards prioritising SAPS members' wellbeing with referral systems implemented and increased institutional support for medical attention. In part, this may be attributed to the transformational effects of legislative changes and organisational reforms on police culture and support services. However, KH's narrative also sheds light on problems that persist within the SAPS. Several incidents he describes, including his own injury and the injury sustained by a colleague during a training exercise, serve as poignant reminders of officers' physical risks and demands. In addition, they remind officers to prioritise training objectives over personal wellbeing. Although support systems have been improved, there appears to still be a tendency for certain aspects of the organisational culture to place operational demands ahead of officer welfare. This is evidenced by instances where injured officers were expected to continue training without proper medical attention.

Several factors have contributed to the evolution of support systems within law enforcement in South Africa (Modise, 2024). Legislative reforms, such as legislation that places a priority on officers' well-being, have played an essential role in influencing organisational practices and attitudes towards seeking support (Maweni, 2021; Bell, 2017). Political interventions and increased assistance have also bolstered support systems, signalling a broader recognition of the importance of officer welfare in maintaining effective policing (Mooloo, 2022; Khumalo, 2021). Furthermore, the evolving nature of crime requires a re-evaluation of support systems to meet the evolving challenges (reality) that officers face. Adapting support structures in response to shifting crime patterns is essential to mitigate the negative impact of traumatic incidents and high-stress environments on officers' mental health.

Participant narratives demonstrate a complex interplay between historical stigma and changing perspectives on the nature and dynamics of support systems within SAPS. While significant progress has been made in destigmatising support-seeking behaviours, challenges exist in

overcoming entrenched cultural norms and addressing concerns regarding professional repercussions. Despite legislative reforms, political interventions, and increased assistance, SAPS need to continue to foster a culture of openness and prioritise officers' well-being.

## 6.3 MASCULINITY SCRIPTS, PRESENTING CONCERNS AND HELP-SEEKING ATTITUDE OF OFFICERS IN THE SPECIAL CRIMES DIVISION

There is a long history of a 'cowboy' mentality prevalent among policemen, which reflects an ethos that values traditional notions of masculinity, often characterised by stoicism, emotional suppression, and physical toughness (Mooloo, 2022; Workman-Stark, 2021). This mentality is deeply ingrained in the profession, reinforced by societal expectations, organisational norms, and the nature of police work itself. This often involves exposure to trauma, violence, and high-stress situations. Sgt Mhlabuyalingana in his response to the question about masculinities in law enforcement noted:

> *At work a man doesn't cry, you comply and complain later. You see that attitude that says you comply and complain later (it is the same as saying Indoda ayikhali). Because it happens that you encounter a smelling toilet and you complain and they just say 'hey get in! you are a policeman!' you cannot complain, can you? I have to get in or another example hearing a complaint that there is a bomb and you just say 'I am so scared!' and they just say 'hey you are a policeman you have to go there!' you will complain later, you just have to go there. You comply and complain later (it is the process). How are you going to comply when you are dead?*

The participants' assertion that, "A man doesn't cry at work, you comply and complain later" reflects the prevalent attitude that emotional vulnerability is incompatible with the image of the strong, authoritative police officer. This expectation not only places undue pressure on

officers to suppress their emotions, but perpetuates a culture of silence regarding mental health issues within the profession as well. Research has shown that the stigma surrounding mental health in law enforcement can act as a significant barrier to help-seeking, leading many officers to suffer in silence rather than seek the support they need (Wheeler, Fisher, Jamiel, Lynn and Hill, 2021). Further, the pressure to conform to traditional gender norms can exacerbate police work's psychological toll, particularly for male officers. When TallGuy was asked whether bottling up emotions was harmful? Asked if this might lead to other remedies, he replied, *"Yeah... definitely, but my reputation is too important to me."* Tall guy's assertion that "my image is too important to me" highlights the perceived threat to masculinity inherent in displaying vulnerability or seeking assistance. This fear of emasculation is deeply rooted in societal expectations that men should be self-reliant and unyielding in the face of adversity (Mooloo, 2022; Workman-Stark, 2021). As a result, many male officers may internalise these expectations and resist seeking help, even when struggling with mental health issues. It is also evident from the narratives of the participants in this study that there are cracks in the façade of the 'Cowboy' mentality, as some of the officers interviewed challenged traditional notions of masculinity and embraced a more nuanced understanding of emotional expression and seeking assistance. Magibela noted that:

> *I believe in a man who doesn't cry but there are times whereby you have to cry and ask for help instead of dying inside. It is not right because it hurts you. If you are dying inside sometimes if you act like a hero you end up crying inside. I believe that a man should cry and should get help because he is human.*

The acknowledgment that *"there are times where you need to cry and seek help rather than dying inside"* is indicative of a growing awareness of the dangers of emotional suppression and the importance of seeking support when it is needed. This represents a significant departure from the traditional 'tough it out' mentality within law enforcement. Recognition of the

significance of support systems and access to psychological services among officers reflects a gradual shift towards increased acceptance of help-seeking behaviour within SAPS. Del's statement that *"we feel that we can actually approach EHW for help or psychological services"* suggests a growing willingness to utilise available resources to address mental health concerns. This is a positive development, as research has shown that access to mental health services can significantly improve officer well-being and job performance (Hofer and Savell, 2021; Demou, Hale, and Hunt, 2020).

### 6.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION AND SEEKING SUPPORT

Emotions are an essential mechanism for coping with stress, trauma, and other adverse experiences (Algorani and Gupta, 2023). As an example, Colgate smile's assertion that *"if there is something that is bothering you, you have to cough it out"* reflects an understanding of the therapeutic value of emotional release. Colgate Smile emphasises the need for a supportive work environment where everyone, regardless of gender, has access to emotional support:

> *I don't believe in that. If there is something and you need to cry you have to cry so that thing… what I believe that maybe if there is something you have to... if you cry maybe that thing you will not keep on thinking about it. It is like maybe if you talk about that thing that is bothering you what I believe in if I talk about the thing that is bothering me if I do not talk about it every time, I will keep on thinking about it but if maybe I talk to someone maybe it will come out then it gets right (that is what I believe in). I can't say that because I am a female because even a male if maybe there is ... sometimes you can see maybe that person is a male you can see that he wants to cough up something but he does not want to talk about it. But you can see that he has got a problem because he cannot speak…he can't talk about it but as soon as maybe he becomes open about it you can see that he becomes relieved (as if there is something that came out you, see?). So, I can't say because I*

*am female/male if there is something that is bothering you, you have to cough it out (that is what I believe in) (Colgate Smile).*

However, while emotional expression is widely accepted in psychological literature, it is critical to note that not everyone feels comfortable expressing their emotions openly. There may be cultural and organisational norms within law enforcement that discourage vulnerability and emotional disclosure, creating barriers for officers seeking support (Burns and Buchanan, 2020). Therefore, while it is crucial to encourage emotional expression among officers, it is equally imperative to address systemic factors that may prevent them from doing so. As Mgijimi challenges traditional gender norms by advocating for men to express their emotions, including crying, he highlights the need to deconstruct toxic masculinity within law enforcement. According to Mgijimi:

*What I can say on that one is just that uhh if God or if nature it depends on what you believe in uhh did not want the man to cry there would be no tears in a man. So, it doesn't apply to us humans we got tears, they are here, I got these tears they must do their job. Ja yes as a man I must uhh like if I feel like crying it is like … you see now you laughing because that is unusual. As a man at least on your side, you can but you must cry, take that thing out yes. I believe in that (Mgijimi).*

Several studies have demonstrated that the stigma associated with male vulnerability can have profound consequences for men's mental health, including an increase in depression, anxiety, and suicide rates (McKenzie, Oliffe, Black and Collings, 2022; Oliffe et al. 2022). Even though Mgijimi's perspective is progressive, it is essential to acknowledge that dismantling gender stereotypes requires a systemic change that affects both organisations and societies. It is imperative that SAPS actively promote a culture of inclusion and support that fosters emotional expression regardless of gender.

Another significant factor that emerged from this study is the crucial role spirituality plays in designing an effective support system. According to Nkosi, *"...support systems like this are needed like pastors. So for instance, if we lose a member we who are older would have to go to family members and it helps to go with the pastor and they know how to deal with these situations."* Nkosi's acknowledgment of the importance of support systems such as pastors demonstrates the multifaceted nature of mental health support in law enforcement. As part of this multifaceted support program, peer support, professional interventions such as counselling and debriefing sessions, and spiritual authorities are crucial. However, accessing support systems within law enforcement may be challenging due to stigma and concerns about confidentiality, as well as perceived career repercussions (Hofer and Savell, 2021; Velazquez and Hernandez, 2019). Consequently, while there is value in having support systems such as spiritual authorities on hand, it is imperative that officers have access to comprehensive and confidential mental health services tailored to their individual needs. Despite the challenges associated with law enforcement, Talkative Mlu stresses the importance of peer support among colleagues. He noted that:

> *...we should have a sort of uhh support system towards each other because the uhh support system is very important. You might think things haven't happened or things are just happening to you alone but me as your colleague and your peer I have just come from the same problem and you see it as a hill or table mountain but I have just climbed it and I saw it is the Drakensberg something that can be done in one day, not like what you call that other mountain? Yes! Kilimanjaro or Mount Everest ja..(Talkative Mlu).*

Peer support interventions are most effective when supplemented with professional guidance and resources (Mutschler et al. 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2020). As such, it should be integrated into a comprehensive framework that addresses both individual and organisational needs. It is

evident from the perspectives shared by members of the special crime division of SAPS Durban that emotional expression and seeking support play a crucial role in promoting mental well-being among law enforcement personnel. However, despite these progresses in fostering a supportive environment, critical challenges persist in addressing systemic barriers to emotional disclosure as well as accessing comprehensive mental health services. Efforts to promote emotional resilience and support must be guided by a nuanced understanding of the cultural, organisational, and individual factors that influence officers' willingness and ability to seek help.

## 6.5 USE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITHIN SAPS: EXPLORING PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE AND HIGHLIGHTING IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGNING A HOLISTIC HELP-SEEKING SYSTEM IN POLICING

The mental health and well-being of law enforcement officers are critical factors that directly impact their performance and effectiveness in combating crime. According to the narratives shared by participants in this study, it is important to recommend a mandatory monthly health check for officers. According to TallGuy, it is important that wellness approaches are proactive and not always reactive. He noted:

> *Well for us in the flying squad I think that what should be done is mandatory sessions with EAS /EHW uhmm on a monthly basis for everybody. That way you can't differentiate who has been going more or who has been going less you know… if every member has to see one of the EHW members twice a month or once a month or whatever just for them to uhmm analyse if you okay or whatever that will be better instead of only after every traumatic experience then you go and see them… or only when you got a problem then you go and see them because if everybody has to do it then there can be no stigma attached to them. If they notice a pattern with all the*

*members, they will know that there is a problem, not with the members but maybe with management (working conditions or whatever) then they can approach that.*

In the same vein, Gena shared a very interesting perspective of how female officers within the special police units are systemically stigmatised from seeking support systems. She noted that:

*I was boarder-line alcoholic, if I tell you the truth, you could say that I did look at alcohol as an escape. You can't talk about mental health to your parents, they will ask you if it's a demon that you got, let me hit it out of you. So, you can't speak about your mental health or even utter the word depression, you can't utter these words that associate anything with mental health. So, in order to avoid that, even if members over here find out, being a female in the dog unit is very difficult. I need you to understand that if you jump in the car you are only going to work with a male. If he is putting 50% you will put in 100%, if he is putting 100% you will put in 200%. Because you will be easily targeted as a person they don't want to work with. You're a female, you do not know how to protect your six, when I say their six I mean their backs, you don't know how to fight in a fight, you will just be labelled as someone like that and you do not want to be that. So, if they give you 50% for that day you will give them 100%, it's a difficult thing, so knowing that you went/going to EHW, it will stigmatise you, why did you go there? For what reason, now you have to answer these questions and they will always remind 'remember that time when you went to EHW because of this…. Even years to come that will always be brought up in this case, especially in the K9 unit so you can't go. So, you go to the bottle and drink like a man (Gena).*

In her narrative, Gena provides a comprehensive insight into working in the Special Crimes Division. She also provides insight into the mental and emotional strain that it entails. She

paints a vivid picture of how trauma experienced by victims leaves an indelible mark on her psyche. Her poignant metaphor of "bringing the demons home" encapsulates the profound impact of her profession on her personal life. Furthermore, Gena exposes the challenges faced in maintaining relationships, grappling with societal expectations of femininity juxtaposed with the assertiveness demanded by her role. Her admission of resorting to alcohol as coping mechanism lays bare the inadequacy of SAPS support structures. The stigma surrounding mental health issues, compounded by societal norms and familial expectations, leaves her feeling isolated and unable to seek help through conventional channels. Moreover, Gena's account also reveals gender dynamics within police special divisions. This is where women are subjected to heightened scrutiny and must continually prove themselves in a male-dominated environment. The pressure to conform to traditional gender roles exacerbates her internal conflict, further complicating her ability to navigate her emotional minefield. While support systems exist within SAPS, Gena's reluctance to engage with them points to its limitations in inclusive engagement. This is further compounded by the pervasive stigma culture that dissuades officers from seeking help. The discrepancy in treatment between male and female colleagues further exacerbates this divide, perpetuating a cycle of silence and self-reliance.

Furthermore, participants believed it was equally imperative to devote the same energy and resources to emotional wellbeing as to physical wellness since they all contribute to the functional effectiveness of the human body. The necessity to implement mandatory monthly mental health check-ins and destigmatise seeking help would be a proactive step towards addressing the pervasive issue of mental health challenges among officers. Several studies have shown that police officers are at a higher risk of experiencing stress, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population (Anders et al. 2022; Regehr, 2021). Failure to address these issues not only adversely impacts officers' quality of life, but also compromises their ability to perform their duties effectively. Regular mental health

assessments and peer support programs reduce the negative effects of job-related stress and trauma (Stelnicki, Jamshidi, Fletcher and Carleton, 2021: Anderson, Di Nota, Groll and Carleton, 2020). According to Anderson, Di Nota, Groll and Carleton (2020) peer support interventions reduce psychological distress and improve coping mechanisms among police officers. The creation of a culture that fosters open dialogue and emotional support can enhance the resilience and overall well-being of officers in the special crimes division.

The participants also agreed that a system of mentorship and sustained support for new recruits is a crucial component of the special crimes division. Magibela's narrative captures some of the intricate issues new officer's battle:

> *As much as we love to save our communities there are some challenges that we face here and you find that nobody knows about it you, see? You must remember here at TRT when you first arrive you are trained and they say this is your weapon that will protect you through all you go through, they give you your firearm so by accepting the firearm you end up thinking this is a tool which can help me in any kind of a problem that I face you see? Even now in your relationship with domestic violence situations, you use this firearm you understand? They don't bring people to teach us no. For instance, here they don't even get people to teach us about finances and how to manage them. When you first start a job, you need to be taught about this. No as a junior member don't involve yourself in such things like this and that uhh because now you're a full officer girls will like you because what is happening here if I go to Howard with my police car, especially you know those guys: all the UKZN girls will come out and be next to the car. They will get girlfriends and waste and be someone who uses the car up and down with them. I remember when I used to go to Edgewood, they used to ask me to get them Wacky Wednesday's you see? You will*

*find that the person is a HOD and I wonder if this person is a HOD and I am still merely a sergeant and this person used to be under me. You end up wasting time and money because you are in the spotlight once you start working in the community. Unlike a teacher, a teacher stays in school and they don't have time but we go everywhere (Riots with students DUT). Back in the years in DUT there always used to be riots they called us and they were so beautiful and we were young you know and tempted and we would take them. You end up working and now you have a child and now you cannot focus on your life. But if you had gotten support from leaving college by being told that as soon as you are a policeman the first thing is that you do not waste money (Magibela).*

KH further emphasized the importance of on-the-job training for officers and highlighted the peculiarity of context and crimes.

*There is a lot of scope within this organisation but depending also on the training that the members get uhhh… if you look at the crime situation in this country you can get it under control but we need to change the way people are being trained you need to be more uhh… vigilant in the training or people need to be taught when they go outside, they need to be vigilant. You need to watch behind your back and the way that the people approach certain crime scenes. the way they do everything boils down to training the way you are trained when you come out of the college of the academy you know how to react. Certain academy's they don't concentrate more on operational readiness. We need to be operationally ready if I am going to the streets. I am wearing this uniform here. I am a target already. It is irrespective of the colour and creed you are; they are not interested. In this day and age, criminals are not interested if you are an African, White, Coloured or Indian. As long as you are wearing the uniform you are already a threat to you and they want to eliminate you.*

*That is what happens and what I have seen, you can see it anywhere that is how it is. Just now there was a hijacking just outside the King Shaka Airport on the N3. Suspects hijacked a vehicle they got engaged.. the police engaged then they left the vehicle they ran to the bush they are busy tackling them now. So, they are not interested in who you are and what you are as long as you are in uniform and as long as you are coming in there, they are going to eliminate you. That is what is happening. How alert you are, you need to react, unfortunately, as I said it is a calling, not a job. It is a calling to serve and protect to me that what it was. It is a calling. I didn't just join the police because I never had a job. I joined because it is a calling for me to become a servant to the community and to serve and protect them (KH).*

Some of the officers who participated in this study believe new recruits should be guided and informed of the demands, challenges and sacrifices they will face when joining specialised units at the beginning of their careers in order to manage expectations and promote long-term commitment to these units. While passion and interest in law enforcement are essential prerequisites for success in specialized units, it is also essential that prospective officers have a realistic understanding of the demands of the position. Research indicates that mentorship programs can play a significant role in shaping officers' attitudes and career trajectories (Lavender and Todak, 2022). The unit can facilitate smoother transitions for new recruits and improve retention rates if experienced mentors provide guidance and support.

Further, participants' narratives indicated that if adequate and fundamental resources are not provided for policing in these divisions, support systems might not be as effective as intended. According to Mgijimi,

*....No, what I can tell is that there is a struggle with the resources, resources are not there. Another issue is the members are not taken care of by the department. What the department is doing is good but we feel like it is not enough. I feel like it is not enough, do you understand? But that is everywhere and that is how we feel in the country but that is not the issue uhh here in the TRT I can tell you about the TRT: uhh there are developments (Mgijimi).*

Further substantiated this, Enhle noted,

*Okay like right now in our……. You mean in our unit or as police as a whole? Okay for our unit I think the most thing that we need to improve it is the supply chain of vehicles (resources). Sometimes you feel like you have less cars, no vehicles. For the cars it is within the unit (for our unit I think we need cars and our garage they need to be sped up because if you do not have equipment, you can't be able to go outside and work). There are no resources ja.. then within the police sighs ey sometimes it is difficult to work especially when it comes to drugs or whatever (Enhle).*

According to KH, it is not just that they lack sufficient resources, but that even the limited resources available, such as vehicles, are in poor condition, making it difficult for them to respond to crimes.

*Ja it is clears throat the challenges we face sometimes it is regarding the procurement of vehicles. Vehicles at the moment have nothing to do with it comes from the national treasury where we are sitting with vehicles at the moment which we have but cannot put on the road because of the tyres. We do not have tyre to put on the vehicles. Another problem/challenge we are sitting with is mechanical defects on the vehicles. We have garages but everything as I said boils down to the treasury to repair those vehicles to get those vehicles back to us so that we can do our job. If*

*we do not get those vehicles on the road and we do not get those tyres we cannot go and serve the community. That is a challenge we are facing. We are willing to help the community but if you do not give us the tools, we can't do the work (Lack of resources) (KH).*

The participants believe adequate resources and effective resource management are critical for maintaining operational readiness and ensuring officers can perform their duties safely and efficiently. This significantly impacts their holistic mental and physical well-being. As a result, they advocate for increased budget allocations for vehicles, equipment, and essential resources within the Special Crime Division. This is to alleviate resource shortages. There has been consistent evidence demonstrating the relationship between police effectiveness in crime prevention and control and resource availability (Dau et al. 2023; Weisburd, 2021). In the absence of sufficient resources, officers may have difficulty responding to emergencies and conducting investigations effectively as highlighted by some of the participants. Furthermore, establishing feedback mechanisms for officers to communicate operational challenges is essential for promoting transparency and accountability within the unit. Timely resolutions to operational challenges are crucial for maintaining morale and preventing burnout among officers. Participants' narratives highlight the importance of operational readiness through regular and specialised training sessions tailored to equip officers with the skills and knowledge necessary to address emerging threats and challenges.

Job remuneration was another challenge that emerged from participants' narratives that had a significant impact on their mental wellbeing. Tso believes promotion as and when due and increasing remuneration in light of contemporary economic reality is crucial for morale and wellbeing.

*Yes, promotions shouldn't stretch because there is a very huge gap in the years before you get to another level. Do you understand that if the government will understand that maybe in a couple of years, interest rates have increased 9 times more I don't know while my salary only has increased by 3% or not increased at all you see that life becomes very difficult? Yeah, it is difficult and you know policemen are hurt by their superiors financially while at the same time, they still need to fight crime. I mean if they had to say now my level has increased to R30 000 every 5 years they would promote me you will see that even if there is danger a person will have pride in being a policeman and I am in charge you, see? no criminal will ever take charge because I am getting paid for this (Tso).*

Another participant, Marazor shares the same sentiment,

*If they can just improve the way police work and give them rights more than criminals, maybe things could be better than what they are now. You find that police do not deserve the salary that they are getting for all the hard work they do. Like I said, if we get more and better rights than criminals and for the courts to see that when they make arrests it is not only because they are provoking people. You find that people just keep getting bail after so much hard work on the police side and they just get bail easily. Even if I end up not moving up a rank because age is no longer on my side and because of age you won't be able to do much in TRT, I wish to finish my career working here at TRT (whatever promotions I get as long as I am here) (Marazo).*

Nkosi believes that poor remuneration dampens the spirit and commitment of officers to policing.

*They can give us a salary increase *laughs* uhh sometimes it looks like morale has gone down with us and I can't point out exactly what can be boosted. I think amongst each other if we can go and motivate ourselves that no we signed up to deal with crime that is now so problematic (People are now getting out of hand). Maybe this can help improve because what I am seeing is that we are just working for the sake of working and those who have passion for the job have decreased. If maybe there could be a motivation from our superiors, then down to the members maybe something can happen. The support of physical resources like cars, guns, training refreshers ja… I remember when we arrived at TRT from training we made a lot of impact. That is why you hear them talking about a problem and mention Barrets they were talking about us. So then as time went on, we are no longer as sharp as we used to be when we first came in from training. I think refresher training/courses are not as often as they used to be. These refreshers should be done often and there shouldn't be a gap because you end up taking things lightly (Nkosi).*

Most of the officers serving in special units who participated in this study believe that job risk is not proportional to financial compensation. To attract and retain skilled officers, fair compensation and career advancement opportunities are essential. Improved financial packages, equitable promotions and salary adjustments are critical for addressing issues of morale and retention within the Special Crime Division. The literature shows that financial incentives and career advancement opportunities positively influence job satisfaction and organisational commitment among police officers (Vickovic and Morrow, 2020). By investing in their officers' professional development and recognising their contributions through fair compensation and promotions, SAPS can foster a culture of loyalty and dedication. To ensure officers are equipped to handle complex challenges in the field, enhanced training programs with an emphasis on operational readiness and additional skills are essential. Additional

training modules, such as medical skills and sign language, should be incorporated into officer training programs. This is so that they can provide immediate assistance in emergency situations and improve communication with the diverse population they serve. A comprehensive orientation program for prospective officers is also essential for establishing clear expectations and fostering a sense of belonging within these units. By addressing the multifaceted challenges facing officers of the special crimes division and implementing evidence-based strategies, SAPS can enhance the well-being of their officers, the operational effectiveness of their operations, and their relationships with their communities. However, it is essential to recognise that addressing most of these challenges demands sustained commitment and collaboration at all levels of SAPS. It is imperative for SAPS to continue to prioritise the welfare of their officers and invest in their professional development in order to create an environment that fosters resilience, innovation, and excellence.

## 6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter explores the complex landscape of mental health support within the SAPS, with an emphasis on the special crimes division. While progress has been made in mental health, significant challenges remain due to historical stigmatisation and systemic barriers. The ingrained "cowboy" mentality among law enforcement officers, reinforced by traditional notions of masculinity, discourages officers from seeking emotional support. The combination of this mentality with societal and organisational norms erects formidable barriers to acknowledging and treating mental health concerns within law enforcement. Despite voices advocating for change and increased emotional openness, systemic changes must take place to completely remove these barriers that hinder or discourage help-seeking behaviour within SAPS. Legislative reforms and political interventions have begun to address these issues, yet there remains a gap between policy and practice. Lingering stigma and fears of career repercussions continue to dissuade officers from seeking help.

This chapter emphasises the importance of proactive wellness approaches tailored to officers' unique challenges. Various suggestions, including the requirement for mandatory monthly health check-ups, demonstrate a growing awareness of the need for preventative measures to mitigate the effects of job-related stress and trauma. In addition, it is important to highlight and discuss gender dynamics in access to and use of support systems within SAPS' special crimes division. This includes the stigma faced by female police officers, which points to systemic challenges that require targeted interventions. Adequate resource allocation and effective resource management emerge as critical factors in promoting officer well-being and operational effectiveness. Beyond addressing immediate mental health needs, fair compensation, career advancement opportunities, and enhanced training are essential components of a comprehensive support system. This chapter stresses the importance of a holistic approach to SAPS officer well-being. SAPS can support personnel's mental health and cultivate a welcoming and inclusive environment. This is done by prioritising mental health support and fostering a culture of openness and inclusion. The next chapter is the last of the thesis. It carefully summarises the key findings of the study and outlines recommendations.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study explores the support systems available to SAPS officers in the Durban special crimes division. The study highlights the intricate interplay between police work demands and the availability of support systems. It also highlights the effectiveness of these systems in preventing SAPS officers' stressors.

The literature review chapter begins by emphasising the stress inherent in police work and the high-stakes decision-making and physically and mentally demanding nature of the profession. As a result of the quasi-military structure of South African police organisations, the increased crime rates, and constant exposure to violent and traumatic events, police officers experience high levels of stress. It has been described in the literature that crime prevalence is deeply rooted in societal structures marked by social marginalisation and high unemployment rates. This leads to a policing environment that is among the most demanding and stressful in the world. This study explores stressors experienced by SAPS officers, categorising them as external, occupational, task-related, and life stressors. Further, this chapter contextualises police stress as a global phenomenon. It focuses in particular on the amplified stress experienced by officers in South Africa. This is due to a lack of resources and inadequate support systems. Several support systems available to SAPS officers were discussed. This includes clinical interventions, training initiatives, and specialised programs targeting stress management and interpersonal dynamics. During the discussion, the EHW Program within SAPS was emphasised as a valuable resource. It offers a broad range of services ranging from psychological support to quality-of-life improvements. However, despite the availability of support structures, the review highlights challenges that impede their effectiveness and accessibility. Among the reasons for underutilisation are trust deficits and stigma, as well as a

shortage of personnel within the EHW program. In the study, it is argued that innovative strategies are necessary to make support services more appealing and easier to access, hence emphasising prevention and early intervention measures. This chapter further argues that trauma intervention programs such as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and national suicide prevention initiatives are vital for mitigating the impact of traumatic experiences and reducing suicide rates among officers. Despite this, persistent obstacles remain, such as the transient efficacy of stress management interventions and the need to address systemic environmental factors. As identified in the chapter, barriers to accessing support services are prevalent within the police culture. These barriers include concerns regarding confidentiality, apprehensions related to career advancement, and the prevailing stigma surrounding help-seeking behaviours.

The literature review brought to the fore the complexities inherent in help-seeking behaviours among SAPS officers. The review revealed that crime prevalence in South Africa is deeply rooted in societal structures marked by social marginalisation and high unemployment rates. This in turn sets the stage for a policing environment that has been described in the literature as one of the most demanding and stressful globally. As a result, this study investigated the support systems in place for SAPS officers in the special crimes division in Durban. While there are support systems in place encompassing a range of interventions such as anger management training, mental health support, and substance abuse training, their effectiveness is hindered by several obstacles. Stigma surrounding mental health issues, fear of career repercussions, and a lack of awareness about stress symptoms among SAPS officers impede the optimal utilisation of these support systems. The deployment of social support and resilience theories provided empirical grounding to clarify the role of interpersonal relationships and coping mechanisms in bolstering SAPS officers' well-being. SAPS officers face unique stressors, requiring tailored interventions to address them. As such, this study

emphasises the importance of a holistic approach that incorporates organisational changes and individual interventions.

The chapter on research methodology provides an in-depth discussion of the methodology and qualitative methods used in this study. This chapter explained the research methodology and methods used in this study. It explained why qualitative research, particularly phenomenology, is relevant to this study. It discussed the sampling method, data collection method, outlined the participant profile, and discussed the interview process. The research participants were all police officers in the Special Crimes Division. The other chapters, excluding chapter seven, are derived from data collected. In-depth interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed based on established major themes derived from data coding. These themes guided chapters five and six. Chapter five, entitled "Behind the badge: Unravelling the demands and complexities of police work in South Africa," critically examined the intricate lives of police officers in South Africa. A special attention was paid to the fact that policing is an extremely complex career, particularly in the Crime Combating and Investigation Division of the South African Police Service. The chapter discusses the symbiotic relationship between police officers' professional and personal identities. It is through this careful examination of the unique and often delicate balance that police officers maintain as both law enforcement professionals and integral members of their communities. This discussion highlights the complex intricacies of their roles and explores the nuances of their experiences. Chapter six explores support systems' effectiveness. The discussion in this chapter provides insight into the historical foundations, evolving perspectives, and current acceptance of support-seeking behaviour within SAPS. Participants' narratives provide valuable insight into historical stigma's continuing impact on SAPS. Several participants described experiences where seeking support was not only discouraged, but stigmatised. This affected the organisational culture and overshadowing the career path of individuals with the courage to address their vulnerabilities. This study ended

with a conclusion that summarised the research and presented findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for future studies. This chapter discusses the overview of the study, a summary of the chapters, the research objectives achieved, and the recommendations for further research.

## 7.2 ACHIEVING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study reveals several key findings. The diverse factors that drive individuals to pursue a career in law enforcement were highlighted and critically discussed. These motivations range from childhood aspirations and community service to the influence of family members on the police force and practical employment opportunities. The exploration of these motivations reveals the complex interplay between personal convictions and external influences that shape career paths. Further, this study showed that SAPS officers working in the special crimes division operate in a challenging work environment characterised by high risks and demanding tasks. Officers handle a wide range of situations, from routine duties to dangerous operations involving violent crimes. The need for rapid decision-making in emotionally charged circumstances adds to the mental and physical strain experienced by officers. As such, officers in these units require rigorous training and preparation to equip them with the necessary skills to handle various situations. These include high-speed chases and armed confrontations. Furthermore, the study discusses the psychological effects of constant exposure to high-risk situations, such as shootings and fatalities. Although some officers develop coping mechanisms to handle stress, prolonged exposure to traumatic events can result in adverse psychological outcomes, such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, and depression. This study provides a nuanced understanding of police work in South Africa's multifaceted realities. It sheds light on police work motivations, challenges, and impacts on SAPS officers.

This study also reveals the historical stigma within SAPS regarding seeking support. Participants' narratives show officers are reluctant to seek help due to fears of career repercussions or being perceived as unfit for duty. However, there is a discernible shift in attitudes over time, indicating a growing acceptance of the importance of mental health support in law enforcement. Cultural norms are discussed, especially the traditional 'cowboy' mentality. This discourages officers from seeking mental health assistance. Embedded in stoicism and emotional suppression, this mentality harms the health of police officers. Nevertheless, the study reveals glimpses of change, with some officers recognising the value of emotional expression and help-seeking. Moreover, the study highlights systemic factors within law enforcement that hinder officers from openly seeking support. In their narratives, participants describe significant barriers to mental health and resource shortages within SAPS. This highlights the urgent need for proactive wellness initiatives and de-stigmatisation programs. This study suggests a significant relationship between resource availability, job satisfaction, and police effectiveness. As such, it is imperative to consider all these factors when planning and implementing support initiatives for police officers.

### 7.3 LIMITATIONS

The study focused on SAPS officers in the Durban Special Crimes Division. There are some limitations identified in this study and that should texture the interpretation of the findings.

1. Participants in this study were all SAPS officers assigned to the Special Crimes Division in Durban. Considering the limited sample size, the results may not represent the broad spectrum of SAPS officers or police officers in general. It is possible that the perspectives and experiences of officers from other divisions or regions may differ significantly. This may affect the generalisability of this study's results.

2. While this study examines the support systems within the Special Crimes Division in Durban, it does not represent the full range of support systems available to South African police officers since it focuses on those within the Durban Central Office. Further research could explore additional sources of support outside of the workplace, such as family, friends, or community organisations. This would provide a more comprehensive picture of police officers' support systems. Officers' access to assistance and effectiveness at addressing stressors.
3. The study provides insights into SAPS officers' attitudes and challenges at a specific point in time. However, the dynamic nature of law enforcement, policies and societal factors means that these attitudes and challenges may evolve over time.

## 7.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Future research could benefit from comparative analyses to examine the differences in support systems and coping mechanisms among police officers across various regions of South Africa. Such studies could delve into the distinct socio-economic, cultural, and organisational contexts that shape officers' experiences in urban, peri-urban, and rural settings. By identifying regional and cultural variations, researchers could uncover tailored, context-specific best practices that address the diverse needs of officers working in distinct and often challenging environments. These insights could contribute to more equitable and effective strategies for officer support across the nation.

Additionally, longitudinal research designs would be instrumental in tracking the long-term effects of police work on officers' well-being, resilience, and support system stability. These studies could illuminate trends and patterns in officers' physical, emotional, and psychological health over the course of their careers. Such research might also identify critical junctures, such as exposure to trauma or career transitions, where targeted interventions are most needed. A

longitudinal approach could further explore how systemic factors, including resource allocation, organisational culture, and societal attitudes towards policing, influence officers' well-being over time.

Intervention studies could provide crucial evidence on the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives designed to enhance officers' mental health and coping mechanisms. These studies should not only measure short-term outcomes, such as stress reduction or job satisfaction, but also evaluate long-term impacts, such as reduced burnout, improved interpersonal relationships, and enhanced job performance. Researchers could test innovative programs, including peer support groups, mindfulness training, and access to mental health services. They could also compare their efficacy across different police units and regions.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of these issues, it is vital to incorporate perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders. These stakeholders include police administrators, frontline officers, mental health professionals, and community members. This multidisciplinary and inclusive approach could help identify both systemic challenges and opportunities for intervention. For example, police administrators may highlight organisational barriers to implementing support programs. Community members may offer insights into how public perceptions of the police influence officers' stress and coping mechanisms. Mental health professionals could provide expertise on evidence-based practices that align with policing demands.

Collaborative research that integrates these diverse viewpoints would not only lead to more nuanced and contextually grounded recommendations but also foster stronger partnerships among stakeholders. Such partnerships could facilitate the co-creation of policy and programmatic interventions that are both practical and culturally sensitive, ultimately enhancing police officers' mental health and resilience. By addressing these issues through an

interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder lens, future studies could make significant contributions to the development of sustainable and effective support systems for officers in South Africa and beyond.

**REFERENCES**


Abrahams, N. and Gevers, A., 2017. A rapid appraisal of the status of mental health support in post-rape care services in the Western Cape. *South African journal of psychiatry*, *23*.

Acquadro Maran, D., Varetto, A., Zedda, M. and Ieraci, V., 2015. Occupational stress, anxiety and coping strategies in police officers. *Occupational medicine*, *65*(6), pp.466-473.

Akosah-Twumasi, P., Emeto, T.I., Lindsay, D., Tsey, K. and Malau-Aduli, B.S., 2018, July. A systematic review of factors that influence youths career choices—the role of culture. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 3, p. 58). Frontiers Media SA.

Alabi, O., 2023, September. Critical reflection on sexuality research in Nigeria: Epistemology, fieldwork and researcher'spositionality. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 24, No. 3).

Algorani, E.B. and Gupta, V., 2023. Coping mechanisms. In *StatPearls [Internet]*. StatPearls Publishing.

Amin, S., 2019. Exploring nexus among diversity, stressful living environment and health outcomes: A global perspective. *Ethiopian Journal of Health Development*, *33*(4).

Amineh, R.J. and Asl, H.D., 2015. Review of constructivism and social constructivism. *Journal of social sciences, literature and languages*, *1*(1), pp.9-16.

Anders, R., Willemin-Petignat, L., Salathé, R., Samson, A., and Putois, B., 2022. Profiling Police Forces against Stress: Risk and Protective Factors for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Burnout in Police Officers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, , *19*(15), p.9218. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19159218.

Andersen, J.P., Papazoglou, K., Koskelainen, M., Nyman, M., Gustafsberg, H. and Arnetz, B.B., 2015. Applying resilience promotion training among special forces police officers. *Sage Open*, *5*(2), p.2158244015590446.

Anderson, G.S., Di Nota, P.M., Groll, D. and Carleton, R.N., 2020. Peer support and crisis-focused psychological interventions designed to mitigate post-traumatic stress injuries among public safety and frontline healthcare personnel: a systematic review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *17*(20), p.7645.

Andreas, J., 2024. Homeland Security: The Domestic Deployment of the South African Armed Forces.

Angehrn, A., Jourdan-Ionescu, C. and Gamache, D., 2023. Resilience among police officers: the role of personality functioning and protective factors. *Policing: An International Journal*, *46*(3), pp.567-582.

Anshel, M.H. and Brinthaupt, T.M., 2014. An exploratory study on the effect of an approach-avoidance coping program on perceived stress and physical energy among police officers. *Psychology*, *2014*.

Ansley, B.M., Houchins, D.E., Varjas, K., Roach, A., Patterson, D. and Hendrick, R., 2021. The impact of an online stress intervention on burnout and teacher efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *98*, p.103251.

April, K., Cole, L.M. and Goldstein, N.E., 2023. Let's "talk" about the police: The role of race and police legitimacy attitudes in the legal socialization of youth. *Current Psychology*, *42*(18), pp.15422-15437.

Arici-Ozcan, N., Cekici, F. and Arslan, R., 2019. The relationship between resilience and distress tolerance in college students: The mediator role of cognitive flexibility and difficulties in emotion regulation. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, *5*(4), pp.525-533.

Arnetz, B.B., Arble, E., Backman, L., Lynch, A. and Lublin, A., 2013. Assessment of a prevention program for work-related stress among urban police officers. *International archives of occupational and environmental health*, *86*(1), pp.79-88.

Asquith, N.L. and Bartkowiak-Théron, I., 2021. *Policing practices and vulnerable people*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Auxéméry, Y., 2018. Post-traumatic psychiatric disorders: PTSD is not the only diagnosis. *La Presse Médicale*, *47*(5), pp.423-430.

Avinash, A.C. and George, S.V., 2018. Effectiveness of different relaxation techniques. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, *8*(5), pp.222-232.

Bacon, M., 2022. Desistance from criminalisation: police culture and new directions in drugs policing. *Policing and Society*, *32*(4), pp.522-539.

Baek, H., Choi, N.Y. and Seepersad, R., 2021. The role of job stress and burnout on health-related problems in the Trinidad and Tobago police service. *Policing: An International Journal*, *44*(2), pp.246-260.

Bailey, K., Trevillion, K. and Gilchrist, G., 2020. "We have to put the fire out first before we start rebuilding the house": practitioners' experiences of supporting women with histories of substance use, interpersonal abuse and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Addiction Research & Theory*, *28*(4), pp.289-297.

Bailey, P.R., 2023. *Work-Related Stress in Conservation Law Enforcement: A Systematic Review of the Literature with an Integrated Design* (Doctoral dissertation, American Military University).

Baloyi, R.P., 2020. *An evaluation of money laundering investigation at the Financial and Asset Forfeiture Investigation Unit of the South African Police Service in Pretoria* (Doctoral dissertation).

Banks, C., 2018. *Criminal justice ethics: Theory and practice*. Sage Publications.

Barney, E., Treby, E., Johannes, G. and Seymour, K., 2024. Understanding how online solution–focused hypnotherapy can support the wellbeing of police personnel and treat symptoms of anxiety and depression. *The Police Journal*, p.0032258X241228493.

Bayley, D.H., 2016. The complexities of 21st century policing. *Policing: a journal of policy and practice*, *10*(3), pp.163-170.

Bazana, S. and Dodd, N., 2013. Conscientiousness, work family conflict and stress amongst police officers in Alice, South Africa. *Journal of Psychology*, *4*(1), pp.1-8.

Beck, J.S., 2020. *Cognitive behaviour therapy: Basics and beyond*. Guilford Publications.

Bell, M.C., 2017. Police reform and the dismantling of legal estrangement. *The Yale Law Journal*, pp.2054-2150.

Belwalkar, S., Vohra, V. and Pandey, A., 2018. The relationship between workplace spirituality, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviours–an empirical study. *Social Responsibility Journal*, *14*(2), pp.410-430.

Ben Romdhane, S. and Babineau, A., 2023. Beyond Reputation Management: An Auto-Ethnographic Examination of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Canadian Policing. *Societies*, *13*(10), p.216.

Bender, A.E., Berg, K.A., Miller, E.K., Evans, K.E. and Holmes, M.R., 2021. "Making sure we are all okay": Healthcare workers' strategies for emotional connectedness during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, pp. 1-11.

Bezuidenhout, C. and Kempen, A., 2021. Historical and current dilemmas in South Africa that challenge proficient police service delivery. *Enhancing Police Service Delivery: Global Perspectives and Contemporary Policy Implications*, pp.259-279.

Biljohn, M., Marange, T.S., le Roux, A. and Schroeder, K., 2024. A Conceptual Framework for Mentorship Support to Early-Career Black Women Academics in South Africa. *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, *6*(1), pp.1-15.

Bishop, S.L., Kobrick, R., Battler, M. and Binsted, K., 2010. FMARS 2007: Stress and coping in an arctic Mars simulation. *Acta Astronautica*, *66*(9-10), pp.1353-1367.

Blair, R.A., 2020. *Peacekeeping, policing, and the rule of law after civil war*. Cambridge University Press.

Blais, E., Landry, M., Elazhary, N., Carrier, S. and Savard, A.M., 2020. Assessing the capability of a co-responding police-mental health program to connect emotionally disturbed people with community resources and decrease police use-of-force. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, pp.1-25.

Blumberg, D.M., Papazoglou, K. and Creighton, S., 2018. Bruised badges: The moral risks of police work and a call for officer wellness. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, *20*(2), pp.1-14.

Blumberg, D.M., Papazoglou, K., Creighton, S. and Kaye, C., 2022. Incorporating psychological skills in police academy training. In *Police psychology* (pp. 47-62). Academic Press.

Bocheliuk, V.Y., Zavatska, N.Y., Bokhonkova, Y.O., Toba, M.V. and Panov, N.S., 2020. Emotional burnout: Prevalence rate and symptoms in different socio-professional groups. *Journal of Intellectual Disability-Diagnosis and Treatment*, *8*(1), pp.33-40.

Bogna, F., Raineri, A. and Dell, G., 2020. Critical realism and constructivism: merging research paradigms for a deeper qualitative study. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *15*(4), pp.461-484.

Bonn-Miller, M.O., Harris, A.H. and Trafton, J.A., 2012. Prevalence of cannabis use disorder diagnoses among veterans in 2002, 2008, and 2009. *Psychological services*, *9*(4), p.404.

Bonner, H., and Brimhall, A., 2021. Gender Differences in Law Enforcement Officer Stress and Coping Strategies. *Police Quarterly*, 25, pp. 59 - 89. https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111211037584.

Borien, J.D., 2020. Evaluation of the differences in perception toward stress and trauma intervention strategies in the South African Police Service.

Boshoff, P. and Strydom, H., 2015. Exploring programmes to support police officials exposed to trauma. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, *27*(1), pp.89-117.

Boshoff, P., Strydom, H. and Botha, K., 2015. An assessment of the need of police officials for trauma intervention programmes-a qualitative approach. *Social Work*, *51*(2), pp.244-261.

Bostean, G., Andrade, F.C.D. and Viruell-Fuentes, E.A., 2019. Neighbourhood stressors and psychological distress among US Latinos: Measuring the protective effects of social support from family and friends. *Stress and Health*, *35*(2), pp.115-126.

Bowley, J. and Bashir, C., 2015. Working with people seeking asylum. In *Case Formulation in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*(pp. 322-351). Routledge.

Bowling, B. and Sheptycki, J., 2018. Global policing and transnational rule with law. In *Transnational Crime* (pp. 151-183). Routledge.

Braaf, E. and Roman, N., 2024. An aftercare intervention programme for employees returning from substance use rehabilitation in South Africa. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, *17*(5/6), pp.554-571.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), pp.77-101.

Breen, D., Lynch, I., Nel, J. and Matthews, I., 2016. Hate crime in transitional societies: The case of South Africa. *The globalization of hate: Internationalizing hate crime*, pp.126-141.

Breslow, J., 2021. *Ambivalent Childhoods: Speculative Futures and the Psychic Life of the Child*. U of Minnesota Press.

Brewin, C., Miller, J., Soffia, M., Peart, A., and Burchell, B., 2020. Posttraumatic stress disorder and complex posttraumatic stress disorder in UK police officers. *Psychological Medicine*, 52, pp. 1287 - 1295. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291720003025.

Bride, B.E. and Figley, C.R., 2012. Secondary traumatic stress. *Encyclopedia of trauma: An interdisciplinary guide*, pp.600-602.

Britt, T.W., Wilson, C.A., Sawhney, G. and Black, K.J., 2020. Perceived unit climate of support for mental health as a predictor of stigma, beliefs about treatment, and help-seeking behaviors among military personnel. *Psychological services*, *17*(2), p.141.

Brooks, H., 2020. 'This democracy is killing us': perceptions of rights and democracy in the South African Police Service. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 58, pp. 165 - 187. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X20000191.

Brown, C., Stoffel, V.C. and Munoz, J., 2019. *Occupational therapy in mental health: A vision for participation*. FA Davis.

Brown, L.A., Zandberg, L.J. and Foa, E.B., 2019. Mechanisms of change in prolonged exposure therapy for PTSD: Implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, *29*(1), p.6.

Bryman, A., 2004. Qualitative research on leadership: A critical but appreciative review. *The leadership quarterly*, *15*(6), pp.729-769.

Bryman, A., 2008. Why do researchers integrate/combine/mesh/blend/mix/merge/fuse quantitative and qualitative research. *Advances in mixed methods research*, *21*(8), pp.87-100.

Buckingham, S.A., Morrissey, K., Williams, A.J., Price, L. and Harrison, J., 2019. OP67 The physical activity wearables in the police force (PAW-force) trial: feasibility, acceptability and impact.

Burgess, A., 2018. *Heist!: South Africa's cash-in-transit epidemic uncovered*. Penguin Random House South Africa.

Burke, R.J., 2016. Burnout in police work: Sources, consequences, and remedies 1. In *Stress in Policing* (pp. 153-169). Routledge.

Burns, C. and Buchanan, M., 2020. Factors that influence the decision to seek help in a police population. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *17*(18), p.6891.

Busetto, L., Wick, W. and Gumbinger, C., 2020. How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and practice*, *2*, pp.1-10.

Caplan, G., 1974. Support systems and community mental health: Lectures on concept development. *Behavioral Publication*.

Casas, J.B. and Kegel, A., 2023. Law enforcement mental health: A systematic review of qualitative research. *Psychological Services*.

Cassel, J., 1976. The contribution of the social environment to host resistance: the Fourth Wade Hampton Frost Lecture. *American journal of epidemiology*, *104*(2), pp.107-123.

Cecire, M.S., 2019. *Re-enchanted: the rise of children's fantasy literature in the twentieth century*. U of Minnesota Press.

Chersich, M.F., Swift, C.P., Edelstein, I., Breetzke, G., Scorgie, F., Schutte, F. and Wright, C.Y., 2019. Violence in hot weather: Will climate change exacerbate rates of violence in South Africa?. *South African Medical Journal*, *109*(7), pp.447-449.

Chetty, M., 2011. *Cause of Relapse Post Treatment for Substance Dependency Within the South African Police Services*. University of Pretoria (South Africa).

Chikwem, C., 2017. The relationship of job stress to job performance in police officers.

Christopher, M.S., Goerling, R.J., Rogers, B.S., Hunsinger, M., Baron, G., Bergman, A.L. and Zava, D.T., 2016. A pilot study evaluating the effectiveness of a mindfulness-based intervention on cortisol awakening response and health outcomes among law enforcement officers. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *31*(1), pp.15-28.

Christopher, M.S., Hunsinger, M., Goerling, L.R.J., Bowen, S., Rogers, B.S., Gross, C.R., Dapolonia, E. and Pruessner, J.C., 2018. Mindfulness-based resilience training to reduce health risk, stress reactivity, and aggression among law enforcement officers: A feasibility and preliminary efficacy trial. *Psychiatry research*, *264*, pp.104-115.

Chu, J.A., 2011. *Rebuilding shattered lives: Treating complex PTSD and dissociative disorders*. John Wiley & Sons.

Clark-Miller, J. and Brady, H.C., 2013. Critical stress: Police officer religiosity and coping with critical stress incidents. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *28*(1), pp.26-34.

Cobb, S., 1976. Social support as a moderator of life stress. *Psychosomatic medicine*.

Cohen, G., 2023. "We're Not the Cure, We're Just the Band-Aid": The Interplay of Structure, Culture, and Practice in Police Service Provision to Persons with Mental Illnesses. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *53*(3-4), pp.99-114.

Cohen, J.A. and Mannarino, A.P., 2017. Evidence based intervention: Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for children and families. *Parenting and family processes in child maltreatment and intervention*, pp.91-105.

Cohen, S. and McKay, G., 2020. Social support, stress and the buffering hypothesis: A theoretical analysis. In *Handbook of psychology and health, Volume IV* (pp. 253-267). Routledge.

Cohen, S. and Wills, T. A., 1985. Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological bulletin*, *98*(2), p.310.

Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J., 2004. Policing culture, cultural policing: law and social order in postcolonial South Africa. *Law & Social Inquiry*, *29*(3), pp.513-545.

Constant, A., Bervoets, J., Hens, K. and Van de Cruys, S., 2020. Precise worlds for certain minds: An ecological perspective on the relational self in autism. *Topoi*, *39*, pp.611-622.

Cook, J.M., Dinnen, S., O'Donnell, C., Bernardy, N., Rosenheck, R. and Hoff, R., 2013. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans: National findings from VA residential treatment programs. *Psychiatry*, *76*(1), pp.18-31.

Cornelius, A., 2016. *The impact of time lost through absenteeism on service delivery in the South African Police Services (SAPS), the area Kuilsriver cluster, Cape Town, Western Cape* (Doctoral dissertation, Cape Peninsula University of Technology).

Cox, S.M., Massey, D., Koski, C.M. and Fitch, B.D., 2018. *Introduction to policing*. Sage Publications.

Cox, T., Kuk, G. and Leiter, M.P., 2017. Burnout, health, work stress, and organizational healthiness. In *Professional burnout*(pp. 177-193). Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2017. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Creswell, J.W., 2007. An introduction to mixed methods research. *Lincoln, Nebraska, USA: University of Nebraska*, p.23.

Creswell, J.W., 2014. *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE publications.

Cronqvist, A., Klang, B. and Bjorvell, H., 1997. The use and efficacy of coping strategies and coping styles in a Swedish sample. *Quality of Life Research*, *6*.

Csikszentmihalhi, M., 2020. *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life*. Hachette UK.

Cuadro, N.C.M., 2019. *The Thin Blue Line and Mental Health: Mental Health Stigma Among Law Enforcement and Its Impact on Suicidality Among Police Officers*. Alliant International University.

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K.G., Denovan, A. and Walsh, R.S., 2021. The potential benefits of non-skills training (mental toughness) for elite athletes: Coping with the negative psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, *3*, p.581431.

Daniel, A.M. and Treece, K.S., 2022. Law enforcement pathways to mental health: Secondary traumatic stress, social support, and social pressure. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, *37*(1), pp.132-140.

Dau, P.M., Vandeviver, C., Dewinter, M., Witlox, F. and Vander Beken, T., 2023. Policing directions: A systematic review on the effectiveness of police presence. *European journal on criminal policy and research*, *29*(2), pp.191-225.

De Angelis, M., Giusino, D., Nielsen, K., Aboagye, E., Christensen, M., Innstrand, S.T., Mazzetti, G., van den Heuvel, M., Sijbom, R.B., Pelzer, V. and Chiesa, R., 2020. H-work project: Multilevel interventions to promote mental health in smes and public workplaces. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(21), p.8035.

de Oliveira Santiago, M.L., Macena, R.H.M., Moreira Filho, R.E., Cavalcante, M.B. and Mota, R.M.S., 2023. Emotional overload in forensic work: A narrative review of the literature. *Seven Editora*.

de Santana, P.R.P.L., Pinheiro, A.S. and de Souza Campos, M., 2024. The importance of public policies to mitigate mental illness among public servants. *Seven Editora*, pp.704-718.

DeFrank, R.S. and Cooper, C.L., 1987. Worksite Stress Management Interventions:: Their Effectiveness and Conceptualisation. *Journal of managerial psychology*.

Del Pozo-Antúnez, J.J., Ariza-Montes, A., Fernández-Navarro, F. and Molina-Sánchez, H., 2018. Effect of a job demand-control-social support model on accounting professionals' health perception. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *15*(11), p.2437.

Demou, E., Hale, H. and Hunt, K., 2020. Understanding the mental health and wellbeing needs of police officers and staff in Scotland. *Police Practice and research*, *21*(6), pp.702-716.

Deschênes, A., St-Hilaire, G., Crête, E., Desjardins, C. and Emeriau Farges, C., 2019. The potentially traumatic event and the psychological health at work of the police; A perception of a unique impact. *American Journal of Applied Psychology*, *7*(1), pp.30-35.

Devilly, J. and Varker, T., 2013. The prevention of trauma reactions in police officers: decreasing reliance on drugs and alcohol.

Diamantis, M.E., 2023. Police Mental Health. *Iowa L. Rev.*, *109*, p.2063.

Dias Felix, A. and Hilgers, T., 2020. Community oriented policing theory and practice: global policy diffusion or local appropriation?. *Policing and Society*, pp.1-9.

Diener, E. and Crandall, R., 1978. *Ethics in social and behavioral research*. U Chicago Press.

Dipela, M.P., 2016. *Evaluating the effectiveness of an employee assistance programme within South African Police Services in the Waterberg district, Limpopo province* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Limpopo).

Directorate for Crime Investigation. 2011. *The proposed DPCI operating model*. Pretoria: National Commissioner.

Dixon, S.S., 2021. Law enforcement suicide: The depth of the problem and best practices for suicide prevention strategies. *Aggression and violent behavior*, *61*, p.101649.

Dlamini, S. and Singh, S., 2018. Lack of Communication, Resources, Trust As Well As Political Interference And Saps Organisational Culture As Hindrances To Effective Community Police Forums. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Science s Research*, *2*(12), pp.193-200.

Dlamini, S., 2024. Community police forumsfuture and legitimacy: Redefining good community policing. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *10*(1), p.2288019.

Domino, J.L., Whiteman, S.E., Davis, M.T., Witte, T.K. and Weathers, F.W., 2021. Sudden unexpected death as a traumatic stressor: The impact of the DSM–5 revision of Criterion A for posttraumatic stress disorder. *Traumatology*, *27*(2), p.168.

Donovan, N., 2022. Peer support facilitates post-traumatic growth in first responders: A literature review. *Trauma*, *24*(4), pp.277-285.

Dougherty, M., O'Leary, M. and Mumford, E.A., 2024. Binge drinking, job stressors, and resilience in a nationally representative sample of law enforcement officers. *The Police Journal*, p.0032258X241244612.

Doyle, L., McCabe, C., Keogh, B., Brady, A. and McCann, M., 2020. An overview of the qualitative descriptive design within nursing research. *Journal of research in nursing*, *25*(5), pp.443-455.

Drageset, J., 2021. Social support. *Health promotion in health care–Vital theories and research*, pp.137-144.

Drew, J.M. and Martin, S., 2023. Mental health and wellness initiatives supporting United States law enforcement personnel: The current state-of-play. *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*, *8*(Suppl_1), pp.S12-S22.

Driskill, G., 2018. *Organizational culture in action: A cultural analysis workbook*. Routledge.

Duxbury, L., and Halinski, M., 2018. It's not all about guns and gangs: role overload as a source of stress for male and female police officers. *Policing and Society*, 28, pp. 930 - 946. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2017.1342644.

Eagle, G., 2015. Crime, fear and continuous traumatic stress in South Africa: What place social cohesion?. *Psychology in Society*, (49), pp.83-98.

Eaton, A.D., Rowe, M., Nguyen, A., Lowe, L., Fletcher, K., Adenwala, A., Sudom-Young, S., Rackow, R., Poellet, L., McDonald, M. and McInroy, L.B., Processes of Co-Response Crisis Mental Health Models: A Scoping Review.

Eckelton-Moreira S. Y., 2011. *A comparison of police cadets' personality characteristics, coping behaviour, and psychological health before and after basic training* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-07292011-153020/

Edensor, T., 2020. *National identity, popular culture and everyday life*. Routledge.

Edwards, A., 2020. Qualitative designs and analysis. In *Doing early childhood research* (pp. 155-175). Routledge.

Edwards, G., 2023. I'm not faking being sick, I'm faking being well: The need for leadership in mental health for policing. *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*, *8*(Suppl_1), pp.S50-S56.

Edwards, T.M., Patterson, J.E. and Griffith, J.L., 2021. Suicide prevention: The role of families and carers. *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, *13*(3), p.e12453.

El-Khodary, B. and Samara, M., 2020. The relationship between multiple exposures to violence and war trauma, and mental health and behavioural problems among Palestinian children and adolescents. *European child & adolescent psychiatry*, *29*(5), pp.719-731.

Employee Health and Wellness (EHW): Portfolio Committee on Police. 2016. Available at: https://static.pmg.org.za/160217EHW.pdf [Accessed 15 August 2022.

Erliyani, N., Sriatmi, A. and Adi, M.S., 2024. The Implementation of Drug Abuse Rehabilitation to Prevent Relapse: A Systematic Literature Review. In *BIO Web of Conferences* (Vol. 133, p. 00043). EDP Sciences.

Ettang, D., 2021. South Africa: Xenophobia, Crime and Small Arms Proliferation. *The Palgrave Handbook of Small Arms and Conflicts in Africa*, pp.819-845.

Fagan, J. and Campbell, A.D., 2020. Race and reasonableness in police killings. *BUL Rev.*, *100*, p.951.

Faulkner, B., Fuss, S. and Couperthwaite, L.M., 2020. PTSD and other operational stress injuries among police officers: empirical findings and reflections from clinical practice. In *POWER* (pp. 129-168). Academic Press.

Fiese, B.H., Jones, B.L. and Saltzman, J.A., 2019. Systems unify family psychology.

Finn, P. and Tomz, J.E., 1997. *Developing a law enforcement stress program for officers and their families*. DIANE Publishing.

Firmin, M.W., DeWitt, K., Ellis, H.G., Smith, L.A. and Tiffan, N.M., 2018. A qualitative study of the motivations and affiliation dynamics involved with a firefighting career. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), p.60.

Flechsenhar, A., Kanske, P., Krach, S., Korn, C. and Bertsch, K., 2022. The (un) learning of social functions and its significance for mental health. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *98*, p.102204.

Foley, J. and Massey, K., 2019. Police officers and post-traumatic stress disorder: discussing the deficit in research, identification and prevention in England and Wales. *The Police Journal*, *92*(1), pp.23-34.

Foley, S., 2021. *Moving beyond psychocentric perspectives of suicide: Towards an ecological and social justice understanding* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Waikato).

Frechette, J., Bitzas, V., Aubry, M., Kilpatrick, K. and Lavoie-Tremblay, M., 2020. Capturing lived experience: Methodological considerations for interpretive phenomenological inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *19*, p.1609406920907254.

Freeman, P., 2021. Social support. *Stress, well-being, and performance in sport*, pp. 240-258.

Gächter, M., Savage, D.A. and Torgler, B., 2011. The relationship between stress, strain and social capital. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, *34*(3), pp.515-540.

Gama, D.N., 2019. *Exploring a psychological trauma management programme at a police station in the Gauteng Province* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).

Garbarino, S., Guglielmi, O., Puntoni, M., Bragazzi, N.L. and Magnavita, N., 2019. Sleep quality among police officers: implications and insights from a systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *16*(5), p.885.

Garcia, P.R.J.M., Restubog, S.L.D., Ocampo, A.C., Wang, L. and Tang, R.L., 2019. Role modeling as a socialization mechanism in the transmission of career adaptability across generations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *111*, pp.39-48.

Garg, R., Kapadia, Y. and Sengupta, S., 2021. Using the lenses of emotion and support to understand unemployment discourse on Reddit. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, *5*(CSCW1), pp.1-24.

Gastrow, P. and Shaw, M., 2001. In search of safety: Police transformation and public responses in South Africa. *Daedalus*, *130*(1), pp.259-275.

Giwa, S., 2018. Community policing in racialized communities: A potential role for police social work. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *28*(6), pp.710-730.

Goldman, L.R., 2020. *Child's play: Myth, mimesis and make-believe*. Routledge.

Gómez-Carrillo, A. and Kirmayer, L.J., 2023. A cultural-ecosocial systems view for psychiatry. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *14*, p.1031390.

Gong, Z., Li, M. and Niu, X., 2021. The role of psychological empowerment in reducing job burnout among police officers: a variable-centered and person-centered approach. *Sage Open*, *11*(1), p.2158244020983305.

Gough, B. and Novikova, I., 2020. *Mental health, men and culture: how do sociocultural constructions of masculinities relate to men's mental health help-seeking behaviour in the WHO European Region?*. WHO.

Govender, D. and Pillay, K., 2022. Policing in South Africa: A Critical Evaluation. *Insight on Africa*, *14*(1), pp.40-56.

Govender, D., 2015. Changing policing back to basics in the 21stcentury: is this a fallacy?. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, *28*(2), pp.I-V.

Govender, D., 2016. Operational strategies for public order policing: A South African case study. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, *29*(2), pp.107-122.

Govender, D., and Pillay, K., 2021. Policing in South Africa: A Critical Evaluation. *Insight on Africa*, 14, pp. 40 - 56. https://doi.org/10.1177/09750878211048169.

Govender, D.O.R.A.V.A.L., 2018. Community-based participatory approach to prevent residential burglaries and house robberies. *Global perspectives on crime prevention and community resilience*, pp.35-47.

Govender, R., 2019. *Inclusivity and support for employees living with disabilities in the South African Police Service (SAPS)* (Master's thesis, Faculty of Commerce).

Grant, K.W., 2023. *Fundamentals of Psychotherapy: Essential Skills that Bridge Theory and Practice*. Kevin William Grant.

Grauwiler, P., Barocas, B., and Mills, L., 2008. Police peer support programs: current knowledge and practice.. *International journal of emergency mental health*, 10 1, pp. 27-38 .

Greeson, J.M., Toohey, M.J. and Pearce, M.J., 2015. An adapted, four-week mind–body skills group for medical students: reducing stress, increasing mindfulness, and enhancing self-care. *Explore*, *11*(3), pp.186-192.

Grobler, A. and Joubert, Y.T., 2012. Expectations, perceptions and experience of EAP services in the SAPS. *Journal of contemporary Management*, *9*(1), pp.150-171.

Grupe, D., Mcgehee, C., Smith, C., Francis, A., Mumford, J., & Davidson, R., 2019. Mindfulness Training Reduces PTSD Symptoms and Improves Stress-Related Health Outcomes in Police Officers. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 36, pp. 72 - 85. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-019-09351-4.

Guan, M., Han, J.Y., Shah, D.V. and Gustafson, D.H., 2021. Exploring the role of social support in promoting patient participation in health care among women with breast cancer. *Health Communication*, *36*(13), pp.1581-1589.

Gucciardi, D.F., Gordon, S. and Dimmock, J.A., 2008. Towards an understanding of mental toughness in Australian football. *Journal of applied sport psychology*, *20*(3), pp.261-281.

Gumani, M., 2014. Concepts of multifaceted social support in operational work in the lives of South African Police Service members. *Sa Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 40, pp. 1-11. https://doi.org/10.4102/SAJIP.V40I2.1209.

Gumani, M., 2022. Work stressors and vicarious trauma among South African Police Service members. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 32, pp. 224 - 231. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2022.2031630.

Gumani, M.A., 2019. The influence of organisational stressors on the well-being and performance of operational police members. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *45*(1), pp.1-14.

Gumani, M.A., Fourie, M.E. and Terre Blanche, M.J., 2013. Inner strategies of coping with operational work amongst SAPS officers. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *39*(2), pp.1-10.

Gutshall, C.L., Hampton Jr, D.P., Sebetan, I.M., Stein, P.C. and Broxtermann, T.J., 2017. The effects of occupational stress on cognitive performance in police officers. *Police Practice and Research*, *18*(5), pp.463-477.

Gyamfi, G.D., 2014. Influence of job stress on job satisfaction: Empirical evidence from Ghana Police Service. *International Business Research*, *7*(9), p.108.

Haarr, R.N. and Morash, M., 1999. Gender, race, and strategies of coping with occupational stress in policing. *Justice quarterly*, *16*(2), pp.303-336.

Haas, E.J., 2020. The role of supervisory support on workers' health and safety performance. *Health communication*, *35*(3), pp.364-374.

Hansson, J., and Padyab, M., 2023. How the availability and adequacy of social support affect the general mental health of Swedish police officers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1196320.

Hansson, J., Hurtig, A., Lauritz, L., and Padyab, M., 2017. Swedish Police Officers' Job Strain, Work-Related Social Support and General Mental Health. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 32, pp. 128-137. https://doi.org/10.1007/S11896-016-9202-0.

Haq, Z.U., Rasheed, R., Rashid, A. and Akhter, S., 2023. Criteria for Assessing and Ensuring the Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Business Reflections*, *4*(2).

Harasemiw, O., Newall, N., Shooshtari, S., Mackenzie, C. and Menec, V., 2018. From social integration to socialisolation: The relationship between social network types and perceived availability of social support in a national sample of older Canadians. *Research on Aging*, *40*(8), pp.715-739.

Harper, C.S., 2011. Family-supportive supervisory behaviours as a moderator of the relationship between job strain and workers' blood pressure.

Haurovi, M. and Chilunjika, A., 2023. Assessing the prevalence of unethical behaviour in the South African police service. *Insights into Regional Development*, *5*(4), pp.36-48.

Helene'Benjamin, J., 2020. *The Democratic Consequences of Highly Publicized Events of Police Misconduct for Black Political Attitudes Towards Police and Local Government Officials in Chicago* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago).

Hellen, S., Adewale, O., and Modipa, M., 2023. Understanding the Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence in Ivory Park Policing Area, Gauteng Province, South Africa: A Comprehensive Analysis. *Khazanah Hukum*. https://doi.org/10.15575/kh.v5i3.25548.

Heller, E.D., Nathan, D.B. and Perek, M., 1979. Short heat stress as an immunostimulant in chicks. *Avian Pathology*, *8*(3), pp.195-203.

Henderson, S., 1977. The social network, support and neurosis: The function of attachment in adult life. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, *131*(2), pp.185-191.

Henry, T.K.S. and Franklin, T.W., 2019. Police legitimacy in the context of street stops: The effects of race, class, and procedural justice. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, *30*(3), pp.406-427.

Hesselink, A., and Häefele, B., 2015. A criminological assessment of police brutality and criminality against women in custody in South Africa. *Police Practice and Research*, 16, pp. 316 - 327. https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2015.1038029.

Higgins, E.M., Overstreet, S., Coffey, B. and Fisher, B.W., 2020. 'Bridging the gap': school resource officers as bridge builders in the community policing era. *Journal of crime and justice*, *43*(4), pp.433-448.

Higginson, A., Mazerolle, L., Davis, J., Bedford, L. and Mengersen, K., 2013. The impact of policing interventions on interpersonal violent crime in developing countries (Protocol).

Hofer, M.S. and Savell, S.M., 2021. "There was no plan in place to get us help": strategies for improving mental health service utilization among law enforcement. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, *36*(3), pp.543-557.

Hostinar, C.E. and Miller, G.E., 2019. Protective factors for youth confronting economic hardship: Current challenges and future avenues in resilience research. *American Psychologist*, *74*(6), p.641.

Huang, G.I., Chen, Y.V. and Wong, I.A., 2020. Hotel guests' social commerce intention: the role of social support, social capital and social identification. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *32*(2), pp. 706-729.

Hui, F.K.P. and Aye, L., 2018. Occupational stress and workplace design. *Buildings*, *8*(10), p.133.

Hyland, P., Karatzias, T., Shevlin, M., McElroy, E., Ben-Ezra, M., Cloitre, M. and Brewin, C.R., 2021. Does requiring trauma exposure affect rates of ICD-11 PTSD and complex PTSD? Implications for DSM–5. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, *13*(2), p.133.

Ibrahim, N., Thompson, D., Nixdorf, R., Kalha, J., Mpango, R., Moran, G., Mueller-Stierlin, A., Ryan, G., Mahlke, C., Shamba, D. and Puschner, B., 2020. A systematic review of influences on implementation of peer support work for adults with mental health problems. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, *55*, pp.285-293.

Illias, M., Riach, K. and Demou, E., 2024. Understanding the interplay between organisational injustice and the health and wellbeing of female police officers: a meta-ethnography. *BMC Public Health*, *24*(1), p.2659.

ISS Africa Crime Hub. Accessed at: https://issafrica.org/crimehub

Jackson, M.E., 2019. *Factors contributing to burnout levels among public sector rehabilitation counselors* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Jacobs, R., and Barnard, A., 2022. Authenticity as Best-Self: The Experiences of Women in Law Enforcement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.861942.

Jacobs, R., and Barnard, A., 2023. Empowering women in South African law enforcement: Developing authenticity as best-self. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 33, pp. 337 - 347. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2023.2233229.

Jaguga, F., Kiburi, S.K., Temet, E., Aalsma, M.C., Ott, M.A., Maina, R.W., Wachira, J., Mostert, C., Kosgei, G., Tenge, A. and Atwoli, L., 2024. A scoping review of substance use brief interventions in Africa. *PLOS Global Public Health*, *4*(10), p.e0003340.

Jain, A., Sandhu, R., Singh, G. and Rakhra, M., 2024, August. The Role of AI Counselling in Journaling for Mental Health Improvement. In *2024 International Conference on Electrical Electronics and Computing Technologies (ICEECT)* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-6). IEEE.

Jayawardene, W., Kumbalatara, C., Jones, A. and McDaniel, J., 2024. Work Stress and Psychoactive Substance Use among Correctional Officers in the USA. *Psychoactives*, *3*(1), pp.65-77.

Jeke, L., Chitenderu, T. and Moyo, C., 2021. Crime and economic development in South Africa: A panel data analysis. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, *9*(2), pp.424-438.

Jiang, S., Chen, Y. and Wang, L., 2024. Effectiveness of community-based programs on aggressive behavior among children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, p.15248380241227986.

Jimenez, P. and Dunkl, A., 2017. The buffering effect of workplace resources on the relationship between the areas of worklife and burnout. *Frontiers in psychology*, *8*, p.12.

Johnson, J.L., Adkins, D. and Chauvin, S., 2020. A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, *84*(1), p.7120.

Johnson, R.R., 2012. Police officer job satisfaction: A multidimensional analysis. *Police Quarterly*, *15*(2), pp.157-176.

Jojo, A., 2016. *Occupational stress and intrinsic motivation as determinants of job engagement in the South African Police Service in Greater Kokstad Municipality* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Fort Hare).

Jolly, P.M., Kong, D.T. and Kim, K.Y., 2021. Social support at work: An integrative review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *42*(2), pp.229-251.

Jones, R., and Kagee, A., 2005. Predictors of Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms among South African Police Personnel. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35, pp. 209 - 224. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630503500204.

Jones, S., 2021. *Criminology*. Oxford University Press.

Jonsson, G., Moosa, M., Jeenah, F., and Musenge, E., 2013. The outcome of mental health care users admitted under Section 40 of the South African Mental Health Care Act (No 17 of 2002).. *African journal of psychiatry*, 16 2, pp. 94-103 . https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpsy.v16i2.12.

Jonyo, E.O., 2015. Effects of occupational stress on work performance of police officers in Nakuru police division, Kenya. *IOSR Journal of Computer Engineering*, *17*(6), pp.61-88.

Jorgensen, L.I. and Rothmann, S., 2008. Occupational stress, ill health and organisational commitment of members of the South African Police Service in the North West Province. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, *21*(2), pp.1-15.

Jorgensen, L.I., 2006. *Work-related well-being among police members in the North West Province* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University).

Joubert, Y. and Grobler, A., 2013. The value and extent of religious participation of members of the South African Police Service (SAPS). *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *69*(1).

Kabelo, V., 2019. An analysis of the effects of occupational stress in Military operational readiness: a case of the Botswana Defence Force.

Kamal, S.S.L.B.A., 2019. Research paradigm and the philosophical foundations of a qualitative study. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, *4*(3), pp.1386-1394.

Kaminer, D., Eagle, G. and Crawford-Browne, S., 2018. Continuous traumatic stress as a mental and physical health challenge: Case studies from South Africa. *Journal of health psychology*, *23*(8), pp.1038-1049.

Kapade-Nikam, P. and Shaikh, M., 2014. Occupational stress, burnout and coping in police personnel: findings from a systematic review. *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, *6*(2), pp.144-148.

Kapaon, D., Riumallo-Herl, C., Jennings, E., Abrahams-Gessel, S., Makofane, K., Kabudula, C.W. and Harling, G., 2024. Social support receipt as a predictor of mortality: A cohort study in rural South Africa. *PLOS Global Public Health*, *4*(9), p.e0003683.

Kaplan, B.H., Cassel, J.C. and Gore, S., 1977. Social support and health. *Medical care*, *15*(5), pp.47-58.

Kappeler, V.E., Gaines, L.K. and Schaefer, B.P., 2020. *Community policing: A contemporary perspective*. Routledge.

Kara, H.B., Sunger, E. and Kapti, A., 2015. Police stress factors among law enforcement agencies: A comparison study of US and Turkish police. *European Scientific Journal*, *11*(4).

Karthikeyan, C., 2024. AI Influence for Revolutionizing Virtual Reality (VR) Therapy: An Exploratory Study. In *Generating Entrepreneurial Ideas With AI* (pp. 217-241). IGI Global.

Keech, J.J., Cole, K.L., Hagger, M.S. and Hamilton, K., 2020. The association between stress mindset and physical and psychological wellbeing: Testing a stress beliefs model in police officers. *Psychology & Health*, *35*(11), pp.1306-1325.

Kekana, T.J. and Montle, M.E., 2022. English linguistic knowledge of police trainees in SAPS training academies. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*, *7*(2), pp.279-295.

Kelley, D.C., Siegel, E. and Wormwood, J.B., 2019. Understanding police performance under stress: insights from the biopsychosocial model of challenge and threat. *Frontiers in psychology*, *10*, p.457515.

Kelly, J. and Hoban, J.E., 2020. Health and wellness programming: The added contribution of an ethical mindset. In *Occupational Stress: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 381-397). IGI Global.

Kerridge, R., 2024. Combatting Unwellness In Policing.

Khosa, D., 2021. Gender and Police Leadership: An Analysis of Metropolitan Police Departments in South Africa. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*. https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2021.10.153.

Khosa, D., 2022a. Strategies to adapt in Breaking Barriers for Women in Law Enforcement in South Africa. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20223134.

Khosa, D., 2022b. Leadership development framework for women in policing in South Africa: Overcoming leadership barriers. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478)*. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i7.2018.

Khosa, D., 2022c. Understanding the Grand Challenges of South African Police Women: Can Relevant Policy Measures Ease This Burden?. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*. https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v5i11.725.

Khumalo, T.P., 2021. *The influence of masculinity on help-seeking behaviour (s) of male police officers in the Royal Eswatini Police Service* (Master's thesis, University of Pretoria (South Africa).

Kleim, B. and Westphal, M., 2011. Mental health in first responders: A review and recommendation for prevention and intervention strategies. *Traumatology*, *17*(4), pp.17-24.

Klyver, K., Honig, B. and Steffens, P., 2018. Social support timing and persistence in nascent entrepreneurship: exploring when instrumental and emotional support is most effective. *Small Business Economics*, *51*, pp. 709-734.

Knott, E., Rao, A.H., Summers, K. and Teeger, C., 2022. Interviews in the social sciences. *Nature Reviews Methods Primers*, *2*(1), p.73.

Koçak, O., Ak, N., Erdem, S.S., Sinan, M., Younis, M.Z. and Erdoğan, A., 2021. The role of family influence and academic satisfaction on career decision-making self-efficacy and happiness. *Internatio*

Koçak, O., Ergin, M. and Younis, M.Z., 2022. The Associations between Childhood Experiences and Occupational Choice Capability, and the Mediation of Societal Gender Roles. In *Healthcare* (Vol. 10, No. 6, p. 1004). MDPI. *nal Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(11), p.5919.

Kois, L.E., Cox, J. and Peck, A.T., 2021. Forensic e-mental health: Review, research priorities, and policy directions. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *27*(1), p.1.

Kong, V., Weale, R., Blodgett, J., Bruce, J., Laing, G. and Clarke, D., 2018. Spectrum of injuries resulting from gunshot wounds in car hijacking: a South African experience. *Trauma Surgery & Acute Care Open*, *3*(1).

Koortzen, P. and Oosthuizen, R.M., 2012. Exploring the meaning of trauma in the South African Police Service: A systems psychodynamic perspective. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *38*(2), pp.1-11.

Kula, S., 2017. Occupational stress, supervisor support, job satisfaction, and work-related burnout: perceptions of Turkish National Police (TNP) members. *Police Practice and Research*, *18*(2), pp.146-159.

Kuo, S.Y., 2015. Occupational stress, job satisfaction, and affective commitment to policing among Taiwanese police officers. *Police Quarterly*, *18*(1), pp.27-54.

Kynoch, G., 2005. Crime, conflict and politics in transition-era South Africa. *African affairs*, *104*(416), pp.493-514.

Lambert, E.G., Qureshi, H., Frank, J., Keena, L.D. and Hogan, N.L., 2017. The relationship of work-family conflict with job stress among Indian police officers: A research note. *Police Practice and Research*, *18*(1), pp.37-48.

Lambert, E.G., Qureshi, H., Frank, J., Klahm, C. and Smith, B., 2018. Job stress, job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and their associations with job burnout among Indian police officers: A research note. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *33*(2), pp.85-99.

Landavazo, C.T., 2019. *The muzzling of the sheepdog: a mixed-methods case study of the impacts of media reporting on police officer performance* (Doctoral dissertation, Brandman University).

Langa, C.J., 2017. Glenister v President of the Republic of South Africa and Others (Centre for Constitutional Rights as Amicus Curiae).

Langa, M., Kirsten, A., Bowman, B., Eagle, G. and Kiguwa, P., 2020. Black masculinities on trial in absentia: The case of Oscar Pistorius in South Africa. *Men and Masculinities*, *23*(3-4), pp.499-515.

Larsen, L.B., Andersson, E.E., Tranberg, R. and Ramstrand, N., 2018. Multi-site musculoskeletal pain in Swedish police: associations with discomfort from wearing mandatory equipment and

prolonged sitting. *International archives of occupational and environmental health*, *91*, pp.425-433.

Larsson, G., Kempe, C. and Starrin, B., 1988. Appraisal and coping processes in acute time-limited stressful situations: A study of police officers. *European Journal of Personality*, *2*(4), pp.259-276.

Lavender, L. and Todak, N., 2022. Exploring the value of mentorship for women police officers. *Policing: An International Journal*, *45*(6), pp.1064-1081.

Lazarus, R.S., 2020. Psychological stress in the workplace. In *Occupational stress* (pp. 3-14). CRC Press.

LeFort, N., 2020. *Officer Safety and Police Legitimacy: Examining Law Enforcement Leader Perceptions of the Impact of Police Peer Support Programs on Occupational Stress and Police Misconduct* (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University).

Lentz, L., Randall, J.R., Guptill, C.A., Gross, D.P., Senthilselvan, A. and Voaklander, D., 2019. The association between fitness test scores and musculoskeletal injury in police officers. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *16*(23), p.4667.

Leppma, M., Mnatsakanova, A., Sarkisian, K., Scott, O., Adjeroh, L., Andrew, M.E., Violanti, J.M. and McCanlies, E.C., 2018. Stressful life events and posttraumatic growth among police officers: A cross-sectional study. *Stress and Health*, *34*(1), pp.175-186.

Levitt, H.M., Surace, F.I., Wu, M.B., Chapin, B., Hargrove, J.G., Herbitter, C., Lu, E.C., Maroney, M.R. and Hochman, A.L., 2022. The meaning of scientific objectivity and subjectivity: From the perspective of methodologists. *Psychological methods*, *27*(4), p.589.

Lewey, J.H., Smith, C.L., Burcham, B., Saunders, N.L., Elfallal, D. and O'Toole, S.K., 2018. Comparing the effectiveness of EMDR and TF-CBT for children and adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Journal of child & adolescent trauma*, *11*, pp.457-472.

Lewis, S., 2015. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health promotion practice*, *16*(4), pp.473-475.

Lillard, N.L., 2020. *Without Emotional Armor: A Phenomenological Study of Traumatic Work Stress Among Female Law Enforcement Officers* (Doctoral dissertation, Sam Houston State University).

Lin, J., Li, L., Yan, Y. and Turel, O., 2018. Understanding Chinese consumer engagement in social commerce: The roles of social support and swift guanxi. *Internet Research*, *28*(1), pp.2-22.

Lincoln, Y.S. ed., 2005. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.

Lipp, M.E.N., 2009. Stress and quality of life of senior Brazilian police officers. *The Spanish journal of psychology*, *12*(2), pp.593-603.

Little, A., Hu, Y., Sun, Q., Jain, D., Broome, J., Chen, M.H., Thibord, F., McHugh, C., Surendran, P., Blackwell, T.W. and Brody, J.A., 2022. Whole genome sequence analysis of platelet traits in the NHLBI Trans-Omics for Precision Medicine (TOPMed) initiative. *Human molecular genetics*, *31*(3), pp.347-361.

Livingston, J.D., Milne, T., Fang, M.L. and Amari, E., 2012. The effectiveness of interventions for reducing stigma related to substance use disorders: a systematic review. *Addiction*, *107*(1), pp.39-50.

Louw, G., 2014. Burnout, vigour, big five personality traits and social support in a sample of police officers. *Sa Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 40, pp. 1-13. https://doi.org/10.4102/SAJIP.V40I1.1119.

Louw, G.J. and Viviers, A., 2010. An evaluation of a psychosocial stress and coping model in the police work context. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *36*(1), pp.1-11.

Lu, Y.F. and Petersen, K., 2023. Effectiveness of psychological skills training for police personnel: a meta-analysis. *Occupational and environmental medicine*, *80*(10), pp.590-598.

Lucia, D.G. and Halloran, M.J., 2020. An investigation of the efficacy of programs to prevent stress in law enforcement officers: A program manager's perspective. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, *35*(1), pp.35-47.

Lyoka, P.A., 2011. Impact of intermittent physical exercises on mental health of some police officers in Nkonkobe District, South Africa: sport psychology. *African Journal for Physical health education, recreation and dance*, *17*(si-1), pp.665-674.

Ma, C.C., Andrew, M.E., Fekedulegn, D., Gu, J.K., Hartley, T.A., Charles, L.E., Violanti, J.M. and Burchfiel, C.M., 2015. Shift work and occupational stress in police officers. *Safety and health at work*, *6*(1), pp.25-29.

Maabela, S.M., 2015. *Guidelines for management of post-traumatic stress disorder among South African police service workers in Mahikeng, North West Province of South Africa*(Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa).

MacEachern, A.D., Dennis, A.A., Jackson, S. and Jindal-Snape, D., 2019. Secondary traumatic stress: Prevalence and symptomology amongst detective officers investigating child protection cases. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *34*, pp.165-174.

MacLean, C.E. and Densley, J.A., 2023. Moral Injury, Compound Officer Trauma, and Officer Mental Health. In *Police, Prosecutors, Courts, and the Constitution: Toward Ending the "Awful but Lawful" Era* (pp. 27-40). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Magwaza, M., 2009. *The relationship between personality, motivation, learning strategies and academic performance*(Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand).

Makoni, S.B., 2017. Language planning, security, police communication and multilingualism in uniform: The case of South African Police Services. *Language & Communication*, *57*, pp.48-56.

Malatjie, B.M., 2023. *The policing of burglary at a residential premises in the Ga-Molepo Village, Limpopo Province* (Doctoral dissertation).

Malone, M.F.T. and Dammert, L., 2021. The police and the public: policing practices and public trust in Latin America. *Policing and society*, *31*(4), pp.418-433.

Maluleke, W. and Dlamini, S., 2019. The prevalence of organised cross-border crimes in South Africa: A non-empirical statistical data analysis on stock theft and hijacking of motor vehicles. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, *11*(1), pp.116-145.

Manamela, M.S., Mokwena, R.J. and Matlala, M.M., 2024. Police Intervention Strategies in the Enforcement of Liquor Policies in South Africa. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, *16*(3).

Manganyi, M.F., Moodley, S.V. and Shirinde, J., 2023. Secondary trauma amongst administrative support staff working with traumatic incident dockets within the South African Police Service in Johannesburg, South Africa. *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, *29*(3), pp.137-140.

Mangoegape, M.F., 2015. *Coping with work related stress and psychosocial functioning: the case of police officers in the Local Criminal Record Centre (LCRC)* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South-Africa).

Manning, L.K. and Bouchard, L., 2020. Encounters with adversity: A framework for understanding resilience in later life. *Aging & Mental Health*, *24*(7), pp.1108-1115.

Marcus, N. and Stergiopoulos, V., 2022. Re-examining mental health crisis intervention: A rapid review comparing outcomes across police, co-responder and non-police models. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, *30*(5), pp.1665-1679.

Marder, I.D., 2020. Institutionalising restorative justice in the police: key findings from a study of two English police forces. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *23*(4), pp.500-526.

Marich, J., 2014. *Trauma made simple: Competencies in assessment, treatment and working with survivors*. pesI publishing & Media.

Marks, M. and Wood, J.D., 2024. Policing with New Habits: How the Covid-19 Lockdown Fostered a Harm Reduction Ethos in Durban 1. In *Routledge International Handbook of Policing Crises and Emergencies* (pp. 150-160). Routledge.

Marks, M., 2008. Looking different, acting different: struggles for equality within the south african police service. *Public Administration*, 86, pp. 643-658. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-9299.2008.00745.X.

Marx, B.P., Hall-Clark, B., Friedman, M.J., Holtzheimer, P. and Schnurr, P.P., 2024. The PTSD Criterion A debate: A brief history, current status, and recommendations for moving forward. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *37*(1), pp.5-15.

Masilela, L.S., 2013. *The middle management learning programme of the South African Police Service: A critical evaluation* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University).

Maslach, C. and Leiter, M.P., 2016. Burnout. In *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behaviour* (pp. 351-357). Academic Press.

Mathibe, M., and Chinyamurindi, W., 2021. Determinants of employee mental health in the South African public service: the role of organizational citizenship behaviours and workplace social

support. *Advances in Mental Health*, 19, pp. 306 - 316. https://doi.org/10.1080/18387357.2021.1938153.

Matthews, K.M., 2020. *Exploring the Lived Experiences of Female Trauma Survivors with Comorbid Substance Use Disorder* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Mississippi).

Maweni, V., 2021. Solidarity, isolation, and cynicism: An attitudinal analysis of the police culture in the South African Police Service. *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, *43*(1).

Mayer, I., 2015. Qualitative research with a focus on qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Sales, Retailing & Marketing*, *4*(9), pp.53-67.

Mazorodze, B.T., 2020. Youth unemployment and murder crimes in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Cogent economics & finance*, *8*(1), p.1799480

Mbuyisa, K.H., 2019. *A comparative study between Employee Assistance Programmes and Occupational Social Work in the Gauteng Province South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

McCraty, R., Atkinson, M., Lipsenthal, L. and Arguelles, L., 2009. New hope for correctional officers: an innovative program for reducing stress and health risks. *Applied psychophysiology and biofeedback*, *34*(4), pp.251-272.

McGuire, J., Evans, E., Kane, E., McGuire, J., Evans, E. and Kane, E., 2021. People with Mental Health Problems: A Systematic Review of Policing Interventions. *Evidence-Based Policing and Community Crime Prevention*, pp.299-311.

McKenzie, S.K., Oliffe, J.L., Black, A. and Collings, S., 2022. Men's experiences of mental illness stigma across the lifespan: a scoping review. *American journal of men's health*, *16*(1), p.15579883221074789.

McLaughlin, K.A., Colich, N.L., Rodman, A.M. and Weissman, D.G., 2020. Mechanisms linking childhood trauma exposure and psychopathology: A transdiagnostic model of risk and resilience. *BMC medicine*, *18*, pp.1-11.

McNally, V.J., 2012. Law enforcement officers. *FIGLEY, CR Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide. Los Angeles: Sage Publications*, pp.341-343.

Meichenbaum, D., 2017. Stress inoculation training: A preventative and treatment approach. In *The evolution of cognitive behaviour therapy* (pp. 101-124). Routledge.

Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M.L., Griffin, M.L., Biegel, G., Roach, A., Frank, J., Burke, C., Pinger, L., Soloway, G. and Isberg, R., 2012. Integrating mindfulness training into K-12 education: Fostering the resilience of teachers and students. *Mindfulness*, *3*, pp.291-307.

Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J., 2015. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Métais, C., Burel, N., Gillham, J.E., Tarquinio, C. and Martin-Krumm, C., 2022. Integrative review of the recent literature on human resilience: From concepts, theories, and discussions towards a complex understanding. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, *18*(1), p.98.

Meyer, E., 2023. Reuniting with Michael: An Autoethnography of a Police Officer's Experience with PTSD. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 29, pp. 565 - 576. https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2023.2280607.

Meyer, M., Roodt, G. and Robbins, M., 2011. Human resources risk management: governing people risks for improved performance: opinion paper. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *9*(1), pp.1-12.

Meyer, M., Roodt, G. and Robbins, M., 2011. Human resources risk management: governing people risks for improved performance: opinion paper. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *9*(1), pp.1-12.

Michael, T., Schanz, C.G., Mattheus, H.K., Issler, T., Frommberger, U., Köllner, V. and Equit, M., 2019. Do adjuvant interventions improve treatment outcome in adult patients with posttraumatic stress disorder receiving trauma-focused psychotherapy? A systematic review. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, *10*(1), p.1634938.

Midgette, G., Spreen, T.L., Porter, L.C., Reuter, P. and Hitchens, B.K., 2022. Model of Emergency Call Risk with Implications for Tasks Assigned to Police and Other Agencies.

Miller, L., 2015. Why cops kill: The psychology of police deadly force encounters. *Aggression and violent behavior*, *22*, pp.97-111.

Milliard, B., 2020. Utilization and Impact of Peer-Support Programs on Police Officers' Mental Health. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01686.

Milliard, B., 2020. Utilization and Impact of Peer-Support Programs on Police Officers' Mental Health. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01686.

Mitchell, J.T. and Everly, G.S., 1997. Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD). *An Operations Manual for the Prevention of Traumatic Stress Among Emergency Service and Disaster Workers. Second Edition, Revised. Ellicott City: Chevron Publishing Corporation*.

Mitchell, J.T. and Everly, G.S., 2018. Critical incident stress management in terrorist events and disasters. In *Psychological effects of catastrophic disasters* (pp. 425-480). Routledge.

Modise, J.M., 2023. South African Police Service Initiatives to Foster a High-Performance Culture. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology, 8*(9), pp. 2113-2131.

Modise, J.M., 2024. Explore and Propose a Comprehensive Framework for Building an Ideal South African Police Service (SAPS), in Addressing Historical Challenges, Contemporary Realities, and Future Aspirations. *Advances in Social Sciences and Management*, *2*(2), pp.01-34.

Mofokeng, J., and Grootboom, V., 2023. The impact of international law enforcement training on the South African Police Service's effectiveness. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478)*. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i4.2421.

Mohajan, H.K., 2018. Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of economic development, environment and people*, *7*(1), pp.23-48.

Moitsadi, Z., Aphane, M.P., Mofokeng, L. and Mofokeng, J.T., 2024. Evaluation of Trainees' Post-Training Competency in the South African Police Service. *Publica: Jurnal Pemikiran Administrasi Negara*, *16*(1), pp.34-63.

Mokgobu, T.S., 2010. *An investigation of the effects of police suicide on the well-being of the South African Police Service members in Polokwane, an area in Limpopo Province*(Doctoral dissertation).

Moller, A., 2008. *The relationship between coping behaviour, personality characteristics and psychological distress in South African police trainees*. University of Pretoria (South Africa).

Mona, G., Chimbari, M., and Hongoro, C., 2019. A systematic review on occupational hazards, injuries and diseases among police officers worldwide: Policy implications for the South African Police Service. *Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology (London, England)*, 14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12995-018-0221-x.

Montesh, M. and Basdeo, V., 2012. The role of the South African national defence force in policing. *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, *40*(1), pp.71-94.

Mooloo, M., 2022. *The Experiences of Police Officers Presenting with the Symptoms of Depression Within the Gauteng South African Police Services (SAPS)* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Moreno, A.F., Karanika-Murray, M., Batista, P., Hill, R., Vilalta, S.R. and Oliveira-Silva, P., 2024. Resilience training programs with police forces: a systematic review. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *39*(1), pp.227-252.

Morgan, M.M., 2024. "The Response Hasn't Been a Human-to-Human Response, but a System-to-Human Response": Health Care Perspectives of Police Responses to Persons with Mental Illness in Crisis. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, pp.1-14.

Mostert, K. and Joubert, A.F., 2005. Job stress, burnout and coping strategies in the South African police service. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, *8*(1), pp.39-53.

Mostert, K. and Joubert, A.F., 2005. Job stress, burnout and coping strategies in the South African police service. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, *8*(1), pp.39-53.

Motulsky, S.L., 2021. Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research?. *Qualitative Psychology*, *8*(3), p.389.

Mueller, A.S., Abrutyn, S., Pescosolido, B. and Diefendorf, S., 2021. The social roots of suicide: Theorizing how the external social world matters to suicide and suicide prevention. *Frontiers in psychology*, *12*, p.621569.

Mujajati, E., Ferreira, N. and du Plessis, M., 2024. Fostering organisational commitment: a resilience framework for private-sector organisations in South Africa. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, p.1303866.

Mumford, E.A., Taylor, B.G. and Kubu, B., 2015. Law enforcement officer safety and wellness. *Police Quarterly*, *18*(2), pp.111-133.

Mushwana, M., Govender, I., and Nel, K., 2019. Stress and coping mechanisms of officers of the South African Police Service based in Tzaneen, Limpopo province, South Africa. *The South African Journal of Psychiatry : SAJP : the Journal of the Society of Psychiatrists of South Africa*, 25. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajpsychiatry.v25i0.1342.

Mushwana, M.R.V., 2017. *Stress and Coping Mechanisms of South African Police Officers in Tzaneen, Limpopo Province*(Doctoral dissertation, University of Limpopo).

Mutschler, C., Bellamy, C., Davidson, L., Lichtenstein, S. and Kidd, S., 2022. Implementation of peer support in mental health services: A systematic review of the literature. *Psychological Services*, *19*(2), p.360.

Myendeki, A.N., 2008. *Job stress, burnout and coping strategies of South African police officers* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Fort Hare).

National Credit Regulator, 2017. "Statistics on Consumer Over-indebtedness", presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry, https://www.thedti.gov.za/parliament/2017/NCR-indebtedness.pdf

Neal, A.G., 2018. *National trauma and collective memory: Extraordinary events in the American experience*. Routledge.

Neelakantan, L., Hetrick, S. and Michelson, D., 2019. Users' experiences of trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy for children and adolescents: a systematic review and metasynthesis of qualitative research. *European child & adolescent psychiatry*, *28*(7), pp.877-897.

Nelson, K.V. and Smith, A.P., 2016. Occupational stress, coping and mental health in Jamaican police officers. *Occupational medicine*, *66*(6), pp.488-491.

Nevels, T.L., Burch, J.B., Wirth, M.D., Ginsberg, J.P., McLain, A.C., Andrew, M.E., Allison, P., Fekedulegn, D. and Violanti, J.M., 2021. Shift Work Adaptation Among Police Officers: The BCOPS Study. *Chronobiology international*, *38*(6), pp.907-923.

Newell, C.J., Ricciardelli, R., Czarnuch, S.M. and Martin, K., 2022. Police staff and mental health: barriers and recommendations for improving help-seeking. *Police Practice and Research*, *23*(1), pp.111-124.

Ngema, K., 2021. *The investigation of the effectiveness of employee training on career development: a case study of South African Police Service (SAPS)* (Doctoral dissertation).

Ngoveni, T.D., Maluleke, W. and Mabasa, C., 2022. Insights on the use of community policing forum for crime prevention: A case study of the Brooklyn police station, South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478)*, *11*(5), pp.482-494.

Nhan, J., 2019. *Issues and controversies in policing today*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Nigar, N., 2020. Hermeneutic phenomenological narrative enquiry: A qualitative study design. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *10*(1), pp.10-18.

Nkosi, L.N., 2019. *Exploring burnout among police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Elukwatini SAPS, Mpumalanga Province* (Doctoral dissertation).

Normore, A.H., Ellis, B., Clamp, K. and Paterson, C., 2019. Cross-cultural collaboration for community-oriented policing and restorative justice. In *Police Science: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 454-472). IGI Global.

Nortje, W., and Hull, S., 2024. Uprooting a culture of gender-based violence in south africa: critical approaches to bail, policing and awareness. *Obiter*. https://doi.org/10.17159/obiter.v45i2.16254.

Nugraheni, E. and Febriyana, N., 2024. The role of social support in suicidal behavior: A literature review. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, *21*(1), pp.1588-1592.

O'Sullivan, O., Neale, J. and Mistlin, A., 2022. Rehabilitation After Trauma. In *Textbook of Acute Trauma Care* (pp. 819-827). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Ogińska-Bulik, N., and Juczyński, Z., 2021. Burnout and posttraumatic stress symptoms in police officers exposed to traumatic events: the mediating role of ruminations. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 94, pp. 1201 - 1209. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00420-021-01689-9.

Oliffe, J.L., Kelly, M.T., Montaner, G.G., Seidler, Z.E., Ogrodniczuk, J.S. and Rice, S.M., 2022. Masculinity and mental illness in and after men's intimate partner relationships. *SSM-Qualitative Research in Health*, *2*, p.100039.

Olsson, M. and Martiny, S.E., 2018. Does exposure to counterstereotypical role models influence girls' and women's gender stereotypes and career choices? A review of social psychological research. *Frontiers in psychology*, *9*, p.2264.

Otu, N. and Otu, N.E., 2022. Why Do the Police Reject Counseling? An Examination of Necessary Changes to Police Subculture. *Journal of Health Ethics*, *18*(2), p.4.

Oweke, J.A., Muola, J.M. and Ngumi, O., 2014. Causes of occupational stress in relation to level of occupational stress among police constables in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Oweke, J.A., Muola, J.M. and Ngumi, O., 2014. Causes of occupational stress in relation to level of occupational stress among police constables in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Padyab, M., Backteman-Erlanson, S. and Brulin, C., 2016. Burnout, coping, stress of conscience and psychosocial work environment among patrolling police officers. *Journal of police and Criminal Psychology*, *31*(4), pp.229-237.

Page, A.C., Stritzke, W.G. and McEvoy, P.M., 2022. *Clinical psychology for trainees*. Cambridge University Press.

Panigrahi, C.A., 2016. Managing stress at workplace. *Journal of Management Research and Analysis*, *3*(4), pp.154-160.

Panigrahi, C.M.A., 2016. Managing stress at workplace. *Journal of Management Research and Analysis*, *3*(4), pp.154-160.

Papazoglou, K. and Andersen, J.P., 2014. A guide to utilizing police training as a tool to promote resilience and improve health outcomes among police officers. *Traumatology: An International Journal*, *20*(2), p.103.

Papazoglou, K. and Chopko, B., 2017. The role of moral suffering (moral distress and moral injury) in police compassion fatigue and PTSD: An unexplored topic. *Frontiers in psychology*, *8*, p.1999.

Parry, J., 2018. Shooting to kill: the ethics of police and military use of lethal force.

Pastwa-Wojciechowska, B., and Piotrowski, A. 2016. Sources, consequences and methods of coping with stress in police officers. *Journal of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence*, *4*(4).

Patel, C., 2013. *The complete guide to stress management*. Springer.

Paterson, A., 2021. Post-traumatic Growth in Policing. In *Trauma and Resilience in Contemporary Australian Policing* (pp. 193-203). Springer, Singapore.

Patterson, G.T., 2003. Examining the effects of coping and social support on work and life stress among police officers. *Journal of Criminal justice*, *31*(3), pp.215-226.

Patterson, G.T., Chung, I.W. and Swan, P.G., 2012. The effects of stress management interventions among police officers and recruits. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *8*(1), pp.1-54.

Patterson, G.T., Chung, I.W. and Swan, P.W., 2014. Stress management interventions for police officers and recruits: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, *10*(4), pp.487-513.

Paulsen, R., 2008. *Levels of stress and coping strategies employed by police service officers in Cape Town, South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape).

Peck, J.H. and Elligson, R.L., 2021. Race, ethnicity, and police–community relations. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

Peñalba, V., McGuire, H. and Leite, J.R., 2008. Psychosocial interventions for prevention of psychological disorders in law enforcement officers. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (3).

Perkins, G., 2016. Shedding light on the hidden epidemic of police suicide in South Africa. *Mental Health Matters*, *3*(4), pp.50-52.

Perkins, G., Howell, S. and Shearing, C., 2020. The spectre of trauma in the South African police service. *Policing and Mental Health: Theory, Policy and Practice*.

Perkins, G., Howell, S. and Shearing, C., 2020. The spectre of trauma in the South African police service. In *Policing and Mental Health* (pp. 286-299). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429470882-19.

Phillippi, J. and Lauderdale, J., 2018. A guide to field notes for qualitative research: Context and conversation. *Qualitative health research*, *28*(3), pp.381-388.

Phiri, L.M., Olutola, A.A. and Mofokeng, J.T., 2023. Enhancing Resilience through Emotional Intelligence in Religious Communities for Crime Prevention Post-COVID-19. *Khazanah Theologia*, *5*(3), pp.179-200.

Pienaar, J., and Rothmann, S., 2006. Occupational stress in the South African police service. *Sa Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 32, pp. 63-71. https://doi.org/10.4102/SAJIP.V32I3.439.

Pienaar, J., Rothmann, S., & Van de Vijver, F. J. R., 2017. Occupational stress, personality traits, coping strategies, and suicide ideation in the South African Police Service. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 32*(1), 34-46. DOI: 10.1007/s11896-016-9199-8.

Pillay, A.L., Kramers-Olen, A.L. and Gowensmith, W.N., 2023. Inequities in forensic mental health in South Africa and recommendations for service development. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, *22*(4), pp.326-339.

Piotrowski, A., Rawat, S. and Boe, O., 2021. Effects of organizational support and organizational justice on police officers' work engagement. *Frontiers in psychology*, *12*, p.642155.

Platt, S. and Niederkrotenthaler, T., 2020. Suicide prevention programs. *Crisis*.

Platt, S., Arensman, E. and Rezaeian, M., 2019. National suicide prevention strategies–progress and challenges. *Crisis*.

Police Recorded Crime Statistics July – September 2023. Accessed 26 January 2024: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_documents/saps_stats.pdf

Pössel, P., Burton, S.M., Cauley, B., Sawyer, M.G., Spence, S.H. and Sheffield, J., 2018. Associations between social support from family, friends, and teachers and depressive symptoms in adolescents. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, *47*, pp.398-412.

Prati, G. and Pietrantoni, L., 2010. The relation of perceived and received social support to mental health among first responders: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *38*(3), pp.403-417.

Prysmakova, P. and Vandenabeele, W., 2020. Enjoying police duties: Public service motivation and job satisfaction. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, *35*, pp.304-317.

Ptakauskaite, N., Cox, A.L. and Berthouze, N., 2018, April. Knowing what you're doing or knowing what to do: how stress management apps support reflection and behaviour change. In *Extended Abstracts of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-6).

Public Servant Association (PSA) union 2017. Accessed 26 January 2024: https://www.psa.co.za/docs/default-source/psa-documents/psa-opinion/psa_police_2017.pdf?sfvrsn=21e36d8c_3

Puranda, K.C., 2022. *Beliefs, Skill Sets, and Behaviors of Police Officers Regarding Mental Health Treatment* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Purba, A., and Demou, E., 2019. The relationship between organisational stressors and mental wellbeing within police officers: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7609-0.

Queirós, A., Faria, D. and Almeida, F., 2017. Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European journal of education studies*.

Queirós, C., Passos, F., Bártolo, A., Marques, A.J., Da Silva, C.F. and Pereira, A., 2020. Burnout and stress measurement in police officers: Literature review and a study with the operational police stress questionnaire. *Frontiers in psychology*, *11*, p.587.

Rajin, J., 2012. *Employee Assistance Programme in the South African police service: A case study of Moroka police station*(Doctoral dissertation).

Rakubu, K.A., 2023. Government Measures to Combat Organized Crime in South Africa. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems* (pp. 1-26). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Ramatsoma, T.M.E., 2022. *Exploring helping professions' experiences of psychological trauma management programmes within the South African Police Services* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).

Randall, R., Kennedy, H., Karanikolas, P., Bashfield, L., Rayner, A., Nguyen, F., Wu, L., Martin, R., Thomas, S., Maylea, C. and Been Apprehended and Leadership Group, 2025. 'I was having an anxiety attack and they pepper sprayed me': police apprehension in mental health contexts in Australia. *Policing and Society*, *35*(1), pp.85-100.

Ranta, R.S. and Sud, A., 2008. Management of stress and burnout of police personnel. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, *34*(1), pp.29-39.

Rastogi, M., 2020. A systemic conceptualization of interventions with families in a global context. *The handbook of systemic family therapy*, *4*, pp.1-32.

Ray, D.J., 2021. *Organizational Stressors, Stigma, and Preventive Programs Within Law Enforcement: A Quantitative Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University).

Reeves, C., 2012. After Glenister: The case for a new dedicated agency. *South African Crime Quarterly*, *39*, pp.23-32.

Regehr, C., Carey, M.G., Wagner, S., Alden, L.E., Buys, N., Corneil, W., Fyfe, T., Matthews, L., Randall, C., White, M. and Fraess-Phillips, A., 2021. A systematic review of mental health symptoms in police officers following extreme traumatic exposures. *Police practice and research*, *22*(1), pp.225-239.

Reitsema, M., de Hoog, N. and De Snoo, T.P., 2023. Mindfulness for the mental resilience of police officers: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Rhine, T., 2020. *Effects of computerized cognitive behavioural therapy and mindfulness based mobile app on job stress and anxiety in active-duty military students* (Doctoral dissertation, Hampton University).

Ricciardelli, R. and Carleton, R.N., 2022. A qualitative application of the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) to contextualize the occupational stress correctional workers experience. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, *45*(2), pp.135-151.

Ricciardelli, R., Carleton, R.N., Mooney, T. and Cramm, H., 2020. "Playing the system": Structural factors potentiating mental health stigma, challenging awareness, and creating barriers to care for Canadian public safety personnel. *Health*, *24*(3), pp.259-278.

Richardsen, A.M., Burke, R.J. and Martinussen, M., 2006. Work and health outcomes among police officers: The mediating role of police cynicism and engagement. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *13*(4), p.555.

Richter, J., Lauritz, L.E., du Preez, E., Cassimjee, N. and Ghazinour, M., 2013. Relationships between personality and coping with stress: An investigation in Swedish police trainees. *Psychology*, *4*(2), pp.88-95.

Rief, R. and Huff, J., 2023. Revisiting the influence of police response time: Examining the effects of response time on arrests and how it varies by call type. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *84*, p.102025.

Roach, J., Cartwright, A. and Sharratt, K., 2017. Dealing with the unthinkable: a study of the cognitive and emotional stress of adult and child homicide investigations on police investigators. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, *32*, pp.251-262.

Robertson, I.T., Cooper, C.L., Sarkar, M. and Curran, T., 2015. Resilience training in the workplace from 2003 to 2014: A systematic review. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, *88*(3), pp.533-562.

Rodriguez, S., Ferrell, B., Cipriano Jr, R.J., Van Hasselt, V.B., Falzone, L., Kuhlman, K., Acosta, W. and Miller, M.V., 2023. Law enforcement mental health: Strategies and issues in prevention and treatment. *Practice Innovations*.

Romas, J.A. and Sharma, M., 2022. *Practical stress management: A comprehensive workbook*. Academic Press.

Roohi, S., Noroozi, H. and Yousefi Afrashteh, M., 2019. Mediating role of resilience and self-efficacy in the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation strategies and psychological well-being of Iranian students. *Health Education and Health Promotion*, *7*(4), pp.183-190.

Roth, S. and Cohen, L.J., 1986. Approach, avoidance, and coping with stress. *American psychologist*, *41*(7), p.813.

Rothmann, M.D., Wiens, B.L. and Chan, I.S., 2011. *Design and analysis of non-inferiority trials*. CRC press.

Rothmann, S. and Jorgensen, L.I., 2007. A model of work-related well-being for police members in the North West Province. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology and Victimology*, *20*(4), pp.73-84.

Rothmann, S., 2008. Job satisfaction, occupational stress, burnout and work engagement as components of work-related wellbeing. *SA journal of industrial psychology*, *34*(3), pp.11-16.

Rousseau, D., Long, N., Jackson, E. and Jurgensen, J., 2019. Empowering through embodied awareness: Evaluation of a peer-facilitated trauma-informed mindfulness curriculum in a woman's prison. *The Prison Journal*, *99*(4_suppl), pp.14S-37S.

Roz, H.B. and Raval, D.T., 2017. A study of occupational stress, burnout, presumptive life events, depression and anxiety among Ahmedabad city police officers. *Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing*, *8*(12).

Rubenstein, A., Duek, O., Doran, J. and Harpaz-Rotem, I., 2024. To expose or not to expose: A comprehensive perspective on treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder. *American Psychologist*, *79*(3), p.331.

Ruiz-Ruano García, A.M., Blaya Sánchez, M.Á., López Morales, J.L., Peinado Portero, A.I., Giner Alegría, C.A., López Puga, J. and Moya-Faz, F.J., 2023. Psychosocial risks factors and burnout in police officers: a network analysis.

Runciman, C., Alexander, P., Rampedi, M., Moloto, B., Maruping, B., Khumalo, E. and Sibanda, S., 2016. Counting police-recorded protests: based on South African Police Service data. *Social Change Research Unit, University of Johannesburg*, *13*.

Russell, L.M., 2012, July. High-risk Occupations: Leader Influence on Employee Stress and Burnout. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2012, No. 1, p. 17164). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Ryu, G.W., Yang, Y.S. and Choi, M., 2020. Mediating role of coping style on the relationship between job stress and subjective well-being among Korean police officers. *BMC public health*, *20*(1), pp.1-8.

Sadulski, J., 2017. *Understanding how police cope with stress to promote resiliency: Multiple case study* (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University).

Sahin, E.B. and Homberg, F.K.F., 2025. How to Reduce Burnout in Public Service Organizations during Times of Crisis? A Review of (Promising) Interventions. *Burned out-Exploring the Causes, Consequences, and Solutions of Workplace Stress in Public Service Organizations*, pp.1-18.

Şahin, H. and Türk, F., 2021. The impact of cognitive-behavioural group psycho-education program on psychological resilience, irrational beliefs, and well-being. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, *39*(4), pp.672-694.

Santa Maria, A., Wörfel, F., Wolter, C., Gusy, B., Rotter, M., Stark, S., Kleiber, D. and Renneberg, B., 2018. The role of job demands and job resources in the development of emotional exhaustion, depression, and anxiety among police officers. *Police Quarterly*, *21*(1), pp.109-134.

Santre, S., 2024. Mental Disorders and Mental Health Promotion in Police Officers. *Health Psychology Research*, *12*.

SAPS, 2020/21. Accessed at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202201/saps-annual-report-202021.pdf

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H. and Jinks, C., 2018. Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & quantity*, *52*, pp.1893-1907.

Saunders, M.N., 2012. Choosing research participants. *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*, pp.35-52.

Savin-Baden, M. and Major, C.H., 2023. *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Taylor & Francis.

Schantz, A.D., Coxe, S. and Bruk-Lee, V., 2021. From where does my support come? Unpacking the contribution of support for police. *Policing: An International Journal*, *44*(2), pp.343-360.

Scheibe, A., Howell, S., Müller, A., Katumba, M., Langen, B., Artz, L., and Marks, M., 2016. Finding solid ground: law enforcement, key populations and their health and rights in South Africa. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 19. https://doi.org/10.7448/IAS.19.4.20872.

Schoeman, G., 2024. *South Africa's High-Stress Security Environment: Keys to Coping*. Taylor & Francis.

Schrader, S., 2019. *Badges without borders: How global counterinsurgency transformed American policing* (Vol. 56). University of California Press.

Schreier, M., 2018. Sampling and generalization. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection*, pp.84-97.

Schriewer, K. and Bulaj, G., 2016. Music streaming services as adjunct therapies for depression, anxiety, and bipolar symptoms: convergence of digital technologies, mobile apps, emotions, and global mental health. *Frontiers in public health*, *4*, p.217.

Scott, M.S. and Clarke, R.V. eds., 2020. *Problem-oriented policing: Successful case studies*. Routledge.

Seaward, B.L., 2017. *Managing stress*. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Selokar, D., Nimbarte, S., Ahana, S., Gaidhane, A. and Wagh, V., 2011. Occupational stress among police personnel of Wardha city, India. *The Australasian medical journal*, *4*(3), p.114.

Shamay-Tsoory, S.G. and Mendelsohn, A., 2019. Real-life neuroscience: an ecological approach to brain and behavior research. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *14*(5), pp.841-859.

Shane, J.M., 2021. *Stress inside police departments*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Shaw, M., 2013. South Africa: crime in transition. In *Violence in Southern Africa* (pp. 156-175). Routledge.

Shaw, M., 2021. *Give Us More Guns: How South Africa's Guns Were Armed*. Jonathan Ball Publishers.

Shearer, A., Hunt, M., Chowdhury, M. and Nicol, L., 2016. Effects of a brief mindfulness meditation intervention on student stress and heart rate variability. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *23*(2), p.232.

Sherwood, G., Cherian, U.K., Horton-Deutsch, S., Kitzmiller, R. and Smith-Miller, C., 2023. Reflective practices: meaningful recognition for healthy work environments. *Nursing Management*, *30*(6).

Sherwood, L., Hegarty, S., Vallieres, F., Hyland, P., Murphy, J., Fitzgerald, G. and Reid, T., 2019. Identifying the key risk factors for adverse psychological outcomes among police officers: a systematic literature review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *32*(5), pp.688-700.

Shimelash Yasegnal, A., 2023. War related psycho-social problems and mitigating strategies: a time of crisis, a time to act. *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, *31*(3), pp.408-425.

Shufutinsky, A., 2020. Employing use of self for transparency, rigor, trustworthiness, and credibility in qualitative organizational research methods. *Organization Development Review*, *52*(1), pp.50-58.

Sibisi, N., Shumba, K., Ngcece, S. and Gopal, N.D., 2022. "Brutal murder scenes are traumatising, and they're mostly indelible": Occupational stressors and mental health among South African police service murder detectives at a selected station in Durban, South Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *8*(1), p.2123146.

Sibisi, N., Shumba, K., Ngcece, S. and Gopal, N.D., 2022. "Brutal murder scenes are traumatising, and they're mostly indelible": Occupational stressors and mental health among South African police service murder detectives at a selected station in Durban, South Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *8*(1), p.2123146.

Silverman, H.I., 2009. Qualitative analysis in financial studies: Employing ethnographic content analysis. *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER)*, *7*(5).

Singh, S., and Khan, S., 2020. Empowering Women in Blue Uniforms—Gender and Police in South Africa. , 7. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-8457/6769.

Singh, S., Gupta, B. and Mishra, P.C., 2021. Coping strategies and social support as moderators of occupational stress and mental health link among police personnel. *Industrial psychiatry journal*, *30*(1), p.67.

Singo, C. and Shilubane, H.N., 2022. How do police officers cope with stress? A qualitative study. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *37*(4), pp.984-992.

Sinha, R., 2024. Stress and substance use disorders: risk, relapse, and treatment outcomes. *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*, *134*(16).

Sipon, S. and Yaacob, N., 2014. Workplace Wellness Program Employees' Perceptions and Expectations toward an Internal Employee Assistance Services.

Slaven, F.B., Erasmus, Y., Uys, M., Bruand, P.E., Magazi, B. and Wadvalla, R., 2021. Can a brief training intervention help improve mental health service delivery in South Africa?. *African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine*, *13*(1), p.2909.

Smith, K., Ostinelli, E., Macdonald, O. and Cipriani, A., 2020. COVID-19 and telepsychiatry: development of evidence-based guidance for clinicians. *JMIR mental health*, *7*(8), p.e21108.

Smith, Z., 2021. Death due to hanging: a retrospective descriptive study of the socioeconomic and demographic profiles of hanging victims in central South Africa. *Forensic Science, Medicine and Pathology*, *17*(2), pp.223-229.

Sohail, M. and Rehman, C.A., 2015. Stress and health at the workplace-a review of the literature. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, *6*(3), p.94.

Soleimanof, S., Morris, M.H. and Jang, Y., 2021. Following the footsteps that inspire: Parental passion, family communication, and children's entrepreneurial attitudes. *Journal of Business Research*, *128*, pp.450-461.

Soravia, L.M., Schwab, S., Walther, S. and Müller, T., 2021. Rescuers at risk: posttraumatic stress symptoms among police officers, fire fighters, ambulance personnel, and emergency and psychiatric nurses. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, *11*, p.602064.

Sousa, M., Andrade, J., de Castro Rodrigues, A., Caridade, S. and Cunha, O., 2024. The effectiveness of intervention programs for perpetrators of intimate partner violence with substance abuse

and/or mental disorders: a systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, *25*(5), pp.4188-4203.

South African Police Service. 2012. *Detective Dialogue: SAPS Detective Services: roles, training, careers, modernisation and other challenges.* [online]. Available at https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/14823/ [Accessed 17 July. 2021]

South African Police Service. 2016. *Annual report 2015/16*. [online]. Available at : https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2015_2016/saps_annual_report_2015_2016.pdf [Accessed 10 October 2022].

Southwick, S.M., Bonanno, G.A., Masten, A.S., Panter-Brick, C. and Yehuda, R., 2014. Resilience definitions, theory, and challenges: interdisciplinary perspectives. *European journal of psychotraumatology*, *5*(1), p.25338.

Srivastava, P. and Panday, R., 2016. Psychoeducation an effective tool as treatment modality in mental health. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *4*(1), pp.123-130.

Stafford, L., 2017. 'What about my voice': emancipating the voices of children with disabilities through participant-centred methods. *Children's Geographies*, *15*(5), pp.600-613.

Stancel, K., Russo, C., Koskelainen, M., Papazoglou, K. and Tuttle, B.M., 2019. Police moral injury, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction: A brief report. *Salus journal*, *7*(1), pp.42-57.

Stanley, I.H., Hom, M.A. and Joiner, T.E., 2016. A systematic review of suicidal thoughts and behaviours among police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics. *Clinical psychology review*, *44*, pp.25-44.

Stanley, N. and Humphreys, C., 2017. Identifying the key components of a 'whole family' intervention for families experiencing domestic violence and abuse. *Journal of gender-based violence*, *1*(1), pp.99-115.

Stelnicki, A.M., Jamshidi, L., Fletcher, A.J. and Carleton, R.N., 2021. Evaluation of before operational stress: a program to support mental health and proactive psychological protection in public safety personnel. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, p.511755.

Stewart IV, C.J.C., 2021. *Examining the relationship between emotional intelligence, employee engagement, and burnout: A comparison of administrative officers, criminal investigators and patrol officers in law enforcement* (Doctoral dissertation, Auburn University).

Stinchcomb, J.B., 2004. Searching for stress in all the wrong places: Combating chronic organizational stressors in policing. *Police practice and research*, *5*(3), pp.259-277.

Stogner, J., Miller, B.L. and McLean, K., 2020. Police stress, mental health, and resiliency during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American journal of criminal justice*, *45*, pp.718-730.

Sundaram, M.S. and Kumaran, M.J., 2012. A study on occupational stress and coping strategies among police head constables (grade III). *Research Journal of Management Sciences*, *1*(1), pp.44-47.

Suresh, R.S., Anantharaman, R.N., Angusamy, A. and Ganesan, J., 2013. Sources of job stress in police work in a developing country. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *8*(13), p.102.

Sutton, R.T., Pincock, D., Baumgart, D.C., Sadowski, D.C., Fedorak, R.N. and Kroeker, K.I., 2020. An overview of clinical decision support systems: benefits, risks, and strategies for success. *NPJ digital medicine*, *3*(1), p.17.

Swanson, J.W. and Rosenberg, M.L., 2023. American gun violence & mental illness: Reducing risk, restoring health, respecting rights & reviving communities. *Daedalus*, *152*(4), pp.45-74.

Swanston, E., Pulman, A., Dogan, H., Murphy, J. and Bitters, F., 2021. Scoping the need for a tailored mHealth app to improve health and well-being behavioural transformation in the police: exploring the views of UK police workers via web-based surveys and client meetings. *JMIR Formative Research*, *5*(8), p.e28075.

Ta, V., Griffith, C., Boatfield, C., Wang, X., Civitello, M., Bader, H., DeCero, E. and Loggarakis, A., 2020. User experiences of social support from companion chatbots in everyday contexts: thematic analysis. *Journal of medical Internet research*, *22*(3), p.e16235.

Tanhan, A., 2019. Acceptance and commitment therapy with ecological systems theory: Addressing Muslim mental health issues and wellbeing. *Journal of Positive Psychology and Wellbeing*, *3*(2), pp.197-219.

Taylor, M.A., 2022. Building resilience in law enforcement through a mental wellness program. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *37*(1), pp.155-161.

Thaba, R.L., 2018. *Organisational culture and Employee Health and Wellness Programme service delivery in South African Police Service in Limpopo* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Theletsane, K.I., 2014. Managing the South African Police Service. *Journal of Public Administration*, *49*(1), pp.349-361.

Thobane, M.S., 2019. The South African cash-in-transit heist enterprise: Managing its wellspring and concatenation. *International Annals of Criminology*, *57*(1-2), pp.198-224.

Thompson Burdine, J., Thorne, S. and Sandhu, G., 2021. Interpretive description: a flexible qualitative methodology for medical education research. *Medical education*, *55*(3), pp.336-343.

Toderi, S. and Balducci, C., 2018. Stress-preventive management competencies, psychosocial work environments, and affective well-being: A multilevel, multisource investigation. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *15*(3), p.397.

Toledo, G., Ochoa, C.Y. and Farias, A.J., 2020. Exploring the role of social support and adjuvant endocrine therapy use among breast cancer survivors. *Supportive Care in Cancer*, *28*, pp.271-278.

Tomes, C., Schram, B. and Orr, R., 2020. Relationships between heart rate variability, occupational performance, and fitness for tactical personnel: a systematic review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *8*, p.729.

Toussaint, L., Nguyen, Q.A., Roettger, C., Dixon, K., Offenbächer, M., Kohls, N., Hirsch, J. and Sirois, F., 2021. Effectiveness of progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, and guided imagery in promoting psychological and physiological states of relaxation. *Evidence-Based*

Trinkner, R., Tyler, T.R. and Goff, P.A., 2016. Justice from within: The relations between a procedurally just organizational climate and police organizational efficiency, endorsement of democratic policing, and officer well-being. *Psychology, public policy, and law*, *22*(2), p.158.

Tsaneva, M. and LaPlante, L.K., 2024. The effect of crime on mental health in South Africa. *Review of Development Economics*, *28*(2), pp.674-696.

Tsirimokou, A., Kloess, J.A., Dhinse, S.K. and Larkin, M., 2024. Experiences of Burnout, Post-Traumatic Growth, and Organisational Support in Police Officers Working in Specialised

Units: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, pp.1-18.

Tucker, J.M., 2015. Police officer willingness to use stress intervention services: The role of perceived organizational support (POS), confidentiality and stigma. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, *17*(1), p.304.

Turgoose, D., Glover, N. and Maddox, L., 2022. Burnout and the psychological impact of policing: Trends and coping strategies. *Police psychology*, pp.63-86.

Tuttle, B.M., Blumberg, D.M. and Papazoglou, K., 2019. Critical challenges to police officer wellness. In *OxfordResearch Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

Uchino, B.N., Bowen, K., Kent de Grey, R., Mikel, J. and Fisher, E.B., 2018. Social support and physical health: Models, mechanisms, and opportunities. *Principles and concepts of behavioural medicine: A global handbook*, pp. 341-372.

Ugwu, L.E. and Idemudia, E.S., 2024. Burnout and Post-traumatic Stress Disorders in Police Officers: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, pp.1-14.

Ulicki, T., 2012. New directions or half measures? Organisational response to gender inequity in the South African Police Service. *Policing and Society*, 22, pp. 496 - 518. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2011.641555.

Ungar, M., 2019. Designing resilience research: Using multiple methods to investigate risk exposure, promotive and protective processes, and contextually relevant outcomes for children and youth. *Child abuse & neglect*, *96*, p.104098.

Vallis, M., Lee-Baggley, D., Sampalli, T., Ryer, A., Ryan-Carson, S., Kumanan, K. and Edwards, L., 2018. Equipping providers with principles, knowledge and skills to successfully integrate

behaviour change counselling into practice: a primary healthcare framework. *Public Health*, *154*, pp.70-78.

Van den Bergh, O., 2021. *Principles and practice of stress management*. Guilford Publications.

Van der Hek, H. and Plomp, H.N., 1997. Occupational stress management programmes: a practical overview of published effect studies. *Occupational medicine*, *47*(3), pp.133-141.

Van der Klink, J.J., Blonk, R.W., Schene, A.H. and Van Dijk, F.J., 2001. The benefits of interventions for work-related stress. *American journal of public health*, *91*(2), p.270.

van der Meulen, E., Bosmans, M.W., Lens, K.M., Lahlah, E. and van der Velden, P.G., 2018. Effects of mental strength training for police officers: A three-wave quasi-experimental study. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *33*(4), pp.385-397.

Van der Velden, P.G., Rademaker, A.R., Vermetten, E., Portengen, M.A., Yzermans, J.C. and Grievink, L., 2013. Police officers: a high-risk group for the development of mental health disturbances? A cohort study. *BMJ open*, *3*(1), p.e001720.

Van Lelyveld, C.R., 2008. *The experience of vicarious trauma by the police officers within the South African Police Service in Limpopo Province* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus)).

van Niekerk, A.M. and Roets, H.E., 2017. The psycho-educational practice of mental toughness in dealing with trauma. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, *9*(4), pp.83-93.

Van Wyk, B.E. and Pillay-Van Wyk, V., 2010. Preventive staff-support interventions for health workers. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (3).

Velazquez, E. and Hernandez, M., 2019. Effects of police officer exposure to traumatic experiences and recognizing the stigma associated with police officer mental health: A state-of-the-art review. *Policing: An International Journal*, *42*(4), pp.711-724.

Venville, A., Kostecki, T., McGowan, D. and Lynch, R., 2024. From active police duty to civilian life: The role of peer support. *The Police Journal*, *97*(1), pp.92-104.

Vickovic, S.G. and Morrow, W.J., 2020. Examining the influence of work–family conflict on job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among correctional officers. *Criminal Justice Review*, *45*(1), pp.5-25.

Vilakati, N., 2009. *Food consumption in selected rural communities in western Kenya with special reference to sorghum* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Violanti, J. M., Slaven, J. E., Charles, L. E., Burchfiel, C. M., Andrew, M. E., and Homish, G. G. 2011. Police and alcohol use: A descriptive analysis and associations with stress outcomes. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *36*(4), 344-356.

Violanti, J., Fekedulegn, D., Hartley, T., Charles, L., Andrew, M., C., C., and Burchfiel, C., 2016. Highly Rated and most Frequent Stressors among Police Officers: Gender Differences. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 41, pp. 645-662. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-016-9342-x.

Violanti, J.M. and Aron, F., 1993. Sources of police stressors, job attitudes, and psychological distress. *Psychological reports*, *72*(3), pp.899-904.
Violanti, J.M. and Aron, F., 1993. Sources of police stressors, job attitudes, and psychological distress. *Psychological reports*, *72*(3), pp.899-904.
Violanti, J.M. and Aron, F., 1995. Police stressors: Variations in perception among police personnel. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *23*(3), pp.287-294.

Violanti, J.M., 2018. Police officer suicide. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

Violanti, J.M., Fekedulegn, D., Hartley, T.A., Charles, L.E., Andrew, M.E., Ma, C.C. and Burchfiel, C.M., 2016. Highly rated and most frequent stressors among police officers: Gender differences. *American journal of criminal justice*, *41*(4), pp.645-662.

Violanti, J.M., Owens, S.L., McCanlies, E., Fekedulegn, D. and Andrew, M.E., 2018. Law enforcement suicide: a review. *Policing: An International Journal*.

Virdee, G., 2015. *The exploration of factors relevant to enhancing mental health service provision and psychological therapies for persons of South Asian origin* (Doctoral dissertation, City University London).

Vogel, D.L. and Heath, P.J., 2016. Men, masculinities, and help-seeking patterns.

Vuorensyrjä, M. and Mälkiä, M., 2011. Nonlinearity of the effects of police stressors on police officer burnout. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, *34*(3), pp.382-402.

Wang, Y., Zheng, L., Hu, T. and Zheng, Q., 2014. Stress, burnout, and job satisfaction: Case of police force in China. *Public personnel management*, *43*(3), pp.325-339.

Ward, R., and Belkin, L., 2024. Police peer supporters in a domestic abuse-specific peer support initiative: Motivations, experiences and challenges. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*. https://doi.org/10.1177/14613557241244607.

Wassermann, A., 2016. *Stress and Coping in the South African Police Service* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Wassermann, A., Meiring, D., and Becker, J., 2019. Stress and coping of police officers in the South African Police Service. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 49, pp. 108 - 97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246318763059.

Waters, J.A. and Ussery, W., 2007. Police stress: History, contributing factors, symptoms, and interventions. *Policing: an international journal of police strategies & management*, *30*(2), pp.169-188.

Watson, D. and Kerrigan, D., 2018. Crime, criminality, and north-to-south criminological complexities: Theoretical implications for policing 'hotspot'communities in 'underdeveloped'countries. In *The palgrave handbook of criminology and the global south* (pp. 611-632). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Watson, R., Ilyna Jorgensen, L., Meiring, D. and Hill, C., 2012. The development and evaluation of an emotion competence intervention in the South African Police Service. *Journal of Social Sciences*, *30*(2), pp.183-203.

Weisburd, D., Cave, B., Nelson, M., White, C., Haviland, A., Ready, J., Lawton, B. and Sikkema, K., 2018. Mean streets and mental health: Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder at crime hot spots. *American journal of community psychology*, *61*(3-4), pp.285-295.

Weisburd, S., 2021. Police presence, rapid response rates, and crime prevention. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *103*(2), pp.280-293.

Weiss, D.S., Brunet, A., Best, S.R., Metzler, T.J., Liberman, A., Pole, N., Fagan, J.A. and Marmar, C.R., 2010. Frequency and severity approaches to indexing exposure to trauma: The Critical Incident History Questionnaire for police officers. *Journal of traumatic stress*, *23*(6), pp.734-743.

Weiss, W.M. and Halupnik, D., 2013. Commitment to strength and conditioning: A sport commitment model perspective. *The Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research*, *27*(3), pp.718-722.

Wellington, C., 2010. Exploring the causes and rates of police suicide in the Western Cape: A thematic analysis. *University of Cape Town Dissertations*.

Weltman, G., Lamon, J., Freedy, E. and Chartrand, D., 2014. Police department personnel stress resilience training: an institutional case study. *Global advances in health and medicine*, *3*(2), pp.72-79.

Werner, E.E. and Smith, R.S., 2019. *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. Cornell University Press.

Wheeler, C., Fisher, A., Jamiel, A., Lynn, T.J. and Hill, W.T., 2021. Stigmatizing attitudes toward police officers seeking psychological services. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, *36*, pp.1-7.

White, T., 2022. The Development of the Police Department Wellness Survey (PDWS).

Whiting, S., 2023. The interplay between historical trauma, substance use disorders, appetitive aggression and the link with violent crime among young male adults in conflict with the law in South Africa.

Williams, H. and Weyers, M., 2006. Proactive stress management: the nature, effect and implications of the South African Police Service's "Managing Stress Effectively" programme. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, *42*(3). https://doi.org/10.15270/42-3-300.

Williams, W., Nicholas, L. and Bawa, U., 2011. Stress and traumatic symptoms among police officers. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, *24*(3), pp.48-59.

Wills, C., Bates, K., Frost, N.A. and Monteiro, C.E., 2021. Barriers to help-seeking among correction officers: Examining the influence of institutional culture and structure. *Criminal Justice Studies*, *34*(4), pp.423-440.

Wirihana, R. and Smith, C., 2019. Historical trauma, healing and well-being in Māori communities. *He rau murimuri aroha*, *2*.

Woiceshyn, J. and Daellenbach, U., 2018. Evaluating inductive vs deductive research in management studies: Implications for authors, editors, and reviewers. *Qualitative research in organizations and management: An International Journal*, *13*(2), pp.183-195.

Wolever, R.Q., Bobinet, K.J., McCabe, K., Mackenzie, E.R., Fekete, E., Kusnick, C.A. and Baime, M., 2012. Effective and viable mind-body stress reduction in the workplace: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, *17*(2), p.246.

Wood, J.D., Watson, A.C. and Barber, C., 2021. What can we expect of police in the face of deficient mental health systems? Qualitative insights from Chicago police officers. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, *28*(1), pp.28-42.

Wood, L., Kamper, D. and Swanson, K., 2018. Spaces of hope? Youth perspectives on health and wellness in indigenous communities. *Health & Place*, *50*, pp.137-145.

Woodbury, Z., 2019. Climate trauma: Toward a new taxonomy of trauma. *Ecopsychology*, *11*(1), pp.1-8.

Workman-Stark, A.L., 2021. Exploring differing experiences of a masculinity contest culture in policing and the impact on individual and organizational outcomes. *Police Quarterly*, *24*(3), pp.298-324.

Wray, C.A. and Jarrett, S.B., 2019. The relationship between burnout and suicidal ideations among Jamaican police officers. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, *21*(3), pp.181-189.

Wright, J.H., Brown, G.K., Thase, M.E. and Basco, M.R., 2017. *Learning cognitive-behavior therapy: An illustrated guide*. American Psychiatric Pub.

Yarkoni, T., 2022. The generalizability crisis. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *45*, p.e1.

Yau, E.K.B., Ping, N.P.T. and Kuan, G., 2021. The Use of Mindfulness Acceptance Commitment (MAC) Approach for Malaysian Elite Triathletes. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, *12*(4), pp.271-279.

Yerk, J.R., 2024. *Destigmatizing Mental Health Treatment Among Law Enforcement Officers Amidst the Blue Wall of Silence* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Yeterian, J.D., Berke, D.S. and Litz, B.T., 2017. Psychosocial rehabilitation after war trauma with adaptive disclosure: Design and rationale of a comparative efficacy trial. *Contemporary clinical trials*, *61*, pp.10-15.

Yin, R.K., 2015. *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford publications.

Young, C., Nagdee, M. and Pieterse, A., 2024. The dose–effect relationship in PTSD: the South African Constitutional Court Case of AK v. Minister of Police (2022). *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, pp.1-9.

Yule, K., Houston, J. and Grych, J., 2019. Resilience in children exposed to violence: A meta-analysis of protective factors across ecological contexts. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, *22*, pp.406-431.

Zamani, A., 2024. Predicting public sector employee burnout using big data analysis. *International Journal of Applied Research in Management, Economics and Accounting*, *1*(2), pp.91-99.

# APPENDIX ONE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

20 July 2022

**Thandanani Ngidi (213509961)**
**School of Applied Human Sc**
**Howard College**

**Dear T Ngidi,**

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00003803/2022
**Project title:** An Exploration of the support systems available to South African Police Officers, Visible Policing and Investigation Division: A study of Durban Central Office, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
**Degree:** PhD

## Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 06 January 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

This approval is valid until 20 July 2023.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

**/dd**

## APPENDIX TWO: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

Privaatsak/Private Bag X 94

| | |
|---|---|
| Reference: | 3/34/2 |
| Enquiries: | Lt Col (Dr) Smit<br>AC SJ Thenga |
| Telephone: | (012) 393 3444<br>[redacted] |
| Email Address: | ThengaS@saps.gov.za |

THE HEAD: RESEARCH
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE
PRETORIA
0001

The Provincial Commissioner
KWAZULU-NATAL

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: DOCTORATE DEGREE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, CRIME COMBATING AND INVESTIGATION DIVISION: A STUDY OF DURBAN CENTRAL OFFICE, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: T NGIDI**

1. Regarding the abovementioned heading refers.

2. The researcher, T Ngidi, is conducting a study topic/titled: ***"An exploration of the support systems available to South African Police Service, crime combating and investigation Division: A study of Durban Central Office, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa"*** and requests permission to conduct research in the South Africa Police Service (SAPS).

3. The research proposal was perused by the Component: Research according to National Instruction 4 of 2022. Therefore, this office recommends that the research study be permitted, subject to the final comments and further arrangements by the office of the SAPS Provincial Commissioner: KwaZulu-Natal.

4. The primary aim of the study is ***"to present a qualitative study of an exploration of support systems available to the South African Police Service at the Durban Central police station in KwaZulu-Natal."*** Furthermore, the researcher selected to conduct a qualitative research study to collect data from participants by conducting interviews.

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: DOCTORATE DEGREE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, CRIME COMBATING AND INVESTIGATION DIVISION: A STUDY OF DURBAN CENTRAL OFFICE, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: T NGIDI**

5. The researcher, T Ngidi, intends to collect data by approaching approximately twenty (20) from the Crime Combating Unit and twenty (20) from Investigation Division Unit Durban Central Police Station, KwaZulu-Natal Province line with the proposed topic/title.

6. This office hereby requests your support on the condition that your office agrees with our recommendations and confirm the proposed official research is viable. Additionally, your office has the authority to set terms and conditions for the researcher to comply with set standards to be followed during the research study process and does not harm the SAPS' image.

7. Kindly find the relevant documents of the requested application topic/titled ***"An exploration of the support systems available to South African Police Service, crime combating and investigation Division: A study of Durban Central Office, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa"*** for your consideration:

   **Annexure A:** Application to conduct research;
   **Annexure B:** Signed undertaking;
   **Annexure C:** Research proposal; and
   **Annexure D:** Research approval from UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL.

8. The researcher will conduct the research at his/her own expense.

8.1 The researcher will conduct the research without the disruption of the duties of the participating members of the Service. **In addition, the researcher must communicate and make prior arrangements with the respective commanders of the participating members of the study.**

8.2 The researcher, T Ngidi, should bear in mind that participation in the interviews must be voluntary.

8.3 Information will at all times be treated as strictly confidential.

8.4 The researcher, T Ngidi, will donate an electronic copy of the final research work/report to the Service to be placed on the SAPS internal website (INTRANET).

Scanned with CamScanner

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: DOCTORATE DEGREE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, CRIME COMBATING AND INVESTIGATION DIVISION: A STUDY OF DURBAN CENTRAL OFFICE, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: T NGIDI**

8.5 The researcher, T Ngidi, will ensure that the research report complies with all conditions for the approval of research.

9. Should your office be in agreement with this research request and to facilitate smooth coordination between your office and the researcher, the following information is kindly requested to be forwarded to our office within **18 days** after receipt of this letter.

- **Signed Certificate/Letter:** Confirm the proposed research request is viable;
- **Contact person**: Rank, Initials and Surname; and
- **Contact details**: Telephone number and email address.

10. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

[redacted] **MAJOR GENERAL**
**SEARCH**
**DR PR VUMA**

**DATE:** 2012-12-12

South African Police Service  Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiedienste

| Privaatsak<br>Private Bag X94 | Pretoria<br>0001 | Faks No.<br>Fax No. | (012) 393 2128 |
|---|---|---|---|

Your reference/U verwysing:

My reference/My verwysing: 3/34/2

THE HEAD: RESEARCH
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE
PRETORIA
0001


Enquiries/Navrae: Lt Col (Dr) Smit AC Thenga
Tel: (012) 393 4333
Email: ThengaS@saps.gov.za


APPROVED

Ms T Ngidi
**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: DOCTORATE DEGREE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, CRIME COMBATING AND INVESTIGATION DIVISION: A STUDY OF DURBAN CENTRAL OFFICE, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: T NGIDI**

1. The above subject matter refers.
2. You are hereby granted approval for your research study on the above mentioned topic in terms of National Instruction 4 of 2022.
3. Further arrangements regarding the research study may be made with the following office:
4. The Divisional Commissioner: :
    - **Contact Person:** Colonel I Walljee
    - **Contact Details:** (031) 325 4841/4934
    - **Email Address**: IsaacWaljee@saps.gov.za
5. The Provisional Commissioner: KwaZulu-Natal has stressed that participants in interviews will be on a voluntary basis and respondents may refuse to answer questions implying sensitive information.
6. Kindly adhere to paragraph 8 of our attached letter signed on the **2022-05-12** with the same above reference number.

[redacted]

**MAJOR GENERAL**
**RESEARCH**

**Date:** 2022 -06- 28

2G.P.S. 002-0222 SAP 21

**SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS** **SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE**

P.O. Box 1965, DURBAN, 4000

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Verwysing Reference | : | 3/34/2(138) |
| Navrae Enquiries | : | Colonel I Walljee/ W/O TC Nkwanyana |
| Telefoon Telephone | : | 031 – 325 4841/4934 |
| Faksnommer Fax Number | : | 031 – 325 6022 |
| E-pos Email | : | ShaziES@saps.gov.za |

**THE PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER**
**KWAZULU-NATAL**

2022 -06- 2 1

The Head
**RESEARCH**

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: DOCTORATE DEGREE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, CRIME COMBATING AND INVESTIGATION DIVISION: A STUDY OF DURBAN CENTRAL OFFICE, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: T NGIDI**

1. Your minute 3/34/2 dated 2022-05-12 regarding permission to conduct the above-mentioned research has bearing on this matter.

2. Paragraph 3 of the said minute requests the final approval of the Provincial Commissioner: KwaZulu-Natal to permit the researcher to interview a total of thirty (30) police members within the eThekwini District. The respondents will include, 10 (ten) members: Durban Public Order Policing, ten (10) members: eThekwini Tactical Response Team, five (5) handlers: Durban Central K9 Unit as well as five (5) members: Durban Central Flying Squad in line with the proposed topic.

3. The application to conduct interviews with these police officials is approved by this office on condition that:

3.1 Participation in interviews must be voluntary;

3.2 Accessing sensitive information/nature or seriousness of cases can result in respondent/s refusal to answer certain questions; and

3.3 The research questions that will be asked be made known in advance;

3.4 A thorough explanation be provided as to how the participants taking part in the study will be protected from harm, as this is not fully explained within the Ethical Considerations of the attached proposal;

Scanned with CamScanner

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL: DOCTORATE DEGREE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, CRIME COMBATING AND INVESTIGATION DIVISION: A STUDY OF DURBAN CENTRAL OFFICE, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: T NGIDI**

3.5 The researcher adheres to the conditions stipulated in Paragraph 8 of Head Office minute 3/34/2 dated 2022-05-12.

4. For any queries, please contact Colonel I Walljee on the following number:
Office: 031 325 4841/4934
Email: KZN: Prov: OD & Strat Mngt: Commander: Walljee I - Col
<IsaacWaljee@saps.gov.za>

[redacted]

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL**
**PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER: KWAZULU-NATAL**
**NS MKHWANAZI**

**APPENDIX THREE: INFORMED CONSENT**

# UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

**APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL**
**For research with human participants**

## INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Note to researchers: Notwithstanding the need for scientific and legal accuracy, every effort should be made to produce a consent document that is as linguistically clear and simple as possible, without omitting important details as outlined below. Certified translated versions will be required once the original version is approved.

There are specific circumstances where witnessed verbal consent might be acceptable, and circumstances where individual informed consent may be waived by HSSREC.

### Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Participant of the South African Police Service (SAPS) Durban Central Office

My name is Miss Thandanani Ngidi from the (School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Criminology and Forensics Studies Discipline, NgidiT@ukzn.co.za/213509961@stu.ukzn.ac.za, [redacted])

You are being invited to consider participating in a study " **An Exploration of the support systems available to South African Police Officers, Visible Policing and Investigation Division: A study of Durban Central Office, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.**" The aim of the study is to present a qualitative study of an exploration of the support systems available to the South African Police Officers at the Durban Central Office KwaZulu-Natal. The study is expected to enroll 25-30 participants of SAPS members (Durban Central Office). The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study, is expected to be 45-60min. The study is a part of requirement for the PhD studies and is not funded by any organization.

The study does not involve in risk or harm to you or prospects of your employment. We hope that the study will create the benefits you and your organization to streamline and refine employee engagement initiative in a manner that will be more attractive for employees to participate in them and in seeing value in those initiatives.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher and supervisor at (singhsb@ukzn.ac.za, 031 260 7895) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

**Research Office, Westville Campus**

**Govan Mbeki Building**

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary, you may withdraw your participation at any point when you feel like your will be harmed by this research or your rights as a participant are violated. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation, you will not incur any penalty or loss of treatment.

Participation in this study is purely voluntary with no costs, incentives or reimbursements associated with participating in the study.

In order to protect your identity, your name, rank or position in the organization, your name will not be used. However, where necessary, instead a pseudo name will be used. Information that will be collected will be stored electronically in an encrypted file with only the supervisor and the researcher having the password to the file. This data will safely be stored by the supervisor for a period not less than five years and thereafter disposed.

---

**CONSENT (Edit as required)**

I (Name) have been informed about the study entitled (provide details) by (provide name of researcher/fieldworker).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

**Research Office, Westville Campus**

**Govan Mbeki Building**

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

_____ _____

**Signature of Participant** **Date**

_____ _____

**Signature of Witness (Where applicable)** **Date**

_____ _____

**Signature of Translator (Where applicable)** **Date**

**APPENDIX FOUR: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**




**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:**

**"An Exploration of the support systems available to South African Police Officers, Visible Policing and Investigation Division: A study of Durban Central Office, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."**

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. Name?
2. Recommended pseudo name?
3. Age?
4. Gender?
5. Years of experience as police officer?
6. Rank?

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

7. Why did you want to be a Police Officer?
8. What consequences do your duties have for you as a Police officer under your unit (POP/TRT/K9/Flying Squad)?
9. How often do you respond to crime scenes in a month? (Please elaborate your answer by mentioning the cases you usually handle/come across)
10. In what way do you feel personally affected by your work?
11. How will you describe the meaning of "support systems"?
12. Do you have access to support systems as a Police Officer? If yes (Please state/elaborate your answer)
13. If you do have access to support systems how often do you receive/attend the support systems in place and are they compulsory or voluntary?
14. How effective are the available support systems to assist with the workload or stress levels that result from being part of the (POP/TRT/K9/Flying Squad) unit?
15. As a Police Officer under (POP/TRT/K9/Flying Squad) unit based on the years of service, what comparison/s do you have of the past and current support systems?

16. Does the “cowboy (men do not need to cry) approach apply to you? (Male based question)
17. Do you have further recommendations in relation to support systems for Police Officers under the (POP/TRT/K9/Flying Squad) unit? If yes, please state.

Abbreviations:
Public Order Policing (POP)
Tactical Response Team (TRT)
K9 (Dog Unit)
Flying Squad