

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: THE EXPERIENCES OF FORENSIC POLICE  
OFFICERS EXPOSED TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my mother and, more specifically, to my father posthumously. The couple played a tremendous role in the success of this academic achievement. Had it not been for their efforts, one wonders what could have happened – but thanks to their commitment for having brought me this far.

The work is further dedicated to the South African Police Service as a useful tool for enhancing the organisation's management of critical incidents.

But, most critically, an extension of this dedication points to the participants without whose sacrifice this work would not have been achieved. To them, I say, Bravo.

## DECLARATION

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Signature...



Date: 2022-01-11

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## DEFINITIONS

- Active coping** The active coping strategy presents a situation where an individual has the self-awareness of a stressful condition, applying personal internal capacity to resolve the situation.
- Coping** refers to cognitive and behavioural strategies that people use to deal with stressful situations or difficult demands, whether internal or external.
- Critical incident** any event that has an unusually powerful, negative impact on personnel.
- Critical** refers to someone or something that is extremely bad or dangerous.
- Emotion-focused strategy** regarded as an important strategy to alleviate stress.
- Forensic science** is a multifaceted discipline, drawing on various subject areas such as history, maths, technology, language and reasoning skills.
- Organisational citizenship behaviour** is performing an extra organisational duty that promotes the positive functioning of the organisation while also helping others.
- Policing** a set of processes with specific social functions.
- PTSD** (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a psychobiological syndrome that comprises an interrelated set of symptoms that cohere to form a prolonged stress reaction of trauma.
- Secondary trauma** is indirect exposure to trauma.

## ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
EHW	Employee Health and Wellness
EST	Ecological System Theory
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SAPS	South African Police Service
SENRIC	Senate Research and Innovation Committee
UNICEF	United Nation Children’s Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa

## ABSTRACT

**Background to the study:** Forensic police officers are exposed to critical incidents, and the exposure to critical incidents may differ, depending on the individual concern, leading to a traumatic situation that may require psychological intervention. Against this background, the study investigated the psychological effect of critical incidents on forensic police officers.

**Research method:** The study adopted a qualitative research approach in order to understand the experiences of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents and how they react to traumatic conditions after attending critical incidents. The type of qualitative research design adopted was a case study, which was used to describe the individual situation to identify key issues that could be analysed. The purposive sampling method was applied when selecting participants to help the researcher obtain participants who had been directly exposed to critical incidents and could relate their experiences very well during the interviews. Five forensic police officers were selected to participate in the study, and the sample included the 24 – 59 age group. All the participants had more than five years of experience in the forensic services division. Unstructured interviews were used to collect information from the participants about their experiences as forensic police officers.

**Theoretical framework:** The ecological system theory provides a holistic approach that encompasses a broader framework of the relationship forensic police officers have with their environment. This theory helped to understand participants' self-awareness, family relations, and participation in various groups of communities, and how that impacted a working environment that exposes individuals to critical incidents during the execution of activities and functions.

**Research findings:** As much as some of them felt a calling to become forensic police officers, we cannot overlook the fact that critical incidents have a negative impact on forensic police officers. Those who participated in the study indicated that they are exposed to the following types of critical incidents while attending crime scenes: suicide, murder, serious injury, advanced decomposed bodies, gunshot wounds, and death due to fire.

**Concluding remarks:** It is clear that exposure to critical incidents has negatively impacted forensic police officers, and there is a need for the South African Police Service (SAPS) to

provide enough support for them to cope well with the effects of critical incidents. This study was a platform for forensic police officers to share their experiences and will educate the public about the work of forensic police officers. The study will also become a referral for future research studies on the exposure to critical incidents of members of the SAPS.

**Keywords:** Forensic police officers, critical incidents, South African Police Service, policing and ecological system theory



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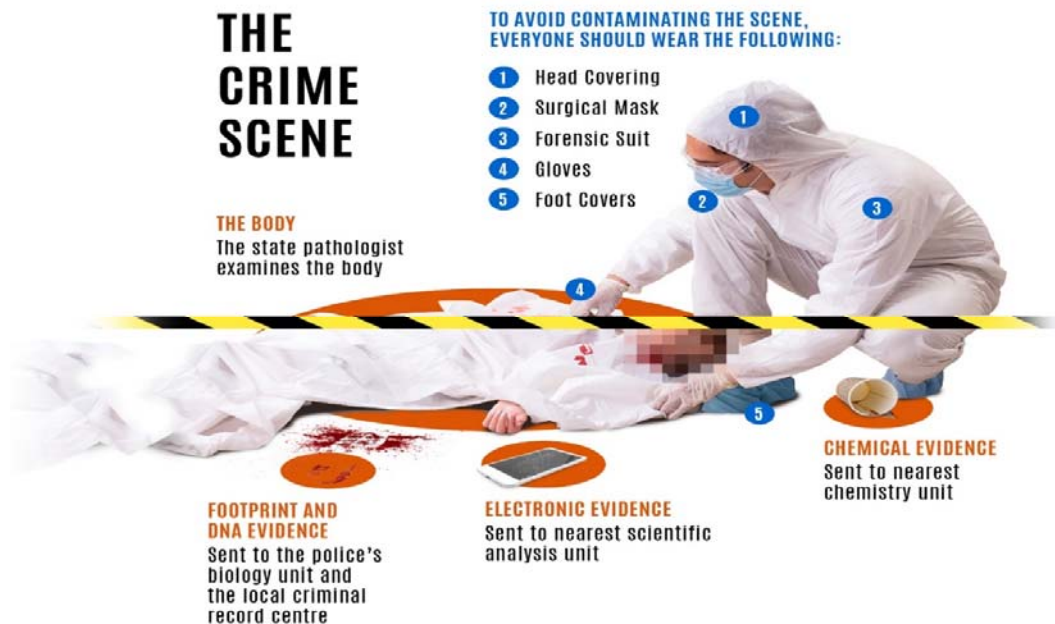
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## CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Overview of the study

Forensic police officials attending crime scenes are office-bound (people who spend most of their time in the office and are not deployed as field workers waiting for call logs). Since crime can be committed at any stage, forensic police officers are expected to be on standby and waiting for a call to attend to a crime scene. Before attending the crime scene, forensic police officers are supposed to recommend a request for a forensic fire scene investigation form (which captures information about the person requesting their attendance, the place where the crime scene occurred, and the background to the crime). In addition, the forensic crime scene manager ensures that a photographer documents the scene before anyone touches anything. Video documentation is used, and crime scene technicians make sketches (DNA Project Africa, 2014). The evidence on the crime scene may be traumatic, depending on the crime committed, as discussed in Chapter 4. The following picture shows what can happen on a crime scene:



**Figure 1.1:** The crime scene.

Source: DNA Project Africa, 2014

Figure 1.1 shows not only the work conducted by the forensic police officers on the crime scene but also that the scene requires various stakeholders to collaborate in collecting the evidence of the incident's cause. For example, the state pathologist examines the body; electronic evidence is sent for scientific analysis. Forensic police officers do not work alone when arriving at the crime scene. This supports the ecological system theory applied in this study. Forensic police officers are part of the ecological system. Pardeck (1988) contends that an ecological approach is suggested to understand normal challenges.

There is a need to consider the psychological, social, economic, political, and physical forces that influence behaviour. The forensic police officers require the assistance of detectives, psychologists, and medical doctors to compile compelling evidence against the crime perpetrators. However, forensic police officers also need psychological help because their exposure to crime scenes influences their life quality. Critical incidents have lasting effects on police officers, some of whom reported olfactory memories going back over 20 years (Mitchell & Everly, 2017). Crime scenes, such as the following, could be difficult for a forensic police officer to forget.

A community member found the decomposing bodies riddled with bullet holes. The police officers arrived at the scene and found them under a scorching sun, with some lying face down. They were discovered near a mine dump along Modderbee Street in Benoni ("Zamazama Turf War Fears", 2018).

# ACTUAL CRIME SCENE



TO AVOID  
CONTAMINATING  
THE SCENE,  
EVERYONE  
SHOULD WEAR  
THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 Head Covering
- 2 Surgical Mask
- 3 Forensic Suit
- 4 Gloves
- 5 Foot Covers

**Figure 1.2: Bodies discovered near a mine dump along Modderbee Street in Benoni.**

*Source: "Zama-zama Turf War Fears", 2018.*

## 1.2 Research problem

Forensic police officers enjoy their work, but this does not mean they are unaffected by critical incidents, such as arriving at a crime scene where a person was burned alive. This is a traumatic event, and exposure could have long-term effects on officers' well-being and affect their capacity to perform their duties. Adequate support is needed to manage the trauma caused by critical incidents.

## 1.3 Purpose of the study

This study aimed to understand the experiences of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents. It was, therefore, important to discover how these critical incidents impact their work performance and interpersonal relationships, such as with family and friends. This study intended to contribute knowledge on how forensic police officers could be assisted to manage the effects of critical incidents.



#### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

Objectives of the study were:

- To understand the duties of forensic police officers.
- To investigate the critical incidents faced by forensic police officers.
- To investigate how critical incidents, affect police officers.
- To understand the coping strategies of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents.
- To recommend how forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents can be supported.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

The following research questions, derived from the research objectives, guided the study

- What are the duties of forensic police officers?
- What are the critical incidents faced by forensic police officers?
- How do they affect forensic police officers?
- How do forensic police officers cope with critical incidents?
- How can forensic police officers be supported in dealing with the effects of critical incidents?

#### **1.6 Scope of the study**

This study focused on police officers employed within the Forensic Services division and exposed to critical incidents. Although the Forensic services division has staff who provide administrative support to forensic police officers, they were not part of the study because they do not attend crime scenes. The study intended to establish how forensic police officers are impacted by critical incidents and what kind of support, including psychological support, is required to help them to deal with the trauma of critical incidents.

#### **1.7 Significance of the study**

This study educates South Africans about the effects of critical incidents on forensic police officers. Although forensic police officers are paid for the work they do, it should be

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considered that these critical incidents harm their psychological well-being. This study could help the South African Police Service (SAPS) review its policies aimed at supporting forensic policies officers exposed to critical incidents. For instance, some forensic police officers use private psychologists outside the SAPS to assist them with trauma, which could indicate they have lost confidence in the psychologists within the SAPS. This study could be a reference for scholars investigating the experiences of forensic police officers.

### **1.8 Research setting: Forensic services division**

The Forensic services division is a national function with offices in various provinces. Lieutenant General HJ Senthumule currently heads it. The Forensic services division has 1825 employees within the head office there are 179 forensic police officers who attend critical incidents (crime scenes). The forensic police officers who attend crime scenes are constables, sergeants, warrant officers, captains and lieutenant colonels. The colonels are only expected to monitor and attend scenes if there is a need or shortage of staff. The employees who attend crime scenes are obliged to wear PPE (personal protective equipment) when attending crime scenes, both for safety and to prevent scene contamination. The attire for employees attending crime scenes includes forensic services overall, boots, safety gloves, hard hurt and musk in case of dust. The choice of head office as a research setting was informed by reasons of proximity and accessibility: The researcher is employed at head office and resides in Pretoria, which makes the study easier and more cost-effective.

### **1.8 Chapter outline**

**Chapter 1** introduces this study by indicating the background of the study, the research problem, and the research setting, including the study's significance, aims and scope.

**Chapter 2** reviews the literature related to this study and outlines its theoretical framework.

**Chapter 3** indicates the methodology, design, data collection techniques, ethical considerations, and data credibility concerns of this study.

**Chapter 4** presents the findings and discussions.

**Chapter 5** presents the limitations, recommendations, and conclusions of the study.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND POLICING

### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the background of the study and its purpose. This chapter presents the literature reviewed on critical incidents and policing. The ecological system theory is also discussed to enhance the understanding of how forensic police officers experience critical incidents. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2020), the concept *critical* refers to “someone or something that is extremely bad or dangerous”. For example, when someone was hit by a car and body parts are scattered. Merriam-Webster (2020) defines the concept of *incident* as “something unpleasant happened”. For instance, a 28-year-old female, Tshegofatso Pule from Soweto, was found stabbed and hanging from a tree in Johannesburg when she was eight months pregnant. This was a shocking incident, causing trauma for observers (Makhetha & Dlamini, 2020, June 18).

### 2.2 Defining critical incidents

Thomas (2011) defined a critical incident as “an event that overwhelms one’s coping mechanism” (p. 27). Those events are horrific for a human to cope with daily. Critical incidents may include murder, rape, homicide, domestic violence, robbery, and suicide. This study embraces critical crime-related incidents, such as the following, reported by SowetanLIVE:

A shooting spree at the Jabulani hostel complex in Soweto has claimed the lives of six people and left a seventh person wounded. Captain Kay Makubela said on Tuesday police are searching for at least three suspects. The shooting occurred on Monday night at about 11 pm. Preliminary investigations have revealed the victims were in a shack within the Jabulani hostel precinct when three men armed with handguns and rifles started shooting at the structure from different positions. Five people died at the scene and a sixth person succumbed to wounds sustained during the attack. A seventh victim is receiving treatment in hospital. The motive for the killing is unknown at this stage, Makubela said (“Six People Killed as Gunmen Open Fire”, 9 June 2020).

This story points to a critical incident as it relates shooting, injuries, and multiple deaths. All these elements qualify as characteristics of critical incidents. According to crime statistics of

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2019/20 released by the SAPS, murder cases increased by 303 from 21 022 in 2018/19 to 21 325 in the 2019/20 fiscal year. On average, 58 people were murdered daily. The crime statistics indicated that sexual offences increased to 53 293 in 2019/20 from 52 420 in the previous fiscal year. Most of these were cases of rape against women and children. This confirms the high rate of gender-based violence in South Africa (Africa Check, 2020).

## **2.2.1 Distinct types of critical incidents**

Police officers may be exposed to critical incidents that are not normal to human experience while executing their daily duties. Those critical incidents are mostly unexpected, and these experiences may have a psychological impact on police officers and the community in general. Various authors have classified critical incidents as natural, man-made and accidental.

### **2.2.1.1 Natural critical incidents**

Natural critical incidents are beyond human prior knowledge or means of control. According to Copes (2005), this can constitute a source of *mobilisation stress*, which is the psychological capability to process incoming and stored information to enable adaptive survival responses to critical incidents. This is because police officers respond immediately, before an incident can be identified as a disaster or terrorism, and this can lead to psychological effects reactions to police officers than to counterparts who responded after the nature of the incident has been defined.

An example of a natural critical incident is a tsunami, which is a catastrophic ocean wave, usually caused by a submarine earthquake, landslide or volcanic eruption. The tsunami that happened in the Indian Ocean in 2004 killed more than 100 000 people and pounded the city into rubble. It was declared one of the deadliest disasters in modern history and left 73 police officers dead (Reid, 2019). This can have psychological effects, such as anxiety, emotional instability, and trauma and stress reactions, not only on police officers but also on the community.

### **2.2.1.2 Man-made critical incidents**

The second category of critical incidents is man-made, and some of them involve violent crimes, negligence that leads to loss of life, and human abuse. Examples of violent crimes are shooting, murder and rape (Gumani, 2012). Negligence leading to loss of life may include poorly built constructions, like the guest house at the Synagogue, Church of All Nations (SCOAN) in Nigeria that collapsed to the ground on 12 September 2014, causing the deaths of 115 people, including 81 South Africans. South African forensic police officers collected blood samples from the victims' families to identify bodies (PoliticsWeb, 2014).

The most common man-made critical incident in South Africa emanating from human abuse is gender-based violence (GBV), which has recently led to femicide and abuse of children by men. Some cases of GBV involved police officers and, unfortunately, also led to the loss of life. An example is the case of Sergeant Munyai, who killed his wife and then turned the gun on himself (Maromo, 2021).

### **2.2.1.3 Accidental critical incident**

Critical incidents in the third category occur by accident. They are not planned but may also lead to injuries and loss of life. This type of critical incident includes car and aeroplane crashes, accidental death during the execution of duties, and loss of human life due to faulty electrical cabling (Moad, 2011).

### **2.2.2 Situational factors**

Lewis (1996) identified the situational factors and predisposing factors affecting victims' reactions to critical incidents. The following are situational factors:

- **Warning:** This is where a person is not emotionally prepared to be exposed to critical incidents. One example of these critical incidents is an earthquake. Earthquakes occur unexpectedly and can cause traumatisation.
- **Nature of the crisis:** This is the reaction after a natural disaster and human-induced circumstances determined by the person on how to manage trauma. For instance, man-made situations, such as rape, shooting and suicide, have greater negative effects

than a natural disaster, such as a hurricane. In this situational factor, victims feel guilt and blame themselves for not preventing the incident.

- **The severity of the crisis:** Lewis (1996) and TerreBlanche and Van Wyk (2014) emphasised that there is a link between the severity of a critical incident and its effect. People encounter various kinds of critical incidents and differ in how they manage them. For example, some people are too weak to manage the trauma, whereas others are strong in handling it, despite the severity; this differs according to people's perception of the incident. The more often a person is exposed to severe critical incidents, the more they perceive a life threat, and the higher the chance of their being affected psychologically.
- **Physical proximity:** Traumatic outcomes become more severe if the victim is directly exposed to a critical incident and close to the person exposed to a critical incident; for instance, in the case involving Kiernan Jarryd Forbes, whose girlfriend committed suicide in his presence and who remains to tell the story of what happened (Makhafula, 2021).
- **Feelings of guilt:** Bevan (2014) indicated that a feeling of guilt results from regrets about the actions taken. For instance, if a person is responsible for interpersonal violence like rape, they are more likely to be severely affected by the incident. If a person has committed the crime of rape, that action of rape may be on the perpetrator's mind for a long time and may cause an obsession about what the perpetrator did.
- **Time:** The more critical incidents a person experiences, the more likely they are to be traumatised (TerreBlanche & Van Wyk, 2014). If a person is likely to be exposed to critical incidents, the person will encounter trauma triggers that may cause flashbacks. Triggers include sights, smells, sounds and thoughts that remind them of the traumatic incidents. For example, if a person has been assaulted, seeing a news report of an assault can cause their body to react as though they are on the scene of the assault again.
- **Psychological proximity:** The critical incident leads to stress, overwhelming a person's sense of self-control (Thomas, 2011). Some people experience psychological challenges due to their exposure to critical incidents. People encounter critical

incidents differently with different crime scenes; even the psychological impact of attending critical incidents differs, depending on the person. People exposed to critical incidents may experience fear, anger, recurrent distressing thoughts, guilt, depression, anxiety, bad dreams, irritability and general hyperarousal. If all these cannot be treated, in the long term, they can lead to conditions such as PTSD, an anxiety disorder, or major depressive disorder, and some may practise substance abuse at a later stage (TerreBlanche & Van Wyk, 2014).

- **Concurrent stressors:** Concurrent stressors are associated with simultaneous levels of burnout (Shirom & Melamed, 2006). In other words, this is the multiple occurrence of various stressors simultaneously, and the stress experienced as a result may lead to trauma. For example, people exposed to critical incidents may be involved in substance abuse, which can lead to gender-based violence (Ratele, 2016).

### 2.2.3 Phases of trauma

A critical incident, by its nature, is a traumatic experience. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the phases of trauma in this study before discussing the methods and mechanisms by which traumatic situations may be addressed for forensic police officers who are exposed to critical incidents in the execution of their daily duties and functions. Most forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents suffer from psychological challenges, such as depression and other forms of trauma, including PTSD. Some of them end up being referred to psychiatric institutions, and others are engaged in an extravagant lifestyle that leads to their spending unnecessarily and contributes to family disputes. Explaining the phases of trauma will contribute to the development of intervention mechanisms that will alleviate some of the challenges brought about by exposure to critical incidents. Lewis (1996) described four phases of trauma.

1. **Pre-impact phase:** This is the moment of warning by which a person learns of the development of an incident. It is the stage when a person decides whether they stay and deal with the situation or abscond from it (Lewis, 1996). For example, police officers who receive a call regarding a car accident that has led to multiple deaths may choose whether to attend the scene based on their emotional readiness or psychological preparedness.

2. **Impact phase:** This phase happens immediately after the critical incident. Flashbacks to the incident can last for a few days for a person who was involved in or saw the critical incident. In this phase, a person exposed to a critical incident may experience shock, numbness, feelings of helplessness, and confusion, disorientation, and irrationality (Lewis, 1996).
3. **Recoil phase:** Though the psychological effects of the critical incident differ for individuals, responses of the person exposed to a critical incident in the recoil phase are anger, sadness, rejection, frustration and guilt (Lewis, 1996). This phase happens shortly after the impact phase. It can begin from 18 to 24 hours afterwards and may last from three weeks to three months. Lewis (1996) also termed the recoil phase a *post impact phase* and divided it into three sub-phases: honeymoon, disillusionment, and reconstruction. In the honeymoon sub-phase, a person feels relieved they survived the incident. In the disillusionment sub-phase, a blame story starts, and victims of critical incidents tend to make wrong personal decisions, such as resigning from work or divorcing; the person feels rejected and frustrated in their personal life. The reconstruction sub-phase is also known as the reintegration phase.
4. **Reintegration phase:** According to Lewis (1996), a person takes responsibility for recovering after exposure to the critical incident in the reintegration phase. The process in this phase can be slow; therefore, a victim needs support to recover socially, psychologically, and spiritually. For instance, a police officer exposed to critical incidents acknowledges the psychological effect it has had and identifies the need for help by professionals and fellow officers.

According to Lewis (1996), in the reintegration phase, a person takes responsibility for recovering after exposure to the critical incident. The process in this phase can be slow, therefore a victim needs support to recover socially, psychologically, and spiritually. For instance, police officers exposed to critical incidents need to acknowledge the psychological effect the exposure has had and admit the need for help by professionals and fellow officers.



### 2.3 Symptoms and diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder

Due to continuous exposure to the trauma associated with crime and violence, and dealing with victims daily, members of the South African Police Services often become traumatised and are, therefore, likely to have the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The symptoms of PTSD include that a person wants revenge on the perpetrator in a crime scene of child murder (Lewis, 1996). PTSD is a “psychobiological syndrome that comprises an interrelated set of symptoms that cohere to form a prolonged stress reaction of trauma” (Wilson, 2004, p. 11). The American Psychiatric Association (2000) listed these symptoms of PTSD based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* :

- **The person was exposed to traumatic events:**
  - The person experienced or witnessed violence, death or serious injury.
  - The person exposed to these events feels helplessness, fear or horror.
- **The traumatic event persists in the form of one or more of the following:**
  - recurrent, intrusive, and distressing recollections of the event, which may include images, thoughts and perceptions
  - recurrent distressing dreams of the event
  - acting as though the traumatic event is occurring, with a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations and flashbacks
  - intense psychological distress at exposure to internal and external cues that symbolise or resemble what happened during the time of the traumatic incident
  - physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise an aspect of the traumatic incidents.
- **Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, and numbing of responsiveness, as follows:**
  - sense of a foreshortened future; for example, the person does not believe they can have children or marriage, among other things
  - efforts to avoid thoughts, emotions and conversations that include trauma
  - efforts to avoid activities, places, or people reminding them of the trauma

- restricted range of affection; the person fails to give love because they do not feel loved.
- a feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
- inability to remember the important aspects of the trauma
- cancelling of all activities involving participation.
- **Persistent symptoms of increased stimulation as indicated by:**
  - sleeping difficulty
  - easily irritated to anger
  - concentration difficulties
  - hypervigilance
  - exaggerated startle response.

Police officers are exposed to critical incidents in the daily execution of their duties. Most police officers display signs of PTSD. Forensic policing, by its nature, comprises horrific events classified as critical incidents. A correlation, therefore, exists between critical incidents and PTSD, indicating a causality principle influencing the PTSD critical incident.

#### **2.4 Effects of critical incidents**

The trauma experienced by the individuals exposed to the police officer attending critical incidents is termed *vicarious* or *secondary trauma*, which is indirect exposure to trauma (Territo & Sewell, 1999). Barnes and Figley (2005) emphasised that the police officer's family is exposed to trauma through knowledge activated a systemic response to assist.

Some police officers exposed to critical incidents engage in domestic violence. A 46-year-old police officer killed his wife and child (Madumo, 2015). The crime happened on Saturday night, 12 September 2015, in Westview, Pretoria West. A neighbour discovered it after hearing gunshots. The wife and daughter were lying dead in a pool of blood. This emphasises that critical incidents influence domestic violence in police officers' families. In the above scenario, though, it is not clear whether a critical incident was the trigger. A high probability exists that police officers are exposed to critical incidents in their duties and that some cannot cope.

Critical incidents can lead to suicide. Police officers who feel they cannot deal with psychological pain any more usually solve the problem through suicide rather than reaching out for assistance (Violanti, Owens, McCanlies, Fekedulegn and Andrew, 2018). According to Miller (2006), the number of police officers who commit suicide is three times greater than the number of police officers killed in the line of duty. Thomas (2011) believes that police commit suicide to relieve trauma. The trauma they experience indicates challenges within their families, media, prosecutors, peers, and pressure in the aftermath of the incident. Baumeister (1990) identified the following six stages of suicide:

1. **Failing expectations:** During this stage, an individual fails to attain basic expectations. These expectations are not self-expectations but indicate social pressures (Baumeister, 1990). For example, learners fall victim to this stage as they cannot meet parents' expectations for them to progress to the next grade. According to Perkins (2016), cowboys (police officers) do not cry. This does not allow police officers to vent. The challenges they are experiencing in their lives keep piling up. The challenges might relate to family, work or the community. All this may overwhelm them until they feel suicide is a good solution. Perkins further indicated that the Marikana Commission of Enquiry caused a high prevalence of depression and post-traumatic stress and these are well known for causing suicide among South African police. Faull (2018) saw domestic violence as one of the causes of suicide for police officers within the SAPS. Most of the suicides are achieved by gunshots.
2. **Attributions of self:** People suffering from low self-esteem may be suicide casualties because of their feelings of inadequacy and unfair comparisons to others. When individuals feel that they perform less well than others, they might develop negative thoughts, which might lead to suicide (Baumeister, 1990). Faull (2018) mentioned that three police officers killed other officers during arguments. The incidents might be the results of low self-esteem because Graves (2009) highlighted that low self-esteem might cause people to make mistakes and be reckless. In other words, the police officers' reckless decisions to kill other officers led to their losing their jobs and being jailed. After committing a crime, most police officers commit suicide rather than be arrested (Lindsay & Lester, 2004).

3. **High self-awareness:** Self-centred people who think the world revolves around them are also potential victims of negative outcomes. These characters always think the best of themselves when compared to others and require acknowledgement and recognition. Should a reward, such as acknowledgement and recognition, not be attained, they question the world and accuse people around them of ingratitude (Baumeister, 1990). A lack of gratification from others could lead to suicide.
4. **Negative affect:** Individuals identify many faults in their lives. This may be in their physical, emotional, social, and economic outlook. Such a state of recognition leads people to devalue themselves and feel a lack of self-worth. Such people may fall victim to suicide. The example here is provided by Wellington (2010), who mentioned the police officer who, before shooting himself, stated that the people around him were not whom he thought they were. This statement illustrates a lack of self-worth by the officer under study.
5. **Cognitive deconstruction:** Individuals deconstruct the knowledge perceived by the general public. A shorter period is perceived as long; common truth is perceived as incorrect; common knowledge is interpreted according to the conditions of such people (Baumeister, 1990). When a person reaches this stage, unless psychological services are procured, they are a danger to themselves, which may lead to suicide.
6. **Disinhibition:** A person starts to be more irrational and unreasonable. They accept drastic measures as the mode of life. In this stage, they become passive; they resign from social activities and disengage in areas that normally would have attracted their attention (Baumeister, 1990). For instance, they will go to a restaurant and order food to eat but, when the waiter brings food, they decide not to eat any more and leave without payment.

## 2.5 Coping strategies and critical incidents

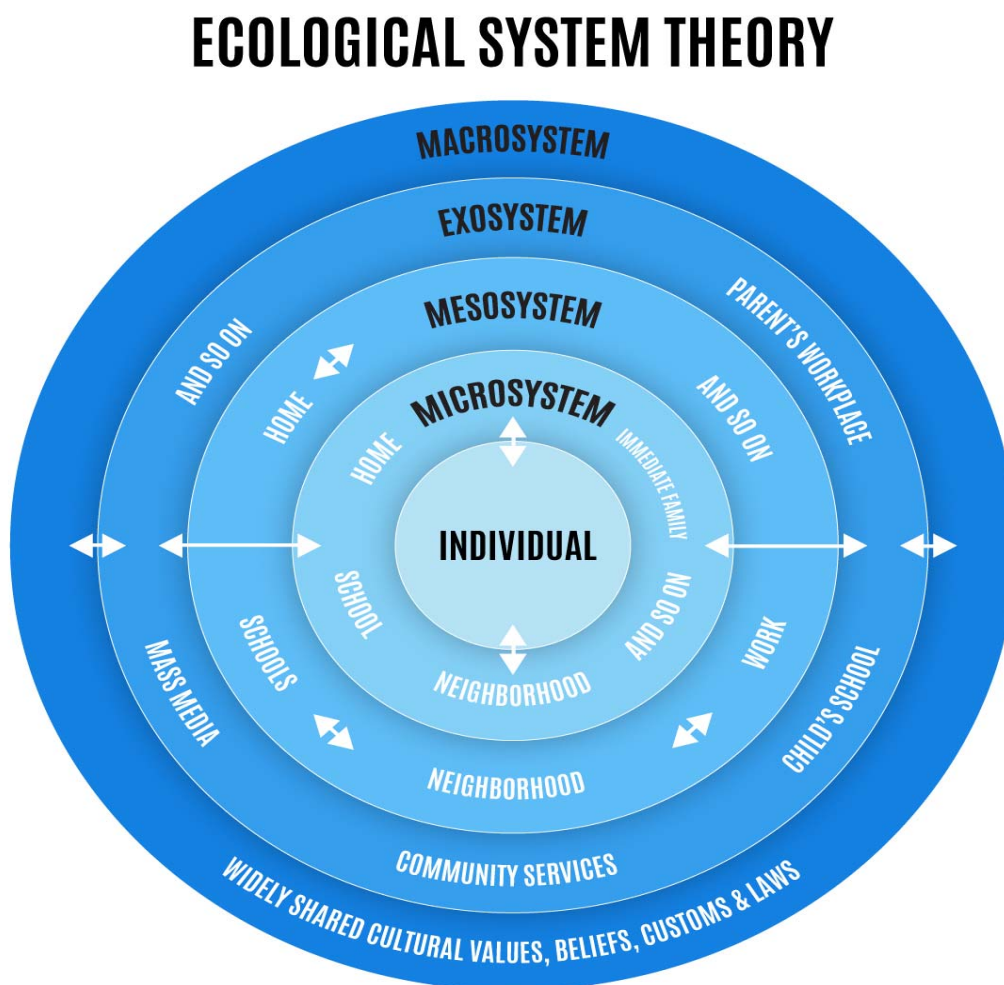
According to Ackerman (2020), "*Coping* refers to cognitive and behavioural strategies that people use to deal with stressful situations or difficult demands, whether they are internal or external" (p. 1). The effectiveness of coping strategies is determined by the physical and psychological wellness of the person exposed to critical incidents and how the affected person handles the pressure (Sarafino, 2012). It also requires knowledge and skills adequate to deal

with various situations (Spriddle, 2004). The diverse coping strategies to alleviate the effects of stress have been identified as follows:

- **Emotion-focused strategy:** An emotion-focused strategy is regarded as an important strategy to alleviate stress. Sometimes humans cannot change themselves due to certain circumstances; therefore, they focus on something that they can control. For example, death – a person cannot resolve a death; the only way to resolve it is to ignore it and move on with life by concentrating on other critical concerns. With this emotion-focused strategy, people focus on their emotions rather than the problem (Ackerman, 2020).
- **Problem-focused strategy:** Using this strategy, a person deals with the problem itself and its causes. It requires proactive and reactive coping to alleviate or deal with stress (Straub, 2002). McLeod (2009) emphasised that the problem-focused strategy is a long-term solution, managing the cause of the problem. It is not effective for all individuals; it is ineffective in situations where it is beyond the individual's control to remove the source of stress. For example, a person cannot use a problem-focused strategy for a feeling of loss. It is suitable for challenges, such as exams and work-based stressors (McLeod, 2009).
- **Avoidance coping:** In this strategy, there are no active attempts to reduce or eliminate the problem; people pay no attention to the problem. They employ denial and distance themselves instead of dealing with the problem (Ackerman, 2020). This strategy emphasises the fact that individuals do not want to pay attention to resolving the effect of critical incidents. Although they identify the challenges facing them, they choose to avoid dealing with those challenges.
- **Active coping:** The active coping strategy presents a situation where an individual has self-awareness about a stressful condition and applies their internal capacity to resolve the situation (Ackerman, 2020). This coping strategy implies awareness of the challenges, and the self determination to resolve them and internalise the means of finding solutions.

## 2.6 Ecological system theory

The developmental psychologist, Bronfenbrenner (1979), developed the ecological system theory. He was a pioneer in examining the influence of family, the economy, and political structures on developing a child into adulthood. He was co-founder of the popular Head Start programme for disadvantaged pre-school children. The ecological system theory explains how diverse types of environmental systems influence human development. The theory identifies five hierarchical systems defining the relationship between an individual and the environment; each system is discussed in this theory. The following is a diagram of ecological system theory:



**Figure 2.1:** Ecological system theory.

*Source:* Zofia (2020, n.p.)

### **2.6.1 Nanosystem (individual)**

The system concentrates on the inner content of an individual, such as historical genetics, inner world, temperament, neurobiology, and personality. These are the individual reference through which the world is perceived. The focus here is on the things that determine the individual's character. For example, Hiriyappa (2012) indicated that personality defines an individual, and these factors determine it:

### **2.6.2 Microsystem**

Blok (2012) defines a microsystem as “a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with, and activity in, the immediate environment” (p. 57). An individual is exposed to close family, extended family, peers, and close friends; behaviour patterns are shaped, and a chain of reactions to the system is made.

### **2.6.3 Mesosystem**

The mesosystem “comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person” (Blok, 2012, p. 57). The mesosystem takes the shape of the interconnection of various microsystems, attending to broader community groups, such as churches, civic associations, the working environment, school, and the neighbourhood. An individual develops a creed, belief patterns, allegiance, and other kinds of conscience.

### **2.6.4 Macrosystem**

According to Blok (2012), the macrosystem “consists of the overarching pattern of micro, meso and exo-systems characteristic of a culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options embedded in each of these broader systems” (p. 58). Larger communities are established in the macrosystem, where cultural norms and values

are established, and social status defined, creating an individual identity with specific conditions (Blok, 2012).

### **2.6.5 Exosystem**

Exo-system “comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but where events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting where the developing person lives” (Blok, 2012, p. 58). In this system, an individual is exposed to external environmental factors that they do not have control over. Despite a lack of control, these factors have a serious effect and may influence an individual and change behavioural patterns (Blok, 2012).

### **2.6.6 Chronosystem**

Chronosystem refers to “change or consistency over time not only in the person's characteristics but also of the environment where that person lives” (Blok, 2012, p. 58). This system presents the time factor and changes happening in an individual's life course, and the family, or changes within the community. Depending on when those changes occur, such changes may lead to a reaction different from the one in the past (Blok, 2012).

### **2.6.7 Application of the ecological system theory in the study**

Most theories developed to intervene during traumatic events focus on individuals and how their traumatic events must be dealt with. The ecological system theory deviates from this traditional norm as it warrants intervention to be broader and engage the environment of traumatised persons. The theory emphasises the importance of recognising and understanding the cultural, social, and physical environment when developing an intervention to assist the victims of critical incidents. According to Herbst and Reitsma (2016), the model offers a good framework for counsellors to approach their clients. This theory provides intervention with exposure to trauma and requires that service providers consider the various societal systems when developing intervention strategies for the trauma of critical incidents.



Cavaiola and Colford (2018) indicated that, when assisting people exposed to critical incidents, professionals must remember that critical incidents do not occur in a vacuum. Therefore, responses to critical incidents cannot be understood without appreciating the victims' families, social milieus, community resources, cultural backdrops, and how individuals, systems, and the environment interact. Smit, Minnaar and Schnetler (2004) emphasise that police officers are recruited from the community; therefore, they are historically, traditionally and legally citizens or members of the community. However, members of the community view police as different from the community, which encourages the 'us' and 'them' syndrome. A good relationship between the police and the community is needed for the community to understand the frustrations of the police and for police officers to understand the needs and expectations of the community (Smit et al., 2004).

The following section focuses on policing. Some of the factors explored in this section are how police officers are trained, types of forensic police officers, and the role of the Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Act, 2003 (Act 37 of 2003).

## **2.7 Conceptualising policing**

Smit et al. (2004) defined policing as "a set of processes with specific social functions" (p. 11). It is a universal requirement of any social order and may be conducted by various processes and institutional arrangements (Smit et al., 2004). Policing in democratic countries is guided by a legal framework that is regulated by acts and government policies. The South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act 68 of 1995) regulates the SAPS. The main aim of the act is to provide for the establishment, organisation, regulation, and control of the South African Police Service. It also provides for matters in connection with the service.

Smit et al. (2004) emphasise that policing in South Africa is a people-oriented service. It is a service for the community by the community, with an emphasis on the fundamental rights of people residing in South Africa. Policing in South Africa involves a consultative approach where the community and unions are stakeholders. It is a community-service-oriented police service aligned with values and principles, such as transparency, accountability, impartiality, and professionalism. This elicits the need for mechanisms, such as community police fora and other civilian involvement in policing matters (Gqada, 2004).

### **2.7.1 Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Act, 2013**

The importance of the Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Act, 2013, is:

- to provide for taking specified bodily samples from certain categories of persons for forensic DNA analysis
- to protect the rights of women and children in taking DNA samples
- to further regulate proof of certain facts by an affidavit or certificate
- to add to the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 (No 51 of 1977), a Schedule 8 of offences regarding which DNA samples must be taken.

The Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Act, 2013, does not indicate how police officers should attend a crime scene. However, the SAPS (2014) document stipulates the procedures to be followed by police officers attending a crime scene:

- The police officer must make sure that the scene is secured.
- The integrity and originality of evidence and exhibits must be protected and guaranteed.
- It must be possible for a thorough and undisturbed investigation to occur at the crime scene.
- The collection of exhibits, leads and evidence must be coordinated and maximised.
- All investigation support resources must be coordinated.

The crime scene must remain under the control of the SAPS for the period determined by the crime scene manager to ensure that the investigation is conducted thoroughly while safety is ensured on the scene.

It is imperative for forensic police officers attending crime scenes to acquaint themselves with the procedures for attending a crime scene. These are key in identifying the actual crime scene and evidence collected. This evidence would be necessary during investigations and for the conclusion of successful prosecution. For example, in the Senzo Meyiwa case, there is no clear record suggesting proper adherence to the procedures for attending a crime scene outlined in the procedure manual. However, newspaper reports suggest non-compliance in the investigation. One area worth noting is the report by Ngoepe (2019), suggesting that the neighbour had cleaned the crime scene before the arrival of the police. Be that as it may,

there is no indication that the neighbour was arrested, even though he or she obstructed the crime scene procedure.

### **2.7.2 Training of police officers in South Africa**

Cooke (2020) indicated that all police officers are employed under the South African Police Act, 1995 (No 68 of 1995), and the work of police officers must focus on crime prevention, crime investigation, and apprehending a suspected criminal. According to Cooke, the training for South African police officers is tough, and not everyone passes it. The SAPS training comprises six months at SAPS colleges: three months for theoretical study and three months for practical study. After six months at the college, six months' training is required at one of the police stations as a student constable. A student constable works in a community-based capacity while gaining experience in dealing with the public and learning the SAPS basics.

After the student constable stage, another 12 months' training is required as a member of the SAPS, dealing with police scenarios and functioning as a qualified member of the SAPS. According to Phillips (2011), the SAPS culture controls how police rationalise their behaviour and how they observe their work and fellow police members. In describing the transformation agenda of the South African Police Service culture, Malan (1997) identified three distinct phases to be interlinked:

- **Rationalisation** was a phase that established compliance with the constitutional requirements of establishing national and provincial administrative structures.
- **Amalgamation** was a phase that brought together the police agents that existed before 1994 into a single national police service. Among the amalgamated agents were those from the Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana, and Ciskei.
- **Change**, the third phase, became the core whose objectives were to be realised after a long time because it dealt with change. Among the focus areas was a service delivery module that emphasised transparency, accountability, and professionalism. There was a need to turn the service into a community-centric organisation. Members of the SAPS are inclined to be accustomed to the understanding that their role is to protect and to provide a safe and secure environment for the community.

In line with the third phase Malan (1997) identified, the SAPS (2010) document classified its organisational culture as comprising socialisation, customs, and *dos* and *don'ts*. This study emphasised customs. SAPS customs are classified into orders, paramilitary bureaucracy, identification, and solidarity. When dealing with orders, police trainees are tutored to understand the concept of obedience to rules, regulations, and SAPS standards. This is conducted so that trainees will understand that deviation from the set standard will cause punitive measures or retribution by other officials.

Orders require submission and adherence to command from the supervisor (Steyn & De Vries, 2007). The SAPS is a security institution providing services to the community, so an element of military culture or military style is unavoidable. Among the military elements of the SAPS are a uniform, rank consciousness, and submission to positions rather than ideas. Ranks play a significant role in the execution of SAPS activities (Gqada, 2004).

As part of police culture, identity plays a significant role. A symbol of identification in the SAPS is the organisational emblem, and individuals are identified by the display of name tags (recognised in the *batho pele* principles as being courteous), their uniform and colours (SAPS, 2010).

Inherent in the execution of duties by police officers developing friendliness and compassion for one another, creating a strong bond. Police officers are exposed to confrontational situations, such as attacks from mass media, dissatisfied comments by the public, and crime perpetrators' evil intrigues. These circumstances strengthen solidarity among police officers. This solidarity becomes the main pillar characterising the police culture globally (Steyn & De Vries, 2007).

### **2.7.3 Diverse types of forensic police officer**

The following are the types of forensic police officer:

- **Forensic drug analysts:** These help in detecting and interpreting drugs and poisons for legal purposes. When analysing drugs, the person needs to make sure that the analysis is extensive and to consider both legal and illicit substances (Bertino, 2008). For example, if a person has been found with "illegal drugs", the drugs will be analysed to check if they are indeed drugs and what kind of drugs they are.

- **DNA forensic biologists:** The purpose of this unit is to examine and analyse all matter or material of biological origin, including any living organism or part thereof, to determine its nature and origin. Thus, any issue or bodily fluids or similar samples are examined (Baxter, 2015). For example, if there is a murder crime scene, the investigator will collect evidence like semen or skin cells (on cigarette butts, drinking straws, drinking vessels, or tools used) for DNA analysis by biologists within Forensic Services.
- **Forensic anthropologists:** These officers collect and analyse human skeletal remains to help identify victims and reconstruct the events surrounding their deaths. They determine sex, age, stature and general physical condition from bones. For instance, when the bones of an unknown person are discovered, attempts are first made to establish what kind of person they were: female or male, old or young, white or black. After finding the answer, they will work on identifying the victim (Bertino, 2008).
- **Fire or arson investigators:** The fire investigators perform their duties immediately after firefighters, searching for the point of origin of the fire, which can provide clues about the cause of the fire, by collecting several evidence samples (fire debris) from the scene (Brown & Davenport, 2012). For instance, if a family is burned in a house, fire investigators need to find out whether the incident was a suicide or murder.
- **Crime scene investigators:** These officers implement a process whereby positive attitude, skills, knowledge, insight, investigation methodology and techniques are applied to identify crimes and criminals. It involves collecting, preserving, and documenting all evidence from the crime scene. The crime scene investigators are also responsible for taking photographs to capture, record and reconstruct the scene (Bertino, 2008). For example, if a robbery is committed, the crime scene investigator will reconstruct the crime scene, collect evidence such as fingerprints and footprints, and take photos.
- **Firearm ballistics experts:** Forensic ballistics is a scientific way of examining firearms and ammunition. This section of the Forensic Police department also conducts the so-called “physical-match” comparisons, which entail comparing separate articles to determine whether they were previously part of the same whole (Baxter, 2015). This comparison can be extremely useful to the investigator in establishing a link between

a suspect and a crime scene. For example, if a person is dead because of a gunshot, the ballistics expert will need to determine whether the crime was a suicide or the person was murdered. The hole created by the ammunition will show this.

The South African forensic services in the SAPS are well advanced. They have all the components mentioned above. However, due to the different nature of their operations, not all of them attend crime scenes. For instance, forensic drug analysts and DNA forensic biologists perform specialised functions whose main purpose is to provide information that may result in the conclusion of specific investigations and impact analysis. Anthropologists will help in discovering decomposed bodies and finalising identification. While their function is closely connected to that of the biologists, in that some of the body parts they find may have to be DNA tested, they are the ones to recover those bodies. For this study, the focus is on the crime scene investigators, who perform investigations and are available at every scene to present accurate images of the scene as exhibits during prosecution.

#### **2.7.4 Difference between forensic police officers and detectives**

It should be noted that both forensic police officers and detectives are called to attend a crime scene. However, their duties when they arrive at the crime scene differ, and Table 2.1 presents the differences between forensic police officers and detectives (Petraco & Sherman, 2006; Williams, 2015).

Table 2.1:

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DETECTIVE & FORENSIC POLICE OFFICER

### DETECTIVES

-  No area of specialisation
-  Attend any crime scene
-  Require police training and detective training
-  Uncover the truth through interviewing witnesses and informants
-  Secure and examine the scene and request a forensic police officer for further handling
-  May testify in a court of law using statements from witnesses

### POLICE OFFICERS

-  Area of specialisation
-  Attend crime scene determined by the scene
-  Require a bachelor's degree in forensic-related areas
-  Uncover the truth through physical and natural science
-  Examine and analyse the evidence collected from the crime scene
-  May testify in a court of law using object evidence

### 2.8 Chapter summary

The literature review was divided into two sections. The first part concentrated on concept definition leading to an understanding of a critical incident and its effect on police officers' performance. The second part of the literature review concentrated on the policy documents providing a regulatory framework for the functioning of police officers. The areas examined included police officers' training, police culture and the act that regulates policing.

The following chapter focuses on the methodology of the study.

## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The literature review and ecological system theory in Chapter 2 contributed to a clear understanding of how forensic police officers experience critical incidents. Chapter 3 focuses on the research method that was used to conduct this research study in order to answer the research questions in Chapter 1. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and face-to-face interviews enabling conversations with forensic police officers, allowing them to explain how they experience critical incidents and cope with the related trauma. Some of the topics covered in Chapter 3 are research paradigms, qualitative research designs, sample selection, data analysis and research ethics.

### 3.2 Qualitative research paradigms

DeCarlo (2018) defined a *paradigm* as a “way of viewing the world and a framework from which to understand the human experience” (p. 144). This simply means that people see things that other people encounter in everyday life; however, they see them differently, depending on their assumptions, concepts, norms, values, and practices that establish their way of viewing reality in the world. It is a system of thinking about perceived reality in the world. An example is how people view same-sex attraction: Usually, this may constitute parallel perceptions, where some may perceive it as sinful, while others view it as a natural phenomenon. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) identified the following research paradigms:

- **Critical paradigm:** a paradigm in social science research focused on power, inequality, and social change. An example is political contestation, which is a broad concept that may include different political belief systems within society. These belief systems can generally be classified into either communist or capitalist theories, and can be further broken down to the classical contestations of political parties within a democratic establishment. For instance, in South Africa, we have political parties that contest for power.
  - **Social constructivist paradigm:** a paradigm based on the idea that social context and interaction frame our realities. In social constructivism, researchers seek to understand how people make sense of their daily lives within their environment and
-



solve their social problems. Adom et al. (2016) indicated that people construct their knowledge and understanding through experiencing things and reflecting on them. Those experiences can be learned through culture, context, beliefs, and religion that can be accumulated from one generation to another and can also change from time to time. People construct their new knowledge and understanding through social interaction within their particular community and integrate it with what they already know. According to Kim (2014), social constructivism can be understood through three assumptions:

- The first assumption is that *reality* is constructed through things that are happening in human beings. Reality is represented by the mirror of a mind, meaning everything that is happening in an individual's life reflects a thought. Kukla (2000) believed that reality cannot be discovered but can be invented.
- The second assumption is that *knowledge* can be constructed through culture and context. This can happen through interaction with other people.
- Lastly is *learning*, which is viewed as the pattern of growth and change within the community. This can happen while people are engaging in social activities. For example, a child who is born into a Christian community will, in most cases, see and define the world from the Christian perspective. This indicates that parental values are instilled in children.

Furthermore, communities and community organisations help to frame how the world is viewed. Just to further elaborate, if you grew up in a society that encourages polygamy, you would understand a *normal* way of life from that cultural perspective, while others who were never oriented in that manner of life may see polygamy as something immoral. All these perspectives are socially constructed into human thinking as a result of the process of socialisation.

- **Interpretivist paradigm:** Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) outlined Interpretivism as a “research paradigm that is based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective, but is rather shaped by human experiences and social contexts (ontology), and is, therefore, best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its various participants (epistemology)” (p. 1). The Interpretivist paradigm believes that reality is multi-layered and complex,

and a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations. An example is a phenomenon such as an eclipse, which some in the Venda group once regarded as Nwali (God). With the discovery of science, the same phenomenon is no longer largely viewed as God by the same community. This is influenced by the accumulation of knowledge, existing social constructs within the same community, and the level of education acquired through learning.

This study has applied the Interpretivist paradigm due to its direct relationship with the qualitative nature of social enquiry. I chose the Interpretivist paradigm to guide me to understand the experiences of forensic police officers when exposed to critical incidents. For example, I understood the meaning they attach to those critical incidents and how that has impacted their psychological well-being. The interpretative paradigm became the tool for me to enter the participants' world and understand how they reflect on critical incidents. Therefore, I regard qualitative research and the interpretative paradigm as the combination of methods that allowed the participants to express themselves about their conditions without imposing my beliefs on them.

### **3.3 Research approach: Qualitative research approach**

The aim of using qualitative research was to obtain in-depth knowledge of how police officers exposed to critical incidents are subjected to trauma, including their reactions to traumatic conditions after attending to critical incidents. Patton (2014) and Franklin (2012) declared that qualitative research simplifies the study of concerns while detailing express qualities, values, states of mind and ideas. Qualitative research is based on reality waiting to be discovered. It deals with the particulars of a situation while applying justice to the subtleties of social life (Franklin, 2012; Patton, 2014).

The study applied qualitative research to identify the subjective reality of the psychological effect of trauma on forensic police officers within the SAPS. One more motive for applying qualitative research was to obtain the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of police officers exposed to critical incidents to create a framework that will contribute to psychological intervention (De Vos et al., 2005). Based on these motives, the researcher deemed it necessary to discuss the characteristics that shaped the qualitative research method in the next section.

### 3.3.1 Characteristics of the qualitative research approach

Creswell and Poth (2018) identified the characteristics of the qualitative research approach as follows:

- **Natural settings:** in this characteristic, the researcher goes to the field and observes the occurrence to draw conclusions about the phenomenon under study. In the case of the current study, the researcher had face-to-face interviews with the participants.
- **Researcher as a key instrument:** The researcher is a primary role player who collects data, analyses it and interprets it. The researcher developed the interview questions to collect data for this study and conducted the interviews. Therefore, no person did that on her behalf.
- **Multiple sources of data (data collection):** this refers to various ways of collecting data. It means the qualitative research approach allows flexibility in terms of data collection. Although there are various data collection methods available for qualitative research, I decided to use interviews as the main data collection method for this study. In addition, participants were further requested to make return submission for the purpose of the matter under investigation and an increased understanding of the subject.
- **Complex reasoning:** in complex reasoning, the researcher applies deductive and inductive reasoning, which helps organise the data. When participants could not understand certain questions, they were allowed to go and think about them and reschedule another appointment for continuation.
- **Participants' multiple perspectives and meanings:** in this characteristic, the sole determination of interpreting data is derived from participants' understanding of a particular phenomenon and its meaning. The researcher must, by all means, avoid imposing preconceived ideas and knowledge. The outcome must reflect the perspectives held by participants. The data collected is a true reflection of how participants have responded to the developed questions. The researcher did not add to or subtract from the information provided by the participants; instead, she concentrated on using scientific methods of analysing the data.
- **Emergent design:** this characteristic conscientised the researcher to take adaptive steps where necessary to learn about the phenomenon under study. In the case of the

current study, the researcher was prompted to continuously ask follow-up questions outside of the structured ones to understand the social problem studied.

I applied the characteristics of the qualitative approach. For instance, I went into the field and conducted interviews with participants to understand their experiences with regard to exposure to critical incidents. The qualitative research approach allows a researcher to use different methods of data collection. For this study, interviews were used to collect the research data. I did not delegate the task of collecting the data to someone else. Therefore, I was the key instrument in implementing this research study.

### 3.3.2 Qualitative research designs

De Vos et al. (2005) identified the following qualitative research designs:

- **Narrative:** De Vos et al. (2005) noted that narrative design, also referred to as *biography*, is the study of the historical life of an individual through the collection of data. Data about an individual's life can be collected from other people, events that the person under study has organised or attended, community organisations, political parties or business entities in which the person was involved. Furthermore, the collection of writing, such as letters, minutes taken and speeches that a person may have rendered, help obtain insights into the life of the person under study (Creswell, 2014). Narrative studies are usually of people with landmark achievements, such as politicians, artists, and scholars.
- **Case study:** Is a “research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context” (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 1). A case study is a method whose intention is to gain a deeper understanding of the question under study. It provides insights into information, enhances understanding and proposes solutions that are relevant to the case. A case study is seen as one of the critical methodologies to be applied when one is engaged in a qualitative study. In addition to its usefulness in a qualitative study, as a way of understanding the concept under study, a case study is both descriptive and explanatory (Vieira, 2007). It is descriptive in that it describes concepts in a normative way and explains events that contribute to a broader understanding of the concept described. Starman (2013) explained that this methodology helps us understand the variables, structures, forms

and interactions between the participants. Starman (2013) went further to highlight the developmental nature of a case study.

- **Phenomenology:** De Vos et al. (2005) defined phenomenology “as a study that describes the meaning that experiences of a phenomenon, topic or concept has for various individuals” (p. 125). In other words, phenomenological research entails breaking down subjects or concepts from a particular social environment in a meaningful way. The main aim of phenomenology is to understand the lived experience of an individual or participant. The experience can be discovered through interaction between the participant and the researcher. According to Creswell (2014), this design has philosophical underpinnings, which means that it interprets the participant's values, experiences, meanings, and behaviours. An example is the work of Barren (2017), who employed a phenomenology framework to investigate the lived experiences of parents of a young child with autism who was receiving early special education services. Barren’s study offered insights into the parents’ perspective of early intervention for their young child with autism.
- **Grounded theory:** Grounded theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (1999), is the discovery, development and provision of theories about data systematically obtained from social research. This means data collection and data analysis, as well as theory, have an equal relationship with one another. In order to develop a full comprehension of the meaning of grounded theory, it is best to understand the perspective provided by De Vos et al. (2005), who stated that grounded theory has three components:
  - a. **Openness** is related to coding, and it revolves around asking questions that will lead to a complete understanding of the subject under review and may lead to the development of codes and their elevations. In this case, the researcher did not elevate any category or thematic expression over another. All themes were used as tools for analysing data to arrive at a conclusion that will be helpful in the development of interventions to manage exposure to critical incidents by forensic officials (Glaser, 1992).
  - b. **Analysis** is done by finding repeating themes when reviewing data, coding the emergent themes with keywords and phrases, grouping the codes into concepts hierarchically, and categorising the concepts by identifying relationships. Thus, a

new theory is developed from categories created through this process and the links found between them (MAXQDA, 2021).

- c. **Memo-writing** refers to the particular coding process and how themes are categorised. In this study, although it must be acknowledged that grounded theory was not applied, coding was done by categorising themes aligned to important concepts (Glaser, 1992).
- **Ethnography:** De Vos et al. (2005) indicated that ethnography is a type of fieldwork research whose outcome must provide the culture of a specific group that has been studied for a particular period through observation and learning. For example, if a researcher wants to research the Venda culture, the researcher will relocate to a Venda community or group to obtain more information about their culture. To further elaborate: when researchers are engaged in an ethnographic study, they will investigate the kind of practices the community under study is involved in and the nature of certain traditional norms, such as initiation schools, types of dances, and belief systems. The researcher concludes by attaching meanings to the observed practices, traditions, norms and values.

It is clear that there is no clear-cut difference between phenomenology, narrative and case study design. For example, this study wanted to understand the meaning of critical incidents for forensic police officers and allow them to tell their stories about their exposure to critical incidents. However, case study design is most suitable for this study because it allows flexibility in the data collection methods. It allowed me to classify this study as a single case study to make the scope of the study clear.

### **3.4 Research design: Case study design**

As stated above, this study adopted a case study design. According to Stake (1994), the case study establishes the study limitations, capturing the intricacies of behavioural patterns within a limited study scope. This means that a case study investigates the behaviours of participants under study within the limits of the investigated concept. In this study, the researcher has studied, by observation, the behaviours of participants who had experienced or been exposed to critical incidents in the execution of their duties. This chiefly motivated the choice of the case study design because it allowed the researcher to capture the

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behavioural patterns of participants and use them as data to be analysed. Further, this research applied a single case study design because the study focused on individual cases without reference to a comparison group. Gustafson (2017) explained that, if the interest is in a specific group, a single case study is the best choice. A single case study focuses on one case and explains what occurred, while a multiple case study deals with numerous cases, providing a comparative analysis of the intricacies of the behavioural patterns identified from each case (Gustafson, 2017).

I have indicated that I adopted a case study design and the type of case study design is the single case study. However, beyond selecting a single case study, this study employed a descriptive case study. According to Zainal (2007), descriptive case studies describe the natural phenomena that occur in the data in question. Therefore, in this study, the critical incidents that had an impact on forensic police officers were described. Also described were the coping strategies employed by forensic police officers to deal with the trauma of critical incidents. The findings on their coping strategies are discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

### **3.5 Population and sample selection**

According to De Vos et al. (2003), a population may include people, such as all the clients in a worker's caseload, or things, such as all the research books housed in a specific library. In this study, the population is all forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents. Five forensic police officers were selected as study sample. The age of the participants was between 24 and 59, and they were all black people. All the participants had over five years' forensic services experience. They were selected from the Division of Forensic Services in the Gauteng province. The purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants. Patton (2014) explained that purposive sampling provides a rich and deep understanding of the subject and breakthrough insight. Using purposive sampling allowed me to select the people with insight into critical incidents and how critical incidents could impact the psychological well-being of forensic police officers. Table 3.1 represents the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 3.1:

## THE INCLUSION & EXCLUSION CRITERIA

<b>INCLUSION</b> 	<b>EXCLUSION</b> 
Forensic police officer exposed to critical incidents	Forensic police officer not exposed to critical incidents
Age group 24 – 59	Fall above 59 or below 24 years of age
Over five years of working as a forensic police officer and being exposed to critical incidents	Less than five years working as a forensic police officer or not exposed to critical incidents

### 3.6 Data collection

This study used an interview as its data collection method. The interview was employed to obtain more knowledge on the experiences of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents. Edwards and Holland (2013) defined an interview as an “interactional exchange of dialogue (between two or more participants, in face-to-face or in any other context)” (p. 1).

An unstructured interview was used instead of a semi-structured interview. De Vos et al. (2003) and Major and Savin-Baden (2010) identified the unstructured interview as an in-depth, open-ended or guided interview that helps the researcher to understand an experience and the meaning of that experience: An unstructured interview is a method through which the researcher deduces an understanding of participants’ emotions about a subject. It uses open-ended questions to allow self-expression by participants. An unstructured interview was used to obtain rich information about the experiences of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents.

The interviews were conducted from 2017 to 2018, and they were conducted in a private residence. This is what transpired before interviews were conducted: I explained the interview process to the participants, the purpose of the study, the meaning of the informed consent form, and the importance of completing the form. I also mentioned that the interview would last for 45 minutes and, if participants were not comfortable with answering some of the questions, they were free not to answer them. If some of them felt they could not proceed with the interview, I indicated that they could withdraw their participation and nothing would happen to them. I was aware that reflecting on their experiences about critical incidents could



be traumatic and, therefore, made contact with a psychologist who would respond immediately should the need arise to assist participants. Interviews were conducted in English but, if participants wanted to use their own language, they were free to do that. An audio recording was made. However, if someone was not comfortable with a voice recording, that would not be used. The information presented was confidential and, when the results of the study are presented, their names will not be revealed.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

TerreBlanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) presented six steps of qualitative data analysis as follows:

#### **3.7.1 Step 1: Familiarisation and immersion**

The researcher became familiar with the information while collecting data. This ensured a better understanding of the meaning of the information during data analysis. Material, such as the audio recorder and interview transcripts, were perused again (TerreBlanche et al., 2006). In this study, the information about police officers attending critical incidents became familiar while collecting data.

#### **3.7.2 Step 2: Inducing themes**

According to TerreBlanche et al. (2006), inducing themes means “inferring general rules or classes from specific instances” (p. 1). It is a bottom-up approach: the materials are considered to determine whether the organising principles naturally underlie the material. No fixed rules were established to identify the theme or category (TerreBlanche et al., 2006). In this study, five themes were identified, namely, policing as a calling, duties of forensic police officers on the crime scene: The South African context, types of critical incidents, effects of critical incidents and critical incidents and coping mechanisms.

#### **3.7.3 Step 3: Coding**

Coding is assigning a code to something for classification or identification. The identified themes were coded. In coding, there are no standard rules. Researchers differ on how to derive codes, when to start and stop, and the level of detail required (TerreBlanche et al.,

2006). This study employed various coloured markers to code the data, based on the themes. Five colours were used to identify the themes: yellow represented policing as a calling; red was associated with the duties of a forensic police officer; green was allied to critical incidents; pink was linked with the effects of critical incidents; and purple represented the critical incidents and coping mechanisms.

#### **3.7.4 Step 4: Elaboration**

The elaboration is to capture the finer nuances of meaning uncaptured by the original, possibly crude, coding system, and to identify ways of structuring it until it is ready to describe the data (TerreBlanche et al., 2006). The information on police officers attending critical incidents was elaborated or expanded to create a more complex, emergent whole.

#### **3.7.5 Step 5: Interpretation and checking**

The interpretation was amalgamated. It presents a chance to reflect on the role of collecting the data and creating the interpretation. After collecting data, the information is checked and interpreted (TerreBlanche et al., 2006). The meanings of the findings were provided. The literature was used to support the interpretation of the findings.

#### **3.7.6 Step 6: Writing-up**

While it is understood that there three ways of writing-up the final product of any form of research, the researcher in this instance present a dissertation as a compliance to Master's Degree qualification requirements.

### **3.8 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is the “process of critical self-reflection about oneself as researcher (own biased, preferences, preconceptions), and the research relationship (relationship to the respondent, and how the relationship affects participant's answers to questions” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 3). The forensic police officers participating in this study are all my colleagues. Despite that, I have made sure that I do not interfere with their responses. It means I allowed them to express themselves as they wished about their experiences of critical incidents. However,

I made sure that they did that within the framework of the study. Therefore, I can conclude that reflexivity was considered in this study.

### **3.9 Principles to ensure trustworthiness**

In qualitative designs, validity and reliability are achieved by strategies to ensure trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness, as described below.

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

Trust was built by honesty and openness with the participants, and honouring their anonymity. This included establishing rapport by spending time with the participants before the interview, allowing new data to emerge until the point of saturation. Trust was built with the participants by explaining the study as it is, academically. The proof of registration was produced to support the research conductor's position at the University of South Africa. Honesty was applied by explaining that the interview would be recorded and transcribed into text for easy access. A further explanation entailed that their names would not be mentioned when transcribing or authoring a report.

#### **3.9.2 Transferability**

Participants' demographics are described in depth, and verbatim quotations from the interviews are provided. The results are reconceptualised in the literature. The provided information was transcribed into text and combined with the literature to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject under research.

#### **3.9.3 Dependability**

All aspects of the research are described; for example, the methodology, characteristics of the sample, the data collection process, and data analysis. Data quality checks and peer review also formed part of the process. Participants were informed that the research proposal was drafted, submitted, and approved by the academic institution. A literature review and data collection were conducted. Participants were informed that their participation

contributed to the final research report. Data were analysed, recommendations were made, and the report was constructed.

#### **3.9.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is the “degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers”. It is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the enquirer’s imagination, but clearly derived from the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 3). Participants were provided with an opportunity to express themselves freely and to provide information, contributing to the objectivity of the research outcome.

#### **3.10 Research ethics**

The Department of Forensics did not request me to apply for ethical clearance at the SAPS. The researcher approached participants as an aspirant master’s degree student who was studying critical incidents as an element of psychology. Participants were informed that the study was meant for academic purposes and would not be used for any reasons other than the one disclosed. I have used the ethical clearance that I have received from the University of South Africa’s Research Ethics Committee. The following were research ethics that were considered in the study:

##### **3.10.1 Informed consent**

Participants were informed about the research procedure and consented to participate in the research before data collection, or the interview occurred. The interview was based on critical incidents, their psychological effects on participants, and the effect of such experience in executing their duties.

##### **3.10.2 Right to withdraw**

The participants were assured that they could withdraw from participation in the study without fear of being penalised. All of them were informed that, should they wish to withdraw due to any other circumstances or due to less interest, they could do so, and there would be no penalties.

### **3.10.3 Respect confidentiality and privacy**

Complete confidentiality and privacy were maintained regarding any information about participants acquired during the research process. The research conduct was honest, fair, and transparent. Honesty was considered regarding the limitations, competence, belief systems, values and needs. During the interview, positions were not abused, and knowledge was not used for personal power or gain. Information collected through an audio recorder was transcribed according to the original recording. The information will not be shared or sold for personal gratification.

### **3.10.4 Non-exploitation**

The research benefits members attending critical incidents within Forensic services division. They received feedback on the research conducted on them. The report is shared with specialised units, such as Spiritual Services, Psychological Services, and Social Work Services.

### **3.11 Chapter summary**

Various methods associated with qualitative research were indicated, providing the reasons for choosing the methods. The study was conducted ethically during the collection of data. Officials selected for sampling were provided with consent forms and were further advised that they had an option to withdraw. The methodology employed helped to uncover most assumed and unfamiliar areas.

The following chapter will focus on research findings and discussion.

## **CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS ON AND DISCUSSION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF FORENSIC POLICE OFFICERS REGARDING THEIR EXPOSURE TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study. The study intended to understand the experiences of forensic police officers as they are exposed to critical incidents. One duty of forensic police officers is to apply scientific principles, methods and techniques to bring offenders to a court of law. Five forensic police officers participated in the study and shared their experiences of being exposed to critical incidents. However, the attendance of the crime scene is determined by the type of crime, and not every forensic police officer will attend the same scene. Some participants are not attending crime scenes any more due to conditions caused by their exposure to critical incidents. But their experience of being exposed to critical incidents is more relevant to the study. Therefore, I have analysed their experiences and developed themes as part of the research findings. Verbatim quotes support the themes, and the original words and the literature are used to discuss the findings and give them meaning.

### **4.2 Profile of the participants**

The following subsections present the profiles of the participants:

#### **4.2.1 Participant 1**

Participant 1 was an African male, 46 years of age, who was married with three children. He had been a SAPS member for 27 years; however, he joined the Ballistics section as a crime scene expert 20 years back. He has a national diploma in criminology as one of the required qualifications in the Ballistics section.

#### **4.2.2 Participant 2**

Participant 2 was an African male, 51 years of age, and not married. He is a qualified graphic designer and photographer. He has been working as an image analyst within the Scientific

Analysis section since 2004. In short, he had more than 15 years as an image analyst. Nevertheless, he joined the SAPS in 1998. Since the participant became an image analyst, he had been struggling with memory loss and consulting with a private psychiatrist every month.

#### **4.2.3 Participant 3**

Participant 3 started working in the mining industry in 2004 as a fire examiner. He was 37 years of age and has a diploma in chemistry. The participant joined Forensic Services in 2015 as a fire investigator in the Chemistry section. The participant is an African male and married with two children. He prefers to attend debriefing sessions every time he has attended a crime scene to deal with trauma.

#### **4.2.4 Participant 4**

The participant was 45 years of age and divorced, with three children. He started his career as a teacher and then joined the SAPS in 2003 as a student constable. He later joined Forensic Services as a crime scene investigator. In 2011, the participant's transfer to Victim Identification section to help identify unknown bodies was approved. The participant was afforded an opportunity to study for a Diploma in Forensic Pathology in the United States of America. He also has a B-Tech in Forensic Investigation. In 2015, he went back to Criminal Record and Crime Scene Management Component as a crime scene investigator and became responsible for high-profile cases.

#### **4.2.5 Participant 5**

She has been a member of the SAPS since 1990 at the Dog School and later moved to Criminal Record and Crime Scene Management Component as a crime scene investigator. After some years, the participant joined the Ballistics section within Forensic Services as a crime scene expert analysing firearms. In 2006, she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and, due to her condition, management placed her in another section.

### **4.3 Themes**

Table 4.1 represents the themes that are part of the findings:

Table 4.1:



### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Policing as a calling

Most participants agreed that policing is a calling. According to participants, for a person to join this profession, there is a prerequisite for patriotism, devotion, commitment, and love for one's country. They further stated that policing is risky as it extends to members of their families. For example, family members may also receive threats and unwanted communication from crime perpetrators. Since policing is a calling, they showed resilience, despite posing a danger even to their families. Participants further stated that the functions of the South African Police Service are to create a safe and secure South Africa through preventing, combating and investigating crime. There is a need for professionalism and ethical conduct among them as they investigate diverse types of crimes. The views of participants about policing as a calling are demonstrated in the following quotes:

[P]olice work has to do with, I believe that it has to do with a calling because all what other police are doing are trying or endeavour to create a safe and secure environment for all the people in South Africa by preventing, combating and investigating crime (Participant 1).

I understand that the Police is a government body which was established in order to fight crime, to push stability in the country, and offer protection and a safe environment for the citizens of the country (Participant 2).

Police as a profession: I believe that, being a police officer, it's a calling and then, for you to join the police, you must have the patriotic feeling, patriotism, because you



must have love for your own country, because, when you go out there and work, you are not sure whether you'll come back, because when you say Bye to your kids (Participant 4).

Well, with the police, I suppose, is to be, is to protect the people and to investigate crime to the best they can. But unfortunately, it is a tendency that current people, or most of the current people, are just going for the money, and the thing is, in the olden days, it was a calling (Participant 5).

### **Theme 1 discussion**

Law enforcement is a service career at its core. This statement implies that intentions of joining policing must be informed by dedication to serving, helping others and resolving the challenges of communities daily. Most assertions by participants support the idea that willingness to serve is the motivation for joining the police service (Discover Policing, 2018). Several studies emanate from Lester, who is a psychologist and is considered the world's pre-eminent suicide researcher. His 1983 survey suggested, in various ways and ratings, that commitment to help is among the motivations influencing people to follow policing as a profession. The survey was to discover the reasons for people's choosing policing as a career and the predictions of their success. Though Lester's survey is outdated, it is still relevant to this study, explaining the motivations for joining the police.

In Lester's (1983) survey, participants mentioned several motivations for considering policing as a career. Some reasons listed are relevant to what the participants in the current study mentioned, such as it provides an opportunity to help people in the community, the excitement of the job, there was a lack of other job alternatives, and to fight crime (Waterman-Smith, 2017). Bumgarner (2006) emphasised that the attribute of police calling reflects a professional's dedication to their work, a dedication greater than extrinsic rewards. The need exists for commitment to work and adherence to ethical standards in policing as a profession (Bumgarner, 2006). Policing is a profession demanding stronger ethical standards than other professions because the community follows any movement by police officers, either on duty or off duty. They are expected to lead by example in everything they do (Rouf, 2019).

Faull (2010) provided three reasons influencing people to become law enforcement officers. For instance, some join the police service because of passion and love for it, others need to serve and help communities, while others work for as long as they are paid. Participant 4 emphasised that love for the country is among the requirements for success in becoming a police officer. That resonates with the first reason for becoming a police officer (Faull, 2010). Conversely, Participants 4 and 5 revealed that most people join policing for the salary and consider it a job. This observation is consistent with a third reason for becoming a police officer, receiving a salary: Some are motivated by money to join the police force. However, some police officers believe their passion to be police officers led them to organisational citizenship behaviour.

Britt and Jex (2008) defined *organisational citizenship behaviour* as “performing an extra organisational duty that promotes a positive functioning of the organisation whilst also helping others” (p. 116). In support of the definition of organisational citizenship behaviour, Participant 1 indicated that his work does not affect him psychologically; he regards it as a service, giving back to the community. Five types of organisational citizenship behaviour are identified as follows:

1. Altruism – employees help others without expecting a reward
2. Courtesy – employees are polite
3. Sportsmanship – when an employee remains cheerful
4. Conscientiousness – reporting early at work or meetings
5. Civic virtue – an employee volunteers for an extra task, both on and off the job (The Organisational Psychology Degree, 2018).

Participants 4 and 5 demonstrated altruism and civic virtue behaviour. For example, Participant 4 helped his neighbour and performed duties while off duty:

There was one incident that I attended: This guy who was staying next to me (my neighbour) in Mabupane: He committed suicide then, when I went home, the guy that the last time they saw him, it was on Saturday, so they were so shocked and surprised ... so, when I peeked through the window, I could see him hanging from the roof truss. I broke the window; I saw him; we went inside; we broke the door of the kitchen and the door of the bedroom. So, the police came, and then they took photographs, and

the mortuary guy came. So, after removing the guy from the roof truss, you know, the family was – no, not the family, the neighbours – were looking at [me] because I was searching the guy, taking out some of the personal stuff. I gave it to [the family], so they were so shocked and surprised. So, since that day, whenever they see me, they respect me (Participant 4).

On the other hand, Participant 5 volunteered her availability, should there be no one else to be on standby. This indicates that she loves her job and that policing is her calling:

I became addicted to crime scenes. When there was somebody that was not willing or was not able to take standby, I would take it. I was eager to go to crime scenes; I was running around; I was doing almost on my standby week; I almost have, on the daily basis, went to crime scene. So I became addicted to it, and then that is my psychologist told me that even people coming from Vietnam and then like wars, like that, they don't get bored when they are at home, but they want to go back; they want to go back; and that's what happened to me: I want to go back, I want to see it, I want to really feel it (Participant 5).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), it is clear that police officers display the microsystem level at which police officers will help the communities to prevent crime. They need to ensure that the cultural norms and values of the community members are not violated. They need to enforce the law in the community by preventing, combating, and investigating a crime, playing an important role in economic growth and social development. Conversely, the communities have the responsibilities to report crime and collaborate with the police officers.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Duties of forensic police officers on the crime scene: The South African context**

Participant 4 gave more details during the interview about the procedure that forensic police officers must follow when assigned to a crime scene: The procedures are demonstrated in the following quote:

Receive a call from investigating officer at the crime scene; make sure that you collect your tools of trade, inclusive PPE; introduce yourself to the investigative officer and

specify that you are Ballistics personnel or expert; receive a briefing on what transpired from investigative officer; confirm whether other sections responsible for an investigation like Biology and Criminal Record Centre for fingerprint; conduct preliminary examination; identify fired cartridge case; identify fired bullet, marks created by the bullet on the wall or floor, marks on the body of the deceased; check if a person shot himself or herself – committed suicide; check the position of the deceased body; check if violent crime is a murder; check if there is a firearm or not; check the distance a position of the firearm; take results to a forensic laboratory for further investigation; reconstruct the scene and provide analysis; hand over the results to the investigating officer for successful presentation and prosecution in court; present evidence in court as a ballistics expert witness (Participant 4).

## **Theme 2 discussion**

The duties of forensic police officers emphasise the ecological system within the South African Police Service. Forensic police officers perform distinct functions when assigned to a crime scene, and they are expected to collaborate as a team. The ecological system theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that, within the mesosystem, there are linkages and processes taking place among more settings to develop the person. The detectives and forensic police investigators must collaborate to enable progress in the crime investigation. According to Gehl and Plecas (2016), the people involved in the crime scene for a sudden death investigation are not limited to the forensic specialist, investigative officer, and coroner. This indicates that forensic police officers do not possess all the skills, and they are compelled to collaborate with other stakeholders.

I have clarified the distinction between detectives and forensic police officers in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. However, it is clear that, on crime scenes, they still work together. Professionals responsible for investigating a crime scene and collecting evidence work together; however, they do completely different work, depending on the type of scene (Gadek, 2019). Nevertheless, a case will be investigated by the detective who is responsible for interviewing persons of interest and victims, pursuing leads and gathering information that developed from the evidence collected at the scene of a crime. The detective works in tandem with the forensic police officers who search the scene and collect evidence. This

means one works behind the other (Krutinger, 2000). Investigation of criminal cases takes place within the national intention of crime prevention and the criminal justice system to ensure the successful conclusion of cases, with criminals sentenced to correctional facilities or whatever outcomes the court may decide, which shows the acceptable conclusion of criminal cases. Should there be a breakdown between a detective and forensic police officials, information collected from the crime scene may result in less successful finalising of criminal cases because evidence may not have been recorded accurately (Gadek, 2019).

#### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Types of critical incidents**

The forensic police officers mentioned during the interviews that they are exposed to critical incidents daily when performing their duties. They encounter situations that create a major risk of serious harm to their health. They identified incidents they are assigned to, such as suicide, murder, serious injuries, gunshots, rape, and death due to fire. The exposure to critical incidents by forensic police officers is also demonstrated in the following statements:

I was first exposed to murder case where a person committed suicide (Participant 1).

My first crime scene was when two guys went to the garage and they approach the petrol attendance and shot the guy several times on the chest and the stomach. I saw the blood-spitting from the man and that image, even now, is still in my mind as [if] it was my first time there (Participant 2).

Since [I] am doing fire investigation, there was a crime scene whereby a husband decided to kill his family. He was fighting with his wife, then he decided to poison them, and then they got drugged, then he set alight a house but, what was so strange is that, even himself, he was inside there, so the trick that he used, that was the one which was so challenging. I have found the pieces of bones during crime scene investigation. That is something that I was not usually used to, so it was really disturbing (Participant 3).

I was exposed to the advanced decomposition of the body of the young girl sold to a traditional healer. This one I will never forget, because that young girl, she was at the stage of advanced decomposition. The only thing that the mama managed to identify,

that made the mom to identify her, [was] the nail (because a day, two days before she went missing, there were Cutex) and singles [braids] (Participant 4).

The wife was shot on close range, obviously. You know, people faces stuck with you, and smells and stuck with you, and that's what post-traumatic stress disorder is about. And the inside of the vehicle, it was a quite new vehicle, and then the new, the smell of the new, newest – that smell stuck with you, and even afterwards (Participant 5).

### **Theme 3 discussion**

Miller (2006) defined a *critical incident* as “any event that has an unusually powerful, negative impact on personnel” (p. 93). In the present study, forensic police officers acknowledged that critical incidents harm them. For instance, they participated in various critical incidents, as aforementioned: Participant 5 participated in the incident in which the wife was shot at close range and could not forget the face of the wife who was shot. Participant 3 experienced a situation where the husband poisoned members of his family and then burned himself and his family in his house. Police officers arriving at the scene were met with burnt pieces of bone and experienced shock and disturbance.

According to the ecological system theory (1979), these critical incidents could also be understood within the chronosystem context, where the individuals are exposed to changes in the environment. That means some of those changes could also be traumatic events. Because the husband poisoned members of his family, this was a traumatic event and may signify there was a change in the home environment, forcing the husband to kill the family. The forensic police officers are called to the scene of the crime. This leaves them with psychological scars because they may not have anticipated witnessing such a horrible incident where the husband killed his family.

These critical incidents may also emphasise the problem of gender-based violence in South Africa. For example, participant 4 highlighted the scenario of an incident where the wife was shot by men organised by her husband. The couple was busy with a divorce, and the husband's business was not doing well. According to Ratele (2016), gender-based violence can be violence against women that may cause psychological, physical, and sexual harm.

Gender-based violence is diverse; it is presented in various dimensions; it is also influenced by the various types of environments where it occurred.

The following two situation types may influence gender-based violence (Ratele, 2016): First, individual factors – for instance, young boys raised in a violent family may use violence in their relationships at a later stage (United Nation Children’s Fund, 2006). It has been confirmed that men are more likely to become violent than women (Ratele, 2016). Alcohol is the second factor. Alcohol abuse links to an elevated risk of influencing gender-based violence (Bennett & Bland, 2008). Ratele (2016) indicated that most violent murder cases in South Africa are conducted with a firearm. He further emphasised that most people with guns, either legal or illegal, have a higher risk of committing intimate femicide.

Exposure to suicide could also be a problem for forensic police officers. Kelly (1992) argued that there is an increase of police officers attending committed or attempted suicide cases. The attendance of such cases by forensic police officers affect their wellbeing and impact them psychologically. The literature review discussed the stages of suicide identified by Baumeister (1990). The suicide committed by a husband falls into one of those stages, the stage where a person lacks expectations. This stage is mostly experienced by husbands who are failing to support their families due to financial problems. Most resolve to commit suicide because they are falling short of expectations. In addition, Feldman and Pape (2011) established that police officers attending suicide calls are personally and professionally affected by suicide crime scenes. Participant 3 confirmed the above statement by stating that “when I have an argument with my wife, I try to avoid her because this could lead to serious violence between me and my wife”. This was influenced by a crime scene assigned to him where the man killed his wife and himself through fire. He, therefore, fear such a thing happening to his family.

According to Participant 5, the smell of the deceased wife shot by her husband remained with her for a long time. This incident harmed Participant 5; she might be displaying the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to WebMD (2020), the sense of smell is strongly tied to memories that trigger PTSD. A smell can remind a person of what happened during and after trauma. Participant 5 experienced the smell on her even after leaving the crime scene. This smell constantly reminded her of the crime scene.

Grank (2019) indicated that smell is a trigger for PTSD that brings back intense memories. The person often relives the critical incident. He also provided the example of a person who has experienced the traumatic event of a fire, who may be upset by any smoky smell. This is because the smoke reminds them of what they encountered during and after the critical incident.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Effects of critical incidents**

According to the participants, the negative effect of their work on their families cannot be overlooked. Some are in the process of divorce because of their duties. Another problem they encounter as forensic police officers is that their families do not understand PTSD and how it affects their well-being. Their colleagues do not reveal to their families that they were admitted to hospital for the psychiatric problem of exposure to a traumatic incident. They also try not to be provoked within their families as they could easily resort to violent behaviour because of the trauma they experience with daily exposure to critical incidents. The challenges they experience in the family because of the work they do are expressed in these statements below:

Fortunately, I don't take this at home. But sometimes, when I have got problems, they can see that this guy got some problems. But, usually, I don't take this thing at home. I leave my problems mostly at work and, when I get at home, I try to forget about this thing (Participant 2).

In the family, I avoid things like confrontations and the issues that can make us fighting, and so those are the things that I try to avoid (Participant 3).

In terms of family, my wife is also working in biology. People were asking her – it's only that we are currently in a process of divorce – her friends were asking her, "You are staying with this man; you know how cruel is this man; the work that he is doing." Then she was used to. So, I didn't want my kids to know what daddy is doing, so there, I was so happy when I went home, sometimes wearing the uniform, and they were asking me, "Dad, are you a cop?" [I] said, "Yes, I'm a cop" (Participant 4)



My family doesn't understand post-traumatic stress disorder, and they don't realise that, since the age of 20, I have been involved in traumatic incidents. They don't even know if [I] am booked for [the] psychiatric clinic because I have been booked four times, and they don't understand what [I] am doing there. So that's the only thing about my family: they don't understand it (Participant 5).

#### **Theme 4 discussion**

Miller (2006) mentioned that police officers exposed to critical incidents take out their frustrations and pain on people close to them. They usually project their emotions onto their families, which may lead to conflict within the family. This is supported by Participant 4's admitting during the interview that he was busy with a divorce due to conflicts within the family. Participant 4 did not explain how this conflict may have influenced the divorce in the family. It can be assumed that the trauma of exposure to traumatic incidents may have also influenced this conflict, leading to divorce. According to TerreBlanche and Van Wyk (2014), it is not practicable for people to leave their problems at home. It would be immature to believe that challenges encountered in the working environment will remain isolated from people's personal life.

This argument contradicts Participant 2's statement that he did not take work problems home. According to TerreBlanche and Van Wyk (2014), this is impossible because the problems are part of their personal life. Hall and Cohn (2011) support this statement, indicating that problems are part of the self in another way; they are unique because a person lives with them constantly. This provides clarity that problems cannot be separated from the person. The trauma they experience could be observed as part of the self. For instance, Vohs and Baumeister (2007) referred to self as a "person's experience as a single, unitary, autonomous being separate from others, an experience that includes the consciousness of one's inner character and emotional life with continuity through time and place" (p. 785).

This can also relate to self-concept with self-observation as physical, emotional, social, and psychological. Conversely, the microsystem level within the ecological system theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) observes the relationship between police officers and families as interdependent. This is because the police must protect the families in communities. The

families must report a crime in their families and outside the family. The same families could also be infiltrators of trauma to the police officers; for instance, the situation reported early in this study, where the husband poisoned the family members, traumatising forensic police officers assigned to the incident because it happened within a family. Therefore, when forensic police officers are assisted to deal with critical incident trauma, the ecological system must be considered in order to assist the police officers effectively because they do not exist in isolation but live within the ecosystem.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Critical incidents and coping mechanisms**

Participants 1 and 3 acknowledged the importance of the Employee Health Wellness section (the EHW) in providing skills and interventions that help them cope with the unbearable situations exposed by the day-to-day execution of their duties. The participants indicated the importance of debriefing among peers as critical in alleviating the pressure encountered. To cite an example regarding lack of consultation, Participant 3 even suggested that consulting the EHW should be made mandatory for all officers who encounter critical incidents because any lack thereof may lead to some officers resorting to substance abuse to alleviate the challenges they are going through.

Though is not enough, we have the EHW Section whereby they also facilitate and help and assist with the coming, especial[ly] after the traumatic incidents. We have got psychologist and clinical psychologist that helps in preparing us to come back and be able to work holistically (Participant 1).

In furtherance of the already mentioned non-mandatory coping strategy, Participant 1 opened his writing with the element of debriefing, and this is what he said:

Yes, debriefing is one of the most important that sometimes I used to attend to – debriefing with peer[s] and colleagues, explaining what happened, how it happened and how you feel. After debriefing, also issue of spiritual affiliation: We believe that, in everything, God takes precedence, and then He is the one that strengthen us, and that gives us the power to do what we are able to do. And also issue of peer debriefing, spiritual affiliation is important to me (Participant 1).

[U]sually, we find out that we do things. At some point, we do the group debriefing and then, on the group debriefing, that's when you realize that I thought I have got a problem. No, I don't have a problem; this is supposed to be. Here is a thing because people will be explaining things that are [more] scaring than what you were thinking you are facing. I think that's the other thing that boost the morale – that okay, that means that I need to be strong and bold because for that guy who is having that a deeper issue as compared to mine (Participant 3).

### **Theme 5 discussion**

It is evident that coping strategies are very important in dealing with the effects of critical incidents on forensic police officers. For instance, Participant 1 indicated that debriefing sessions were assisting with coping with the effects of critical incidents. Because of the nature of the enquiry under study, debriefing is discussed within the context of intervening after exposure to critical incidents by police officers. Various researchers have discovered the model of critical incident stress debriefing (CISD). According to Gumani (2012), police work is viewed as an organisation that requires coping; however, law enforcement has adopted critical incident stress debriefing in order for police officers to deal with trauma. It is an intervention method that is adopted at the workplace to help service providers, particularly those involved in traumatic events, deal with sudden, unexpected critical events in their line of duty. Gumani further indicated that CISD enables service providers to express their emotions relating to those critical incidents in a non-threatening environment. CISD is used to refer to the process of coping embarked on by police officers, which is inclusive of individual coping resources, debriefing, and the support of others. It is aimed at helping the individual to cope with the effects of the traumatic scenes that they are exposed to (Gumani, 2012). It seems that debriefing is the main coping strategy that assists forensic police officers.

Furthermore, the forensic police officers mentioned that the EHW programme is assisting them with coping with critical incidents. It is a vital element in the performance of police officers. The programme assures their physical and emotional well-being, which translates to the achievement of organisational objectives because tasks will be executed effectively and efficiently. Police officers who are well taken care of physically and emotionally will ensure the SAPS objective of having law-abiding citizens. On the other hand, organisations that do

not provide an effective EHW programme suffer dearly because their employees do not work to their full potential. Studies have shown that, when officers' physical and mental health issues go unaddressed, job performance decreases, decision-making abilities are impaired, and the cost to the organisation increases (Police Executive Research Forum, 2018).

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

The findings are based on information provided by participants' engaging in their responses and the work they do, related to critical incidents. Some aspects of the ecological system theory were applied to show how critical incidents influence their daily operations.

The following section will focus on limitations, recommendations and concluding remarks about the study.

## **CHAPTER 5. LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 is placed against the backdrop of Chapter 4. This study wanted to understand the experiences of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents, how this impacts their psychological well-being, and how they are coping with critical incidents. Forensic police officer's experiences of critical incidents were presented in Chapter 4 and were discussed using the existing literature about critical incidents. Therefore, Chapter 5 presents the limitations and recommendations of the study, identifying ways forensic police officers could be assisted concerning their exposure to critical incidents.

### **5.2 Limitations of the study**

The mixed-method approach that includes qualitative and quantitative research would have been more suitable for this study because the quantitative approach allows for the selection of a larger sample and administering a questionnaire would have obtained more views on the phenomenon that is under investigation: in this case, a larger sample of forensic police officers would have obtained more views. I, therefore, regard this as a methodological limitation of this study.

I could not find the previous South African studies that deal with forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents. This has made it difficult for me to obtain enough literature on critical incidents in the South African context. Although there is a lack of literature about forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents in South Africa, hopefully, this study will be merely the beginning of literature that focuses on forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents in South Africa.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The participants outlined their duties during the interview. However, it seems that they do not receive psychological training about critical incidents. Therefore, there is a need for psychological training to assist them to deal with the effects of critical incidents. Although

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forensic police officers are not necessarily psychologists, the nature of their employment, which exposes them to critical incidents every day, requires elementary psychological training. This training would give them the skills to identify emotions, anxiety, and other related psychological effects that may emanate from exposure to critical incidents. Initial debriefing should be part of such training courses, with other conscientising programmes that may be deemed fit by the Psychological Service section. As already highlighted, it is not primary knowledge they must acquire, but exposure to such training courses may become very helpful as defence mechanisms in executing their daily duties. This study does not intend to suggest a specific learning programme; rather, the study suggests that the Psychological Section should contribute to formulating such training.

In addition, some of the forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents indicated that they were in the process of divorce because of the work they were doing. Therefore, I recommend intensifying Social Work Services section to intervene in conscientising the families of the forensic police officers about the impact of critical incidents on the victims. The Social Work Services section may help resolve family disputes of police officers who are exposed to critical incidents. It is inherent in the conditions of employment of forensic services to evoke emotions that may be transferred to families in an unexpected manner. It is also possible that officers who are exposed to unbearable conditions in their families may have emotional breakdowns that, if combined with exposure to critical incidents, worsen their situation. The procurement of social work services to help resolve the internal family disputes of forensic police officers is a basic need that must be provided to all. Generally speaking, officers exposed to critical incidents become victims of most social problems, such as excessive substance abuse, absenteeism, internal conflict and divorce. These challenges require the services of social workers as an additional aid to psychological services.

The officers revealed during the interviews how they are coping with critical incidents. However, more is needed in terms of helping them to apply more coping strategies. For example, perhaps they can rely mostly on peer support and be able to share common experiences. Psychological Services should encourage peer support and emphasise its role in advancing coping mechanisms among police officers attending critical incidents. It is easy for police officers assigned to perform similar activities to share information and similar experiences. People with similar experiences have a common understanding of how such

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experiences affect their actions and reactions in various circumstances. It is, therefore, critical that peer support be encouraged at all levels of operations, with the sole purpose of making it an additional coping mechanism.

At the heart of unleashing a programme or intervention is to provide training on peer support. The South African Police Service must develop psychologically informed study material that emphasises the importance of peer support among colleagues. The study guide must form part of a package of tools to be provided when individuals are oriented with forensic services. Primarily, all officials must be trained upon appointment, and further follow-up refresher courses should be conducted annually. One area to be emphasised in enhancing peer support is encouraging interpersonal relations among officers attached to Forensic Services. Should there be a lack of interpersonal relations, peer support may be difficult to apply as a coping mechanism function.

### **5.3.1 Recommendation for further psychological research in the field of forensic police service**

This study applied qualitative research but a follow-up study could employ qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand the experiences of forensic police officers exposed to critical incidents. Further research may include stakeholders such as retired forensic police officers to share their experiences about the effects of critical incidents on forensic police officers.

## **5.4 Concluding Remarks**

Forensic police officers attended criminal scenes, most of which exposed them to critical incidents. They witnessed people who were murdered in a cruel manner. Some of the victims were burned inside houses and died on the scene. According to participants in this study, such incidents had effects on their psychological well-being, and they could not cope very well with such incidents. The lesson learned from this study was that, although forensic police officers are exposed to critical incidents, they cannot resign because they perceive their work as a “calling” and want to continue serving their South African compatriots. However, there is a need to help forensic police officers deal with critical incidents. This means more debriefing sessions are necessary to help forensic police officers. Also, wellness programmes should be capacitated in order to continue to support forensic police officers.

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## Appendix A Informed Consent

### CONSENT FORM

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Ref/ Verw: Mr F.Z. Simelane

Tel nr: (012) 429 4438

Fax: (012) 429 3414

E-Mail: simelfz@unisa.ac.za

Researcher: Tshiwela Francinah Masupha (MA in Research Psychology student)

University of South Africa

Dear Participant

My name is Tshiwela Francinah Masupha and I am conducting research on the experiences of forensic police officers, exposed to critical incidents. This study investigates the experiences of the forensic police officers attend to critical incidents. Participation is voluntary and you are requested to participate in an interview which will be recorded. The interview will last 45 minutes to an hour and there might be a need for a follow-up interview. You may discontinue the interview at any point or skip questions that you do not feel comfortable to answer. All information is strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Data that may be reported in scientific journals and my dissertation will not include any personal information which could identify you as a participant in this study.

Thank you for your cooperation

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_

Tshiwela Francinah Masupha

I \_\_\_\_\_certify that I have read the consent form and volunteer to participate in this research study.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (Place) on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B Interview Schedule**

Tell me about yourself (including your age, academic and when did you start working SAPS)?

How do you understand the police as a profession?

What is the procedure for crime scene?

What is required to be a forensic analyst?

How was your first experience after attending critical incidents? What kind of incidents was that? How did it affect you? How many of you attended the scene?

Mentioned one scene that you will never forget, what happened in that scene and how did you feel after attending the scene?

How often have you been exposed to critical incidents?

In which way has your exposure to critical incidents change your lifestyle?

How did this affect you concerning work?

How did this affect you concerning family?

How did this affect you concerning community?

Did you receive assistance from psychological services, if yes what kind of services did they provide? Did the service have an impact?

Did you receive an assistant from management and colleagues?

How is the relationship between you and your colleagues?

How do you deal with trauma every time after attending critical incidents?

Do you think there is a need for psychological services?

What is the role of chaplain within SAPS?

In your own opinion, what do you think can be done to help members attending critical incidents within Forensic Services?

What do you think can be improved in the psychological support system of SAPS for members exposed to critical incidents?

What advice can you give to members want to go for the crime scene for the first time?

Have you ever thought of leaving SAPS due to your work?

## Appendix C Ethical Clearance Certificate

Ref. No: PERC-17003



Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa has evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA and the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Student Name: Tshiwela Francinah Masupha Student no.: 42696984

Supervisor: Mr F. Z. Simelane Affiliation: Department of Psychology, Unisa

Title of project:

A police officer within the division Forensic Services attending critical incidents: how they experience psychological services offered by South African Police Services

The application was approved by the departmental Ethics Committee on the understanding that:

Any and all formal procedures that need to be followed to gain access to the participants and to obtain information for the purposes of research, as required by the management structures of the SAPS, were adhered to, and that the relevant authorities are aware of the scope of the research;

All ethical requirements regarding informed consent, the right to withdraw from the study, the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the information will be explained to the research participants and signed consent forms will be obtained from them.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Kruger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Date: 26 January 2017

Prof P. Kruger  
[For the Ethics Committee]  
[Department of Psychology, Unisa]

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Psychology Department Ethics Review Committee.

An amended application should be submitted if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Please note that research where participants are drawn from Unisa staff, students or databases require permission from the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (SENRIC) before the research commences.

**Interviewer: Like going to mortuary or you or you end up there at the crime scene?**

Interviewee: Okay mmmm lets use a scenario, let's say there is, a person is deceased inside the house he or she is the only person inside the house and the investigating officer cannot tell if the person shot himself or there were people that came and shot at that person, that is the reason why we were called to the scene. When we go there we, during our examination our preliminary examination we will try to determine the position of the firearm, we will try to determine the existence or the position of the fired cartridge case, the fired bullet, their position in relative to the deceased body where they are and if the person is dead and we cannot find the firearm inside the house, then it is one indication that the person who moved the question, who moved the firearm comes, kicks in the possibility of somebody being in that house having committed that crime and left with the firearm. Is also questionable then if the firearm is there, we also look at the distance, position of that firearm, how far is the firearm from that person if the firearm was left there but then at a far distance, distant and position there by if this was a self-inflicted wound then the firearm should not, may not be necessarily at that position where the firearm is, also tells you that this might have been a second person that committed the crime and trying to frame the deceased, so as forensic analysts we are, if I can use this phrase we are there to read the scene and to speak on behalf of the deceased. We are there to reconstruct the scene and explain what might have happen, explaining it in a scientific way so yes the first, in our preliminary investigation will be to answer or to look at all the possibilities or what the facts are at the scene and then we will physically work at the position of the deceased and then we will move that deceased to see if there are other wounds that maybe are hidden by the blood or if there were further injuries attained or sustained by the deceased then a follow up will be a post-mortem would be performed immediately on the following day or other areas if are rural areas you find that it takes two or three days before the pathologist can come for the post-mortem, but either way the investigating officer will inform also inform us when the, during the performance of the post-mortem which we also must be, which we also must attend to verify our findings or to confirm our findings (clears his throat) aaahhh Ja let's put it till then(clears his throat)

**Interviewer: okay sir and then how was your experience after attending critical incidents?**

Interviewee: Aaahhhh first experience, first experience Ja well everything when you do it the first time it poses some challenges and some difficulties but then with the right set, find when, if with you were prepared in advance and you were prepared and then you, you have a right, what do you call this? A Ja your mind is prepared so you, the challenge will be minimal because now you will go there expecting and go there being prepared. It is always challenging but then it's doable.

**Interviewer: And what kind of incident was that?**

Interviewee: Aaaah if I remember well then it was a murder case where a person committed suicide.

Interviewer: Ooh, how did it affect you and how many of you attended the scene?

Interviewee: It is during training, normally when you attend the scene you start attending them while you are still on training, remember we are trained on each and every aaahhh aspect, we have an incentive training, so each and every, should I call it a module like you are first trained with identification, ammunition identification then you are trained with it using the original or the the the what do you call it? Mmmm the real, you start with a dummy then you, you use, you are introduced to the real thing. Even with firearms you are trained starting with the dummy and the theory then you are introduced to firearms, the handling. So when we did our crime scenes it was after a lengthy theory and a during the, the training we went to the mortuary, by then you just went and see what it looks like and look at the different aaahhh in effects of the firearm on the body, of the people that was on the mortuaries during training, so when you went to your crime scene the first times, when you go to the crime scenes, you go with a trained member when he is doing the duty, the examination you are there to learn how it is done and what he does to a point where you get confident and when you have to do your first crime scene at list you are fully aware of what is expected of you and what you should do and how you should do it. So you are mentally prepare to do that and Ja, so the question was, how, what effect or come again?

**Interviewer: How did it affect you?**

Interviewee: How did it affect?



**Interviewer: Mmmm**

Interviewee: Well it was a job that needed to be done and it was my turn to do the job, so I just did the... the work.

Interviewer: Okay, how often have you been to critical incidents?

Interviewee: Oooh as often as, we we we were few that attends crime scenes, so we were rotating on a weekly base.

**Interviewer: Mmmm**

Interviewee: One week you are on standby and the other week you are free to do your other duties, so I can say we were doing it... Aaahhh twice in a month or two weeks in a month.

**Interviewer: In what way has your exposure to critical incidents change your lifestyle?**

Interviewee: Well when it starts it is interesting because it is a new field and then you are doing everything that you need to do, the right way that you have, that you were taught but then as time goes on then it starts to affect you psychologically and then that is when you start.... Mmm..Aaahhh having the the the, feeling the impact of, of it so in what way, you end up, I personally ended up hating violent crimes, I ended up hating men that abuse their wives, I hated conflicts in the families because they are the course of these..Aaahhh.. Violent crimes. So my lifestyle changed..Mmm I to a point of, to the point whereby even when I watch movies, I don't watch violent movies due to the kind of work that I do or the exposure to these violent crimes, I ended up not, even now I don't watch violent movies.

**Interviewer: So do you go to court after attending critical incidents?**

Interviewee: I go to court for all the work that I have done to testify. Aaahhh as a ballistic analysts I am I, or as a forensic analysts I understand myself as being the middle men, middle men in a scene that there is crime committed, there is me to analyse, to give expert opinion and then there is court waiting for my report or my expert opinion, so after each and every work that I do I have to when called to the courts, I have to go there and give my expert opinion.

**Interviewer: How does these critical incidents or crime scenes and the issue of going to court affect your work, family and the community?**

Interviewee: Well I dint consider it as affect but then I consider it as, this is service delivery, this is my duty, this is my..Aaahhh,..Aaahhh which word can I use? Mmm this is the part that I play with pride for that matter this is how I give back to the community, every the service has invested in me teaching me so that I can be of good service to our community. So when I do that, I do it with pride and I make sure that I do it to the best of my ability so I can proudly tell u that in almost all the cases that I attended and all the work that I did we managed to positively convict the suspect, some of them got life sentences because of the job well done.

**Interviewer:... mmmm after attending the critical incidents did you get the assistance from psychological services, management and colleagues?**

Interviewee: in the beginning when we started around 2003 we didn't have a psychological service section I think in the SAPS it , the psychological service were only introduced late now in the 2, 2016 so for since 2203,2004,2005 till 2016 we only had the, so initially we did not have any more..Aaaahhh psychological support, Aaahhh as for as management is concerned it was just work well done and we didn't have also any psychological or moral support, it was just a support to work more and pro produce more, more results. As for, as far as colleagues are concerned we are also not inclined to Aaahhh supporting each other psychologically, even now if you say support your colleagues psychologically I wouldn't know where to start but then we were giving full support as far as how to do your examinations, as far as your conclusion, your findings Aaahhh there we support each other and we still are still supporting each other, that is work related but not.. mmmm Psychologically or spiritually.

**Interviewer: How is the relationship between you and your colleagues?**

Interviewee: It is, always its, its good, its good Eee, we are, we have the same vision, we have the same goal, we help each other as much as possible to attain the, the same goal so, our, we work as a team.

**Interviewer: And then what advice do you get from colleagues after attending critical incidents usually?**

Interviewee: The advice would be concerning these your results concerning your findings, concerning you advise, your analyses, there are instances where you have to consult and sit down with the photos, sit down with the ..Aaahhh Ja the the photos will illustrate the position, you have a closer range photo to identify the tattooing to identify the ring of aberration so you need the confirmation and that is how and where we assist each other so that when your results and your findings go to court we are in agreement and it is surely a an examination well performed.

**Interviewer: How do you deal with trauma every time after attending critical incidents?**

Interviewee: Aaaahhh.. Now that we have the spiritual services, we have debriefings sessions it should be every time when one comes from the crime scene but then due to lack of staff in the EHW you, it is, we are not able to get it immediately but at least we do get some debriefings.

**Interviewer: Do you think there is a need for psychological services to assist members who are attending critical incidents?**

Interviewee: Yes, yes, yes.

**Interviewer: And what kind of support do you get from psychological services within SAPS?**

Interviewee: Aaahhh... Lately I would say yes they help us with the debriefing. mmmm the all psychological support or all Ja, all psychological support Eee work related and home related or family related. So at least as we speak now mmmm. The psychologist s are here doing their part although they, they are, are faced with the bad lock because it's now many of us and few of them, so but then we appreciate their, the, their the part that they are playing.

**Interviewer: Aaaah what is the role of chaplain within SAPS, do you understand it?**

Interviewee: Yes the role of a chaplain in the SAPS, its Aaahhh, spiritual empowerment, sooo yes they do help because you understand that a men, a person Eee.. you you, you also need help from God, you also need guidance from God so that the they really praying for us, encouraging us and empowering us spiritually, also helps a lot in our lives.

**Interviewer: In your own opinion what do you think can be done to assist members who are attending critical incidents within the forensic services?**

Interviewee: In my own opinion Aaahhh..I wud say yes more in, from the spiritual services, from the EHW Employee Health and Wellness. mmmm sector, more is needed from them in that they, the debriefing sessions should be if possible as frequent as immediately when the person comes from the crime scene and there should also be a con, it it should be a continues process Eee too to to empower us psychologically and to help us psychologically.

**Interviewer: mmmm What kind of advice can you give to members who want to Eee to go to for the crime scene for the first time?**

Interviewee: What kind of advice can u give to members who want to goo

**Interviewee: For the crime scene for the first time?**

Interviewee: Yes Aaahhh the members should really Eeehhh know and understand that as much as we are dealing with deceased, dead people Aaahhh ( clears his throat) you cannot work effectively if you relate to that deceased as a person. You should rather see him /her as a dummy so that you are able to perform your duties Aaahhh, don't attach your feelings to your work, don't attach your feelings and your emotions, just see it as a dummy like as in the first aid, the dummy that we use on first aid when we are learning first aid Eeehhh see it as such so that you are able to enjoy the cutting, enjoy theee, to be able to do your analyses effectively so.

**Interviewer: Have you ever thought of leaving the service of SAP, or SAPS?**

Interviewee: Well with theee the inflicts of, with this work load and sometimes not hav, Eee receiving enough encouragement from management, yes many times I've thought of quitting but then because of mmmm the family, because now before you can quite you think of your wife, you think of your children, you think of all the inflation thennn Ja if there is any better job you would go for it but for now still have to do what a men has to do.

**Interviewer: mmmm Lieutenant Colonell Motha thanks for your time, from my side I'm done and thanks for being part of the interview mmmm till next time if there is a need for me to repeat it, but will hear from my supervisor, anyway thanks.**

Interviewee: Thank you, thank you too.

**Interviewer: Thank you.**

## **SECOND INTERVIEW**

**Interviewer: good afternoon sir**

Interviewee: afternoon mom

**Interviewer: how are you?**

Interviewee: am well and you?

**Interviewer: fine thanks. Am Tshiwela Francinah Masupha am currently doing masters research at the university of s mmmm South Africa which is in short UNISA. The purpose to conduct interview for my studies is for my mmmm academically or is for mmmm studies. The information that you will provide me with will be confidentially and your name will not be mentioned anyway on my research. I have a consent form for permission for you to complete it, so do you have any problem to complete it?**

Interviewee: no

**Interviewer: mmmm here is the cons....consent form to complete for me**

The interviewee completed the consent form.

**Interviewer: mmmm thanks for completing the consent form meaning that you allow me to proceed with my interview and thanks to be to be part of the interview. Remember the interview will take plus minus 45 minutes. Our questions will start as follows: mmmm Tell me about yourself.**

Interviewee: mmmmm am about 51.... 51 years of age, my academic background yaka I have got diploma in art design and some certificates in designing and I started working for the SAPS in 1998.

**Interviewer: you started working at SAPS in 1998?**

Interviewee: ja in 1998

**Interviewer: ok. When did you start working as Image Analyst?**

Interviewee: (keep quiet for seven seconds) am not sure but I don't have correct date with me here but there is somewhere in 2004

**Interviewer: in 2004?**

Interviewee: yes

**Interviewer: and then how do you understand police as profession?**

Interviewee: I understand (quite for four seconds) that the Police is a government body which was established in order to fight crime mmmmmm to push stability in the country mmmm and offer prote... a safe environment for the citizens of the country.

**Interviewer: mmmm you have mentioned that you are an Image Analyst, eeehh what is required to be an image analyst?**

Interviewee: to be an image analyst you require an NQF 6 in graphic design or fine arts or photographic or mmmmm IT with graphic design sssub....subjects

**Interviewer: ok. And then what is the proce procedure when you attend crime scene?**

Interviewee: mmmmmm our crime scene, the procedure when we go to the crime scene we got the crime scene form whereeee which we fill in when we arrive at the the crime scene , at least some of the details that you fill are the time that we left the lab and the time that you arrive at the... scene and the physical address of the place and the person you spoken to maybe the manager of the shop,orrerr can be the system operator or an assistant of the shop or anyone who help you to download the footages.

**Interviewer: I can hear that mmmm your career is about theeeee the images is either the video one or the photographic the photo the photos one, how does it affect you psychologically?**

Interviewee: Ja, my career is mostly images they are both moving and still images and some of this images moving images maybe they might have sound in them like audio , soooo they affect you because is the job that you do everything. Some of the image are are too graphic like when I see like murder, robbery and stuff like that or where there is too much violence on the image.

**Interviewer: and then how was your first experience after analysing the critical incidents?**

Interviewee: mmmmm my first one was if I remember well it was a case like this guy this two guys they went to the garage and then theyyyyy approach the petrol attendance I don't know why cause there was no audio on the on the footage I don't know whyyyy why did they one of them took out the gun and it was a close range he shot the guy several times on the on the chest and the stomach and you can see the blood spitting from the guy there and that image even now is still in my in my mind because it was the first time there. More of this images but some of them in time they go out of your mind if something triggers triggers then they come back to you.

**Interviewer: how did it affect you psychologically?**

Interviewee: mmmmmm psychologically is like maybe at night youuuu you don't sleep or when you are supposed to sleep they this images they play back in your brain, in your brain and psychologically some of them is like you become paranoid like you don't trust people when you move in the street or what what

**Interviewer: you don't trust anyone?**

Interviewee: mmmm mayyyybe strangers or maybe people like when you walk at night and the car suddenly stop you even if maybe those people will just stop for themselves you just become paranoid or when you go at home you see a car standing outside your yard for a long time maybe sometimes the car has stacked or what what you just think of some other things.

**Interviewer: how often have you been exposed to images that are critical?**

Interviewee: how often, I can't say but many times until I went to the psychiatrist psychiatric and then after wards my psychiatrist told me that I must not be exposed to such images.

**Interviewer: and then in which way has your exposure to critical incidents change your lifestyle?**

Interviewee: mmmmmmm, change your lifestyle?

**Interviewer: Ja, didn't affect you like before you were fine and then when times goes on because of work then you change and change**

Interviewee: since I worked at the image analysis am not someone I used be before, theeeee I have developed some psychiatric problems like the last time I went to my psychiatric she check my brain, she said my I have lost some volumes in my brain and then like am forgetful sometimes I .....I.... I get very confused and loose staff like my wallet, my cell phones and my money even important things like keys or what what. Sometimes I put them there I can't remember where I put them. Like forgetfulness staff like that or memory it affects your memory.

**Interviewer: how did this affect you, mmmm affect you in terms of work?**

Interviewee: in terms of work is like you sometimes you lose concentration and sometimes you make mistakes like if you have to write like a serial numbers or you write wrong staff like that.

**Interviewer: and then how does it affect you in terms of family?**

Interviewee: mmmmm, fortunately me in my family I don't I don't take this to at home. But sometimes when I have got problems they can see that this guy got some problems, but mmmm usually I don't take this thing to at home, I leave them mostly at work when I go at home I try to forget about this thing.

**Interviewer: since you have mentioned that it affects you psychologically have you ever get assistant from psychological services within SAPS?**

Interviewee: Ja, I think maybe the other time we went to a psychological service in town there, it was me and my other colleague and then ja I think maybe it was the other time and the other, from theeeee, is there a Social Worker?

**Interviewer: psychologist?**



Interviewee: Psychologist, a Social worker there is one social worker

**Interviewer: so you saw social worker not Psychologist?**

Interviewee: the first time my myyyyy commander

**Interviewer: referred you to social worker**

Interviewee: ja referred me to social worker and psychologist even went to the chaplain

**Interviewer: even went to chaplain?**

Interviewee: the chaplain

**Interviewer: have you ever seen psychologist except social worker or iiiii chaplain?**

Interviewee: ja I think I saw the social..... psychologist

**Interviewer: how many times have you visited?**

Interviewee: about maybe twice

**Interviewer: only twice since you started since you become image analysis since 2004?**

Interviewee: mmm

**Interviewer: and then did you see did you see mmmm the service having an impact?**

Interviewee: ja the service, the service mostly it does, it does have an impact somewhere somehow

**Interviewer: you mentioned that you went to you are seeing private psychiatrist and then if you compare between the private psychologist with the SAPS psychologist how do you take it?**

Interviewee: I think the, the private psychiatrist maybe is because they, they are being paid a lot of money what, what they sometimes maybe they are more, more detailed their treatment is more detailed like the one I went to the, this psychiatrist in hospital there is this the other one will talk to you , will talk to you wanna find out about the family, what is happening there your relationship and everything and if there are things that bothers you, will try to give you some advises how to overcome those things. Usually psychologist don't do

medicine to solve these problems but the psychiatrist I think is the one who is more into medical like she sent me for an x-ray to see my brain if there is no a portion on my brain which are damaged and check for if you got epilepsy or anything like that. Afterwards she prescribes you some medication drugs like to cope with the thing and the other clinical psychologist I think that one she or he gives you some exercises like to evaluate you like exercises like if you like maybe something and say you must draw this thing as it is and you draw it. after some time, she might say do you remember that thing I said you must draw can you draw from memory I give you maybe one hour to try to draw it as much as you can so he wants to see your memory on how you remember the thing. The other exercise maybe they might give you the puzzle and show you must pack it in order they see your respond speed how you do it and if you are struggling and afterwards they give you a score and tell you which field you scored most and which one you underperformed and what what something like that.

**Interviewer: so do you the private psychologist as having an impact more than SAPS one?**

Interviewee: ja maybe is because is is much intense like even like maybe the SAPS one is the time may be allocated to see him or her maybe is very short or maybe the methods or procedures the private one I think they are more intense.

**Interviewer: they have got more time than SAPS one?**

Interviewee: maybe, maybe is because they are being paid by the medical they, they, theyyyy want to charge for, for they don't want to charge you for nothing they didn't do.

**Interviewer: ohh they want you to come back?**

Interviewee: mmmm

**Interviewer: and then, since you have been mmmm affected through work do you get any assistance from management, colleagues maybe support regarding the impact of your work?**

Interviewee: ja, my, my manager most of the time if I have problems he arranges with the psychiatrist there or psychologist here at work to let them talk to me and see what they can do for me. And my colleagues most of them because we are, we are in the same deep waters,

we are doing the same thing, we try to like support each other in most cases when they show cases, they show to us and what what we try to cope with this thing.

**Interviewer: and then how is the relationship between you and your colleagues?**

Interviewee: our relationship mmmmm is very good, there is no, there is nooooo tense situation where we work, because mostly artist areeeee very peaceful people. We don't fight or do what what, we got a good relationship.

**Interviewer: how do you deal with trauma every time after analysing critical images?**

Interviewee: mmmm, how do you deal with trauma every time after attending critical incidents? Myself Most of the time if I have got the trauma I go to my psychiatrist or Doctor that to need some drugs to, to try cope with this thing.

**Interviewer: do you think there is a need for psychological services within SAPS?**

Interviewee: ja, I think since the police to work in the police is a very difficult environment, ja I think the psychological service is needed.

**Interviewer: what is the role of chaplain?**

Interviewee: I think the chaplain maybe gives us mmmm spiritual support like if we got problems they give you some spiritual support.

**Interviewer: do you think there is a need for chaplain to assists based on work?**

Interviewee: ja, I think when people got problems they sometimes need some spiritual mmmm

**Interviewer: support**

Interviewee: support

**Interviewer: ok, and then, in your own opinion, what do you think can be done to assist members who are attending critical incidents within forensic services? The way you see it, you are analysing iii images that are critical every time, so what do you think can be done to assists you guys?**

Interviewee: mmmm, I don't know how to answer it, with us like maybe there should be, there are members who are like a sensitive because we are not the same, people are not the same some, some people like if they see if they killed a person there some will go and see even closer if this guy, who is this guy or what, what. Some are not sensitive. So I think maybe the sensitive one like me my commander because of my psychology said I must not do the sensitive cases because they, they bring back those things they disturb me. So Even with the others maybe they, they should be prepared the people should be prepared for when they go to this crime scene.

**Interviewer: so have you been trained to to too attend critical incidents?**

Interviewee: no, as I told you we weee don't attend critical what what is just the videos we, wee see we were not trained we were just trained on how to analyse the videos like you put your video in the computer were you want to capture the instant you stop or you watch and see the request of what you want maybe two guys what, what and the time, as you watch sometimes you don't know what you are going to get but sometimes you if they told you like when they bring the exhibit they say is murder, then you must expect to see people like a person stabbing someone maybe twenty times or what what then the guy falling there is still kicking staff like those.

**Interviewer: so what do you think can be improved in the psychological support system of SAPS for members exposed to critical incidents? When you look a psychologically in general do you think is helping us and where can they improve if they are not assisting?**

Interviewee: ja, I don't know in the SAPS if we do have the services of psychiatrist they were mostly psychologist, I don't know cause the private hospital where I went there most therapy involved psychiatrist, psychologist, physiotherapist they work hand in hand, maybe they supplement each other staff like that.

**Interviewer: so do you need them to add Psychiatrist and physiotherapist?**

Interviewee: not necessarily, maybe on this environment the environment are not the same, that one maybe because is a private hospital so you will get all those Doctors.

**Interviewer: where do you think they can improve on?**

Interviewee: usually the psychologist he communicates with maybe with the person who got the problem he wants to find out what, what is causing the problem and if possible if they are things that maybe she should avoid she, she shouldn't come into contact with otherwise the problem won't go away if like the person is exposed to same environment like that. So, maybe, maybe am not a psychologist if I was a psychologist maybe I will answer this differently like I don't know if someone is having a problem I don't how to handle.

**Interviewer: mmmm are you receiving any debriefing from psychological services?**

Interviewee: noooo

**Interviewer: you are not receiving any debriefing?**

Interviewee: mmmm

**Interviewer: even if is after seeing those critical incidents and see that they affected you psychologically so you don't request assistant or you don't know where to go if you need psychological assistant?**

Interviewee: maybe maybe maybe nowadays I don't, I don't watch these things if there are problems but if there got if I know that if maybe I have got some disturbances I should maybe I can arrange with my commander to arrange with for the people of psychological services or maybe I can go to my psychologist or what, is just that my psychologist they are, they are expensive you pay them on the medical if your medical the funds are exhausted you can't use their services but they can maybe mmm refer you to public a hospital that's what they told me. If it happens that my funds are exhausted I still need some psychological or psychiatrist help which they can refer me to public hospital.

**Interviewer: have you ever thought of leaving SAPS due to your work?**

Interviewee: SAPS? mmmm No, maybe currently because eeeehhhh, because I have been diagnosed, I know what's my problem where I don't have problem with working here, is just sometimes that there are some footages that I mustn't, I mustn't look at them even if I don't think of leaving even if maybe I feel that the situation is not getting better maybe I would rather think of being changed to another department in the SAPS not like just leaving, like if

maybe this work is too trauma maybe is too much to handle for me I would rather change me and take me to another section.

**Interviewer: ok, what kind of advice can you give to a person who want to, to be a Forensic Image Analyst?**

Interviewee: Advise?

**Interviewer: yes**

Interviewee: ja, is like maybe, is like maybe when you want to be a pilot, akere mostly when you want to be a pilot one of the criteria they use there, if you got like fear of heights you can't be a pilot. You must just expect what you are doing to get there and you must try to, to deal and cope with it. Because, myself before I, my first cases before I do them I used to, like they are not like now, now am like settled I don't see any problem with this thing, I see them normal all these things like the robberies and the what, what but there are some which are very graphically and myself am someone who is sensitive cause like my father was having epilepsy he died in front of me so things like those they bring back those memories. So we are not the same there are some people they are not sensitive and they can even watch horror movies on the daily basis nothing happened to them. It all depends on the individual.

**Interviewer: ok, Warrant Officer Tsutsubi, thanks for your and for being part of the interview. We are done with the interview and thanks for your participation.**

Interviewee: thanks eeish

**Interviewer: Dankie**

## **THIRD INTERVIEW**

**Interviewer: good morning sir**

Interviewee: morning morning morning

**Interviewer: how are you?**

Interviewee: am great, yourself?

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**Interviewer: am fine, am Tshiwela Francinah Masupha, am currently doing Masters In research psychology at the university of South Africa in short UNISA. Am conducting a research about police officers attending crimi, attending critical incidents within Forensic Services and how Psychological Services assists them within SAPS. The reason why am conducting research is academically. And then, mmmm mmm your information will be treated confidentially and your name will never be mentioned anyway in my research. And then mmmm i have got a consent form here, do you have any problem to complete it?**

Interviewee: no , no, problem

**Interviewer: ok, thanks here is a consent form to complete.**

Interviewee: ok.

**Interviewer: mmmm, thanks for completing the consent form meaning that you accept me to interview you regarding my studies. mmm remember the interview will take plus minus 45 minutes. Can we start?**

Interviewee: yes, please.

**Interviewer: mmmm, tell me about yourself?**

Interviewee: i have been working frommmmmm eeehhh back in 2004 in the mining industry and then my last job was in Tarisa and then i joined SAPS in 2015 first month of 2015, that was on the second day of that first month. Aahhh mmmm academically i did aaahhhh national diploma in chemistry. mmmm ja i think that's in shorts.

**Interviewer: how do you understand police as a profession and how do you compare police with your previous, previous employer?**

Interviewee: aaaahhh look, is not that different from where I was, the only thing is that maybe the responsibility here they are bit different as there I was working strictly inside the Lab. And then here in SAPS is crime scene am attending instead of being mmmm full time in the lab i also go to attend crime scenes and then after that i come and then analyse. Even though the only different it can be the instruments that we are using here, they are not eeehhh necessarily mmmm similar with those one that i was using.

**Interviewer: mmmm what is the procedure for crime scene?**

Interviewee: mmmm basically am doing fire investigation in SAPS under forensics soooo we don't just go to crime scenes unless we are being called by the IO. The IO we are talking about the investigative Officer the first person who attend the crime scene, those are the people who called us. And then from there they are certain forms that they need to fill before we can leave the office. And then when we get to the crime scene what we need to see is this that the crime scene is still preserved is gathered and then there is no any disturbance in the crime scene. And then mmmm all in all what we do is just mmmm mmmm doing investigation on trying to find out what is the cause mmmm, its quarrel eeehhh kind like cause determination and then mmmm what do we call this? The fire origin, so we determine the fire, the the fire origin and then the cause determination what cause that fire. So that is basically

**Interviewer: do you attend courts after attending critical incidents?**

Interviewee: yessss, it depends on, on the cases. Some of them yes and some not.

**Interviewer: does it affect you may be psychologically in a community if you attend the cases at court?**

Interviewee: at court?

**Interviewer: yes**

Interviewee: eeehhh mmmm at court it doesn't does not have much effect is just that eeehhh stage freight when you get there since you have to swear an oath and what so ever. Ja that's actually the, the freight but because you are the subject expect as they go by it becomes easy to can address or attend their issues or their questions. so in actual fact it does not affect me.

**Interviewer: what is required to be a Forensic Fire Investigator?**

Interviewee: eeehhh you need to beeee having analytical chemistry orrrrrr chemical engineering orrr..... this fire, fire courses that, that they do like not short course, not fire fighting because is but i think is it has to do with eeehhhh fire..... basic fire and what so ever, ja.



**Interviewer: how was your first experience after attending your critical incidents?**

Interviewee: jo, that was horrible, that was not nice

**Interviewer: and then what kind of incident was that?**

Interviewee: eeehhh mmmm since am doing fire investigation there was a crime scene whereby a husband eeeeehhhhh decided, he was fighting with his wife then he decided to poison them and then they got drugged then he sat alight a house but eeehhh what was so strange is that even himself he was inside there so the trick that he used that was the one which was so challenging. And then finding pieces of bones during eeehhh crime scene investigation that it something that we are not usually used to. So ja it was really disturbing.

**Interviewer: how did it affect you?**

Interviewee: eeehhh since am married it was something like eeehhh really people can they go to this point or to this far whereby now when you are at home sitting alone looking at your wife or having an argument it becomes a challenge you sometimes you reserve yourself not knowing eeish will this end up in, in a eeehhh, eeehhh what do you call this home domestic violence. So ja, i think eeehhh the only thing that assisted is the debriefing session that we attended after the crime scenes. I think theyyyyyy, they, they worked at least.

**Interviewer: mentioned one scene that you will never forget and tells us what happened on that scene?**

Interviewee: eeehhh, so far, i can tell you that that is one of the crime scenes that I will never forget. The crime scene happened in Secunda that was innnn eeehhh 2015 just a day before Christmas. Sooooo when i got the background the guy had eeehhh, since they were not in good terms with the wife, they were in separation. So he manage to peruse the lady to come over with the kids. And then he takes them out for a week and then when they come back that's when he drugged them and then they sleep. So he opens up a gas. mmmm he didn't even use a match to, to mmmm to set alight a house, instead he went to the plugs cause apparently he was an electrician, electrical engineer in some mining that side of Secunda. So fiddle around with the cables or conductors until they give a spark and they give a spark and then mmmm gas mmmm exploded.

**Interviewer: when you go to the scene usually do you go alone or?**

Interviewee: no, we go in pairs. Is either we are two or three. But we don't go alone at all.

**Interviewer: how often have you been exposed to critical incidents?**

Interviewee: mmmm if we are talking about, if am having 50 scenes under my name, thirty of them were very critical.

**Interviewer: and then in which way has your exposure to critical incidents changed your lifestyle?**

Interviewee: mmmm, eeish the thing is most of the the the crime scenes those which the critical ones in most cases you find that it involves domestic violence. So even though it doesn't change the lifestyle but whenever you misunderstanding with your wife at home it becomes a challenge like you sometimes feel like maybe she was there in the crime scene that you were attending she she just wanna complish or check if ever that is possible she can do that and she can behave the same way from the crime scene that we were attending. But in any case i try to live hey.

**Interviewer: how these, how this affects you in terms of work, family and community?**

Interviewee: eeesh mmm in terms of work i think is as i get exposed on day to day on such crime scene i get to relax my mind start to adopt and then start to live that thing that thing happened in life. mmmm and then in family i avoid things like confrontations and the having issues that can makes or result us fighting so that's those are the things that i try to do. Community wise is, is very sad because you see things happening in which can lead to such incident. And then due to some restrictions and then try to be safe on the other hand you can't even intervene, instead you have to follow the protocol or maybe advice those community, community members to report the matters and in some instances becomes so bad where by the person who is being aaaa attacked or a is a victim is scared he or she is scared maybe to confront SAPS, maybe for the various reasons can be the fact that they don't have trust in SAPS anymore or aaahhhh he or she is very scared of what could be the consequences after reporting such cases.

**Interviewer: you mentioned that every time for critical incidents you mmmm get debriefing from Psychological services, is it a psychological service from SAPS or is a private.**

Interviewee: no its, it's from SAPS it hasn't gone to that stage whereby i feel like i need mmm debriefing with mmmm psychologist, from private psychologist.

**Interviewer: does a service had an impact?**

Interviewee: aaaahhh i think it does because is like you know you find a cause usually we find out that we do things as some point we do the group debriefing and then on the group debriefing that's when you realize that ooohh i thought i have got a problem no i don't have a problem this is supposed to be, here is a thing because people will be explaining things that are scaring than what you were thinking you are facing. i think that's the other thing that boost the moral that ok that means that i need to be strong and bold because for that guy who is having that a deeper issues as compared to mine.

**Interviewer: when did you start having debriefing from psychological services?**

Interviewee: mmmm immediately after that crime scene in 2015, soooo, unfortunately it was on December then it took some, it took more than the days that is required for us to go to debriefing but eventually it was done, it was conducted so it was late 2015.

**Interviewer: right, do you the reasons why they saw you after a long period of time?**

Interviewee: ja, one of the reason is that mmmm when am in crime scene, cause am doing National, when am in crime scene if ever my first crime scene is the one which i experience such mmmmh difficulties or such traumatic issues and then i had to go to another crime scene i will be back in the office after seven days. Soooo, thats the form my side and then from their side when i get back here since they were not in our mmmm building we had to arrange first with them on the other side. And then unfortunately am not the only one who need the debriefing there are other people who need debriefing, then it need to be certain appointment i think on that, on their side that was the sad bad. On my side the sad bad was that i had to first complete my standby.

**Interviewer: what do you think can be done in order for the them to reach you at least a period of time that has been mentioned for debriefing?**

Interviewee: eeehhh, since presently we got theeee one of theeee that psychologist from the building I don't think it will be a struggle because immediately when i get back to the office i will be able to can go and consult, not unless she is not available but i have never experience such a thing.

**Interviewer: did you get assistant from management and colleagues regarding you after attending critical incidents?**

Interviewee: yes, most definitely.

**Interviewer: how is the relationship between you and your colleagues?**

Interviewee: mmmmm, i don't know i don't wanna say is wow or is lovely but ja i can live with them.

**Interviewer: how do you deal with trauma after attending critical incidents on your own except the issue of psychological services?**

Interviewee: eeehhh the only thing that assists or that i think it also assists is talking about it than keeping it myself. So usually you find that after a crime scene while we are driving, let's say we are attending a crime scene in Northern Cape along the way while we are driving will be talking ehhh try to make jokes of some few thing and then try to rethink like reconstruct what could have happened but how was it could have been avoided. Such things i think they also help us because we were there together so it becomes easy to relate and liaise with one each other.

**Interviewer: do you think there is a need for psychological services?**

Interviewee: yes, most definitely.

**Interviewer: mmmm in which way?**

Interviewee: in way that mmmm I remember amongst us would discuss things but we might not have a solution like trained psychologist, having a trained psychologist that, that at least give us a mmmm good path that, that person is trained to start with and they, then even know how to handle our issues. Unlike if ever am just discussing it with each and every Tom, Dick and Jerry.

**Interviewer: what is a role, a role of Chaplain within SAPS, do you think there is a need for chaplain regarding your work?**

Interviewee: (He laugh) myself honestly I don't know about thing because I only see the chaplains when there is a memorial service. Sooo at first I used to think that they have hired the pastor from outside until somebody told me that no there, it is also an SAPS member. So i don't know, i don't know how does it work and how, when and how do you get their services, i don't know.

**Interviewer: in your own opinion, what do you think can be done to assists members who are attending critical incidents within forensic services?**

Interviewee: mmmm, I think mmm, theee the psychologist need to bond and have good relationship with us not only check us if ever we coming from crime scene or what so ever but they must constantly have interaction with us. I don't know how can they do that but having interaction with us it can assists in a way that, remember some people when they back come from the crime scene they sometimes feel like aaaag thllllliiiii may be i will find her busy. So she ends up not knowing if ever the person is having a problem and then or maybe sonmebody make a phone call mmmm and then the lady is not in the office then they think aag ok anyway why bother. So if the psychologist has a list of us all the theee the crime scene guys, even though doesn't mean that she mustn't visit our office maybe but have a way where by now she knows that she interacts with us time and again no appointments needed on that. I think that could make a huge different cause will also be releaving those people to, to kind like feel that you know what there is people out there who is still care about us. Sooo that person even if you not around that person won't mind to wait for, for the lady because he knows that he is waiting for somebody who cares.

**Interviewer: What kind of advice can you give to members who want to go for the crime scene for the first time or who want to follow your career?**

Interviewee: mmmm, the advice I think actually what I can say is that during the interview I think the interview pa., panels must be honest and be open with the guys that this is kind of things that we experience if there are pictures or videos show them such videos and then they decide from there. I remember when somebody decide from that point there mmmm can be two reasons can be that the interest or fact that they want just to want to be members

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of SAPS. Then we will take it from there and taking it from there is like mmmm, take them gradually don't take them to heavy scenes on, on when they are still a beginner. At least take them gradually so that they get used to the fact that mmmm in some instance you have to find mmmm dead bodies, in some instances we have to even drive and look for those dead bodies in the mock and then conduct the, the, theeee post-mortems. I think it, it can work, but again remember it is a mental thing. soooo, the advice it cannot be a one-day thing it should be a continuous thing. Hence now i was thinking that the psychologist they can also play part on that one.

**Interviewer: have you ever thought of leaving SAPS due to your work?**

Interviewee: not due to my work, due to my salary.

**Interviewer: that's the only thing?**

Interviewee: ja, honestly i enjoy my work

**Interviewer: aaaaahhhh, thanks Warrant for being part of the interview, mmmm this is the end of interview.**

Interviewee: eeehhh thank you very much and God bless you.

**Interviewer: ok, thanks.**

## **FIFTH INTERVIEW**

**Interviewer: morning madam**

Interviewee: Morning

**Interviewer: I am Tshiwela Francina Masupha , currently doing masters in research psychology at the university of South Africa and then my research topic is on police officers within division forensic services attending critical incidents and how they experience psychological services by south African police services. The purpose of the interview is for my studies or academically, the information you will provide me will be confidentially and your name will not be machined anywhere. The interview will take plus minus 45 minutes. I have a concerned form for permission for you to complete it. So do you have any problem to complete it?**

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Interviewee: no problem

**Interviewer: ok here is the concerned form to complete it. Thanks for completing the concerned form. Then will start with question. Tell me about yourself?**

Interviewee: Am in the police force currently in the photograph section started in the police in 1990. I was placed there after college in rode plate dog centre. I was socialising in police dogs, afterwards I went to Rustenburg SRC drafted fingerprint expert. After that I came to Pretoria . I did analysis on fire arms I was diagnose with PTSD 2006 in 2008 I was placed due to my condition I was taken off to crime scenes. Now currently am just there without being fear

**Interviewer: how do you understand police as a profession?**

Interviewee: well with the police supposed to be, is to protect the people and to investigate crime to the best they can. But unfortunately it is tendency that the current, the most of the current people are just going for the, for the money and the thing is in the olden days it was mmmmm it was a calling. It was much a mmmmm it was a job, it was a calling.

**Interviewer: you mentioned that you used to attend crime scenes while you were working at Ballistics, mmmm do you still remember the procedure for crime scenes?**

Interviewee: ja, first is that you must introduce yourself properly and then what you do is the person on the scene, will take you through the scene and tell you exactly what happened and then you make your own conclusion on what you want and what you see. And then mmmm what I normally did, because i normally work alone on the crime scene is you go for a crime scene and you mark out what you want to mark and i took photos of everything then i mark out and then i draw and i make a plan, I draw a plan of everything. Make all my notes and then ja, then basically back at the office, it is compiling all the photos and the, the mmmmm, the conclusion that I came to compile a report with the photos.

**Interviewer: how was your first experience after attending critical incident?**

Interviewee: well my first encounter with a mmmm, with an incident was when i was at LCRC in Rustenburg . i was on a mentorship, and my mentor was actually his, was actually his crime scene. It was a suicide, and then we went to the guy`s house and obviously family was outstanding outside and i was there as basically a spectator but also a learner. And the guy was lying obviously, he was a gunshot boot through his head and he was lying on a floor in a pool of blood, the blood was already becoming mmm plaster and aaa my colleague went through the blood with his finger in search of the bullet if there is a bullet and that was the grossest thing for me as I said, i never ever want to experience but later ballestics, i had to do it, and it was, it was a thing that will stay with me, but the thing that was for me, what was the, of this suicide it is mmm, the guy`s son, he wanted to see his father and mmm we try to stop him but he didn`t want to listen so he came, and he was just sitting on the side of a bed and he was just looking at his father, so it was that scene, scene was quiet aaa you know, it made an impression on me

**Interviewer: how many of you attended that crime scene?**

Interviewee: mmmm, i don`t know about the police officer with the uniform section, but it was only me and my mentor that was there for LCRC taking photos and mmmm drawing plan, but that plan wasn`t necessary and fingerprints were not necessary because it was a suicide.

**Interviewer: how did it affect you psychological?**

Interviewee: well that one stayed with me, it was my first mmmm, i won`t say my first crime scene, but it was my first serious one, but after there was a few that was a mmmmm more of psychology effect had on me. I had one in mmmmm Woodspruit. The guy shot his four year old son and his seven year old daughter. What happened is mmmm, they had a braai and he was drunk and his wife then screws somebody else and he accused her of fooling around. And when they went home, he apparently went it was his same that he wanted to commit suicide. But am not topping and that`s correct. But mmmm he went to his room and he took out his mmmm R5 riffle, but that it states R5 riffle. And his little boy run after him, as his boy run after him, he took aim at his boy, at his son and he shot him and he was immediately obviously dead because the R5 is making, R4 is making damage. And then his wife came in and he shot her in the hip and she was fighting with him because of the child that was shot maybe she

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could still help him. What happened, she beat him in the, in the throat and decide to took off the neck and she didn't realize she took part of his skin out of his neck. And she shouts to the little girl to run, and she also run. And the guy took aim at the little girl, lucky he took aim at the little animal and he shot his little daughter. And his wife got away. But the story is and that will stay with me also, the story is which was running she was feeling that she is chocking on something and then she realize but she took the chunk out of his neck. And for me what it, it is the desperation in people`s mmmm, how they so desperate and so afraid that they will do stuff like that. But the ja, and the thing is he got only ten years to serve for two murders and attempted murder and afterwards he claimed that he cannot remember anything because he was drunk. They say it is, that can happen but in my opinion I think the first shot he fired, I think he must remember what happened afterwards.

**Interviewer: mention one scene that you will never forget and what happened on that scene and how did you feel after attending that scene?**

Interviewee: That one was one, and the one that i was, i had to basically choose as the incident for my Posttraumatic stress diagnose. There was a lady mmmm they call her actually on the newspaper also there in one lady. And it happened mmmm man and wife was divorced and they came to Pretoria. Apparently the business was going down and they come to Pretoria i don't for business or what. And evening they mmmm to go to the mmm guest house at the N4, no at the N1. Just before the Atturburry off ramp, he stopped and he wanted to take lick next to the road. And then for me is ridiculous because there are so many places that you can stop next to the road. mmmm you don't have to pee in the field anymore. So, for me it was indication, it was a, it was a planned thing he know exactly where he stopped. But when he was in the field mmmm, suspect came to her side of the, the vehicle and they shot her. And my indication was mmmm, according to the shooting to, according to the trajectory on, on her body that she was trying to alert him and trying to hoot for him as they shot, as they shoot her again. So they just closed the door and they just dropped the seats so nobody can see and they took a vehicle and just took the off ramp. And mmmm, they just stopped next to the road, mmmm he didn't look even if they had a rush there were not on the rush. They just park the vehicle, they didn't took anything, they didn't take a vehicle. And there she was just lying

there, blood tipping out of mmmm body through the scene. And he was obviously arrived there and mmmm according to that's why they called Ballistics guy that was from th LCRC, that's why they called Ballistics because something smell like a rat. They couldn't pin point on him, but we all know that he did it. But the, the closed range she was shot on close range obviously. You know peoplefaces stuck with you and mmmm smells and stuck with you and that's what Posttraumatic stress disorder is about. And the inside of the vehicle it was a quite new vehicle and then the new, the smell of the new, newest. Mmmm th