

A CRIMINOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF POLICE CRIMINALITY

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SUMMARY

The primary objective of this research was to study and explain police criminality from a criminological point of view. Police criminality was addressed from a scientific perspective and this was achieved by using scientific measures and procedures including theoretical explanations and recognised research methodology.

The secondary objectives included the undertaking of a comprehensive literature study on police criminality in addition to conducting interviews with specialists in order to gain expert information from knowledgeable sources in the field of police criminality. Interviews conducted with police offenders addressed police criminality from the viewpoint of the individual offender.

The findings of the empirical study reflect significant individual and organisational factors. The individual factors highlighted characteristics such as power, greed, aggression, feelings of invincibility, gullibility, propensity to criminality and psychological factors including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which contributed to crimes committed by police members. Perhaps the most significant organisational contributors highlighted by this study related to managerial shortcomings. It is evident that police organisations with high levels of untrained, inexperienced and incompetent managers experience high levels of internal criminality. Poor supervision and the lack of corruption controls create an enabling environment for the perpetuation of police deviance.

Additional organisational factors that encourage criminality include negative aspects of police culture such as the code of silence, where police members are more apt to protecting corrupt colleagues than reporting them. The lack of discipline gives rise to insubordination and

familiarity, which encourages impunity. In the South African Police Service at present, the policy of Affirmative Action is causing widespread dissatisfaction and the lowering of morale amongst certain members. Inadequate recruitment and training do not prepare members adequately for their job and it literally allow the “worm into the apple.”

The researcher’s contribution to this study is an interventionist model, which contains essential recommendations primarily for the benefit of the South African Police Service. These include the expeditious implementation of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy and the creation of an independent investigation unit. Management shortcomings must be rectified and professionalism encouraged. Recruits need to be thoroughly vetted and ethics and integrity must be included in police training.

KEY TERMS

Police criminality; South African Police Service; Individual contributors to police criminality; Organisational contributors to police criminality, Police managerial shortcomings; Types of crimes; Policies and procedures; Recruitment; Training; Interventionist model.