



## Poor Leadership and Its Impact on Police Performance in the Tshwane Police Precinct, South Africa

Hendrick Puleng Motlalekgosi\* , Pule Herman Mokubyane   
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa

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### Abstract

Despite the positive reception of the report highlighting a decline in crime, South Africa still grapples with a significant crime rate, particularly concerning violent crimes. This reality hinders the government's aim for citizens to feel secure in their homes, educational institutions, and workplaces, and to participate in community life without fear. This situation is indicative of the police's subpar performance, which could be a result of ineffective leadership. This study described the relationship between poor leadership and poor performance within the South African Police Services (SAPS) statistically. A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study. The population included male and female police officers of all ages representing different ranks from 14 police stations within the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Data were collected from 182 police officials sampled through a probability cluster sampling strategy using self-administered questionnaires. Univariate analysis, frequency distribution in particular, was used to analyse the data. This study found that 31% strongly disagreed and 66% disagreed, while only 2% agreed and 1% strongly agreed that they had an opportunity to participate when decisions are made where they are stationed, and that enhances their work performance. 26% strongly disagreed, and 70% disagreed, while only 2% agreed and 1% strongly agreed that their supervisors in the SAPS were unbiased and treated every employee fairly, and that this enhanced their work performance. 34% strongly disagreed and 58% disagreed, while only 3% were uncertain and 4% agreed that the existing leadership style in the SAPS where they were stationed motivated employees to strive to attain a high level of performance. It is recommended that compulsory leadership training be provided to all those in leadership and management positions across all police stations to upgrade their leadership and management skills. It is further recommended that the SAPS establish and constantly monitor an early warning system to detect any act that may amount to poor leadership. Recommendations for further study are also made.

**Keywords:** *South African Police Service, Poor Leadership, Poor Performance, Police Stations*

### INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of South Africa mandates the South African Police Service (SAPS) with several key responsibilities. These include preventing, fighting, and investigating criminal activities, maintaining public order, safeguarding the country's inhabitants and possessions, and enforcing the law. The SAPS is tasked with upholding these duties to protect the Republic and its citizens in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa, 1996). The South African Police Act 68 of 1995, as amended, was enacted to fulfil the aforementioned constitutional requirement. This legislation aims to accomplish several goals, the chief among them being the creation, structuring, governance, and supervision of the South African Police Service (SAPS). Furthermore, the Act encompasses provisions for addressing various matters related to law enforcement within the country. (South African Police Services (SAPS, 1995). A reasonable interpretation of the latter part of this aim could encompass the services provided by the SAPS, as stipulated in section 195(1)(e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This constitutional provision, among others, requires that the needs of the public be addressed. (South

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Corresponding author's email: [motlalekgosid@tut.ac.za](mailto:motlalekgosid@tut.ac.za)

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Africa, 1996).

With regard to measuring the performance of the SAPS, its constitutional and legislative mandate should be used as a yardstick. This will mainly depend on the effectiveness of its leadership structures. Given its status as one of the world's largest law enforcement agencies, it is not surprising that SAPS is considered a leading governmental organization using performance monitoring systems since the late 1990s. Every year, an annual performance plan is published (Bruce, 2011). In 2003, SAPS introduced a technology-based system called a "performance management chart" to monitor and compare the performance of police stations. The mechanism evaluates each station's efficiency by comparing it with its prior performance. Subsequently, it ranks the stations relative to one another based on their degree of performance enhancement (Bruce, 2011).

A simple scanning of the recent SAPS crime statistics paints a bleak picture regarding the performance of SAPS, measured against the expected standards. The Gauteng Province, of which the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality is part, continues to report an increased crime rate concerning contact crime, sexual offences, aggravated robbery, property-related crimes, and other serious crimes. For instance, murder and attempted murder have increased by 15.1% and 16%, respectively, year-on-year for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 financial years, whereas attempted sexual offences increased by 7.1% during the same period. Furthermore, commercial crime and shoplifting increased by 11.2% and 18.6% during the same period (SAPS, 2023).

Although this study concentrated on a SAPS case, its findings might also apply to other entities such as the Department of Correctional Services (DCS). The DCS is currently facing challenges with a high recidivism rate, which parallels the elevated crime rate in South Africa. Jacobs (2024) asserts that the country's approach to rehabilitating offenders is alarmingly ineffective. An overwhelming 86% to 94% of those convicted reoffend after being released, a situation known as recidivism, highlighting the persistence of criminal behavior. This indicates that the department is not fulfilling its responsibility to help offenders reintegrate into society, which is essential for creating a safer environment for all South Africans. This situation casts a negative light on the correctional staff responsible for rehabilitating these individuals. As Samuels (2024) argues, addressing recidivism is vital for evaluating the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives. Ultimately, this unsatisfactory performance may be attributed to inadequate leadership within the DCS, as identified by Baloyi et al. (2021), who noted it as a factor that reduces motivation.

Current research has examined different facets of poor leadership, including the harmful effects that toxic leadership can have on employees' productivity, motivation, and job satisfaction (Modise, 2023); the potential negative impact of adverse leadership on an organization's overall performance (Wejinya & Agwoje, 2023); and the influence of nurses' silence in moderating the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational outcomes (Farghaly & Abou, 2023).

Modise (2023) provides an in-depth overview of toxic leadership, destructive leadership, abusive supervision, and unethical leadership and uses these concepts to analyze case studies. Modise (2023) argues that a damaging leadership approach, toxic leadership, can hurt both people and organizations, and yet there is still no agreement on how to react to the question of whether leadership practices are perceived as improper, detrimental, or toxic to enterprises. Contributing to knowledge, Modise (2023) refers to toxic leadership as a pattern of actions that are not only detrimental but also encourage leaders to pursue their own goals and rewards at the expense of the interests of their team members. In their study on how negative leadership might hurt organization's performance, Wejinya and Agwoje (2023) have found that the manifestation of poor leadership in a form of abusive attitude, a lack of vision, a failure to communicate effectively, and a refusal to empower employees can have a detrimental influence on employee attitudes, output, and commitment to the organization and consequently lower output and higher turnover. They have

further found that employee morale, group dynamics, decision-making processes, and even an organization's culture could be negatively influenced by ineffective leadership. The study by [Farghaly and Abou \(2023\)](#) assessed toxic leadership and organizational performance among nurses of a University Hospital and explored the mediating effect of nurses' silence. Employing a cross-sectional research design with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), their study found that toxic leadership accounted for the prediction of 65% of the variance of nurses' silence and 87% of the variance of organizational performance. Also, nurses' silence as a mediating factor accounted for 73% of the variance of organizational performance. The study goes further to point out the importance of creating a work environment that encourages and promotes open communication, as well as eliminating toxic leadership behaviour from the organizational culture among nurses, as it affects organizational performance. This recommendation is consistent with that of [Wejinya and Agwoje \(2023\)](#) that organizations may create a positive work environment that supports growth, employee involvement, and sustained success.

Numerous studies have explored the link between ineffective leadership and employee performance. Yet, few have quantitatively assessed how leadership behaviors, such as not appreciating employees' skills and ideas, granting them autonomy in decision-making, involving them in decision processes, and exhibiting bias and unfairness, along with their leadership style, might contribute to poor performance. For instance, [Gandolfi and Stone \(2022\)](#) examined leadership behaviors like coercion, corruption, and narcissism. [Almeida et al.'s \(2022\)](#) research focuses on four types of harmful leader behavior (HLB), including intimidation, neglect, self-centeredness, and excessive pressure. [Walton \(2021\)](#) investigated toxic leaders' breaches of ethical standards, exploitation of employees, and the enforcement of coercive policies due to the power they hold. Furthermore, there is an apparent dearth of scholarly research on ineffective leadership as the root cause of police underperformance, especially at the station level. Given this context, the present study aimed to undertake a quantitative investigation of the relationship between subpar leadership and poor performance within the SAPS in the Tshwane police precinct. With crime rates persistently high not only in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, but also across the country, and frequent criticism directed at the police for their inadequate performance ([Pillay, 2023](#)), this study is based on the research question of whether the leadership of the SAPS might be adversely affecting police effectiveness.

This study has found that the police leadership in the Tshwane police precinct negatively influences the SAPS officials' performance. Poor police performance means that the fight against crime within the Tshwane police precinct remains elusive. This finding aligns with the work of [Saeed et al. \(2023\)](#), who examined how leaders behave or influence their employees to feel satisfied with work, strive to achieve their goals in their work organization, and cooperate. Their study found that strong leadership is essential for enhancing organizational productivity and establishing a good workplace ambience for the staff. From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study appear to be supportive of the Behavior Leadership Theory Behavioral Theory which suggests that a leader's actions significantly impact team morale, productivity, and overall success ([Spalding University, 2023](#)).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In an attempt to put this study into perspective and enable a comparison and contrast with the literature, we deem it important to dissect the two key concepts pertaining to this study, namely, 'poor work performance' and 'poor leadership.' Additionally, we examine the existing literature regarding the connection between ineffective leadership and subpar work performance. This examination will also seek to correlate the results of our study with previous research findings.

### Poor Leadership Defined

According to [Kellerman \(2004\)](#), various terms such as "ineffective, negative, bad, poor, or evil leadership" are used to describe subpar and unacceptable leadership practices. These terms represent the negative aspects of leadership, which can be detrimental to an organization, unethical, harmful to both society and employees, and wasteful concerning company resources. Inadequate leadership is characterized by a leader's inability to implement an organization's vision and establish a work environment that enables employees to make meaningful contributions towards achieving the company's objectives. An ineffective leader typically struggles to develop strategic plans for the organization, enhance its vision, manage and allocate resources appropriately, and monitor performance to identify any weaknesses and improve efficiency ([Musah, 2023](#)). Consequently, organizations often lose their distinct identity ([Nahak & Ellitan, 2022](#)).

According to [Farghaly and Abou \(2023\)](#), ineffective leadership is characterized by a lack of concern for employee welfare and engagement in behaviours that undermine, diminish, and dishearten staff members. Such leaders control their subordinates excessively, display rudeness, fail to listen, and create an intimidating work environment. Additionally, they misuse their authority, resulting in decreased job satisfaction and employee morale ([Osei et al., 2024](#)). In turn, [Hoffman and Sergio \(2020\)](#) define poor leadership as a collection of unfavourable traits and insufficient abilities in the leadership that can result in subpar outcomes in terms of efficacy, efficiency, and morality, which hinders an organisation from reaching its objectives and from nurturing and inspiring its workforce. Consequently, employees may lack the drive to perform at their best due to the lack of proper guidance and motivation. Ultimately, they may feel disconnected from the organisation's goals and lose focus on the tasks at hand.

The foregoing diverse definitions of the concept of 'poor leadership' capture a sense of the consequences of poor leadership in any given organisation, such as the SAPS. These definitions further describe the characteristics of a poor leader. Although these could be exhaustive definitions, it is our view that they could also include leaders who do not afford employees the freedom to make decisions or participate in the decision-making processes.

### **Poor Work Performance Clarified**

An inferior job performance can be described as an employee's failure to achieve or sustain the work standards established by their employer. This concept is separate from misconduct, as it does not involve any deliberate wrongdoing by the employee. Subpar work performance occurs when individuals still fail to reach the required level of proficiency despite applying their best effort, attention, and conscientiousness to a task ([Gold Fields Mining South Africa \(Pty\) Limited \(Kloof Gold Mine\) v. Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, 2013](#)). This failure to meet expectations typically arises from a deficiency in the necessary abilities, inadequate training, or the absence of essential personal qualities that impede the employee from producing work at the expected quality standard ([Invictus Human Capital Management, 2018](#)). Investigations conducted by [Campos \(2024\)](#) have indicated a positive and significant relationship between interpersonal capabilities and work effectiveness.

According to the Public Service Commission ([PSC, 2007](#)), underperformance is defined as employees' inability to fulfil their job responsibilities or meet the acceptable standards. Employees who perform poorly are often described as those who disappoint their superiors. Significantly, there is little faith in their ability to complete or perform tasks correctly. Managers frequently redo these employees' work or modify their assignments substantially. As a result, managers may only entrust these employees with tasks they are confident they can handle, which is considerably less than what would be expected of them under normal circumstances. [Edvardsson \(2005\)](#) concurs and further distinguishes between high and low performance. High performance is achieved when

the output or services exceed expectations, while low or poor performance occurs when the products or services fail to surpass the anticipated standard. When an employee fails to match the expected performance standard, it is considered poor performance.

Subpar job performance affects productivity and efficiency negatively in the workplace, and in extreme cases, may increase on-the-job accidents ([Labour Relations Agency \(LRA\), 2016](#)). While [Grogan \(2007\)](#) does not see much difference between negligence and a poor performance and suggests that in certain situations, both negligence and subpar job performance can be classified legitimately as forms of misconduct, the [United States Office of Personnel Management \(2017\)](#) distinguishes poor work performance from misconduct in that poor job performance merely indicates an employee's inability to meet the acceptable standards, while misconduct typically involves violating workplace rules or regulations. What can be learned from the literature concerning this concept is that there must be a set of standards that can be used to measure the work performance, and this can generally be related to the legislative prescripts and relevant work performance regulations of a particular organisation.

### **The relationship between poor leadership and poor performance**

This study aims to describe the relationship between SAPS' poor leadership and poor performance quantitatively within the Tshwane police precinct. The focus of this section is to review the relevant literature, as alluded to earlier. Researchers have conducted investigations into the connection between ineffective leadership and subpar performance in various settings, excluding law enforcement agencies. However, such studies could prove to be useful for this study in that they help identify critical key issues and situate this study in the context of existing scholarly work.

[Werner et al. \(2011\)](#) sought to illustrate the connection between ineffective leadership and subpar performance by identifying two primary components that affect individual performance. These components include intrinsic factors, which are internal to the individual, and extrinsic factors, which are organizational elements beyond an individual's control. Through the literature review, we aimed to show how these factors contribute to the relationship between poor leadership and diminished performance outcomes. For this study and relevance, only extrinsic factors are discussed. Many scholars identify several extrinsic factors that could influence the performance of individuals in an organisation. [Collins and Long \(2003\)](#) identify the overburdening of workloads and a lack of security in the workplace as factors that lead to increased pressure and stress and, ultimately, poor work performance. Additionally, organisational and operational issues are among the leading causes of occupational stress, which can result in weak performance by the police ([Liberman et al., 2002](#)).

[Werner et al. \(2011\)](#) highlight several key elements: leadership, organizational structure, systems and processes, support, empowerment, performance opportunities, job design, and rewards. Research by [Hidiroglu \(2021\)](#) and [Biloa \(2023\)](#) highlights various employer-related factors influencing employee performance. These include assessment methods, compensation packages, managerial approaches, and motivations behind career changes. The leadership style adopted within an organization plays a crucial role in either enhancing or impeding employee productivity. [Van Fleet and Griffin \(2006\)](#) highlight various organizational elements, including reward systems, unclear feedback, negative attitudes, perceived unfairness, and trust violations, as contributors to subpar work performance. [Nassazi \(2013\)](#) notes that workplace conditions can affect employees' physical and mental output, potentially leading to fatigue, which may endanger company assets, increase accident risks, lower morale, or result in the loss of life. [Asim \(2013\)](#) points out additional factors causing poor work performance, such as inadequate equipment, excessive workloads, insufficient managerial routines, undefined objectives or standards, and

unclear organizational statements.

[Arinanye \(2015\)](#) suggests that leadership attitudes, personal issues, roles, responsibilities, norms, and standards can also contribute to poor work performance. [Irawanto \(2015\)](#) advocates for employee involvement in organizational decision-making, arguing that such participation fosters job security and indirectly motivates employees to excel, reflecting their organizational pride and loyalty. [The Public Service Association \(PSA\) \(2007\)](#) identifies several factors contributing to poor performance, including resistance to change, unclear objectives, communication issues, vague job descriptions, unrealistic targets, resource scarcity, non-adherence to performance management systems, inadequate HR support, poor record-keeping, and management's inability to address underperformance. [Grote \(1996\)](#) emphasizes that performance issues often stem from a lack of role clarity and misaligned expectations between employees and the organization.

[Hidiroglu \(2021\)](#) and [Biloa \(2023\)](#) assert that performance appraisals can impact employee performance significantly. [Selvarajan and Cloninger \(2012\)](#) concur, stating that appraisal characteristics relate to perceptions of fairness and accuracy, which in turn affect appraisal satisfaction and motivation to improve. [Bernardin \(2007\)](#) recommends regular performance monitoring through periodic evaluations and suggests integrating performance appraisal systems into strategic human resource management. These systems should inform internal staffing decisions such as promotions, retention, or terminations. Performance appraisals are powerful tools for enhancing employee performance by discouraging workplace ignorance and fostering a high-performance culture.

It would not be far-fetched to argue that the external extrinsic factors identified by different scholars primarily point to the fact that leadership appears to be the primary factor influencing individual performance in an organisation. Simply put, many, if not all, of the extrinsic factors are dependent on the leadership qualities that influence individual performances in organisations. This notion is further supported by several findings of different studies. [Pothier's \(2021\)](#) research indicates a connection between the persistent leadership issues plaguing the SAPS and its progressively diminishing capacity to predict, address, and solve crimes and social disorder. This long-term leadership crisis has been linked to the service's declining effectiveness in managing lawlessness and criminal activities.

Research by [Rukuni et al. \(2019\)](#) indicates that various components of leadership competencies, including setting the direction, unifying personnel, providing motivation and inspiration, having a sense of purpose, and demonstrating risk-taking and self-assurance, positively impact organizational effectiveness. Their study revealed a favourable relationship between leadership abilities and organizational outcomes. In a separate investigation, [Kılıç and Günsel \(2019\)](#) explored the impact of toxic leaders on staff members, finding that these leaders' harmful attitudes and behaviours lead to numerous negative workplace consequences. These effects extend beyond the reduced commitment to the organization and encompass decreased employee productivity.

Research by [Aboyassin and Abood \(2013\)](#) revealed a statistically significant correlation between ineffective leadership practices and employee performance. These practices include the lack of a unified strategic vision, inadequate leadership abilities, and adverse effects on staff interactions. [Toor and Ogunlana \(2009\)](#) observed that the excessive use of authority and avoidance of responsibility for errors diminishes subordinates' trust and confidence, resulting in decreased productivity and work engagement. Furthermore, [Wolor et al. \(2022\)](#) determined that toxic leadership impacts job satisfaction and motivation, leading to subpar work performance. [Saeed et al \(2023\)](#) argued that certain leadership approaches, such as democratic leadership, have a positive effect on employee job satisfaction. These studies emphasize the link between poor leadership and

reduced performance in organizational contexts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research methodology was adopted for this investigation, encompassing respondents from 14 police stations within the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The study was conducted following permission granted by the SAPS in terms of the National Instruction 4 of 2022. The study was also ethically approved by the Tshwane University of Technology Faculty Committee for Research Ethics. The study sample included both male and female police officers, diverse in terms of age, years of service, rank, and qualifications. Data acquisition involved 182 law enforcement officials selected through a probability-based cluster sampling approach using self-completed paper-based questionnaires (see Table 1 below for further details). The questionnaires were printed and distributed physically to the respondents, often during the changing of shifts, thereby ensuring accessibility to as many of them as possible. When the respondents were taken through the questionnaire, all the ethical issues were observed, such as informing them that their participation was voluntary, with an option to withdraw at any time. They were further informed about the purpose of the research and how the data would be used. Data were collected anonymously and stored securely to ensure their right to privacy.

Each population member within the study area had an equal likelihood of sample inclusion. Considering the study's descriptive nature and the attribute distribution of the single variable, SAPS poor work performance, a univariate analysis, specifically frequency distribution, was utilized for the quantitative data examination. As defined by [Creswell and Plano-Clark \(2007\)](#), a quantitative data analysis is a systematic process of collecting and evaluating measurable and verifiable data, incorporating statistical mechanisms for assessing or analysing numerical information.

**Table 1.** Biographic information of respondents.

Biographic information	n	%	p-value
	<b>182</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Police Station			
Akasia	13	7,1%	
Atteridgeville	13	7,1%	
Hercules	13	7,1%	
Mabopane	13	7,1%	
Mamelodi West	13	7,1%	
Pretoria Moot	13	7,1%	
Pretoria North	13	7,1%	
Pretoria West	13	7,1%	1,000
Silverton	13	7,1%	
Sinoville	13	7,1%	
Soshanguve	13	7,1%	
Sunnyside	13	7,1%	
Temba	13	7,1%	
Wonderboom Poort	13	7,1%	
1. Gender			
Male	120	65,9%	
Female	62	34,1%	0,000
2. Race			
Black	150	82,4%	0,000

Biographic information		n	%	p-value
		182	100%	
	White	17	9,3%	
	Coloured	14	7,7%	
	Indian	1	0,5%	
3. Years of service	0-5 years	3	1,6%	
	6-10 years	28	15,4%	
	11-15 years	11	6,0%	
	16-20 years	57	31,3%	0,000
	21-25 years	44	24,2%	
	26-30 years	15	8,2%	
	31 or more	24	13,2%	
4. Rank	Superintendent/Lieutenant Colonel	11	6,0%	
	Captain	8	4,4%	
	Inspector/Warrant Officer	31	17,0%	0,000
	Sargent	87	47,8%	
	Constable	45	24,7%	
5. Highest qualification	National Certificate/National Senior Certificate (Grade 12)	114	62,6%	
	Higher Certificate	4	2,2%	
	National Higher Certificate	4	2,2%	
	Diploma	9	4,9%	
	National Diploma	43	23,6%	0,000
	Bachelor's Degree (Professional)	1	0,5%	
	Baccalaureus Technologiae (B Tech)	4	2,2%	
	Bachelor's Degree	1	0,5%	
	Master's Degree	2	1,1%	

## Reliability And Validity

### Reliability

In an attempt to improve the reliability in this study, the researcher followed [Neuman's \(1997\)](#) four principles of increasing the reliability of measures. First, the word "poor performance", with its sub-dimensions, was clearly conceptualised to avoid ambiguity. Secondly, the measurement tool for data gathering utilized a five-tier scale, encompassing strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, and strongly agree. This method was selected due to the correlation between the increased precision in measurement and the enhanced reliability of the results. Thirdly, the questionnaire comprised multiple indicators. The more indicators of the same construct, namely, poor work performance, the more the reliability increases. Multiple indicators do two things namely, they allow the researcher to measure a wider range of the content of a conceptual definition. In this way, different aspects of the construct can be measured; one indicator may be imperfect, but several measures are less likely to have the same error. Fourthly, a draft version of a measure was tried before applying the final version through piloting.

To assess the internal consistency of the questions or statements selected for constructing composite variables, researchers employed Cronbach's Alpha. This metric evaluates how well a set of items correlates as a group, typically yielding values from 0 to 1. Negative results can often indicate data issues, such as the overlooked reverse-scoring of certain items. In this study, a threshold of 0.7 was established as acceptable, with scores above 0.8 considered better and those exceeding 0.9 deemed optimal. The analysis revealed that the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the ten items surpassed the 0.70 benchmark, confirming the scale's reliability and internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 below presents these findings.

**Table 2.** Reliability Statistics for all ten questions/statements

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
0,708	0,577	10

#### Validity

To ensure the validity of this research, several measures were implemented. Initially, the study employed cluster sampling, a technique that represents the characteristics of the broader population accurately. Subsequently, the questionnaire used for data collection underwent pilot testing to guarantee quality research outcomes. The research instrument was also designed and scrutinized for its content, criterion, and construct validity to verify its representativeness, ability to capture variable relationships, and concept of 'measurement accuracy.' This process helped ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the research instrument's measures.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was utilized to assess the validity. This test evaluates the suitability of data for factor analysis by measuring the sample adequacy for each variable and the overall model. The researchers examined whether the score for each composite variable was valid, assuming that multiple questions measured the same underlying construct. As shown in Table 3 below, the KMO value of 0.819 exceeds the 0.7 threshold, indicating a sufficient correlation between the item pairs to proceed with the factor analysis. Moreover, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was employed to evaluate the assumption of equal population variances across different samples. This test examined the null hypothesis that the items are uncorrelated. The p-value (Sig.) of 0.000, displayed in Table 3 below, is less than 0.05, allowing for the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, it can be concluded that the items are indeed correlated.

**Table 3.** KMO and Bartlett's Test for the overall questions

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0,819
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2239,297
	df	703
	Sig.	0,000

Table 4 below provides the KMO results and the Bartlett's Test p-values for the construct of the leadership-related factors and conditions. In this construct, the p-value is less than 0.05, which indicates that the null hypothesis can be rejected. We can thus conclude that the items in each construct are correlated.

**Table 4.** KMO and Bartlett's Test for each construct

Construct	KMO results	Bartlett's Test (p-values)
Leadership-related factors & conditions	0,755	<0,001

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to describe the relationship between poor leadership and poor performance of the SAPS within the Tshwane police precinct. Various descriptive statistics, such as mean with corresponding standard deviation and number, and percent for the items, are provided in this section. Table 5 below provides the mean and standard deviation for each question/statement used to construct the leadership-related factors and Conditions variable. The mean values of these items ranged between 1,74 (close to 2, i.e., Disagree) and 4,69 (close to 5, i.e., strongly agree) (on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree). This shows that the average mean scores vary significantly between the questions/statements. Since these multiple questions/statements are measuring leadership-related factors and conditions, we also measure their reliability using Cronbach's Alpha test as depicted in Table 2 above.

**Table 5.** Item statistics that measure the leadership-related and conditions construct

Var. Nr.	Question/Statement/Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	n
1A	Valuing of ideas and skills by supervisors/managers leads to improved work performance.	4,56	0,498	182
1B	My supervisors/managers in the SAPS value all the ideas and skills I bring to the organisation.	1,74	0,628	182
2A	Employee freedom to make decisions leads to improved work performance.	4,34	0,475	182
2B	My supervisors/managers in the SAPS give me the freedom to make decisions on my role, and that helps me to perform better.	1,85	0,704	182
3A	Participation in decision-making leads to improved work performance.	4,64	0,545	182
3B	I have the opportunity to participate when decisions are made in the SAPS where I am stationed, and that has enhanced my work performance.	1,77	0,666	182
4A	Unbiaseness and fair treatment of employees by supervisors/managers boost employee performance.	4,69	0,465	182
4B	My supervisors/managers in the SAPS are unbiased and treat every employee without discrimination and which enhanced my work performance.	1,81	0,646	182
5A	Leadership style plays an important role in employees' level of work performance.	4,25	0,548	182
5B	The existing leadership style in the SAPS where I am stationed motivates employees for a high level of performance.	1,78	0,710	182

The survey revealed that 56% of respondents believed supervisors' appreciation of ideas and skills enhanced their work performance, with 44% strongly agreeing with statement 1A. However, only 3% strongly believed that SAPS supervisors valued employee contributions, while 33% strongly disagreed and 64% disagreed with statement 1 B.

With regard to decision-making freedom, 66% agreed and 34% strongly agreed that decision-making freedom improves work performance. With regard to statement 2B, 26% strongly disagreed and 69% disagreed that SAPS supervisors allow such freedom, with only 4% agreeing and 1% strongly agreeing.

Regarding statement 3A on decision-making participation, 34% agreed and 66% strongly agreed that it boosts work performance. However, 31% strongly disagreed and 66% disagreed that this occurred in the SAPS, with merely 2% agreeing and 1% strongly agreeing with statement 3B.

Concerning fair treatment, 31% agreed and 69% strongly agreed that it enhanced employee performance. Nevertheless, 26% strongly disagreed and 70% disagreed that SAPS supervisors treated employees without bias, while only 2% agreed and 1% strongly agreed.

Lastly, 64% agreed and 31% strongly agreed that the leadership style significantly impacted the work performance, with 5% being uncertain. However, 34% strongly disagreed and 58% disagreed that the current SAPS leadership style motivated high performance, with 3% being uncertain and 4% agreeing.

While these findings are specifically relevant to the SAPS due to the distinct nature of their operations, they might also apply to organizations like the DCS. The issue of recidivism faced by the DCS could stem from inadequate leadership. Therefore, it might be beneficial for them to provide ongoing training in management and leadership skills for senior managers, conduct regular impact assessments, and establish a system to consistently monitor and identify early signs of ineffective leadership.

## Discussion of results

[Pothier \(2021\)](#) has noted a connection between the long-standing leadership issues in the SAPS and its declining ability to anticipate, combat, and resolve criminal activities. In line with this observation, the current research reveals a link between subpar employee performance and inadequate leadership within the Tshwane police precinct. Various factors, including poor leadership as an external influence, can contribute to the underperformance ([Werner et al. 2011](#)). This study's findings indicated that SAPS supervisors and managers failed to value employee ideas and skills, resulting in reduced job productivity. [Padilla et al. \(2007\)](#) cautioned that such leadership practices can lead to emotional distress, disengagement, decreased job performance, reduced organizational citizenship, and diminished self-esteem among employees. The study's findings regarding the limited employee decision-making autonomy are concerning.

With 76.9% of respondents having over two decades of work experience and 32.8% possessing three or more years of educational qualifications (see table 1 above), it is reasonable to assume that they had a thorough understanding of their work environment's operations. This made it unlikely that the respondents fabricated their answers. Consequently, it appears genuine that a significant portion of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that supervisors' recognition of ideas and skills boosts work performance, contrasting with the small percentage who believed that the SAPS supervisors valued their input. Given the extensive experience of many respondents, this finding suggests a long-standing issue. As a result, the valuable contributions of police officers on the ground to fight crime in the study area are likely to remain unacknowledged for the foreseeable future, potentially keeping crime statistics persistently high.

Police officers in the Tshwane police precinct face restrictions imposed on them by their superiors, hampering their ability to perform effectively. This aligns with [Hoffman and Sergio's \(2020\)](#) definition of poor leadership, which encompasses neglecting employee welfare and engaging in demeaning, belittling, and discouraging behaviors. These leaders often micromanaged, displayed rudeness, ignored the input, and intimidated their subordinates. The SAPS's ongoing struggle to reduce the crime rates is unsurprising, given that the officers are not involved in the decision-making processes. The crime statistics might improve if ground-level police officers are allowed to participate in operational decision-making. According to [Irawanto \(2015\)](#), this involvement would enhance job security and motivate officers indirectly to deliver an optimal

performance, reflecting their dedication and loyalty to the organization.

The significant number of responses indicating a lack of involvement in SAPS decision-making within the study area suggests an autocratic leadership approach. While this style may be appropriate in certain scenarios requiring swift action where consultation is impractical, it is crucial to maintain transparency about decisions and explain the reasoning behind them. This leadership approach involves unilateral decision-making, where an individual acts without consulting others. It is generally perceived as unfavorable due to its potential consequences: it may foster discontent, reduce employee motivation, provoke resistance to changes, hinder effective implementation of decisions, and leave team members feeling undervalued. Despite the implementation of alternative crime reduction strategies like community policing, the study area's neighbourhoods will likely continue to experience the negative effects of criminal activities. These repercussions suggest that residents will remain disproportionately affected by crime, regardless of new initiatives aimed at improving safety.

One of the crucial aspects of successful organizations is how managers engage with their employees. [Van Fleet and Griffin \(2006\)](#) highlight various organizational factors that can lead to poor work performance, including unclear feedback on performance, negative attitudes, perceived unfair treatment, and breaches of trust. This study's findings support this perspective, revealing that biased and discriminatory actions by supervisors and managers in the SAPS impact employee work performance negatively rather than enhancing it. Motivation is another management principle that could strengthen employee performance. [Kinicki and Kreitner \(2006\)](#) suggest that motivation influences employee performance in organizations, but is challenging to comprehend as it cannot be observed directly and must be inferred from the behaviours. Employees who are motivated exhibit more positive behaviours and perform better than those who are demotivated. Managers need to be cognisant of the motivation process to learn how to improve employee performance. However, this study found that police officials within the Tshwane police precinct do not feel motivated to perform at a high level due to the SAPS's current leadership style. This finding contributes to the continuous increase in crime rates.

The SAPS is responsible for ensuring that its employees are treated fairly and respectfully. Taking steps to prevent unfair treatment would not only create a happy and productive work environment, reduce employee turnover, and improve productivity levels and the overall success in policing operations, but it will also ensure compliance with the laws of the land including, *inter alia*, the Constitution of the Republic of 1996 ([South Africa, 1996](#)) and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 ([South Africa, 1998](#)). This includes proactive measures, such as implementing the internal SAPS policies, conducting leadership training, and creating an environment where employees feel safe and valued.

## CONCLUSIONS

The current research reveals that poor leadership persists in the SAPS despite the existing mechanisms to address it. This suggests that addressing poor leadership may not be a top priority for the organization, particularly at the higher levels. If left unchecked, this issue could hinder the SAPS's ability to fulfil its Constitutional and legislative duties, including crime prevention, investigation, maintaining public order, protecting citizens and property, and enforcing the law. Poor leadership impacts staff morale and performance significantly. Employee performance suffers when leaders fail to meet their responsibilities, as seen in the Tshwane police precinct. Conversely, effective leadership has been shown to influence job performance and employee satisfaction positively. Leaders must be capable of guiding their followers towards achieving the goal. The study's findings indicate that to combat poor leadership and improve employee performance, leaders should value employees' ideas and skills, allow freedom in decision-making, encourage

participation, ensure fair treatment, and adopt motivational leadership styles. Neglecting these aspects can lead to poor employee performance and leadership, while prioritizing them can enhance both these aspects. Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- Station-level managers and supervisors receive ongoing training in management and leadership skills, with regular impact assessments.
- Additionally, the SAPS should establish and consistently monitor an early warning system to detect potential instances of poor leadership.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Two major limitations in this study could be addressed in future research. First, the scope of this investigation was restricted to a group of SAPS officials within the Tshwane police precinct. The study's reliance on descriptive statistics as its primary analytical tool limits the generalizability of its findings to the broader population of SAPS personnel across South Africa. To address this limitation, future researchers could expand the study by collecting data from police precincts in other provinces nationwide. Another approach would be to utilize inferential statistical methods to conclude the larger population based on the sample data. Additionally, a qualitative investigation exploring potential solutions to leadership deficiencies within the SAPS could be conducted to strengthen the evidence base and increase confidence in the research outcomes. Secondly, this research was limited to examining the relationship between poor leadership and police performance, without investigating how poor leadership impacts the overall well-being of employees. Therefore, it is recommended to investigate the impact of poor leadership on the stress levels experienced by police officers.

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