Perceptions of Public Order Policing (POP) officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Municipal areas

Tiana Courteney Hiscox

Perceptions of Public Order Policing (POP) officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane municipal areas

by

Tiana Courteney Hiscox

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Artium (Criminology)

In the Department of Social Work and Criminology

at the

University of Pretoria

Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor: Prof. C. Bezuidenhout

January 2025

Declaration

I, Tiana Hiscox, hereby declare that the dissertation '*Perceptions of Public Order Policing (POP) officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane municipal areas'* submitted in fulfilment of the degree MA (Criminology) at the University of Pretoria is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at another university. In addition, I declare that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged.

20 January 2025

Tiana Hiscox | Date

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout this journey:

- I am deeply grateful to God for granting me the wisdom, patience, and perseverance needed to complete this project. His presence has been my source of strength and inspiration.
- To my parents, Juanita and Herman Evert, who supported me throughout the struggles, illness and crutches. Who motivated me when all seemed dark with no way out, who provided me comfort when I needed it, and also offered a stern hand when necessary. Without you I would be nothing, and I am forever grateful for the life and opportunities you have given me.
- The University of Pretoria for providing me with the opportunity to continue my postgraduate education.
- A very big thank you to my supervisor, Prof. Bezuidenhout, for his insight and guidance and for encouraging and supporting me throughout the entire duration of the research process.
- To Mrs Harriet Klopper, thank you for providing me with the support to submit this thesis during the last few weeks of editing, your assistance will be forever appreciated.

Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of Public Order Policing (POP) officials concerning the multifaceted factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the municipal areas of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane. Utilising a qualitative research methodology, the research includes semi-structured interviews with a diverse sample of South African Police officials to uncover their insights and experiences in managing public demonstrations.

Key findings indicate that the escalation of violence is often influenced by a combination of socio-economic disparities, political tensions, and the nature of protester-police interactions. Officials have reported that underlying grievances, such as unemployment, inequality, and inadequate service delivery, often act as catalysts for unrest. Additionally, the study reveals that the perception of police presence, the tactics employed by law enforcement, and the protesters' prior experiences with authority play significant roles in shaping the dynamics of these events.

This research underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the root causes of protest violence and highlights the importance of strategic communication and community engagement in mitigating conflict. By shedding light on the perspectives of South African Police officials, this study contributes to the discourse on public order management and offers practical recommendations for improving policing strategies in protest situations. Ultimately, the aim is to foster a more peaceful and constructive dialogue between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Moreover, this research provides several recommendations to enhance understanding of how violence escalates during protests. It suggests expanding studies beyond Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane to other regions and contexts. This will allow for an examination of community perspectives to reveal potential differences between police officials and civilians. Investigating the effectiveness of police training, tactics, and communication – particularly regarding social media – can provide insights into protest dynamics. Analysing the legal and political frameworks governing public order policing is crucial, as is exploring the psychological impact on police officials who manage violent protests. Longitudinal studies could track the long-term effects of various policing strategies, while examining the demographics of protest participants may inform more customised approaches. Additionally, understanding the historical and cultural context of protests, especially in relation to the apartheid-era policing, can clarify current tensions. Finally, investigating the role of emerging technologies in public order policing could yield valuable insights into the dynamics of violence escalation during protests. Overall, these recommendations aim to enhance the understanding of factors influencing protest violence and improve public order management.

Keywords: Public Order Police officials, violent protests, violence escalation, socio-economic disparities, political tensions, and the nature of protester-police interactions.

Perceptions of Public Order Policing (POP) officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane municipal areas

Tiana Hiscox

15024548

MA Criminology

Department of Social Work & Criminology

Supervisor: Professor C Bezuidenhout

Table of Contents Page

List of Tables

Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
GNU	Government of National Unity
GST	General Strain Theory
IRIS	Incident Registration Information System
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
POP	Public Order Police
RGA	Regulation of Gatherings Act No. 205 of 1993
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAPS	South African Police Service

Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose

1.1 Introduction

The study seeks to gauge the perceptions of Public Order Policing (POP) officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas. Specifically, it examines the elements that trigger or intensify violence during protest actions and marches. Protests are a regular occurrence, but one particularly significant period of unrest in July 2021 had a profound impact on the country's social, political, and economic spheres. During this period, South Africa's export and import channels were also affected, which coincided with the COVID-19 Level 3 lockdown. Although these protests were widely associated with the 'Free Zuma' movement, some argued that they represented a delayed response to underlying issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate service delivery. The consequences of these protests were severe. They affected South Africa's political, economic, and social stability, which raised concerns regarding the country's security and risk management. The protests resulted in loss of life, political instability, widespread property damage, looting, and a significant devaluation of the rand (Mothelesi, Marumo & Sebolaaneng, 2022: 41).

Protest actions can manifest in various forms such as boycotts, marches, rallies, and blockades, and these modes of protest are constantly evolving. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, the most common reasons for protests in South Africa have included labour union rivalries, poverty, unemployment, inequality, and wage disputes (Kali, 2023: 28; Mothelesi et al., 2022: 42).

The term 'service delivery protest' refers to a phenomenon that is often seen as a response to failures in local government, specifically in relation to essential services, such as water, electricity, sanitation, and infrastructure (Booysens, 2009: 130). However, the term has been oversimplified and generalised to the point that it has lost much of its political and analytical significance. Statistics are often employed to illustrate instances of delivery or non-delivery without being critically scrutinised, which neglects the complex reasons behind protests. Consequently, service delivery protest has become a vague term that lacks analytical precision. It has echoes of the apartheid-era phrase 'township unrest', which encompassed a variety of political actions, including rent boycotts, labour strikes, and student uprisings (Nyar & Wray, 2012: 25–26).

In a similar vein, service delivery protest is now being used as a blanket term for various governance issues. The grievances expressed during these protests are diverse, including poor communication with local authorities, inadequate services, claims of nepotism and corruption, internal political conflicts, and challenges related to community development projects linked to contracts and tenders (Booysens, 2009: 130). The motivations for these protests are often intertwined with broader national

issues, including poverty, land reform, and unemployment. Additionally, incidents of cross-border protests and xenophobia have emerged within the context of service delivery protests. These protests have been consistently linked to the lack of accountability among local councillors. However, it is not clear whether the protests are efforts to demand accountability or expressions of general frustration (Shongwe & Meyer, 2023: 136–150).

There is a critical distinction between service delivery and public service, as protests are often partially fuelled by failures in participatory democracy. Likewise, the vote-service-delivery narrative is detrimental, because it fosters a passive expectation that the government will resolve all problems, discouraging proactive engagement from citizens. Moving away from this narrative would be beneficial, as there is a growing acknowledgment of the conceptual and practical shortcomings of the service delivery discourse. There are calls for a shift towards a more productive public sector to enhance both analytical and political clarity (Shongwe & Meyer, 2023: 136–150).

The dynamics of protest-related violence reveals a notable dearth of comprehensive studies addressing the underlying reasons why violence occurs in certain contexts while remaining subdued or absent in others (Ngcamu, 2019: 3-7). There are various socio-political factors that contribute to these disparities. However, the existing literature often falls short in exploring the nuanced interactions between protester motivations, state responses, and the broader societal climate. For instance, protests arising in environments marked by systemic injustice or political repression may escalate to violence more readily than those in contexts where grievances are met with some degree of governmental responsiveness. Moreover, the role of social media and its influence on protest mobilisation and radicalisation presents an additional layer of complexity that remains underexplored in current research (Ngcamu, 2019: 1–9).

In addition to the socio-political landscape, the organisational structure of protest movements plays a critical role in determining the likelihood of violence. Movements that lack coherent leadership or clear objectives may experience fragmentation, leading to more chaotic and potentially violent encounters. Conversely, well-organised protests that emphasise non-violent strategies often succeed in maintaining order, even amid high tensions. The interplay of these factors, such as the presence of counter-protesters, law enforcement tactics, and community support, can significantly alter the trajectory of a protest. However, there is a shortage of systematic analyses that connect these variables to outcomes of violence. Understanding these dynamics is not only essential for developing effective strategies to prevent violence in future protests but also for fostering environments that promote peaceful expression of dissent (Nyar & Wray, 2012: 22–43).

Based on the researcher’s comprehension, understanding the variables associated with protests is crucial for identifying the contributing factors that fuel violence or the combination of factors that lead

to the escalation of violence during protests. Various strategies have been employed by the researcher to identify the variables that cause and escalate violence during protest actions. It is expected that understanding these factors can aid in preventing and mitigating violence and improve the planning and management of protests by relevant stakeholders, thereby enhancing readiness and preventive measures.

The extent of protest planning is contingent upon the nature of the event and the prevalence of factors that exacerbate violence. It is important to recognise that violence during protests is not always premeditated, making it essential to consider what factors contribute to the escalation of violence since South Africa has experienced thousands of violent protests (Kali, 2023: 28).

The current research aimed to identify the factors that increase the likelihood of violence during protests in South Africa, and those that contribute to its escalation. Violence during protests is often a means of communicating grievances to authorities, drawing attention to social issues such as access to basic services and education. Interest in this subject has grown as violent protests have become more common in South Africa over the past decade; however, variations in data collection methods, counting rules, scope, and definitions have led to inconsistent availability of resources (Kali, 2023: 28).

1.2 Origin of the study

The researcher completed a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Criminology at the University of Pretoria in 2020. After obtaining her honours degree, she started working as an analyst. Part of her duties involve analysing risks during protest action and compiling brief and concise reports regarding the identified risks. The researcher was particularly interested in the protests that took place in KwaZulu-Natal in July 2021. Questions that the researcher pondered about include the following: Why such drastic violence during certain protests? Did the South African Government respond swiftly enough prior to the 2021 protest? Were the protests orchestrated? What did the country's intelligence service know beforehand? What were the factors that led to these specific acts of violence, and can they be used to determine the subsequent factors that result in the escalation of violence? Why is there a lack of research pertaining to violence escalation during riots?

It has been estimated that the protests that occurred in July 2021 cost the South African economy an approximate R64,462,470, with some even stating that since 1994, it has been the severest violence to have hit the country (Harding, 2022). On 24 May 2022, Bheki Cele, the Minister of Police, delivered his budget vote speech to the Parliament of South Africa. He stated that:

> A total of 19 instigators of violence were arrested including those who meted untold brutality to another race group, under the disguise of defending their community and property during the unrest. To date 36 suspects have been arrested for their alleged

> respective roles in the murder of 35 people and 31 people have been arrested for attempted murder in Phoenix.

Based on the researcher's questions, the lack of existing research on the topic, and the significant impact of the July 2021 protests, the researcher aimed to answer these questions by conducting face-to-face interviews with individuals who have first-hand experience in dispersing such protests. The researcher believed that conducting face-to-face interviews with POP officials who work at the forefront of these protests would be the best starting point. The current study has the potential to highlight the main reasons why violence occurs during protests and why it escalates in certain situations. A qualitative methodological approach was considered the best approach for gaining first-hand knowledge from POP officials about this problem. The qualitative approach was identified for its capacity to yield rich data that facilitates a deeper understanding of the contextual factors that influence violent actions during protests.

1.3 Rationale and problem statement

Violent protests have caused several billion rands of damage in South Africa. Most importantly, many lives have been lost due to violent protests. The ability to predict the propensity for violence in protests early and accurately is currently indistinguishable and vague. Identifying the key factors that contribute to violence during a protest and having knowledge about them can aid in managing these events (Zerbst, 2023). Therefore, the current study aimed to address this void in research to enable preventive action and adequate preparation, which must surely rate as research of utmost value and importance to all South Africans.

Protest and unrest are related to the socio-economic conditions in communities where they occur. Peaceful protests and violent unrest occur in communities with different socio-economic characteristics. Violent unrest is not simply an escalation of peaceful protests and requires distinct prevention approaches. Communities with a high probability of peaceful protests may have higher levels of social cohesion, which is the ability to organise for a collective goal. Conversely, communities with a high probability of violent unrest may have lower levels of social cohesion, which may affect how municipal interventions are received (Hoffler, Meyer & Moller, 2022: 269). Furthermore, available data shows that the number of protests in South Africa has been progressively increasing over the past 20 years (Vhumbunu, 2022).

The reasons for the high number of protests in South Africa are often more multifaceted than what is alleged. For example, the scale and severity of the looting and sabotage that took place in KwaZulu-Natal and parts of Gauteng in July 2021, in response to the jailing of former President Jacob Zuma, brought social protest and civil unrest into a popular debate. However, several debates regarding the July 2021 riots neglect to take the country's history of violent protest into consideration.

While dissatisfaction with Zuma's arrest was the trigger, the roots of social unrest go much deeper (Hoffler et al., 2022: 269). Not only did the July 2021 unrest disrupt the supply of goods and services, but it also resulted in the loss of billions of rands in properties, livelihoods, business stocks, employment and essential services, financial services facilities, farming, telecommunications, and food distribution. In addition, many workers became unemployed and the looting had an impact on the investment confidence in the country (Vhumbunu, 2022). In addition, infrastructure damage and several human fatalities ensued. Taking the aforementioned into consideration, further research into the development of a protocol and/or tool to assess and identify the onset and/or escalation of violence in protests to timeously intervene in hotspot situations would be beneficial (Vhumbunu, 2022).

Risk factors for protests have been used in risk assessment protocols for decades. Such tools and guides have been shown to be a valid and reliable way to assess the risk of future violence and help with preventative measures (Lolwana, 2016: 1). The current assessment protocols available to determine when violence may occur during a protest are questionable in their relevance to violent protests because the risk factors used to assess such events do not necessarily relate to the background and motivations of violent actors. It is therefore important to verify factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests. This study specifically concentrated on the metropolitan municipalities of the City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane.Moreover, during the past 10 years, local politics have been dominated by protests. Protests often escalate into violence, with clashes between the police and protesters. On several occasions, protests were triggered by the lack of adequate service delivery, including government housing, access to an adequate water supply, provision of electricity or affordable rates for electricity, adequate road infrastructure, and proper sewage and waste removal (Lolwana, 2016: 1). In addition, the Incident Registration Information System (IRIS) does not utilise beneficial reporting and classification systems. The IRIS system is an initiative by the government to record all protests and riots in South Africa. However, its current design lacks the capacity for detailed categorisation and analysis of incidents, limiting its effectiveness in understanding the underlying causes, trends, and patterns of civil unrest. The absence of advanced reporting tools and classification frameworks hampers the ability to make informed decisions, plan proactive measures, and allocate resources efficiently. This gap in functionality results in a missed opportunity to use data for improving public safety and addressing the root causes of unrest in a more systematic way. Although IRIS could possibly be a useful data source for the numerous protests in South Africa, it amalgamates several types of protest and therefore severely misinforms the public (Morudu, 2017: 4).

Protesters are typically young people, individuals from a new generation of unemployed people who reside in environments characterised by high levels of inequality and urbanisation, with limited

opportunities for finding employment. They have participated in, witnessed, and even instigated acts of violence, often directed towards local governance structures. Even though violence can be an expression of legitimate anger, it often spills over into protests and communities, causing fear among the people (Lolwana, 2016: 1).

The guidelines for managing public gatherings are outlined in the national instruction of the South African Police Service (2012). In the context of South African law enforcement, SAPS refers to the South African Police Service, while POP stands for Public Order Police. The SAPS is the national police service, and the POP is a specialised unit within the SAPS that is responsible for crowd management and public order policing.

After considering the aforementioned information, the research question is: What are the perceptions of POP officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane metropolitan municipalities?

1.4 Goal and objectives

The aim of the study was to gauge the perceptions of POP officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests. The goal was to identify the factors that contribute to the onset and/or the escalation of violence during protest actions and marches. In pursuit of the aim, the objectives of the study were to:

- Gauge the perceptions of POP officials regarding violence escalation during protests.
- Determine the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane metropolitan municipalities.
- Determine the likely combination of factors expected to result in the onset and/or escalation of violence.
- Contextualise protests in South Africa.

1.5 Value of the research

Due to a lack of first-hand knowledge pertaining to the factors believed to escalate violence during protest action, the study aims to identify the core factors that contribute to violence during protests. The study holds significant value as it could assist police officials, practitioners, criminologists, and the South African Government in gaining a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas, by identifying their correlates and predictors. By ascertaining these factors, the study provides value as having

knowledge about these factors can prevent protest action and/or provide information to make the necessary preparations for preventing and controlling protest action.

The study's findings could provide researchers, police officers and anyone who would want to use the information, with fundamental knowledge and a point of reference to carry out future research. It can be utilised to inform policies related to protest control/prevention in South Africa. Although there are many articles, research papers, and journal publications that address the identification of factors that cause protest action in South Africa, this study is valuable because it offers an in-depth review of the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence in protest action. If the determined factors, as interpreted by means of the perceptions of POP officials, are used correctly, these factors could be addressed and/or attenuated within at-risk communities to prevent protest action and adequately prepare for potential protest action. Moreover, the research can serve as the basis for the development of future protest-related theories and solutions.

1.6 Key concepts

The definition of key concepts is included because a concept is regarded as a mental representation of objects and/or ideas. Defining concepts provides a method of grouping and/ or categorising objects to understand a multifaceted and varied world and create a common framework for understanding, communication, and action (University of Phoenix, 2024).

Community protests refer to collective actions that most often take place within a localised geographic area, for example, an informal settlement or a section of a township (Paret, 2015: 121). The term community refers to protests occurring within a specific geographic area. However, it is important to note that communities are not homogeneous. Typically, only certain segments of a community, such as those who are unemployed, engage in these protests. A community protest is defined as a geographically identified group collectively expressing demands to support or defend the interests of their community (Alexander, Runciman, Ngwane, Moloto, Mokgele & Van Staden, 2018: 27–28). These protests differ from those that are categorised as labour-related, crime-related, and so on. For the purpose of this study, the concept of community protest encompasses a wider range of issues than what is typically seen in service delivery protests. South African journalists frequently use the term service delivery protest, which tends to oversimplify the complex concerns that communities raise, which often include critiques of South Africa's democracy. Additionally, the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Cooperative Governance, and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) have also adopted the term community protest as it is broader and more encompassing (Ngwenya & Steyn, 2015: 11–13, SALGA, 2015).

Detection broadly refers to the act of extracting specific information from a larger body of data without any direct cooperation or coordination with the source of that information (Qian, 2014: 7). In the context of unrest detection, the concept is often framed by focusing on the ongoing or present unrest by identifying new events as they occur (Zhao, Ye, Chen, Lu & Ramakrishnan, 2016: 3). It often comes with a guarantee of rapidity in terms of examining information on civil unrest in real time. Detection typically focuses on the present whereas prediction produces claims about the future (Zhao et al., 2016: 3).

The **extended present** is regarded as a thematically connected information structure that offers a knowledgeable context for perception. Moreover, information in the extended present is organised through hierarchical structures. It is kept in working memory and an easily accessible form in long-term memory. In addition, the extended present works as a facilitator for the generation and perception of structures as well as operations within several spheres (White, 2021: 1). The concept of extended present is relevant as detection is sometimes concerned with the future while also pursuing the extended present. Likewise, when anticipated unrest events materialise close to the present, the task of prediction becomes more similar to detection.

The **Gini coefficient** is the most widely used statistical method for measuring inequality in a population. The coefficient measures the distribution of income or division of wealth among a population. While it is commonly applied to measure income inequality, it can also measure inequality in other distributions, such as wealth or even life expectancy (Hasell, 2023). The Gini coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying greater inequality. It can also be expressed as a percentage, known as the Gini index, ranging from 0% to 100%. A lower value indicates less inequality, whereas a higher value indicates greater inequality. A Gini value of 0 represents perfect equality, where everyone has the same income, while a value of 1 represents perfect inequality, where one person receives all the income and everyone else receives nothing (Hasell, 2023). In short, the Gini coefficient is a statistical measure of inequality within a distribution.

Prediction is utilised as shorthand for the interpretation of information from data, which also encompasses several detection systems. Prediction additionally refers to forecasting practices to anticipate the future. In the context of the present study, prediction entails the forecasting of future unrest (Wang, Giridhar, Wang, Kaplan, Pham, Yener & Abdelzaher, 2017: 1). The reason for focusing on detection and prediction is that the proposed research relates to prediction in several ways:

- **Identifying factors:** By understanding officials' perceptions, researchers can identify key factors that contribute to escalating violence. This knowledge can help predict when and where violence might occur during future protests.

- **Behavioural insights:** Insights from police officials can reveal patterns in protest behaviour, enabling authorities to anticipate potential flashpoints and plan responses accordingly.
- **Preventive strategies:** Understanding these factors can help develop strategies to mitigate violence, enabling law enforcement to intervene proactively before situations escalate.
- **Data analysis:** If the study incorporates data about past protests and their outcomes, statistical models can be created to predict the likelihood of violence based on the identified factors.

In summary, the perceptions gathered can serve as a foundation for predictive analyses to help anticipate and effectively manage protest-related violence.

Protests can be broadly categorised into two types. Firstly, there is the discourse that protests embody a restricted rebellion. Even though protests could be seen as unruly, they are mostly a means to achieve political re-engagement. Secondly, there is a category that connects new social movements that address wide-ranging socio-political issues to wider hegemonic challenges (Lodge & Mottiar, 2016: 819). Moreover, according to Manyaka (2018: 55), a protest is a multifarious occurrence that interacts with historical legacies, corruption, cultures of violence, and living in poverty that evolves into a dependence on the state for improved living conditions, effective or non-effective communication between government and communities, planning, migration, and complex debates over how state resources are used. In this research, the concept ‘protest’ encapsulates any type of protest. However, protests are often used as an umbrella term to also encapsulate riots. For this reason, riots and protests are used interchangeably in the current study.

Riots have been a subject of interest for researchers for many years, yet studying this form of collective disorder remains a complex challenge. Riots are dynamic and unpredictable events, marked by intense, emotionally driven violence that often appears to lack a clear, logical foundation. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that each riot is distinct, stemming from a unique set of causal and contextual factors that can vary significantly from one occurrence to another (Oxford Bibliography, 2020). Urban riots are sudden and highly damaging expressions of collective violence. While they are often characterised by their explosive and unpredictable nature, they frequently appear, at first glance, to lack a clear or understandable political purpose. As a result, riots are often mislabelled as irrational, senseless, or merely criminal acts, overlooking the underlying factors that may drive them (Waddington & Moran, 2020).

Risk is a notion used to describe objects, forces, or circumstances that pose a threat to people or what they value. Definitions of risk are usually denoted in terms of the probability of harm or loss resulting from a hazard. The definitions frequently contain the discovery of what is at risk and what

could be harmed or lost, the hazard that could cause this loss, and the decision encompassing the probability that harm will occur (Stern & Fineberg, 1996: 215). Risk additionally refers to the anticipation of a catastrophe. Its existence is a constant state of virtuality and only becomes topical to the extent that the risk is anticipated (Beck, 2009: 292).

The concept of risk is closely related to the research title, “Perceptions of POP officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas”.

Gaining an understanding of the perceptions of POP officials can yield valuable insights into the risk factors that contribute to violence during protests. By identifying these factors, authorities can assess the overall risk of violent outbreaks during future demonstrations. This knowledge is not only helpful for risk assessment but also facilitates in developing effective risk management strategies. It enables police to plan for crowd control, improve communication, and allocate resources more efficiently. Furthermore, the research can identify the patterns or trends that are associated with violent protests, enabling predictive analysis that helps anticipate the likelihood of violence based on specific conditions or triggers. Additionally, insights into how police officials perceive risk can inform broader public safety strategies, ensuring that both law enforcement and protesters engage in a manner that minimises potential harm. Ultimately, the findings from this research can guide policy decisions aimed at reducing the risk of violence, shaping training programmes for police, and enhancing community relations – all of which contribute to a more effective approach to managing protests and ensuring public safety.

Violence is defined as an act of physical force that results in or is aimed at causing harm. The resultant harm imposed by the violence may either be physical or psychological, or both. In addition, violence can be categorised according to its motivation. Firstly, whether reactive or emotional, violence usually includes the expression of anger (a hostile need to hurt someone) that occurs as a reaction to an apparent provocation. Secondly, proactive or instrumental violence is regarded as more calculated and is often executed with the expectation of a reward (Jacquin, 2023).

1.7 Summary of the research methods

For the purpose of the introductory chapter, a brief overview of the research methods is provided, with a more detailed discussion included in Chapter 3. A qualitative approach was chosen as it involves a methodical investigation of social phenomena that occur within our physical environment (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Martimianakis, 2015: 669). The research conducted is classified as basic research because its primary aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon (Given, 2012: 57–59). A case study research design was

used. Firstly, case study research aims to produce an in-depth understanding of real-world behaviour and its meaning, while also providing new learning opportunities. Secondly, it allows for the personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, and feelings of the research participants to be heard and elaborated on. It further identifies the key aspects of the research question on hand and consequently elaborates, finds relationships, and draws accurate conclusions about the research question (Starman, 2013: 31).

The researcher used face-to-face and semi-structured interviews, also known as in-person interviews, as the data-gathering method. Face-to-face interviews are one of the most popular methods for collecting survey data. This method decreases non-responsiveness and improves the quality of data given by participants (Pedersen & Kristensen, 2013: 5). In addition, thematic analysis was used as it provides a means for identifying, analysing, systematising, depicting, and reporting themes uncovered in data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 80). Thematic analysis offers an extremely docile approach that could be altered to meet the requirements of the study, offering a productive and detailed, albeit multifaceted account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 90–91).

1.8 Structure and layout of the dissertation

Chapter 1 introduced the research study and discussed its purpose by describing the problem statement, rationale, aim and objectives of the study, and conceptualising key concepts central to the study. Additionally, it outlined the structure and layout of the overall research report.

Chapter 2 will explore and engage with the literature in terms of the aim and objectives of the study. Therefore, the chapter will specifically focus on critically evaluating and synthesising a review of the available literature and key documents on both protests and the violence during protests. In addition, a detailed description of the theoretical framework as related to the proposed study will be discussed.

Chapter 3 will provide an extensive analysis of the methodological considerations of the study. It will shape a framework of the research approach that will be used and the procedures that will be followed to select the participants. The data collection method and instrument will be discussed in detail along with the advantages and disadvantages of the strategies used. The researcher will further reflect on the data analysis process and the trustworthiness of the data obtained.

Chapter 4 will provide an analysis of the thematic data obtained during the research process and give an in-depth description of the understanding that POP officials have pertaining to the relevant escalating factors in violent actions during protests.

Chapter 5 will synthesise the research findings and the literature review, drawing final conclusions from the study. The chapter will link the results to the central research question, outline contributions and limitations, and offer recommendations for future research.

1.9 Summary

It is important to study protests and the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence, because protests are generally regarded as an appropriate way to achieve change and exert influence. The study intends to determine the factors that contribute to escalated violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane municipal areas. To achieve this aim, the perceptions of POP officials working on the front lines and experiencing these factors first-hand will be gauged. By emphasising the aim, objectives, key definitions, origin, and rationale, the study can develop and improve already existing insights into the factors that escalate violence during protests. In addition, an enhanced comprehension can be attained from developing an in-depth knowledge of these factors. Moreover, providing a brief rundown of the research methods and the outline of the dissertation assists with indicating the direction and intention of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which was certified by the Constitutional Court on 4 December 1996 and came into effect on 4 February 1997, serves as the supreme law of the country. It provides the legal foundation for democratic governance and enshrines a broad range of socio-economic rights, including access to adequate housing, health care, food, water, and social security. As the highest legal authority, the Constitution supersedes any legislation or government action that is inconsistent with its provisions. This literature review explores the extent to which these constitutional guarantees are upheld in practice, particularly in the context of protest action related to service delivery and governance failures. The chapter examines key themes emerging from scholarly discourse, including the role of the state in realising socio-economic rights, the dynamics of protest movements, public order policing responses, and the broader implications for accountability and democratic participation in post-apartheid South Africa.

2.2 Overview of protests in Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane municipal areas

Protest injuries in South Africa are especially prevalent in the Gauteng province, where densely populated metros like Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane have become flashpoints for service delivery dissatisfaction, governance failures, and political contestation. These municipalities frequently experience violent protest events that result in injury or even death, raising critical questions about police conduct, public accountability, and the right to peaceful assembly.

Protests in Gauteng often intensify during election cycles, with communities leveraging collective action to draw political attention to unresolved grievances. In both Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg, their study observed that protesters frequently resorted to road blockades, the burning of public property, and mass mobilisation tactics, which in turn provoked heavily armed police responses. These interactions, often marked by the use of rubber bullets and tear gas, resulted in numerous injuries—particularly in low-income wards where service delivery complaints were long ignored (Sempijja & Mongale,2023: 95).

Tshwane, much like other urban municipalities in Gauteng, has faced recurring protest activity linked to housing shortages and alleged corruption in allocation systems. However, the authors emphasise a key issue: the lack of structured data collection on injuries sustained during these protests, which makes it difficult to accurately assess the human cost of public unrest. The absence of disaggregated injury data specific to municipalities like Ekurhuleni and Tshwane has contributed to underreporting, thereby limiting the potential for policy reform and institutional learning (Nyar & Wray,2023: 183).

There are also disturbing patterns of police aggression during protests in Gauteng's urban centres. In case studies from both Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, officers were found to have employed crowd-control measures prematurely and with disproportionate force. The resulting injuries were often to the head, upper body, and limbs—suggesting either lack of training or disregard for protest de-escalation protocols (Nyar & Wray,2023: 183).

Municipal officials in Gauteng often fail to engage with protestors constructively, especially in areas like Ivory Park (Johannesburg) and Tembisa (Ekurhuleni), where residents report long-standing neglect and unmet promises. The inability of local governments to intervene pre-emptively or communicate transparently is frequently cited by protestors as a catalyst for disruptive—and increasingly violent—demonstrations (Ngcamu,2021: 269).

Moreover, reports from grassroots monitoring groups have documented cases where peaceful gatherings in Tshwane were declared unlawful, leading to swift and violent police dispersals. These cases often result in preventable injuries that receive little media or institutional attention (Nyar & Wray, 2023:185).

In summary, the frequency and severity of protest injuries in Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane highlight both the inadequacy of current policing methods and the failure of municipal authorities to address service delivery breakdowns through democratic channels. These incidents reveal a broader crisis of legitimacy facing local governance and policing in Gauteng's most politically active metros.

In contexts where formal mechanisms of government responsiveness have weakened or failed, communities have increasingly turned to protest not simply as a means of expressing dissatisfaction, but as a form of informal governance and parallel policymaking. Booysen (2022: 211) demonstrates that in several parts of Gauteng—including hotspots such as Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane, protests often compel the state to reverse decisions or deliver services, effectively functioning as a “governance from below.” Far from being chaotic or irrational, these protests reflect structured and strategic responses by marginalised communities seeking to force state action where participatory mechanisms have proven inadequate or unresponsive.

Booysen’s analysis reveals that protest action frequently produces measurable policy outcomes, even if achieved through disruptive means. Communities have learned that peaceful petitions are often ignored, while mass mobilisation—particularly in the form of road blockades, municipal shutdowns, and coordinated disruption—can yield rapid results (Booysen, 2022: 214). In this way, protest has become an alternative channel for public engagement in cities like Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, where local governance structures are often seen as corrupt, inefficient, or absent.

Complementing this governance-based reading, Kirshner (2011: 555) adds a spatial and identity-focused dimension, showing how protest in Gauteng is also a form of place-making and citizenship assertion. Kirshner's study of Khutsong, a township on the periphery of Gauteng, demonstrates how residents employed protest not only to resist being administratively shifted into North West province but also to reaffirm their political belonging to Gauteng. The slogan "We are Gauteng People" encapsulated a deeper struggle over identity, access to state resources, and political inclusion.

Protests in Khutsong went beyond service delivery to challenge the marginalisation of peripheral communities in post-apartheid spatial governance. This pattern is echoed in parts of Tshwane and Ekurhuleni, where spatial exclusion, poor infrastructure, and broken promises generate protest action that is both materially and symbolically charged. The Khutsong case, therefore, serves as a broader metaphor for how protest in South Africa operates at the intersection of governance failure, identity politics, and spatial inequality (Kirshner, 2011: 558).

Taken together, the works of Booysen and Kirshner highlight the dual character of protest in Gauteng's municipalities: as a means of compelling state performance and as a form of territorial and political claim-making. In both instances, protest becomes more than a reactive force—it becomes an essential, though informal, part of South Africa's governance landscape.

2.3 Legal Context

In examining the legal context of protest action in South Africa, Section 17 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) plays a pivotal role. It affirms that "everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions" (Republic of South Africa, 1996, Section 17). This constitutional provision underpins the legitimacy of public protests and gatherings as essential forms of democratic expression. As noted by scholars such as Runciman (2016), South Africa's constitutional commitment to the right of assembly distinguishes it from many other post-colonial states, where public protest is often heavily restricted. The literature highlights that, while this right is protected in law, its practical application is often challenged by issues of police brutality, bureaucratic restrictions, and tensions between protestors and the state (Duncan, 2016; Benit-Gbaffou, 2018). Therefore, while Section 17 provides a normative foundation for peaceful protest, the realities on the ground reveal a significant gap between constitutional ideals and lived experiences. This legal backdrop is crucial for understanding the dynamics explored in this research, which investigates the factors contributing to violence during protest actions despite the framework guaranteeing peaceful assembly.

Also, in terms of public gatherings and protests the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states in Chapter 2, The Bill of Rights, Section 17 that:

> Everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions.

That every person has the right to assemble with others and express their views on any matter freely in public and to enjoy the protection of the state while doing so. Section 17 of the Constitution provides that: everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, demonstrate, picket and present petitions. The exercise of such rights shall take place peacefully and respecting the rights of others.

Against the backdrop of the Constitution, one needs to highlight the nature of different demonstrations or protests. There are three different types of protest: Firstly, peaceful protests, which are non-violent, such as workers striking and attending rallies and marches where management or the relevant authorities have agreed to the actions taken. Secondly, disruptive protests that constitute more forceful but still non-violent actions, including barricading roads with tyres, stones or other objects, and occupying buildings or offices. Thirdly, violent protests, which include injuring or even killing people and destroying other people's property (Bohler-Muller, Roberts, Struwig, Gordon, Radebe & Alexander, 2017: 84).

2.4 Persistent Unrest and Political Shifts in Post-Apartheid South Africa

South Africa is currently grappling with a surge in violent strikes, mass action, and protests, coupled with a rise in violent crime rates. The frequency of protests is increasing in the country, highlighting an urgent need for effective policing to mitigate the potential for violence, loss of life, and criminal behaviour (Mkhwanazi & Khosa, 2021: 1320).

Since 1994, South Africa has witnessed urban riots and protest action as defining features of a struggling democracy. These events often serve as a means of political expression directed at the new democratic government, which has been led by the African National Congress (ANC) for more than 30 years (Centre for the Study of Violence Reconciliation Society Work, 2011: 19). Recently, the ANC has been experiencing a decline in support, which reflects growing discontent among South Africans regarding issues such as unemployment, corruption, and service delivery. As public frustration mounts, the political landscape is shifting, leading to discussions around the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU), which was officially created in June 2024. This GNU, includes multiple political parties from across the legislature, aiming to foster collaboration and stabilise governance in a time of increasing division and dissatisfaction (Awesu, MacDonald, Taverna-Turisan, Umraw & Mukundi, 2024).

However, even with a GNU in place, the prospect of protests and riots continuing unabated raises important questions about the effectiveness of such a coalition in addressing the root causes of

social unrest. Although the formation of a GNU may temporarily provide political stability, it does not necessarily resolve the systemic issues causing public discontent. Factors such as socio-economic inequality, lack of trust in political institutions, and ongoing frustrations with governance are deeply entrenched and may persist regardless of the political make-up of the government (Adams, 2024).

According to the researcher, the presence of a GNU could lead to complexities in decision-making and accountability since various parties may have distinct priorities and agendas. This fragmentation could hinder timely and effective responses to the public's grievances, potentially exacerbating tensions and leading to further protests. In such an environment, citizens may feel that their voices are still not being heard, prompting them to mobilise out of frustration.

The potential for ongoing protests and riots highlights the importance of addressing not only political reform but also the need for a comprehensive approach to social and economic challenges. This may involve engaging with civil society, addressing the concerns of marginalised communities, and implementing policies that prioritise equitable resource distribution and accountability. Ultimately, while a GNU could represent a positive move towards political inclusivity, it must be accompanied by meaningful actions that address the underlying issues in order to prevent continued unrest in the country.

In essence, these riots are characterised by civil disorder and marked by intense violence directed at authority figures or property. The occurrence of riots is often linked to herd behaviour and collective action, which involves the participation of numerous individuals and ultimately leads to civil unrest (Enaifoghe, Mtshali & Durokifa, 2021: 67–89).

Riots typically emerge from perceived grievances, where people feel that their concerns have not been adequately addressed by the government. Several factors can contribute to the involvement of the masses in riots, including poor living conditions, government oppression, high taxation, ethnic diversity, religious differences, and even conflicting views on sports. However, in the South African context, the country faces persistent challenges that contribute to urban riots. These challenges encompass rapid urbanisation; high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality; uneven service delivery; unaccountable governance; and intra-party tensions (Lancaster, 2016: 1).

In the next section, the right to protest in the South African context will be discussed.

2.5 Understanding the right to protest in South Africa

In early 2015, protests broke out in Malamulele, Limpopo Province, where demonstrators set fire to five schools and a library. These actions were a response to the Municipal Demarcation Board's ruling that the town did not qualify as a separate municipality. While some may view property damage

as a way to highlight grievances that might otherwise be overlooked, the destruction of educational institutions is unacceptable, as it ultimately harms the community and violates children's right to education (News24, 2015a). It is in stark contrast to the stipulations stated in the Constitution.

These protests were part of a larger pattern. In January 2015, xenophobic demonstrations erupted in Soweto after a Somali shopkeeper fatally shot a young person during an alleged robbery attempt at his store. This unrest led to looting of businesses owned by foreigners (Sapa & M&G Staff Reporter, 2015).

The right to protest is a crucial democratic freedom, especially for marginalised communities, as it allows for expression. However, this right must be exercised with responsibility in line with the Constitution, to enhance, not undermine, collective movements. Misguided or destructive protests often result in heightened police presence and increased repression, as seen with xenophobic protests (Duncan, 2016: 180).

Repression can be used not only to address violent demonstrations but also to silence dissenting voices that challenge the state, even when their demands are valid. For instance, in February 2015, the African Diaspora Forum attempted to organise a march against xenophobic violence and advocate for tolerance, but it was banned on the grounds that it could incite further violence against foreign nationals (Duncan, 2016: 180). This rationale was legally questionable; unless the marchers posed an imminent threat, there was no justification for the prohibition. This situation underscores the importance of protecting the right to protest while also reminding demonstrators of their responsibilities.

Duncan's (2016) book, *Protest Nation: The Right to Protest in South Africa*, delves into the state of the right to protest in South Africa, focusing on municipal and police responses to collective action and protesters' perspectives on their ability to exercise this right freely (Duncan, 2016: 181). It draws from a unique source: municipal records of all gatherings and protests notified under the Regulation of Gatherings Act, No. 205 of 1993 (RGA). These records provide valuable insights into protest trends, the main participants, and why certain voices dominate or disappear from protest spaces.

The data indicated that protests tend to occur outside the RGA framework when demonstrators perceive institutional protest methods as ineffective, are unaware of the RGA, or experience obstruction from municipalities regarding their lawful right to protest (Duncan, 2016: 181). While municipalities can impose restrictions on the time, manner, and place of public gatherings, they cannot regulate the content of protests without infringing on the freedom of expression (American Civil Liberties Union, 2015). However, in practice, municipalities often manipulate these restrictions to suppress the substance of protests.

Although municipalities wield significant power under the RGA, they face criticism that creates conflicts of interest in regulating public gatherings. They are required to uphold the right to protest, even when those protests criticise their actions. However, they also have a vested interest in suppressing such dissent. This ongoing conflict suggests that abuses of the right to protest are likely to persist. There is a pressing need to reconsider how this right is protected and facilitated. Some argue that any regulation inherently limits the right to protest and should therefore be rejected (Runciman, Maruping & Dlamini, 2016: 16). For example, the Social Justice Coalition challenged the constitutionality of the RGA, particularly the stipulation that municipalities must be notified of protests involving more than 15 people. They argued that this threshold is both arbitrary and too low, as a protest with 16 participants is unlikely to threaten public safety. Furthermore, they contended that failing to provide notice should not be criminalised. While courts may uphold the RGA as constitutional and view a timely notice as a reasonable requirement, this raises questions about whether municipal officials are the right decision-makers where protests are concerned. Some suggest establishing elected local committees within municipalities to manage notifications instead of relying on municipal officials (Langa & Kiguwa, 2016: 96).

As activists assert their right to protest, it is essential for them to be informed about the RGA, their rights, and the responsibilities of municipalities and the police. This knowledge is crucial for effectively navigating interactions with authorities, including during section 4 meetings. According to section 4 of the RGA: If a responsible officer receives notice as outlined in section 3(2) or becomes aware of information regarding a proposed gathering, they must promptly consult with the authorised member to determine whether negotiations are necessary regarding the gathering's conduct or any related conditions. If, following this consultation, the responsible officer believes negotiations are unnecessary, they will inform the convener that the gathering can proceed as outlined in the notice or with any agreed-upon amendments (Runciman, Maruping & Dlamini, 2016: 22).

Conversely, if they deem negotiations essential, the responsible officer will call a meeting with the convener, the authorised member, any other relevant responsible officers, and representatives from pertinent public bodies, such as local authorities and police-community consultative forums. This meeting will focus on discussing potential amendments to the notice and any conditions that may need to be established for the gathering, ensuring that the discussions are conducted in good faith (as stipulated in sections 1–14 of the RGA).

If the convener has been notified of the decision not to negotiate or if they have not been called to a meeting within 24 hours of giving notice, the gathering may proceed as initially specified in the notice, adhering to the provisions of section 8, but subject to sections 5 and 6 (as stipulated in sections 1–14 of the RGA). If an agreement is reached during the meeting, the gathering may take place in

accordance with the agreed notice contents, including any amendments, while still complying with sections 5 and 6.

In cases where the convener's identity or whereabouts are unknown, or if immediate action is required, the notice may be publicly disseminated through various means, such as local newspapers, radio, television, public announcements, or postings at the convener's specified address. The convener and authorised member are responsible for ensuring that all marshals and police members at the gathering are informed of the notice's contents, including any amendments or conditions (as stipulated in sections 1–14 of the RGA).

Understanding the RGA can help prevent abuses since municipalities and police may recognise that they cannot easily violate protesters' rights without facing repercussions, including complaints or lawsuits. Additionally, documenting abuses is vital for raising public awareness, especially since media coverage often focuses on sensationalism and overlooks the challenges faced by protesters (Duncan, 2016: 181).

Understanding risks is essential for developing effective responses that balance the right to protest with the need to maintain public order and safety, as such , the relevant risks will be discussed in the next section.

2.6 Risk in terms of protests

In Western societies, several key categories of risk dominate the concerns of individuals and institutions. One prominent category is environmental risks, which encompass dangers such as pollution, radiation, chemicals, floods, fires, and hazardous road conditions. Another significant area involves lifestyle risks, which are those risks associated with behaviours such as food and drug consumption, exercise habits, sexual activities, driving practices, and stress. Medical risks also play a role, involving the potential dangers of medical care or treatment, including drug therapies, surgeries, childbirth, reproductive technologies, and diagnostic tests (Lupton, 2013: 22).

Interpersonal risks, related to intimate relationships, social interactions, love, gender roles, marriage, and parenting, further contribute to people's worries. Economic risks, such as unemployment, underemployment, borrowing, investment, bankruptcy, and the failure of businesses, are additional concerns. Criminal risks, which involve being a participant in, or the victim of illegal activities, and political risks, such as political instability, terrorism, illegal immigration, and civil unrest, also weigh heavily on the public mind (Lupton, 2013: 22).

These categories reflect the broader sociocultural, political, and economic context of the time. Our awareness and understanding of these risks influence many aspects of daily life, from how we define

ourselves and social groups to how we perceive our bodies, make decisions about relationships and families, manage our finances, and choose where to live, work, and travel (Lupton, 2013: 23).

Risk is a notion used to offer meaning to objects, forces, or circumstances that pose danger to people or to what they value. In the context of the proposed research, risk refers to danger of the escalation of and/or the utilisation of violence during protests. The definitions frequently contain the discovery of what is at risk and that could be harmed or lost, the hazard that could cause this loss, and the decision encompassing the probability that harm will occur (Stern & Fineberg, 1996: 215). Risk additionally refers to the anticipation of a catastrophe. Its existence is a constant state of virtuality and only becomes topical to the extent that the risk is anticipated (Beck, 2009: 292).

A risk society is a society that is becoming more concerned with the future and safety, which produces the constant analysis of possible risk. Generally, risk has a negative association because it refers to the possibility of avoiding a negative outcome. However, risk can be positive because brave incentives can be taken when facing a future that is problematic (Beck, 2006: 292). Risk is always associated with security, safety, and responsibility. Logically, it follows that the world is moving more towards manufactured uncertainty, such as protests, instead of external uncertainty, such as earthquakes (Bergkamp, 2017: 1279).

The ability to cope with risk situations can be controversial and complex. Both industry and government have invested substantial resources into developing and implementing techniques for risk analysis and characterisation. These techniques help them make better informed and more trustworthy decisions about threats to human health, welfare, and the environment. However, these methods often do not meet the expectations of improving decision-making. They can be regarded as failing due to the inadequacies of the techniques available for risk analysis, the essential and continuous doubt about the information available about risk, and the misconception of risk characterisation (Stern & Fineberg, 1996: 215). Risk analysis includes the analysis techniques pertaining to risk. It attempts to increase the understanding of the fundamental qualities, seriousness, likelihood, and conditions of a hazard or risk as well as of the alternatives of managing it (Stern & Fineberg, 1996: 216).

On several occasions, risk assessment has been perceived to belong to the realm of physical and biological sciences, while social scientists focus on risk management and communication (Freudenburg, 1988: 44). To achieve precise calculations of risk consequences and probabilities, it is important to consider the input of social sciences. This helps to recognise possible biases that could be produced by certain risk assessment procedures and in analysing and expounding public responses to risk (Freudenburg, 1988: 44).

The involvement of social and behavioural sciences in risk assessment provides, among others, three contributions to risk assessment: Firstly, social sciences provide tools and sets of relevant findings to bridge the gap between the scientific community and the general public. Secondly, social scientists contribute to risk assessments by providing input to the actual calculations of probabilities and consequences of undesired outcomes. Third, social sciences offer insights into the processes involved in carrying out risk assessments (Freudenburg, 1988: 44). In this regard, Beck (2009: 291) claims that while governments continue to manage risk and develop strategies for security, the plan of politics is being generated progressively more by the decisions and actions in the public sphere. These sub-politics move the attention from central government to civil society. Beck (2009: 291) draws attention to the decisions and activities taken by scientists, corporations, and consumers that increasingly form government policy and the lives of citizens. Ethical issues for governments and individuals arise with scientific and technological innovation, for example, stem cell research or human cloning (Mythen & Walklate, 2006: 149–155).

In trying to comprehend the notion of risk, it is vital to distinguish between what is real and what is possible. In terms of the latter, risk characterises a world state where there is a combination of uncertainty of outcome and human concerns about outcome. Uncertainty can be regarded a state of mind, and the state of mind results from a process of assessment of numerous alternative predictions about the future. Uncertainty is created from a form of computation, which is based on new and existing knowledge and information. Contemporary ideas of risk seem to consist of a deceptive searching in order to overcome uncertainty itself. The certainty of security in every aspect of experience appears to be a desirable and marketable commodity (Denny, 2005: 9).

2.7 Protests in South Africa and recommendations of previous studies

Some scholars have made recommendations to decrease protests, such as increasing the provision of functional sewerage, sanitation, electricity, schools, and hospitals in all neighbourhoods (Alexander, 2010: 30). Moreover, the current construction of electricity infrastructure and provision of residential buildings with electricity should be accelerated to actively contribute to the reduction of service delivery protests. The aforementioned bears some resemblance to several conclusions made by qualitative studies that state that a more thorough shift of resources towards the poor should take place (Alexander, 2010: 30). In addition, protests generally materialise in more crowded areas. It is also not feasible to embark on programmes that aim to decrease population size as seen with the influx control measures implemented by the apartheid regime. Therefore, it would be more prudent to strengthen the delivery of modern basic services in highly populated areas (Morudu, 2017: 14).

Morudu (2017: 14) mentions the following in this regard:

> Almost all protests that relate to service delivery materialises at lower geographical levels than local municipalities. For instance, one local municipality such as the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan area has some 130 wards where protest might take place, but available service delivery data is at local municipality level.

As such, should Statistics South Africa gather service delivery data, including water, housing, electricity, refuse removal, and sanitation data, at levels that are lower than municipal boundaries, it would be more beneficial for policymakers to take lower municipal boundaries into account. This would be valuable, since aggregated data limited to municipal boundary levels does not allow for a rich and in-depth analysis.

For example, according to raw data, most protests materialise in informal settlements, usually surrounding established cities. An improved classification system should be developed within IRIS with the SAPS for the development of reliable and official protest data. Note that currently there is no other authoritative source for protests in South Africa. Given the number of service delivery protests, policy creation should not and cannot be restricted to data collected from media reports (Morudu, 2017: 14).

It is rare for public protests to remain peaceful as they often turn violent. Mkhwanazi and Khosa (2021: 1321) identified a number of potential factors that contribute to violence during protests, namely:

- inadequate service delivery (including deteriorating infrastructure and services);
- overestimating the government's response to the previous factors;
- excessive youth unemployment;
- group size (i.e. a large group);
- unobtainable resources;
- perceived marginalisation, injustice and inequality;
- people's level of motivation;
- the level of trust/distrust in authorities;
- an agreement between the demonstrators about the reasons for protesting;
- the governmental leader's attitude towards the violence;
- the response towards the grievances;
- the media's interest in the topic;
- the type of police response; and

- formal responses following the violence.

It is clear that the complexity of factors that contribute to the increase in violence during public protests highlights the multifaceted nature of this issue. From inadequate service delivery and excessive youth unemployment to perceived injustice and media influence, these elements collectively affect the dynamics of protest movements. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective strategies to address the root causes of unrest and foster a more peaceful and constructive dialogue between protesters and authorities. Only through comprehensive and empathetic approaches can the cycle of violence be mitigated, and in so doing the underlying grievances addressed adequately (Hlongwane, 2023: 200–208).

In the next section, possible solutions to, and reasons for community protest as highlighted in academic literature will be reviewed.

2.7.1 Possible solutions

It is suggested that a decrease in protests could be achieved if local governments engage more effectively in enhancing service delivery, improving community communication, and fostering greater community involvement (Botes, 2018: 252). However, these efforts to reduce protests were undermined by influential figures such as President Zuma and the Gupta family, who immigrated to South Africa in 1993. It is general knowledge that Mr Zuma and the Gupta brothers plundered state coffers and resources and were involved in the state capture of South Africa. During the period of state capture, Zuma and the Guptas significantly influenced political and economic systems, leading to widespread corruption and disillusionment among citizens. Their actions created an environment where the needs of the community were overlooked, which exacerbated tensions and frustrations that fuelled the protests. In addition, polarisation of certain ethnic groups occurred which unfortunately fuelled political unrest in South Africa.

Following the end of former President Jacob Zuma's regime in February 2018, South Africa entered a new era filled with fresh aspirations and hope. After the era of state capture, there was widespread hope that South Africa would transition into a more developmental state process rather than remain under a polarised influence. Although there are still pockets of hope for a reduction in community protests, it can only be achieved if municipalities are committed to genuine participatory governance and fulfil their public service commitments, rather than merely planning for them. The current polarisation in the GNU is also not favouring "a new beginning" after the state capture era. For local government to be truly participatory, the well-being of communities and their livelihoods must be a priority for both politicians and bureaucrats (Botes, 2018: 252).

After the ANC, the ruling political party in 2018, asked former President Jacob Zuma to resign, the former Deputy President and current President, Cyril Ramaphosa, was elected to take over from Zuma. While it was believed that the transition from Zuma to Ramaphosa would reduce the number of protests, the reality was quite the opposite. During the first 100 days after Cyril Ramaphosa took office, there was a steep increase in community protests, particularly in the North West Province of South Africa (Botes, 2018: 252). For protests to likely decrease, communities must experience tangible improvements in their living conditions, while local politicians, government officials, and bureaucrats need to demonstrate genuine commitment to proactive initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life. This includes, among others, providing electricity as well as running fresh water, fixing potholes and sewage spillages, providing adequate refuse collection, facilitating the employment of qualified and skilled government officials, managing finances appropriately, and putting an end to corruption.

The South African Government must create, expand, strengthen, and leverage opportunities for public participation in development initiatives, allowing citizens to see themselves as the architects of their own progress and future. However, another political change occurred in 2024 when the GNU emerged. Once again, the citizens of South Africa are hopeful that this coalition will improve their living standards and help to address the socio-economic disparities that have persisted for years. The impact of the GNU is yet to be determined, particularly whether there will be a decrease in protests and riots in response to the new leadership. Many citizens are cautiously optimistic and are looking for tangible improvements in service delivery, job creation, and community engagement. However, the success of the GNU will largely depend on its ability to unify various political factions (e.g., neutralise polarisation as we have seen several changes in the management of municipalities already without clear reasons), and respond effectively to the pressing needs of the populace. If the coalition can foster a sense of trust and collaboration among diverse communities, it may pave the way for a more stable and prosperous future and decrease violent protests eventually (Peyton & Roelf, 2024).

2.7.2 Reasons why protests occur

Protests are an essential part of a democratic South Africa; they are occasionally perceived as acts of communication that disrupt the functioning of everyday society to draw public attention to grievances (Duncan, 2016: vii). Protests additionally provide ordinary civilians with the opportunity to engage in practical politics and subsequently be a factor in the change of how power is organised in society (Duncan, 2016: vii). Protests commonly involve communities voicing grievances about the perceived inadequate provision of basic municipal services such as water, electricity, sanitation and other municipal obligations (Matebesi, 2017: 2). The aforementioned can be regarded as civil strife,

which refers to the continuous collective advocacy to address a concern. The struggle against municipalities transcends geographic and demographic boundaries, but the media attention given to community protests in predominantly black communities in South Africa, which can turn violent and deadly, is often greater than that given to non-violent protests, for example ratepayer associations refusing to pay taxes directly to municipalities (Matebesi, 2017: 2).

Social protests frequently arise at the intersection of state and society, driven by social movements and networks of individuals engaging in civil strife against local government. In post-apartheid South Africa, which is currently ranked as the second most unequal society in the world, there is widespread discontent among the poor (McKeever, 2024: 2-14). Since 2004, the country has witnessed numerous local protests that have not only increased in number and frequency but have also intensified, progressively becoming more violent and destructive (Botes, 2018: 240).

Many feel that protest action is not caused by dissatisfaction with inadequate service delivery, but rather by poor governance and a deficient democracy that does not provide citizens with a proper say over public affairs (Ngwane, 2010: 8). The level of political trust in local governance, political actors, and institutions is a significant outcome related to direct experiences with the political system. One of the main differences between the two prevailing theoretical backgrounds of political trust (institutional and cultural theories) is that trust is regarded as a cognitive process that depends on the knowledge and beliefs that citizens hold about specific institutions and actors (Kong, 2014: 385). Cultural theories, however, emphasise that trust is based on attitudes regarding values learned early in life (Putnam, 2000: 15). The conjunction of institutional and cultural theories is that trust is then interpreted as a reaction to direct experiences with political actors and institutions. According to Goebel (2011: 369–388), mass protests in impoverished communities in South Africa extend beyond concerns about the sluggish delivery of services, housing, and infrastructure. Protests often express frustration with government corruption, the elite capture of wealth and opportunities, and the criminalisation and political exclusion of the poor. Protests, therefore, encompass a broader spectrum of grievances related to governance, wealth distribution, and social inclusion.

Community protests reside at the intersection of the trust citizens have in their political representatives, the actors (both political and civil) who provide services, and the institutions responsible for services (such as municipal structures). It is important to note that the aforementioned level of trust may vary across different geographical areas, specifically in a racially and economically divided society such as South Africa. For example, one group may have a strong distrust towards political actors and institutions owing to their ethnic affiliation and/or racial differences, while others could experience higher levels of trust (Matebesi, 2017: 148).

Political affiliation is a further contributing factor towards protests. Individuals and communities with diminished trust in the political system often resort to protests as a means of communication, since their perceptions of the political system are shaped by poor service delivery (Matebesi, 2017: 147). An additional factor regarding trust is a person's immigration status, particularly when it involves cross-border immigration from neighbouring countries. According to Putnam (2000: 12–20), an increased level of immigration contributes to the breakdown of trust between migrants, political hosts, and the host population. The effect of large-scale urbanisation, which also has an impact on ethnic tension and community protests, is widely known. For example, the fast-rising backlog of employment opportunities due to the considerable number of migrant jobseekers. Likewise, Brosché (2015: 4) claims that some of the main factors of conflict in communities and/or protests are not solely grounded in ethnic and religious identity, but the separating line between the original occupants of an area and newer citizens.

Individuals who participate in protests frequently emphasise that regardless of their living conditions and socio-economic status, women and men who are mobilised or who must be mobilised, in other words individuals who intend to and/or participate in protests, are ordinary people (Tournadre, 2018: 42). Mobilisation or organisation offers individuals a chance to identify with a movement and thus realise that their interests are being defended/promoted, which restructures the individual self around a new and appreciated identity. Shifting poverty to ordinariness has increased inclusivity qualities. It does not distress the feeling of belonging to the imaginary middle class; it encompasses all individuals who are experiencing inadequate service delivery, such as housing, water, and electricity (Tournadre, 2018: 43).

Democracy thrives on compliant protests and social mobilisation, as these actions allow citizens to communicate their discontent to political elites. When a loss of intra-institutional processes occurs, protests hardly ever result in sustainable change. The claim is that protests lose efficiency because of the loss of support, the tendency to take on violent nuances, and/or reformist measures. There will always be leaders and activists who intend to engage in violent protests, but the majority of protesters and leaders participate in peaceful events. The difference is that heterogeneous communities with multiple expressions, political factions, and leaders are almost always involved in protests and social movements. In addition, during some protests, certain participants and political parties advocate for and engage in violent direct action. Moreover, some individuals utilise protests as a cover to conduct criminal activity such as looting (Habib, 2020).

The connection between violence and collective resistance has been a persistent issue in South Africa, which was notably highlighted during the apartheid era when the ANC embraced an armed struggle and residents sought to render townships ungovernable. Today's community protests bear

similarities to past struggles that originated in impoverished black communities and drew from comparable repertoires of collective action. However, protest violence takes on a distinct significance in the post-apartheid context. During apartheid, black residents were largely excluded from meaningful engagement with the state. In the contemporary period, violence can be seen as an alternative to formal democratic channels, such as voting. While democracy and violence are often perceived as opposing modes of operation, Von Holdt (2013: 590) argues that “democracy may configure power relations in such a way that violent practices are integral to them”. This suggests that in certain contexts, violence becomes intertwined with democratic processes as a means of expressing grievances and exerting influence within the existing power structures.

Ramulumo and Gumbi (2022) investigated the perceptions of university students in Gauteng regarding the prevalence and impact of service delivery protests in South Africa, with a particular focus on their implications for socio-economic rights. Using a qualitative research design, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of students to explore how this group interprets both the motivations behind and consequences of these protests. The study is situated within the broader context of post-apartheid South Africa, where the constitutional recognition of socio-economic rights-such as access to water, housing, education, and healthcare-contrasts sharply with the lived experiences of many communities facing persistent poverty, inequality, and government neglect.

A significant finding from the study is that students largely perceive service delivery protests as legitimate forms of resistance, often viewing them as a final recourse for communities whose basic needs have been ignored. Many participants expressed empathy for the frustrations that drive protest actions, acknowledging that marginalised communities frequently resort to public demonstrations after exhausting other avenues for engaging with the state. However, the study also reveals an ambivalence in student attitudes, as many pointed out the unintended negative effects of these protests. These include disruptions to education through school closures, damage to public infrastructure, threats to public safety, and the infringement of the rights of others not directly involved in the protests. This duality underscores the paradox at the heart of many protest actions in South Africa: while intended to secure constitutional rights, they may simultaneously contribute to the erosion of those very rights in practice (Ramulumo & Gumbi, 2022).

The participants were particularly critical of the state's handling of protest situations, especially the often aggressive and militarised responses of the South African Police Service. Students reported that such responses frequently escalate tensions and lead to violent confrontations, rather than providing a platform for constructive dialogue. This aligns with broader concerns in the literature about the securitisation of protest and the shrinking of democratic space for dissent. Moreover,

students highlighted how the criminalisation of protest undermines the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution, especially the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. In this way, the study not only documents student opinions but also reflects broader socio-political dynamics, where protest is both a tool of empowerment and a potential trigger for state repression.

Ultimately, the authors conclude that while service delivery protests are often a justified response to structural neglect, they must be understood within a framework that considers both their causes and consequences. They advocate for more responsive and accountable governance, improved public participation mechanisms, and non-violent avenues for communities to raise grievances. Importantly, the study contributes to the existing literature by centring the voices of young people-future leaders and stakeholders in the country's democratic processes-whose perspectives on protest and rights are crucial for shaping more inclusive and effective public policy (Ramulumo & Gumbi, 2022).

The article titled *"Protests as a form of electioneering: A comparative study of the 2016 and 2021 local government elections protests in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal"* by Hanyane and Mampane (2023) explores the intersection between protest action and electoral politics in South Africa. The study critically analyses how community protests during the 2016 and 2021 local government elections in two key provinces-Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal-served not merely as expressions of service delivery dissatisfaction, but as deliberate forms of electioneering.

Electioneering entail that protests are increasingly being used as strategic tools by local communities and political actors to influence electoral outcomes or draw political attention during election periods. This phenomenon, which is also known as "electoral protests," reflects a shift in how civic actors engage with democratic processes-moving beyond passive voting to more confrontational participation. Their comparative analysis reveals a consistent pattern: while the root causes of the protests (such as poor service delivery, unemployment, and governance failures) remained largely unchanged between 2016 and 2021, the strategic deployment of these protests during election times intensified, suggesting an evolving political consciousness among disenfranchised groups (Hanyane & Mampane, 2023: 15).

Utilising qualitative content analysis and grounded in the theory of participatory democracy, the study underscores the role of protests as a channel for amplifying community voices in the face of institutional neglect. The authors highlight that these protests are not spontaneous acts of lawlessness, as often portrayed, but are organised and timed to maximize visibility and political leverage. Notably, in both provinces, communities felt that traditional modes of political engagement, such as ward committees or councillor consultations, had failed to address their grievances.

Consequently, they resorted to disruptive protest actions to place their demands on the political agenda during election campaigns (Hanyane & Mampane, 2023: 18).

The article further illustrates how these protests affect party politics and electoral competitiveness. Political parties, particularly the African National Congress (ANC) that were in power during this period, were often forced to respond to protest demands to secure electoral support. This dynamic created a feedback loop where communities recognised the effectiveness of protest as a bargaining tool, reinforcing its use in subsequent elections. However, the authors also caution that the institutionalisation of protest as an electoral tactic risk undermining democratic stability and eroding faith in non-violent political mechanisms if underlying governance issues are not addressed.

In conclusion, the study frames election-time demonstrations as a form of grassroots electoral engagement. It calls for a rethinking of protest not as a threat to democracy, but as a symptom of democratic deficit and a call for more inclusive governance mechanisms (Hanyane & Mampane, 2023).

Lancaster's (2018: 30) research provides an in-depth exploration of the factors and patterns that drive protest activity within South Africa. Drawing upon the data collected through the Institute for Security Studies' Protest and Public Violence Monitor, the study examines the geographical and socio-political underpinnings of protest events across the country. The primary drivers of protest in South Africa are dissatisfaction with service delivery, political frustration, and socio-economic inequality, particularly in historically Marginalised areas. These areas often experience failures in basic services such as water, electricity, healthcare, and housing, which in turn fuels public frustration and demands for accountability (Lancaster, 2018: 31).

Lancaster (2018) recognises that protests are not only geographically concentrated in impoverished or disenfranchised areas but are also a reaction to systemic issues such as high unemployment, inequality, and government corruption (Lancaster, 2018: 32). Lancaster (2018: 33) makes the critical point that these protests are often not isolated incidents but part of a larger wave of discontent, where issues such as poor governance and a lack of responsiveness from local authorities act as key catalysts. Importantly, the study also examines the socio-political environment in which these protests occur, emphasising the role of local leadership, media, and community mobilisation in shaping public response to perceived injustices (Lancaster, 2018: 34).

Lancaster's (2018: 35) analysis of protest locations also reveal a pattern of heightened protest activity in urban and peri-urban areas where there is a more direct interface with governmental structures. Protests are notably concentrated in municipalities with high levels of inequality and poor service delivery, indicating a critical nexus between local governance failures and widespread public

unrest. Additionally, the study emphasises the complexity of the South African protest landscape, noting that protests may stem from a mixture of grievances, including local service delivery issues and broader national concerns such as corruption, policy failures, and socio-economic exclusion (Lancaster, 2018: 36).

The research calls for a more nuanced approach to understanding protests, stressing that they should not be viewed solely as disruptions but as expressions of deep-seated frustrations with systemic issues that require attention (Lancaster, 2018: 37). Improved policy responses that address the root causes of dissatisfaction, such as enhancing accountability in local government and addressing inequalities that fuel unrest should be considered by the government. Lancaster's (2018: 38) findings contributes to the academic discourse on protest movements by offering a comprehensive analysis of both the immediate and long-term factors contributing to protest action in South Africa.

Since the advent of majority rule in 1994, South Africa has experienced a significant surge in community protests, particularly notable from 2004 onwards (Shai, 2017: 360). The escalating frequency of these protests, often marked by violent incidents, has garnered attention from policymakers, practitioners, and academics. Scholars offering diverse perspectives on the root causes of these protests have fuelled debates, with views ranging from linking them to service-related issues to portraying them as politically motivated (Tsheola, 2014: 165).

The quest to understand these ongoing community protests necessitates a thorough examination of their purported root causes, given the contested nature of these explanations (Tsheola, 2014: 167). Various reasons for the persistent nature of community protests are outlined by Burger (2009), including dissatisfaction with basic municipal services, high youth unemployment, widespread poverty, inadequate infrastructure, housing shortages, and disputes over municipal boundaries. Allegations of corruption and nepotism in local government structures further exacerbate the situation.

Burger (2009) posits that the fundamental cause of community protests stems from the widespread frustration with socio-economic conditions. The protests within South Africa's communities can be understood within the historical context of socio-economic and political conditions that were shaped by centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid governance. Both intra- and inter-party-political conflicts, as observed in the lead-up to the 2016 local government elections, contribute to the volatile nature of these protests. The competitive political landscape, particularly within local government, provides opportunities for the dispensation of patronage, intensifying the contested political terrain and contributing to the subjugation, disempowerment, humiliation, and dehumanisation of the black majority (Manyaka, 2018: 59).

Sartorius and Sartorius (2015: 3337) highlight that the allocation of public resources prioritises urban areas with economic potential, perpetuating historical inequalities rooted in colonialism and apartheid. The unequal access to socio-economic resources, opportunities, and development is deeply entrenched in historical legacies, disadvantaging poorer communities and reinforcing service delivery inequality (Twala, 2014: 160). Its detrimental implications for the socio-economic development of underprivileged communities lead to migration towards urban areas in search of economic opportunities, which ultimately contributes to the proliferation of informal settlements in metropolitan municipalities (Twala, 2014: 159–167).

Despite the optimism surrounding the post-apartheid democratic era, marked by political freedom and the adoption of the 1996 Constitution, the anticipated improvement in socio-economic status for most black South Africans did not materialise as expected. Maserumule (2012: 180–207) challenges the assumption that democracy inherently leads to development, highlighting the ongoing challenges and disparities faced by many in the aftermath of the political transformation in South Africa since 1994.

According to Botes (2018: 245), there are six primary reasons why protests occur in South Africa. Firstly, protests can be seen as a manifestation of the absence of political trust. Secondly, they may arise as an expression of the desire for "development as freedom" and the restoration of human dignity. Thirdly, protests serve as a mechanism for ensuring political accountability, holding the government and state structures responsible for their actions. Additionally, inadequate service delivery is a significant factor that can trigger protests. Economic and financial hardship also acts as a driving force behind many protests. Lastly, protests may result from a perceived lack of consultation and participation in public service delivery processes. These reasons will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

(i) Absence of Political Trust

South Africa’s prevailing socio-political tensions are deeply intertwined with widespread dissatisfaction and a pervasive sense of marginalisation among communities. At the heart of this unrest lies an erosion of political trust, especially at the local government level, where many citizens perceive public officials-both politicians and senior bureaucrats-as prioritising personal gain over public service. This sense of betrayal is rooted in what many see as a departure from the moral and political legacy of former President Nelson Mandela, whose leadership symbolised a commitment to inclusive governance and socio-economic justice. Today, however, community members frequently characterise their leaders as self-serving, indifferent, and corrupt-sentiments that have become central to the growing culture of protest in the country (Alexander, 2014).

Over the last decade and a half, South Africa has witnessed a surge in community-led demonstrations, predominantly around grievances related to inadequate service delivery. These protests, often framed as expressions of popular dissatisfaction, question not only the efficiency but also the legitimacy of governmental authority at various levels. Pieterse and Van Donk (2013: 108) argue that these forms of protest significantly undermine the developmental trajectory of local government. Given the persistence of these protests, it is worth asking whether the ongoing crisis in service delivery is contributing to a breakdown in democratic governance, and whether the democratic project is at risk of becoming ungovernable in the face of such widespread disillusionment.

(ii) The Need to Restore Human Dignity

While poverty is undeniably a major challenge in South Africa, it is not the sole trigger of service delivery protests. Rather, these uprisings are more accurately understood through the lens of relative deprivation-a sense of injustice born when individuals compare their living standards and opportunities with those of more affluent groups (Banks, Meade & Shaw, 2016: 220). In many cases, the resentment that fuels protest is not based on absolute poverty but on the realisation that others in society, often nearby, enjoy vastly better access to services and opportunities.

For those on the socio-economic margins, the persistent failure of the state to meet even the most basic service delivery obligations exacerbates their sense of exclusion and indignity. Many feel that their lives are not valued by government institutions, and that their daily struggles are either ignored or trivialised by those in power. The state's failure to provide adequate services does not merely inconvenience the poor-it actively deepens their vulnerability. This situation is particularly dire for the most marginalised communities, which typically lack the financial and political resources to improve their conditions independently or pressure local authorities to act (Chikulo, 2013: 35–64; Death, 2016: 201–217; Philipps, 2016: 592–607).

In this context, protest emerges as a form of counter-conduct-an act of resistance driven by a desire to reclaim dignity and demand recognition through development. It represents a collective assertion of rights by communities who feel excluded from the promises of post-apartheid transformation.

(iii) A Mechanism for Political Accountability

Another critical dimension of South Africa's protest landscape is the demand for political accountability. The growing frequency of community protests can be attributed, in large part, to a perceived lack of responsiveness among public officials, particularly at the local level. Protesters often voice concerns about corruption, mismanagement, broken promises, and the general

ineffectiveness of local governance. In fact, research shows that roughly 17% of protest-related grievances are linked to governance failures (Alexander, Runciman & Ngwane, 2013: 11; Karamoko, 2011: 31–32).

These protests can be viewed not simply as expressions of frustration but as grassroots efforts to hold political elites to account. When formal mechanisms of democratic participation are seen as ineffective, communities increasingly turn to protest as a means of engaging the state. Public confidence in government accountability is alarmingly low, reflecting a deep-seated belief that the state often acts contrary to the interests of its citizens (Netswera & Phago, 2013: 24–39). As Habib (2013: 70–71) aptly observes, South Africa suffers from a fundamental accountability deficit that threatens the sustainability of its democratic order.

In 2009, the National Taxpayers Union-representing 220 branches across 49 municipalities-formally declared disputes with local governments, citing widespread dissatisfaction among members who withheld municipal tax payments in protest (Mouton, 2013). These actions reflect a broader sentiment that local governments are failing to meet their constitutional mandates.

At the core of these challenges is the urgent need to establish responsive and inclusive local governance structures. Achieving this is not merely a technical task but a deeply political one, requiring the commitment of public servants at all levels to act with integrity and to prioritise the public good. According to Botes (2018: 250), community protests often result from the state's failure to meet the expectations and needs of ordinary citizens, revealing the limitations of South Africa's young democracy in fulfilling its foundational promises.

In many instances, the root of the crisis is not merely a lack of service delivery, but the broader issue of dysfunctional governance. Without effective, accountable leadership, neither participatory governance nor equitable service provision can be realised. In this setting, aspirational values such as batho pele (people first) and ubuntu (I am because we are) remain symbolic ideals rather than lived realities (Govender, 2016: 25; Merten, 2018).Merten (2018) notes, that nearly one-third of South Africa's 257 municipalities are classified as dysfunctional, with another 137 municipalities burdened by unsustainable debt, thereby limiting their capacity to invest in infrastructure and service delivery. These systemic deficiencies are compounded by issues such as overlapping jurisdictional responsibilities, corruption, the effects of cadre deployment, and institutional dysfunction stemming from poor resource allocation (Habib, 2013: 63–68).

Although many protests begin peacefully, a growing number escalate into violent confrontations, often as a result of heavy-handed state responses. According to Gwanyanya (2017), between September 2014 and May 2015, police use of force-such as rubber bullets-resulted in the deaths of

53 protesters. In one tragic instance, children protesting inadequate teacher provision in Port Elizabeth (now referred to as Gqeberha) in 2015 were reportedly met with excessive force.

These developments must be interpreted within the broader historical and socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa. The end of apartheid did not represent a miraculous rupture, but rather a new phase in the protracted struggle to resolve deeply entrenched inequalities and contradictions dating back to the 1970s (Marais, 2011: 2).

The uneven development of South African cities and townships during the democratic transition of the 1990s can be attributed in part to the ANC's adoption of neoliberal policy frameworks. Bond (2000) argues that the failure to redistribute urban resources led to increased unemployment, utility cut-offs, substandard housing, and spikes in transport-related violence and crime.

The demographics of protest participants reflect this ongoing inequality. Demonstrations are predominantly led by black South Africans living in precarious conditions, whose lived realities are shaped by two dominant income divides: one between the multiracial elite and the rest of the population, and another between the urban middle class and the deeply marginalised-particularly the unemployed and rural poor (Wasserman, Chuma & Bosch, 2018: 3).

(iv) Inadequate Service Delivery

An increasing number of communities have resorted to protest in response to the government's failure to deliver adequate basic services, including housing, sanitation, electricity, and water (Matebesi & Botes, 2011: 51–69). These protests are not merely reactive to slow service provision but are often rooted in deeper grievances about the poor quality of services and the exclusionary or patronage-based practices tied to service delivery mechanisms. Communities perceive such failures as both technical shortcomings and symptoms of broader governance deficits.

These deficits are partly attributable to overlapping and poorly defined roles among the three spheres of government-national, provincial, and local which often result in policy inconsistencies and a lack of accountability. Further compounding the issue are systemic issues such as corruption, the legacy of cadre deployment by the ANC until the 2024 establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU), and the underperformance of state institutions due to resource constraints and administrative inefficiency.

Nonetheless, the state has made measurable progress in certain areas of service delivery since 1994. By February 2022, more than 3.4 million housing units had been delivered, and access to piped water had increased from 61.7% in 1994 to 82.4% in 2022. Similarly, household access to electricity rose from 58.2% to 94.7% over the same period. South Africa's social assistance network

has also expanded dramatically, with around 28 million beneficiaries during October 2024-approximately 45% of the population (Maree & Khanyile, 2024: 1–5).

Yet these advances mask the persistence of deeply embedded structural challenges. South Africa's socioeconomic development remains hindered by high unemployment, severe inequality, and underperformance in education-especially among historically disadvantaged groups. In the second quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate stood at 33.5%, with youth unemployment (ages 15–24) alarmingly high at 60.8% (World Bank, 2024). These figures reflect a labour market that continues to exclude large portions of the population, thereby exacerbating social discontent. According to the *Daily Maverick* (Mahlaka, 2025), South Africa's labour force reached 25.1 million people, reflecting a growing number of individuals actively seeking work. However, job creation has failed to keep pace, resulting in persistently high unemployment. The official unemployment rate remains at 32.1%, with youth unemployment (ages 15–24) alarmingly high at around 45%. Despite this increase in labour market participation, the broader economy struggles with low growth and structural challenges, deepening socio-economic vulnerability among the working-age population.

Income inequality remains stark, with South Africa registering a Gini coefficient of 63 in 2023-among the highest globally. This inequality is mirrored in access to quality education, where learners from poorer communities consistently face under-resourced schools and low post-matric progression rates. The United Nations Development Programme (2022; 2023: 101–102) warns that without substantial investment in education and skills development, efforts to reduce unemployment and promote inclusive growth will be severely constrained.

Furthermore, housing backlogs and deteriorating infrastructure, particularly in urban centres, worsen spatial and economic marginalisation. These deficits not only violate constitutional rights to housing and basic services but also hinder broader economic participation and upward mobility. In this context, community protests can be understood as manifestations of cumulative frustration with a state perceived as unresponsive and out of touch with the lived realities of its citizens.

(v) Economic and Financial Hardship

The economic basis of protest in South Africa has become increasingly pronounced in the post-apartheid era. Bedasso and Obikili (2016: 130–146) demonstrate that direct political action has shifted from race-based mobilisations to class-based grievances, with economic precarity emerging as a central driver of community unrest. Their analysis indicates that up to 85% of protests during periods of heightened activity are rooted in economic concerns-ranging from unemployment to rising living costs and the broader failure of the economy to provide equitable opportunities.

This shift underscores the extent to which economic issues have eclipsed racial-political ones in shaping the protest landscape. Class-based deprivation has become a key catalyst for mobilisation, revealing how political freedom has not translated into material well-being for the majority. Community protests thus serve as localised expressions of resistance against intersecting deprivations, where communities challenge not only poor service delivery but also broader structural exclusion.

The establishment of the GNU in 2024 is seen by many as a potential turning point in addressing these grievances. Widespread dissatisfaction with governance, corruption, inequality, and lack of opportunity has driven hopes that a more inclusive and representative coalition could bring about the systemic reforms required to address the country's multifaceted crises (Beukes, Chigwata & De Visser, 2024: 5–20). The GNU is perceived as a possible mechanism for bridging the divide between estranged constituencies and restoring public trust.

Political fragmentation and disenchantment with the ANC, which has dominated the post-apartheid political landscape, have created space for alternative voices. The rise of opposition parties like the EFF and the Democratic Alliance (DA) reflects a growing appetite for accountability, transparency, and more responsive governance. Many South Africans hope that a GNU could facilitate this by providing a more collaborative and less partisan approach to policymaking, thereby tackling exclusion, inequality, and unemployment (Beukes et al., 2024: 5–20).

Economic inequality remains one of the most stubborn and destabilising forces in South Africa. Despite the end of apartheid, the benefits of economic growth have been unequally distributed. Millions remain trapped in poverty without access to meaningful employment, quality education, or healthcare. The GNU is seen as an opportunity to rectify these disparities through pro-poor economic policies, job creation, and more equitable resource allocation (Ndzendze & Hlabisa, 2024).

Corruption has further exacerbated inequality and eroded trust in public institutions. A series of high-profile scandals involving state-owned enterprises and corruption by public officials has fuelled anger and disillusionment. Proponents of the GNU argue that a broader coalition government could introduce stronger checks and balances, improve accountability, and help combat corruption more effectively (Beukes et al., 2024: 5–20).

According to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2025, youth unemployment remains a significant concern. The number of unemployed individuals aged 15–34 increased by 151,000, reaching a total of 4.8 million. Notably, approximately 58.7% of these unemployed youth reported having no prior work experience, highlighting the challenges young people face in entering the job market. The survey also revealed that around 1.9 million youth

were classified as discouraged work-seekers, indicating they had given up looking for employment. Educational attainment plays a crucial role in employment prospects; youth without a matric qualification faced an unemployment rate of 51.6%, while those with matric had a slightly lower rate of 47.6%. Youth with vocational or technical training experienced an unemployment rate of 37.3%, and university graduates had the lowest rate at 23.9%, underscoring the importance of higher education in improving employment outcomes (Statistics South Africa, 2025).

(vi) Lack of Consultation and Participation in Public Service Delivery

A recurring theme across many protests is dissatisfaction with the top-down nature of public service delivery. There is growing demand for participatory governance, where communities are meaningfully consulted and included in planning and development processes. Citizens increasingly reject imposed solutions and instead advocate for bottom-up approaches that reflect their needs, values, and aspirations (Netswera & Phago, 2013: 24–39). In this regard, protests have become a principal channel for asserting democratic agency and demanding participatory governance.

Service delivery failures are especially acute in rural and underdeveloped areas, where delays in accessing water, electricity, housing, and healthcare are common. These deficiencies are compounded by high levels of crime and insecurity, particularly in urban areas, which contribute to a pervasive sense of fear and state neglect. A government structure that includes diverse political voices, such as the GNU, could foster more holistic solutions that integrate security, social development, and economic policy (Beuer, 2024).

Internationally, perceptions of political instability and weak governance have hampered South Africa's ability to attract foreign investment and promote economic growth. The GNU, if successful, could signal a renewed commitment to democratic governance and policy coherence, which might boost investor confidence and improve developmental outcomes (Buhlungu & Mpungose, 2017: 50–68).

Despite hopes for improved governance, public scepticism persists. Many South Africans remember past political compromises that failed to bring meaningful change. The success of the GNU hinges on the political will of its leaders, their capacity to share power constructively, and their genuine commitment to reform. Without these, the GNU risks repeating the inefficiencies and patronage networks that have long undermined progress (Mafumo, Buhlungu & Mpungose, 2017–2024: 164–170). Early signs of strain have already emerged, such as the contentious VAT increase debate, which exposed divisions within the coalition and raised questions about the GNU's ability to maintain consensus on key economic policies (Sadike, 2025).

As South Africa moves through 2025, achieving a more equitable society remains contingent on fundamental wealth redistribution and a pro-poor economic agenda. A clear illustration of ongoing inequality is seen in the disparity between the earnings of ward councillors—who receive between R45,000 and R112,000 per month—and the R2,180 monthly social grant allocated to elderly citizens (Government Gazette, 2023). These stark income gaps continue to exacerbate the disconnect between elected representatives and the communities they serve.

Moreover, South Africa faces a fiscal dilemma. Over 29 million people depend on social grants, while just 7.4 million taxpayers support state revenue. This imbalance poses significant risks to fiscal sustainability and highlights the urgent need for economic reform that includes expanding the tax base through job creation and inclusive growth (Libera, 2024).

2.7.3 Additional contributors to protests in South Africa

Political parties in South Africa often engage with poor urban communities through clientelist practices and informal negotiations. Marginalised residents are not merely passive recipients in this dynamic; they actively participate in party politics. However, their access to essential services like housing and infrastructure frequently depends on political allegiance and involvement in party networks (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2012: 385–387).

The article emphasises the dominant role of the ANC in shaping these dynamics, where the party sustains support through patronage mechanisms that provide symbolic and material benefits to loyal constituencies. This results in uneven service delivery and fragmented governance, as political allegiance frequently outweighs actual need or rights in determining who receives resources (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2012: 390–392).

Bénit-Gbaffou also highlights the limits this system places on genuine political accountability. While grassroots mobilisations and protests occur, they are often absorbed or defused within party structures, channelling dissent into less threatening forms. This containment restricts the potential for Marginalised groups to demand broader systemic change, keeping political participation tied to clientelism rather than empowerment or democratic deepening (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2012: 395–398).

Finally, the article situates South Africa’s urban political realities within a wider context of post-colonial cities, underscoring how similar clientelist relationships shape governance and social justice struggles globally. Bénit-Gbaffou calls for a more nuanced approaches that appreciate the agency of poor urban residents while recognising the structural constraints imposed by entrenched party politics (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2012: 398–400).

2.6.3.1 Influence of Community Leaders in South African Protests

Community leaders have been shown to play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics, organisation, and outcomes of protests in South Africa. Their influence ranges from mobilising marginalised groups to negotiating with authorities and mediating conflict within communities.

Backyard residents in Cape Town—those living in informal structures behind formal houses due to severe housing shortages and high rental costs—face significant barriers in accessing formal support. Local charismatic leaders play a crucial role in mobilising these communities by transforming scattered grievances into collective action. Acting as intermediaries between residents and political institutions, they help amplify community demands and facilitate access to essential resources. Without such leadership, individual frustrations often remain isolated and fail to develop into effective protest movements (Hendricks & Washinyira, 2023: 700–705).

Similarly, Bhuda and Maditsi (2023) explore the often-overlooked role of traditional leaders during periods of unrest, particularly in the context of the 2021 riots in South Africa. They argue that traditional authorities possess a unique legitimacy rooted in indigenous governance systems, which enables them to exert significant influence in restoring order and guiding community responses (Bhuda & Maditsi, 2023: 6–9). This suggests that beyond formal political structures, indigenous leadership remains a vital mechanism for social regulation and conflict resolution during crises.

community leadership plays an important role within the broader discourse of service delivery protests. According to Botes, local leaders serve as essential agents who channel collective frustrations over poor service delivery into organised protests that demand government accountability. Their ability to coordinate logistics, articulate grievances, and sustain protest momentum, positions them as indispensable actors in community development struggles (Botes, 2022: 215–220).

Expanding the discussion to labour and community strikes, Paret (2020) examines how leaders within precarious communities foster militant organising by translating individual insecurities into collective demands. Leadership is not merely about mobilisation but also about constructing a shared identity and political consciousness necessary for sustained activism (Paret, 2020: 5–10). The capacity of community leaders to unify diverse groups around common goals emerges as a key determinant of protest efficacy.

Relating to this, Paret (2015) addresses the relationship between community protest violence and democracy, emphasising that leaders play a strategic role in framing protests to either promote democratic engagement or allow violent disruption. Effective leadership can legitimise protest

actions in the eyes of the public and authorities, thereby influencing the political outcomes and future opportunities for collective action (Paret, 2015: 110–115).

Community leaders in South Africa have a key role to play and are far more than facilitators of protest; they are central to the negotiation of power between the governed and the governing. Their leadership mediates access to services, influences the form and tone of protests, and often determines whether social unrest is channelled into constructive political dialogue or violent conflict. Recognising this multifaceted role is essential for understanding the socio-political landscape of contemporary South African protest movements.

2.6.3.2 The Role of Instigators and recruiters in South African Protests

The concept of “instigators” in South African protests is complex, involving both individual actors who deliberately escalate tensions and the broader narratives used to describe them. While community protests often emerge from legitimate grievances, certain individuals can intensify unrest for personal or political gain, turning localised discontent into large-scale demonstrations.

Some of these actors engage in what has been described as “transactional activism”—a form of protest leadership where participation is driven less by collective struggle and more by individual interests. This idea, explored by Brooks, Chikane, and Mottiar (2022), illustrates how protest dynamics can be manipulated to serve specific agendas. These actors often operate within the context of real community frustrations, making it difficult to separate self-serving behaviour from genuine leadership (Brooks et al., 2022: 45–50).

Concerns over the influence of instigators became especially prominent during the July 2021 riots. Public responses, such as those from the Right2Know Campaign, called for decisive action against individuals believed to have incited violence. These reactions reflect fears that deliberate provocateurs may hijack protests and undermine peaceful civic engagement. At the same time, they highlight the delicate balance between safeguarding the right to protest and maintaining public order (Right2Know, 2021).

This tension is further complicated by how the “instigator” label is used in political discourse. Rather than being a neutral descriptor, the term can be strategically employed by state and elite actors to delegitimise grassroots movements. Hattingh (2021) argues that framing unrest as the work of “third forces” or external agitators allows the state to deflect attention from the socio-economic injustices that fuel protest. In doing so, this narrative justifies securitised responses and suppresses dissent, ultimately narrowing democratic space (Hattingh, 2021: 12–18).

Journalistic reports from the 2021 riots provide concrete examples of law enforcement targeting alleged instigators, with arrests based on incitement via social media platforms (Africanews, 2022). These actions demonstrate the growing importance of digital spaces in shaping protest dynamics and the new challenges authorities face in identifying individuals who may be inciting violence. However, these arrests also raise questions about criteria and fairness in distinguishing instigation from legitimate protest leadership (Africanews, 2022).

The mobilisation of collective emotions—such as rage and frustration—plays a critical role in shaping protest dynamics. These emotions can be harnessed by certain actors to transform diffuse discontent into organised action, sometimes escalating tensions in the process. A theoretical perspective on this process is provided by Canham (2018), who, while not focusing exclusively on instigators, explores how emotional energy can drive communities toward confrontation. This framework sheds light on how emotional mobilisation, when manipulated, can influence the trajectory and intensity of protest outcomes (Canham, 2018: 6–12).

Together, these sources underscore the multifaceted role of instigators in South African protests. Instigators are not merely agitators; they often operate within complex social and political ecosystems where motives range from genuine grievance expression to self-interested manipulation. Understanding this complexity is essential for policymakers, civil society, and researchers aiming to engage with protest movements constructively without undermining the fundamental rights to dissent.

Recruitment practices in South African protests often involve mobilising participants with varying levels of awareness about the underlying issues, raising important questions about the role of recruiters in shaping protest dynamics. Several studies shed light on how recruitment strategies influence participant composition and the coherence of protest movements.

During the #FeesMustFall protests in 2016, student leaders at a peri-urban university campus extended invitations to a broad base of students, including those less directly affected by the issues, such as accommodation shortages. This inclusive recruitment led to a heterogeneous protest body, where some participants were only superficially engaged or lacked detailed knowledge of the demands. This imply that while broad recruitment helps build numbers and visibility, it can also complicate message clarity and strategic focus during protests (Greeff, Mostert, Kahl and Jonker (2021) examine Greeff et al., 2021: 15–18).

Similarly, Duncan (2016) analysed student mobilisation in South Africa in his research, underscoring the importance of recruitment channels such as social media and peer networks. These methods can inadvertently bring individuals into protests who are not fully informed about the issues at stake.

This phenomenon sometimes results in a dilution of protest objectives or challenges in maintaining unity among diverse participants. The research stresses the delicate balance recruiters must maintain between expanding participation and ensuring informed engagement (Duncan, 2016: 22–25).

Social influence, including peer pressure and recruitment by activists, plays a significant role in protest participation. Some participants acknowledged joining protests primarily due to social dynamics rather than personal conviction or understanding, illustrating how recruitment can mobilise individuals with limited awareness of protest goals. This social dimension complicates the narrative around protests and affects how movements are framed and understood by both participants and observers (Lekoba & Buthelezi, 2019: 30–34).

Recruitment strategies used in community engagement projects can offer valuable insights into how individuals are drawn into protest movements. Informal methods—particularly those relying on social networks and social media—often attract participants who may lack a clear understanding of the movement's goals. This can weaken the cohesion and overall impact of collective action. Joseph (2018), in a study on university student volunteers, highlights the importance of coupling recruitment with education to ensure more informed, committed participation. Although focused on community projects, the findings are highly relevant to protest contexts, where purposeful and transparent recruitment can strengthen long-term engagement (Joseph, 2018: 8–11).

Although focused on a different context, Gonzalez-Bailon et al. (2011) provide valuable insights into how online networks facilitate recruitment during protests. Their study on mobilisation efforts in Spain shows that early participants in social media networks play a pivotal role in disseminating information and attracting new participants—many of whom may join without fully understanding the protest's objectives. In the South African context, where social media is increasingly used for protest coordination, these findings highlight the importance of understanding digital recruitment dynamics. While such methods can significantly broaden participation, the study warns that uninformed recruitment may undermine message coherence and weaken strategic coordination (Gonzalez-Bailon et al., 2011: 4–7). This implies that protest organisers must strike a balance between expanding reach and ensuring that participants are well-informed and aligned with the movement's core goals.

The aforementioned studies underscore the complex role recruiters play in shaping South African protest movements. Recruiters broaden participation and enhance visibility but also risk involving participants without sufficient understanding, which can complicate protest unity and effectiveness. Recognising these recruitment dynamics is crucial for analysing the successes and challenges of contemporary protest movements in South Africa.

2.8 Violence during protests

To accurately explain and understand violent action, one must first understand non-violent action. Non-violent action includes peaceful and accommodating action, as well as communication between the aggrieved party and the relevant aggressed authority, entity, group or person, with the aim of resolving the issue in an amicable way for both parties (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2017: 31). The primary goal of non-violent action is to address grievances in a manner that seeks mutual understanding and compromise in order to promote solutions that are satisfactory for both sides. This can involve methods such as negotiation, mediation, and active listening, where parties express their concerns and desires openly and respectfully (Ollitrault et al., 2017: 31).

Non-violent action can also manifest through organised efforts, such as community forums or town hall meetings, where individuals come together to discuss issues collaboratively. These gatherings create a space for sharing perspectives and building empathy, allowing for a deeper comprehension of each party's needs and motivations (Hlongwane, 2023: 200–208). Moreover, non-violent action often includes strategic forms of protest, such as marches or sit-ins, which draw public attention to injustices while maintaining a commitment to peace. Such actions not only highlight grievances but also invite broader societal engagement and support, fostering a culture of dialogue over conflict. In this context, understanding non-violent action is crucial for comprehending why some individuals or groups might feel compelled to resort to violence. Often, when non-violent channels for addressing grievances are ignored or ineffective, individuals may feel that their only recourse is to escalate their actions. By analysing the dynamics of non-violent interactions, one can better appreciate the complexities that lead to violent responses, highlighting the importance of creating and maintaining avenues for peaceful resolution of grievances in society (Hlongwane, 2023: 200–208).

Studies that focus on violent events deal with the development of two sets of determinants: firstly, the general determinants of collective action, whether it produces violence or not; and secondly, the determinants of violent outcomes to collective action (Ollitrault et al., 2017: 31). Violence holds an uncertain place in the aforementioned school of thought. It can materialise as the quest of politics (in a Clausewitzian perspective) or it can be abridged to the simple resource (occasionally rewarding, or sometimes counterproductive or exposed to cost-benefit calculations). The Clausewitzian strategic theory claims that certain common characteristics are shared by all wars in history. For instance, the nature of war itself does not truly change; however, how wars are fought (warfare) is persistently changing (Guerra, 2012: 30). This is also true for protests that change constantly. For example, if during a service delivery protest a protester is fatally shot by police, the protest may shift into a protest to voice dissatisfaction with the police.

There have been occasions where protest leaders convey their unease, reject the use of violence, and distance themselves from it. However, others strategically pardon the use of violence, suggesting that the use of violence could be connected to the experiences of protesters, supposedly by police and/or by the victims of oppression and exploitation. Although this might be applicable in some cases, it evades the strategic problem that protests often lose their legitimacy when violence is used. Additionally, it produces opportunities for police and security forces to suppress the actual social action (Habib, 2020).

In addition, violence is often blamed on criminals or aggressive police action, which can be true as criminals sometimes use protest actions as a cover to engage in criminal activity, such as looting and theft. Another factor that can often turn peaceful protests violent is aggressive and repressive policing by police or security services; however, it does not explain all forms of violence in protests (Habib, 2020). According to the SAPS Act (Act No. 68 of 1995), SAPS POP officials must maintain public order, uphold and enforce the law, and secure and protect South African citizens and their property.

Two key factors contribute to violence: aggressive police action and political conflict as different political groups vie for control over social protest movements. For instance, some politicians may exploit peaceful service delivery protests to advance their own agendas, which could potentially incite violence. While many progressive intellectuals critique aggressive policing as a primary cause of violence, they frequently overlook the second factor: the political confrontation between the police tasked with upholding the government's agenda and protesters who hold opposing views. This oversight creates confusion and highlights the necessity for collective self-reflection on the complexities of these dynamics (Habib, 2020).

In the context of violence, particularly related to protests in South Africa, it is important to highlight a pivotal study from 1967 that demonstrated how simply seeing a gun can heighten aggression, a phenomenon known as the weapons effect. This effect has significant implications for understanding the dynamics of protests, where the presence of weapons – whether among protesters, law enforcement, or onlookers – can escalate tensions and lead to violent confrontations (Benjamin, Kepes & Bushman, 2018: 347).

Since the original study, there have been numerous research efforts that have attempted to replicate and clarify the weapons effect. A meta-analysis has synthesised findings from studies conducted between 1967 and 2017 by employing the general aggression model to explain this phenomenon. It included 151 effect-size estimates from 78 independent studies involving 7,668 participants. The results, which align with the general aggression model's predictions, indicate that the mere presence of weapons leads to increased aggressive thoughts, hostile assessments, and aggressive

behaviour. This suggests that there is a cognitive pathway connecting weapons to aggression (Bushman, Kerwin, Whitlock & Weisenberger, 2017: 82–85).

In the context of South African protests, where issues of inequality and injustice frequently lead to heightened emotions, the presence of firearms can exacerbate underlying tensions. While the research indicates that weapons do not significantly elevate feelings of anger, their mere presence can trigger aggressive responses, undermining the potential for non-violent action to prevail. Furthermore, a comprehensive sensitivity analysis of the meta-analysis revealed that not all naive mean estimates were resistant to publication bias, indicating that the existing literature might overstate the weapons effect for certain outcomes and moderators. This finding is particularly relevant to understanding the complexities of protest dynamics in South Africa, where non-violent intentions can swiftly transform into violence if the environment is charged with the presence of weapons. It is also very common for protesters to arrive at protest sites with spears and knobkieries (a short stick with a knob at the one end - traditionally used as a weapon by some indigenous groups in South Africa). The effect of this tradition on escalating violence during protests has not been investigated. Thus, recognising the implications of the weapons effect in protest scenarios underscores the importance of promoting non-violent methods of engagement, as they are crucial for fostering dialogue and preventing the escalation of conflict (Benjamin et al., 2018: 347).

The widespread occurrence of violent service delivery protests across the country can be attributed to residents' dissatisfaction with the provision of essential municipal services (Burger, 2009). Issues such as inadequate access to water, electricity, and sanitation facilities, along with housing shortages, unemployment, and heightened poverty levels, particularly in informal settlements, contribute to the unrest. Furthermore, service delivery protests are fuelled by allegations of widespread corruption and nepotism within local government structures (Burger, 2009). According to Jobo (2014: 10), a lack of communication between councillors and the community significantly contributes to the prevalence of protests. The author contends that well-informed residents, who are provided with clear communication from councillors or other municipal officials, are more likely to comprehend service delivery processes, reducing the likelihood of resorting to violent protests. Inadequate leadership from ward committees and ward councillors plays a role in triggering violent service delivery protests (Jobo, 2014: 10)

Violent protests at the local government level (municipal level) are regarded as part of the broader problem that could potentially create a revolution. While the more direct issue is connected to the frustration of promises not being kept about service delivery, the increasing disparity between the poor and the rich, as well as the persistent deterioration of governmental departments, such as the Department of Home Affairs, is also a leading factor resulting in frustration amongst community

members. This creates the impression that the government is no longer in control, which causes the foundation of a revolutionary presence (Hough, 2008: 6–11).

Unrest comprises conditions such as disruption, displeasure, and agitation that usually ends in demonstrations and/or civil disorder. Unrest typically materialises when a group of individuals work concertedly to destabilise the community, government, or organisations. Disruption, agitation, and dissatisfaction generally trigger civil disorder and could comprise looting, violence, and the destruction of private and public property. As such, civil disorder refers to a circumstance where people take part in acts of violence that cause damage to property or the loss of lives. Unrest results in civil disorders where perpetrators deliberately cause harm to other people or purposely participate in criminality, such as looting (Mahaye, Dlomo & Ajani, 2023: 349).

Protests are not only considered threats to law and order but also to national security, although the difference between the two is not always apparent. Third-party involvement is another explanation for protests. For example, there are instances where individuals connected to political parties, such as the United Democratic Movement and the Inkatha Freedom Party, were implicated in instigating violent protest action by following the orders of political figures high up in the government hierarchy (Hough, 2008: 6–11). Allegations of third-party/force involvement have also been made that the burning of townships in 1984 during the Township Uprising was a contributing factor to the fall of the National Party Government. In August 2007, a member of the Anti-Privatisation Forum threatened that should their grievances remain unattended, they would burn down the Sebokeng Township. When considering the aforementioned factors, it is clear that there is no evidence to support certain official opinions and views that suggest a third force in service delivery protest actions. However, several protests were allegedly organised by local groups in similar ways but in different areas, even though there is no evidence of premeditated coordinated action. Rumours also surfaced that several members of certain political factions (non-students) were transported to universities to protest alongside students during student unrests (e.g., during the 2016 student protests) (Kynoch, 2024: 1023-1039).

As mentioned above, there are other explanations for the violent nature of protest actions, such as the idea that violence is a reaction to police presence. When the police respond to incidents of vandalism or barricaded roads, for example, this can also lead to violence. Traditions and believes also provide explanations, such as the belief that violence was instrumental and had an impact on achieving specific aims; therefore, it is a means to an end of attracting attention (Hough, 2008: 6–11).

In South Africa, research on protests indicates that most of them predominantly occur in impoverished communities lacking basic infrastructure, essential services, and overall development

(Swart, Day & Govender, 2020: 485). Economic grievances are identified as the primary motivation for protest action (Sikweyiya & Nkosi, 2017: 345). Despite the end of apartheid in 1994, a significant portion of the South African population continues to experience a low quality of life. This has prompted scholars to scrutinise protester demographics, often using race as a proxy for income inequality in the country (Swart et al., 2020: 481). Beyond race, factors such as age, sex, occupation, education, active civic engagement, and negative perceptions of government performance are also considered in the analysis of protest events (Swart et al., 2020). In some cases, very specific reasons (e.g., free student education for all) are also considered as triggers for protests.

According to Sikweyiya and Nkosi (2017: 1-7), protesters in South Africa are usually identified as young males, a demographic that is commonly linked with violence. Although Swart et al. (2020) report a 36% increase in violence during protests between 2007 and 2014 most protest events in South Africa are not violent, challenging popular perceptions (Ngwenya, Malherbe & Seedat, 2022: 116).

Protest has become an especially popular topic of inquiry within social movement research (Carothers & Young, 2015). Such research has tended to focus on the existing dynamics, tensions, and conflicts between ruling institutions and the social actors involved in protests (Della Porta, 2011). In other words, researchers have predominantly focused on the structural determinants of protests. This is not to say that there is uniformity or consensus within this literature. Instead, the particular accent of this research differs from context to context. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the diverse ways in which the structural determinants of protests have been studied in different contexts, it is perhaps sufficient to say that the findings in general point towards the kinds of context-specific research gaps that need to be addressed.

Shifting the focus towards cultural production in protest events can enhance our comprehension of how political and structural aspects merge during protests. By examining how cultural semiotic repertoires are utilised and transformed by protesters, researchers can explore the inner dynamics of protests, including their interactional features and performative processes. This approach emphasises the importance of understanding how politics are shaped by the dynamic and shifting symbolic orders in protest collectives, shifting the focus of South African protest research towards the protester as a dynamic social actor (Bekker, 2021; Day et al., 2019). Such an approach may challenge traditional scholarly inquiries in political sciences and sociology, aligning more with a multimodal approach that embraces different methods of conducting, analysing, and interpreting human interaction and social meaning-making (Ngwenya et al., 2022: 117).

Post-1994 South Africa saw urban riots and protest actions become major features. Moreover, protests in South Africa serve as a means of political expression against the government, which is

led by the ANC. Riots are a form of civil disorder characterised by concentrated violence aimed at those in authority (power) or their property. When riots occur, they are considered as herd behaviour and collective action that may suggest the involvement of certain individuals in riots, leading to civil unrest because of the participation of other community members (Mongale, 2022: 2). Since riots contain a factor of violence, current research focuses on this type of unrest. However, riots and protests are used interchangeably in the current study.

Riots often occur as a result of apparent grievances, such as individuals feeling that the government has not adequately addressed their concerns. Moreover, there are several aspects that push the masses to participate in riots, including inadequate living conditions, high tax rates, government oppression, religion, ethnic diversity, and opposing views on sporting activities. Within the context of South Africa, several factors are still present in the country and can thus result in riots. These factors include a high unemployment rate; rapid urbanisation, inequality, and poverty; uneven provision of adequate service delivery; a government that is unaccountable; and tension within the government and between different political parties (Mongale, 2022: 2).

Corruption, even just the perception of corruption and/or reality of corruption, together with poor service delivery results in a deadly combination in terms of violent protests. A former ANC Chairperson, Mosiuoa Lekota, stated that several poor-quality members are in governmental positions and that there are certain officials who steal public funds because they feel that politics does not pay (Hough, 2008: 6–11). These are the actions of politicians that trigger public distrust and cause protests. In addition, notwithstanding high levels of poverty and unemployment, it is also important to take the perceptions of corruption and relative inequality into consideration when explaining protests and determining when they will turn violent (Hough, 2008: 6–11).

Given the growing frequency and intensity of protests, it has become increasingly important to develop reliable methods for detecting early warning signs and predicting potential unrest, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.9 Detection and prediction of protests

The difference between protests in the making (protests that have not yet occurred but are being planned) and in progress is unclear. In practical situations, assumptions about the conceptualisation of the start and end of protest, define where the difference is. The start of unrest activity can be denoted as the moment when the first public announcements of a protest are made, when a certain number of activists are on the streets, or when media reports give credibility and importance to an event (Grill, 2021: 811–839). There are instances, however, when detection is also concerned with the future as it pursues an extended present. Likewise, when anticipated unrest events materialise

close to the present, the task of prediction becomes more similar to detection. The inconclusiveness around the start and end of unrest activity also illustrates how design decisions determine the temporal bounding of civil unrest. In addition, it emphasises how research into the prediction of unrest has to consider detection. Furthermore, technical affordances, such as the choice of public data sources, influence how and when unrest is perceived. The affordances and thresholds that determine the recognisability of the start and end of various unrest stages matter as they also construct which protests are noticed and possibly receive increased attention and intervention (Grill, 2021: 811–839).

In response to the complexities of managing large-scale gatherings and protest actions, the SAPS relies on the specialised expertise of the POP Unit to maintain stability and uphold public safety (Marks & Tait, 2011). The POP unit will be discussed in the next section.

2.10 The Public Order Policing (POP) Unit

The POP Unit is a specialised division within the Crime Combating Unit and Tactical Response Team of SAPS that is primarily tasked with managing crowd situations. Police stations are responsible for handling localised crowd management, but they may request assistance from the POP Unit when events escalate. While all station officers involved in crowd management should receive specialised training, this is rarely the case (Marks & Tait, 2011: 15–22).

At the same time, the RGA, which outlines the legal framework for managing protests, has not been followed consistently. This has undermined police legitimacy with reports of a more aggressive response to protests, including high levels of arrests of alleged instigators. This has raised concerns that the right to protest peacefully is no longer being protected and that protests are being increasingly criminalised (Marks & Tait, 2011: 15–22).

Following the 1994 democratic elections, the SAPS sought to reform public order policing. The Internal Stability Division, which was established in 1992, was renamed the Public Order Police (POP) Unit in late 1994. Officers were retrained under new policy guidelines influenced by the Belgian police, which emphasised a shift away from crowd control towards crowd management. This included strategies focused on minimising force, negotiating with protest organisers, and using appropriate equipment and tactics to ensure the peaceful policing of protests (Marks, 2017: 134–137). The core function of the POP Unit was public order policing, with a secondary focus on crime prevention. However, the longer-term plan of decentralising public order policing resulted in retrained POP officers being deployed to local stations to support regular officers in managing public order events. Unfortunately, the required in-service training for these local officers never materialised, leaving them ill-prepared to handle crowd situations as first responders (Iwu & Iwu, 2015: 541–549).

After further restructuring in 2006, the POP Unit was downsized and renamed the Crime Combating Unit. This shift changed the unit's primary focus from crowd management to crime control, diminishing its specialised role and eroding its expertise in public order policing. As a result, the capacity and morale of the unit suffered. The disruption to the specialised skills developed in the mid-1990s was a cause for concern, especially given the rise in volatile protests (Iwu & Iwu, 2015: 541–549).

The introduction of paramilitary units, such as Tactical Response Units, into crowd management roles has posed an additional challenge to effective public order policing. Many members of these units lack the necessary training in democratic service delivery policing, which has created coordination problems during public order events (Bruce, 2016: 23–24). Additionally, officers deployed from local stations to manage protests often lack proper briefing, equipment, or training. This results in a reliance on heavy-handed tactics and undermines the principles of minimal force, tolerance, and negotiation (Marks & Tait, 2011: 15-22). As accountability for police actions has become increasingly unclear, it has become challenging to determine which officers are responsible for using excessive force. In 2011, the Crime Combating Unit was once again renamed to Public Order Police, signifying a return to its original focus on crowd management. However, the same limitations and issues continue to persist (Marks & Tait, 2011: 15-22).

The success of public order policing is largely contingent on the police's understanding of the challenges they face and their ability to apply appropriate training. In order to reduce the reliance on force during protests, police officers must be educated about the motivations behind protests and the often, violent nature, of some demonstrations. Having such knowledge can enable police to act as sympathetic representatives of the state, potentially improving their rapport with the public and reducing the likelihood of violent protests (Lancaster, 2016: 15). Additionally, it is critical that police adhere to democratic policing values, such as respecting citizens' rights, following due process, and being accountable for their actions. Police should demonstrate that conflict can be managed systematically and transparently (Lancaster, 2016: 16).

To address these challenges, it is essential for public order policing policies to undergo regular reviews, particularly in light of the evolving nature of protests. A national campaign is needed to inform citizens of their rights and responsibilities related to protests and to establish clear guidelines for police conduct. This would also help ensure that public order policing aligns with constitutional principles (Hills, 2001: 79–90). Any further restructuring must involve careful consideration of the models and tactics available, drawing upon academic insights to ensure the development of a contextually appropriate South African model of public order policing that balances human rights with effective law enforcement (Kynoch, 2024: 1023-1039).

The next section will contain a comprehensive discussion of the impact of protests in South Africa.

2.11 Impact of protests and/or xenophobic protests

The article *"Dynamics Informing Xenophobia and Leadership Response in South Africa"* by Masikane, Hewitt, and Toendepi (2020) explores the underlying causes of xenophobic attitudes and violence in South Africa, with a strong emphasis on the role of leadership in either perpetuating or challenging these issues. Drawing from a qualitative research approach based on semi-structured interviews with key individuals involved in addressing xenophobia, the authors argue that xenophobic tensions are deeply linked to socio-economic hardship, inequality, unemployment, and poor service delivery (Masikane et al., 2020: 3–5). These conditions create a context in which foreign nationals—particularly African and South Asian migrants—are perceived as threats to already limited resources.

Rather than viewing xenophobia solely as prejudice, the article frames it as a symptom of deeper frustrations and structural failures in post-apartheid South Africa (Masikane et al., 2020: 5–6). In communities struggling with poverty and high unemployment, competition for jobs and housing often fuels resentment against migrants, who are wrongly blamed for socio-economic decline. Leadership, particularly at the political level, is shown to be a key factor in shaping public attitudes. The authors note that political leaders have at times failed to strongly condemn xenophobia, and in some cases have made populist or inflammatory remarks that indirectly validate anti-immigrant sentiment (Masikane et al., 2020: 7–8). Such rhetoric, coupled with weak responses from the state, contributes to an environment where xenophobic violence is tacitly tolerated.

The study situates these tensions within South Africa's historical trajectory, particularly the enduring legacies of apartheid and the slow pace of transformation in the democratic era (Masikane et al., 2020: 8–9). Many citizens feel excluded from economic opportunities promised during the transition to democracy, and immigrants become scapegoats for the state's failure to deliver. The article also highlights how ideas of national identity have been shaped in exclusionary ways, portraying black African migrants as outsiders, despite shared continental ties. The lack of public education and discourse around migration, diversity, and pan-Africanism allows stereotypes and misinformation to persist (Masikane et al., 2020: 10–11).

For a way forward, the authors advocate for multi-pronged interventions that include structural reforms to tackle inequality, investment in ethical and accountable leadership, and civic education to promote tolerance and social cohesion (Masikane et al., 2020: 12–13). They argue that xenophobia cannot be addressed solely through policing or immigration controls, but requires a broader societal shift towards inclusivity and justice. The article ultimately contributes to a deeper understanding of

how socio-political dynamics, leadership, and historical context intersect to produce recurring outbreaks of xenophobic violence.

Mathe and Motsaathebe (2022) investigate the role of social media in shaping and amplifying protest, xenophobia, and looting in South Africa, particularly during periods of political unrest. Employing a digital ethnographic approach combined with social network analysis, the study examines how online platforms facilitate the formation of discursive communities that mobilise around shared grievances, often leading to real-world violence and property destruction (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2022: 103–104).

The authors utilise the propaganda model to analyse how social media content—such as hashtags, videos, and images—serves as a tool for both activism and manipulation. They argue that participation in online groups is driven by common interests or grievances and is significantly influenced by propaganda techniques that exploit existing socio-economic disparities (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2022: 105–106). This dynamic is evident in the way political players and activists use social media to highlight issues like poverty and inequality, thereby attracting followers who reinforce these messages through sharing and retweeting (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2022: 107).

The study finds that social media platforms act as double-edged swords: while they can be used to raise awareness and mobilise support for legitimate causes, they are also susceptible to being weaponised for inciting violence and xenophobia. The rapid dissemination of provocative content can cause widespread panic and anxiety, effects that persist until the next outbreak of unrest (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2022: 108).

In conclusion, the authors emphasise the need for a nuanced understanding of social media's impact on social movements and unrest. They call for strategies that address the root causes of poverty and inequality, as well as measures to mitigate the spread of harmful propaganda online (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2022: 109).

The current wave of violence in South Africa, which is targeted towards foreigners, is linked to protests related to inadequate service delivery and perceived inequality. As such, immigrants have become the face of this perceived inequality as it is believed that immigrants seize service delivery related resources meant for South African citizens. However, the true source of the perceived inequality is that of contested resources, which can only be addressed properly when service delivery is improved. Moreover, beliefs of relative deprivation are emphasised in the following perspectives: Poor community members (not necessarily the poorest in the country or their specific municipality) equate themselves unfavourably with local politicians or residents who are perceived to be better off. The aforementioned comparisons increase frustration with one event and/or series of events,

providing a tipping point towards protests. Municipal IQ, a data and intelligence service on South African municipalities, shows that causal poverty together with a series of events or a single event can clarify the violence that occurred in several provinces in South Africa in the past (Tshabalala, 2015).

Protests are often characterised by aggressive acts. It could be claimed that they additionally symbolise grievances and dissatisfaction among community members. Protests usually also occur due to competition for limited resources. As such, in a comparative sense, protests have become an aspect of politics. Xenophobic violence has been a marker of the socio-economic issues faced by the ANC-led government (1994 – 2024). Competition over limited and inadequate resources is another factor that has led to the escalation of violence. It is theorised that service delivery protests in South Africa are frequently symbolised by either violence or non-violence. As such, violent protests could be considered as protests whereby demonstrators participate in physical acts which could result in instant harm to individuals or damage to property. A variety of actions are regarded as acts of violence. These actions include barricading roads, building barricades, burning tires, causing malicious damage to public buildings, looting, and hurling stones at police officers. Communities assume that their rioting behaviour will improve the service delivery response from the relevant authorities. Furthermore, the belief exists that dissatisfaction and complaints that are communicated during violent protests have a better chance of being addressed (Mamokhere, 2021: 84).

The reality is that the failure to deliver basic services is not merely the primary cause of protests but rather a manifestation of a more profound societal issue, rooted in high levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality. This perspective is supported by Managa (2012), who contends that a substantial service delivery gap persists between urban and rural municipalities, particularly in the former homelands. Acknowledging this broader context, this contribution opts for a more encompassing term, using ‘community protest’ instead of ‘service delivery protest.’ This inclusive characterisation recognises that the escalating socio-economic hardships endured by the majority of South Africans are linked to widespread community-based protest actions. The SALGA elaborates on the complexity of protests. They emphasise their intricate interplay with historical legacies, cultures of violence, corruption, experiences of poverty fostering dependency on the state for improved living conditions, effective communication between government and communities, migration, planning, power struggles, and multifaceted disputes over the allocation of state resources (Manyaka, 2018: 54).

2.12 Exploring current practice regarding crime intelligence and information gathering

Crime intelligence is designed to gather, analyse, and disseminate information to monitor, anticipate, and prevent criminal activities. For an effective response to crime, law enforcement and authorities

must have access to comprehensive knowledge, specialised expertise, and the capability to gather intelligence efficiently, enabling them to address challenges and contingencies appropriately. The continuous availability and accurate collection of crime intelligence are crucial for enhancing the efficacy of SAPS in executing and fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Accurate crime intelligence involves the collection, evaluation, and analysis of data, with a focus on understanding broader patterns and interrelationships that may initially appear unrelated (Scheepers & Schultz, 2019: 1–9). In the context of this study, obtaining precise crime intelligence will enable the government, independent individuals, and POP members to anticipate and prevent potential violent protests.

The 2021 Zuma riots in South Africa were a spout of civil unrest that materialised mainly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng and left more than 350 people dead. It was triggered by the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma (Mahaye et al., 2023: 1). The government's failure to anticipate the July 2021 riots and the consequential destructive events that materialised brought to light the alleged large-scale collapse of the intelligence services. The intelligence breakdown refers to the government failing to meet the uprising with an adequate response. The factors that are missing in effective crime intelligence include the effective accurate gathering of the information required to reduce/prevent crime and civil unrest. Compared to their resources and performance before 2011/2012, crime intelligence should have been able to operate at enhanced levels due to their budget increase of 113% since 2011/2012. As such, repairing the current crime intelligence dysfunctionality does not just lie in financial resources but should be holistically overhauled (Meyer & Swanepoel, 2021).

The intended research will provide important contributions to the intelligence environment, as the current intelligence field and its politicisation have intricated factional divisions. The persistent factional divisions within the current system hinder any meaningful progress toward internal reform. These internal conflicts obstruct efforts to identify effective solutions or to establish a public service that is constitutionally aligned, professional, and efficient. Consequently, the dysfunctionality cannot be resolved from within the existing structures alone. Therefore, meaningful remedies and sustainable solutions will likely need to come through external interventions-whether through independent oversight, civil society pressure, or judicial mandates-to overcome institutional paralysis and restore functionality. The July 2021 riots serve as a constant reminder of the vital role that intelligence agencies play in a country. Should the proposed research yield the desired results, it will assist in determining when violence will erupt during a protest, which in theory could help in preventing and/or developing strategies to aid in the management of protests and intelligence gathering (Meyer & Swanepoel, 2021).

2.13 Framing community protests accurately in research

Addressing community protests in South Africa requires a nuanced and accurate description, challenging the predominant tendency to categorise them as related to service delivery. The discussion which follows emphasises the limitations and inadequacies of such categorisation in comprehending the root causes of protests. Studies conducted by SALGA and others reveal the disconnection between protests and the demand for service delivery (Manyaka, 2018: 59). Community grievances, according to these studies, often surpass the competency of local government as outlined in the Constitution. Despite this evidence, many scholars in South Africa persist in characterising these protests as service delivery related, leading to a poor conceptualisation of the phenomenon. This conceptual limitation, in turn, compounds the issue. For this reason some scholars express concerns about the proliferation of protests and question whether these protests genuinely reflect community concerns or whether they are manipulated by community and political leaders for specific reasons (Manyaka, 2018: 59).

The central suggestion is that a more accurate understanding of community protests necessitates moving beyond the service delivery framework. The root causes – identified as the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality – require attention. Burger (2009) supports the perspective that current service delivery protests in South Africa are symptomatic of broader socio-economic and political instability. Burger (2009) underscores the importance of the government taking a leading role in addressing these root causes to prevent the manipulation of information by leaders and to promote genuine community concerns.

The next section will highlight the role of violence in a democracy based on the current body of knowledge in this regard.

2.14 The role of violence in a democracy

As ongoing community protests persist and discussions about violent protest are never-ending, it becomes increasingly important to refine our understanding of protest, violence, and democracy. Treating violence and democracy as inherently conflicting or irreconcilable modes of action is an inadequate perspective. This viewpoint fails to capture both how violent tactics can advance democracy and how democratic structures can label certain actions and individuals as violent. However, recognising the apparent opposition between violence and democracy lays the groundwork for a more nuanced analysis of their relationship. Both the liberation perspective and the domination perspective consider violence as the opposite of formal democracy, differing mainly in their focal actors (Paret, 2015: 120–121).

The liberation perspective centres on protesters, viewing direct violence such as property destruction, burning tires, and road blockades as an alternative form of democratic participation that is more effective than the traditional channels created by the democratic state. Conversely, the domination perspective focuses on the state, deeming these same acts illegal and immoral thereby undermining formal democratic institutions. In the context of community protests in South Africa, notions of violence exist in the tension between forces from below (protesters) and forces from above (the state) (Paret, 2015: 120–121).

Beneath this tension lies a complex interplay between action and discourse. Media outlets often use the concept of violence to encompass a wide range of actions without clear definitions or explanations. While these ambiguities may draw attention to protesting communities' struggle for recognition, the inherently negative connotation of violence, associated with harm and disorder, makes it challenging for protesters to assign it a positive moral value (Gause, Moore & Ostfeld, 2023: 446-468)

For protesters, the label is less significant than the actions themselves and their capacity to disrupt the status quo. However, for the state, violence serves as a discursive tool for governance and control. The ambiguity surrounding the meaning of violence allows for flexibility and potential leverage. This ambiguity enables the state to conflate different forms of violence, justifying repressive responses and demonising protesters. Media outlets contribute to this mechanism through their ambiguous representations of violence, creating a malleable concept used by state officials. The tension between protesters and the state raises questions about the popular legitimacy of violence in the post-apartheid context. While acts of property destruction and social disruption may hold some popular legitimacy, understanding the extent of this support across social groups is crucial (Gause et al., 2023: 446-468)

Additionally, it is crucial to examine public support for police repression and determine whether this support declines when the police inflict harm on protesters. Investigating how support varies according to political party affiliation and evaluating the role of political parties in either inciting or promoting direct violence by protesters or the police are also important factors to consider. Addressing these questions is valuable for unravelling the meaning of violence in South Africa's contentious democracy. However, analysts must approach the notion of violence critically, recognising its complexity and serious political implications. A careful examination of the different meanings of violence, including vague usages of the concepts lacking clear definitions, is necessary. It is important to understand how these meanings become infused with moral significance and applied to political projects. While the concept of violence may seem distracting, critical scholars

may choose alternative, more precise analytical concepts to delve into issues such as power, social and economic injustice, and collective struggle (Lewis, 2020: 245-259).

2.15 Blame attribution for protest action in South Africa

The predominant focus of protests is the state as the primary target for claims (Van Dyke, Soule & Taylor, 2004: 30). The challenge lies in understanding how individual, interpersonal, or intergroup economic conditions are intricately linked to state-society conflicts that manifest in popular protests against local or national governments. If people are economically disadvantaged, why do they express their grievances through political protests that target state actors and institutions? The question that also arises is why protesters often burn down schools and clinics that offer essential basic services in their disadvantaged areas. In essence, the researcher posits that this approach lacks a defined theory about the mechanisms through which economic conditions transform into grievances centred toward the state, subsequently sparking protest activity (De Juan & Wegner, 2019: 35).

Bridging this theoretical gap necessitates additional assumptions about blame attribution, a facet often unexplored in empirical studies about both peaceful and violent protests. Social movement research indicates that individuals and groups are more inclined to protest when they can attribute blame for a problem to a clearly identifiable source and can identify actors or institutions capable of addressing their grievances (De Juan & Wegner, 2019: 36).

For economic deprivation to effectively trigger protests against the state, people must be convinced that the state is accountable for income inequality and possesses the capability to rectify it (Javeline, 2009). However, this linkage finds limited support in social psychology research. Numerous studies show that many individuals either accept personal responsibility for their economic situation, attribute it to fundamental structural conditions, or emphasise fate, bad luck, or transcendent causes rather than attributing it to state actors, institutions, or policies (Ige & Nekhwevha, 2012: 215). This diffuse and fatalistic attribution of blame generates feelings of powerlessness and inevitability, reducing people's sense of injustice and willingness to mobilise (Van der Toorn, Feinberg, Jost, Kay, Tyler, Willer & Wilmuth, 2015: 93–110). A smaller segment of the population tends to directly blame the government for absolute or relative economic deprivation. These findings underscore the theoretical gap between general economic measures of deprivation and political protest. While frustration from poverty and unemployment may indeed breed anger against state institutions in certain cases, blame attribution in many instances does not foster mobilisation (De Juan & Wegner, 2019: 36).

2.16 Highlights from the literature review

Three clear trends emerge from this literature: firstly, protests have been increasing since the mid-2000s; secondly, the proportion of violent protests has risen; and thirdly, there is a positive correlation between service delivery protests and service delivery levels. The simultaneous rise in both access to services and protests in South Africa may seem puzzling at first. Despite the government's significant investment in expanding basic services, leading to noticeable improvements in household connections, the sharp increase in protests prompts questions about the root causes behind this discontent.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) guarantees rights such as housing, health care, food, and water. It allows individuals to assemble, demonstrate, and protest peacefully, provided they do so without infringing on others' rights. However, the country has experienced various forms of protest, including peaceful, disruptive, and violent protests. These protests often stem from dissatisfaction with living conditions, service delivery, unemployment, and inequality.

Post-apartheid South Africa has seen many protests, sometimes escalating into riots. Factors including rapid urbanisation, poverty, and poor service delivery contribute to civil unrest. While the right to protest is fundamental, it must be exercised responsibly to avoid justifying repression by authorities. Some protests, such as xenophobic attacks and destructive actions, have harmed communities rather than addressing grievances.

Under the RGA, municipalities are tasked with regulating protests but often face criticism for suppressing dissent. Activists argue that such regulations, including the requirement for protests with more than 15 people to notify authorities, unnecessarily restrict the right to protest. Social and behavioural sciences highlight the importance of understanding the risks involved in protests, particularly the factors that lead to violence. Addressing service delivery issues, improving infrastructure, and increasing engagement between authorities and communities are recommended to reduce protests and their potential for violence.

The reduction in protests could be achieved if local governments engage more effectively in service delivery, enhance communication with communities, and foster active public participation (Botes, 2018: 252). When former President Jacob Zuma's term ended in 2018, many South Africans hoped the transition to Mister Cyril Ramaphosa's presidency would bring fewer protests. Despite initial optimism that the end of state capture linked to Zuma and the Gupta family would lead to an immediate decline in community unrest, it did not transpire.

Instead, during President Ramaphosa's first 100 days in office as the newly elected president, there was a sharp increase in protests, particularly in the North West Province. The continuation of protests can be attributed to poor service delivery, corruption, and a lack of participatory governance. People want tangible improvements, such as the maintenance of infrastructure, provision of basic services, and employment of skilled officials. Without these needs addressed, protests persist. Public participation is crucial for development, urging the government to empower citizens as "architects of their own development".

Political trust has eroded in South Africa due to a culture of self-serving elites, often at the expense of ordinary citizens. The ongoing service delivery crisis and corruption at various levels of government challenge the legitimacy of local governance, leading to questions about the sustainability of South Africa's democracy. Inequality, rather than absolute poverty, drives many service delivery protests. Poor communities, which rely heavily on government services, feel marginalised and excluded. Protests become a means of asserting their dignity and pressing for equitable development.

The unresponsiveness of local governance and a lack of accountability from politicians and bureaucrats contribute significantly to protests. Corruption, unfulfilled promises, and incompetence at the local level fuel grievances, with citizens seeking a more responsive and accountable government.

Service delivery remains a significant trigger for protests. Despite achievements, such as housing and electricity provision, the quality of these services and the pervasive corruption in their delivery continue to be major sources of discontent. Many municipalities in South Africa are dysfunctional, with issues such as mismanagement and financial strain further exacerbating the problem. In conclusion, South Africa's community protests are driven by a complex mix of governance failures, service delivery issues, economic inequality, and the desire for accountability and dignity. Without substantial improvements in governance, service provision, and public participation, protests are likely to persist.

Analyses indicate a significant shift in the motivations behind protests in South Africa, moving from racial-political issues to economic concerns (Bedasso & Obikili, 2016: 130–146). This shift highlights how, in the post-apartheid era, economic factors – such as job availability and overall economic conditions – have increasingly driven protest agendas. Economic issues now play a dominant role, with up to 85% of protests in recent years being rooted in economic dissatisfaction. This transition underscores the prominence of class-based grievances over racial issues, marking a broader struggle against multiple forms of deprivation through political action.

The economic disparities between South African citizens and their representatives exacerbate the sense of injustice and inequality. For instance, part-time councillors earn significantly more than the poorest citizens, such as those receiving social grants. This stark disparity highlights the need for a more equitable distribution of wealth and improved economic policies that genuinely serve the interests of the poor. Addressing these imbalances is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Protests also arise from dissatisfaction with the top-down approach to service delivery, which often ignores grassroots input. Citizens increasingly demand a bottom-up approach that incorporates their choices and needs from the community level. The call for more meaningful consultation and participation reflects a desire for a more inclusive and participatory governance system.

The process of detecting and predicting protests involves understanding the various stages of unrest, from initial planning to active demonstrations. The distinction between protests in the making and those in progress can be ambiguous. Detection and prediction require careful consideration of when and how unrest is recognised, influenced by data sources and research methodologies.

In South Africa, protests are a vital aspect of democratic engagement, serving as a means for citizens to voice grievances and challenge power structures. They highlight issues such as inadequate municipal services and broader governance failures. The prevalence of protests in predominantly black communities, often with violent outcomes, contrasts with the less intense focus on non-violent protests in predominantly white areas.

The intersection of trust in political institutions and service delivery is crucial in understanding protest dynamics. Low trust in political actors and institutions often leads to increased protest activity. This trust is influenced by various factors, including ethnic affiliation, political affiliation, and immigration status.

The connection between violence and protest in South Africa reflects historical struggles and contemporary challenges. While violence was a key feature of the anti-apartheid struggle, it now manifests in different ways, often as a response to perceived failures of the democratic system. Von Holdt (2013) maintains that violence can become intertwined with democratic processes when formal channels fail to address grievances, illustrating how historical patterns of resistance continue to influence modern protests.

Overall, the landscape of protests in South Africa is shaped by complex interactions between economic issues, political representation, and public participation. The shift from racial to economic motivations reflects broader socio-economic challenges, while ongoing issues with governance and

trust highlight the need for more inclusive and responsive political systems. Addressing these issues requires a nuanced understanding of the roots of discontent and the ways in which protests serve as a tool for expressing and addressing systemic grievances.

Understanding violent actions requires first examining non-violent actions. Studies focus on two determinants: general determinants of collective action and those specific to violent outcomes. Violence can be viewed as either a political tool or a resource with varying effectiveness. Historical theories, including the Clausewitzian perspective, suggest that while the nature of war remains constant, the methods of war evolve. This applies to protests as well. Protests escalate from non-violent to violent due to various factors such as police action, criminal intention or political manipulation.

Violent protests can stem from multiple sources. Sometimes, violence is attributed to criminals exploiting protests for personal gain or due to aggressive policing actions. Additionally, political actors may use protests to advance their agendas, which can trigger violence. Some argue that service delivery failures, corruption, and inadequate communication between officials and communities are root causes of these violent outbreaks (Ndasana, Vallabh & Mxunyelwa, 2022). Research indicates that socio-economic issues such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment drive most protests (Francis & Webster, 2019: 788–802).

In South Africa, protests are often violent, linked to socio-economic grievances and political dissatisfaction. Factors contributing to violence include high unemployment, rapid urbanisation, and corruption. The perception of inadequate service delivery and corruption exacerbates public frustration, leading to riots and civil disorder. Notably, some scholars suggest that focusing on cultural and symbolic aspects of protests could offer deeper insights into their dynamics.

Overall, while many protests in South Africa are not violent, underlying socio-economic and political issues often fuel violence when it does occur. The complexity of protests underscores the need for a broader understanding that encompasses both the immediate and systemic factors at play.

Since South Africa’s transition to majority rule in 1994, community protests have surged, especially from 2004 onwards. These sometimes, violent protests, have attracted significant attention from policymakers and scholars, who debate their causes. Perspectives range from service delivery issues to political motivations. Key factors contributing to these protests include dissatisfaction with municipal services, high unemployment, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and corruption.

Burger (2009) suggests that frustration with socio-economic conditions, rooted in a history of colonialism and apartheid, is also a major driver of these protests. The 2016 local government

elections and ongoing political conflicts also exacerbated tensions. Historical inequalities and uneven development, driven by neoliberal policies, have further deepened socio-economic disparities, contributing to the proliferation of informal settlements and persistent protests. Research indicates that many protests are driven by perceived government unresponsiveness and corruption. The 2021 Zuma riots, which resulted in over 350 deaths, highlighted failures in crime intelligence and government response. Effective crime intelligence is crucial for preventing and managing such unrests (South African Human Rights Commission, 2024).

Addressing these protests requires moving beyond the service delivery framework to consider broader socio-economic issues, including unemployment, poverty, and inequality. The relationship between violence and democracy is complex, with protesters sometimes using violence as a form of democratic expression. Understanding this dynamic and the role of media and political discourse in shaping perceptions of violence is essential for addressing community grievances and improving governance.

The exploration of community protests in South Africa reveals a conceptual gap between traditional measures of deprivation and the motivations behind protests. Historically, deprivation has been measured through absolute poverty, income disparity (e.g., the Gini index), and group-level economic inequality. However, protests often target state actors and institutions, raising the question of why economically disadvantaged individuals express their grievances through political protests rather than other means. To address this gap, researchers claim that the link between economic conditions and state-targeted protests is not well defined (Dodson, 2016: 873–891). Understanding how economic deprivation translates into grievances directed at the state requires exploring blame attribution. Social movement research suggests that people are more likely to protest when they can clearly attribute their problems to identifiable actors or institutions capable of addressing them. However, many individuals either accept personal responsibility for their economic situation or attribute it to structural factors, reducing their sense of injustice and willingness to mobilise (Dodson, 2016: 873–891).

Protest motivations are also influenced by perceptions of service inequality. Dissatisfaction with service delivery can erode state legitimacy and increase the likelihood of protest. Service delivery represents a direct interaction between individuals and the state, making the state a clear target for grievances. In middle-income countries, governments frequently position themselves as developmental yet fall short of expectations, leading to heightened frustrations with service delivery and overall discontent with the state (De Juan & Wegner, 2019: 40). In South Africa, protests over service delivery are still fuelled by persistent inequalities that have their roots in the apartheid era and are characterised by unequal distribution of resources. Despite significant improvements in

service access since the end of apartheid, recent trends show a rise in both the frequency and violence of protests. This paradox – where increased service access coincides with heightened protest activity – suggests that deeper issues, such as unmet expectations and perceived state failures, drive unrest (De Juan & Wegner, 2019: 40).

Overall, addressing these protests requires understanding the complex relationship between economic conditions, blame attribution, and service delivery perceptions. This nuanced approach helps explain why protests emerge despite improvements in service access and highlights the need for more effective governance and accountability measures. Perhaps the perception of “this is the only way government will listen to us” has also been ingrained in the thinking of protesters in South Africa. Protests have become a habitual means of “communicating” with the powers of the country or municipal area or to raise frustration.

Protests and grievances in South Africa are deeply intertwined, reflecting broader social, economic, and political issues. Based on the literature review, several key themes emerge as significant drivers of public demonstrations. First, the historical context of apartheid has left enduring scars, with many contemporary grievances rooted in the injustices and systemic inequalities of that era. The democratic transition in 1994 brought promises of equal rights and opportunities, yet persistent structural issues continue to fuel ongoing protests. Second, economic inequality remains a major source of discontent, despite democratic progress. High unemployment rates, particularly among the youth, and unequal access to resources exacerbate widespread frustration and contribute to the proliferation of protests. Third, service delivery problems, including unreliable electricity, inadequate sanitation, and insufficient healthcare, frequently trigger public demonstrations as citizens demand better governance and improved living conditions.

Corruption also plays a pivotal role in protest activity. A lack of trust and accountability, resulting from corrupt practices at various levels of government, drives public outcry and calls for transparency and systemic reforms. Additionally, dissatisfaction with political representation and leadership often leads to protests. Many South Africans feel their concerns are inadequately addressed by elected officials, and municipalities frequently suffer from ineffective leadership. Political competition among members from different backgrounds vying for control further impedes progress and obstructs service delivery. Social justice issues, such as land rights, gender inequality, and xenophobic racial discrimination, remain significant sources of public grievance, with many protests aiming to address these injustices and advocate for policy change.

Overall, protests in South Africa serve as a vital mechanism for citizens to voice their frustrations, hold authorities accountable, and demand meaningful responses to their evolving and persistent grievances.

Service inequality can erode state and government legitimacy, thereby elevating the likelihood of protests. This assertion is grounded in the idea that dissatisfaction with service delivery is more likely to generate anger against state institutions than dissatisfaction with people's economic situation. The researcher hypothesises this on two primary grounds. Firstly, basic services embody a direct interaction between the individual and the state's institutions, making the state easily identifiable as the main culprit in depriving people of state-sponsored services (Brinkerhoff, Wetterberg & Dunn, 2012: 273–93). As discussed earlier in the chapter, this is especially relevant for middle-income countries presenting themselves as developmental states with a robust public agenda for enhancing living conditions through widespread access to basic services. Secondly, compared to alleviating poverty, providing access to services is a more tangible and visible action linked to infrastructure development and personnel deployment. Consequently, solutions to service deprivation are more readily identified. People witness schools being constructed or neighbourhoods being connected to electricity grids, demonstrating the state's general capability to improve service access. However, this reinforces frustrations related to the state's neglect in other areas. This often leads to situations, typical of many middle-income countries, where states announce the expansion of basic services, raising expectations, but then fail to serve the entire population as the envisaged new services often do not address the basic needs of the lower classes (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2015: 175–99).

There is a clear relationship between service delivery, poverty, and political perceptions (Askvik & Dhakal, 2011: 417–437). Access and quality of basic services are often strongly correlated with people's evaluations of state institutions. There have also been suggestions that perceptions of improvements in government service delivery positively affect both trust and approval ratings of local government representatives (Guerrero, 2011). Similarly, it was established that there is a high correlation between a service delivery index and measures of political trust (Askvik & Dhakal, 2011: 417–437). A service delivery index evaluates the performance of municipalities, district councils, metropolitan municipalities, and provinces based on their actual delivery and the progress they have made over time. In contrast, the above does not consistently reveal the effects of poverty or other forms of economic well-being on trust or government perceptions. Thus, they propose a specific indirect causal mechanism through which service deprivation heightens the probability of protests (Askvik & Dhakal, 2011: 417–437).

Beyond inciting frustrations that may directly lead to actual service delivery protests, service deprivation can negatively shape people's broader attitudes towards the state and enhance the state's overall vulnerability to mobilisation and protest. A state held accountable for not effectively addressing the most basic needs of the population is more easily identified as the primary culprit for other grievances, such as dissatisfaction with poor service delivery, the exacerbation of poverty and inequality, and inadequate access to proper education. Protests that frame the state's lack of

responsiveness and accountability are likely to resonate more strongly when aligned with the public's overall perception of state institutions. This alignment, in turn, increases the likelihood of widespread protests against the state (De Juan & Wegner, 2019: 40).Contemporary South Africa inherited substantial levels of inequality from the apartheid era. During apartheid, the government concentrated most resources in white areas with service delivery levels comparable to Western Europe, while investing minimally in black neighbourhoods, who received less access to health care, education, and basic services such as water, electricity, or sewerage (Qithi & Mkhize, 2023: 1021). In 1948, South Africa's minority white population elected the Afrikaner-led National Party, initiating the apartheid regime that would last for 46 years. The apartheid government invested heavily in infrastructure like roads, airports, harbours, water catchment areas and electricity but the government quickly faced growing pressure from increased urbanisation and political mobilisation within the black population. To ensure the regime's survival, spatial segregation became crucial. The government established ten ethnically distinct homelands with the aim of dividing the black majority and fostering tribal identity and loyalty. Under the guise of separate development, approximately 3.5 million black South Africans were forcibly relocated between 1960 and 1980 in what is referred to as the ultimate apartheid experiment. These individuals were moved to resettlement camps within the homelands, which suffered from severe economic deprivation and overcrowding. The forced relocation disrupted numerous existing social relationships (Abel, 2019: 915).

Following the end of apartheid in 1994, citizens harboured high expectations regarding the economic benefits of the political transition. Since then, South Africa has made significant investments in service delivery, enhancing absolute access to basic services across the country. According to the 2022 Census, which marked the fourth census after the introduction of democracy in South Africa, and after the three previous censuses held in 1996, 2001, and 2011, respectively, there has been a general improvement in access to basic services in South Africa from 2001 to 2022. Over 80% of formal households now have access to piped water, either in their homes or yards. The reliance on piped water sources outside yards or from community stands has decreased over time. In 1996, 19.6% of households depended on such sources, but by 2022 this had fallen to 8.9%. However, some regions, notably the Eastern Cape (19.5%) and Limpopo (20.5%), continue to face significant challenges in accessing piped water. Additionally, the percentage of households using water vendors or tankers as their primary water source rose from 1.9% in 2001 to 5.8% in 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Water infrastructure built during the apartheid era has not been adequately maintained, leading to significant challenges in water provision. The existing infrastructure is either failing to expand rapidly enough to meet the growing demand for water supply or is poorly maintained, resulting in frequent breakdowns. This neglect contributes to widespread water leakages, which, in turn, cause water shortages in many parts of the country (IRR, 2013).

Regarding sanitation, the Western Cape (93.9%) and Gauteng (89.7%) had the highest levels of access to flushing toilets in officially recognised municipal neighbourhoods. However, 4.5% of households in the Northern Cape still rely on bucket toilets. KwaZulu-Natal presents a mixed picture, with 58.9% of households using flushing toilets, 28.5% relying on pit latrines, and 7% using chemical toilets. In the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape, 4.5% and 3% of households, respectively, reported having no toilet facilities, while more than half of households in Limpopo (57.9%) using pit latrines, with or without ventilation (Statistics South Africa, 2023).

While it is true that the Western Cape (93.9%) and Gauteng (89.7%) boast relatively high levels of access to flushing toilets in recognised, formal neighbourhoods, these figures mask the stark reality faced by millions of South Africans living in informal settlements and squatter camps. In urban areas, informal settlements are typically situated at the outskirts and are known for having inadequate infrastructure, limited access to basic services, and high levels of overcrowding. In these areas, access to sanitation is often inadequate or non-existent. Many residents rely on shared pit latrines, bucket systems, or even open fields for basic sanitation, which contributes to significant public health risks, including the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera and dysentery (Hunter & Houghton, 2016: 453–472).

The disparity in access to sanitation between formal neighbourhoods and informal settlements can be attributed to a number of factors, including the historical legacies of spatial planning under apartheid, rapid urbanisation, and inadequate government investment in infrastructure for informal areas. Informal settlements are often not formally recognised by municipalities, making it difficult to provide essential services such as running water, electricity, and sanitation. Furthermore, these areas are frequently located on land that is not legally zoned for residential development, making it harder for local governments to justify or plan for infrastructure upgrades (Zulu, 2017: 637–651).

While formal neighbourhoods in provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng may have access to modern sanitation facilities, including flushing toilets, the millions of people living in informal settlements are being left behind with no such guarantees. This discrepancy highlights the ongoing challenges in South Africa’s efforts to address inequality and ensure that all citizens have equal access to basic services. The situation underscores the need for more inclusive urban planning, the regularisation of informal settlements, and increased investment in infrastructure that reaches all South Africans, regardless of where they live. Management integrity, proper maintenance, upgrading and expansion of services are key to address this conundrum.

In short, there is a stark contrast between the high levels of access to flushing toilets in officially recognised neighbourhoods in some provinces and the dire lack of sanitation facilities in informal settlements. Millions of South Africans living in these informal areas continue to face significant

challenges in accessing basic services, perpetuating inequality and contributing to the cycle of poverty (Adom & Simatele, 2024: 1–5).

While statistics may indicate improvements in water access and enhanced sanitation services in South Africa, these figures can be misleading without context. For instance, improvements often benefit urban areas or regions with better infrastructure, while leaving rural and marginalised communities still facing significant water and sanitation challenges. Moreover, the quality of water supplied is a crucial factor that statistics may overlook. Many areas experience intermittent supply, contamination, or aging infrastructure, which compromises the safety and reliability of water sources. Improvements in access do not necessarily equate to improvements in water quality or sustainability (Adom & Simatele, 2024: 1–5). Even neighbourhoods in formal neighbourhood's struggle as the continuous changing of municipal management, corruption, poor planning and maladministration have resulted in the collapsing of existing infrastructure from the apartheid era, causing it to be deficient and reducing its ability to supply effective sanitation services and water treatment plants to provide high quality drinking water.

Additionally, the reliance on alternative sources, such as water vendors or tankers, which has increased in some regions, highlights ongoing issues rather than solutions. This shift often places a financial burden on vulnerable households, undermining the notion that water access is truly improving for everyone. Municipalities across South Africa are raising concerns about the rampant vandalisation of water infrastructure, which worsens the country's water crises while benefiting criminal enterprises.

Finally, the effects of climate change and drought conditions are increasingly impacting water availability. Even in regions that have seen access improvements, prolonged droughts can reverse gains, leading to water shortages and increased reliance on emergency measures. Thus, while some statistics suggest progress, they often mask deeper, systemic issues that continue to affect many communities in South Africa (Grönwall & Danert, 2020: 419).

According to the researcher, it is true that regions such as the Eastern Cape and Limpopo face significant challenges when it comes to accessing piped water and adequate sanitation. However, it is important to recognise the broader context of progress across South Africa. For instance, many urban areas have made substantial advancements in water and sanitation access, resulting in improved health outcomes and quality of life for millions. Additionally, the increase in the percentage of households relying on water vendors or tankers, while concerning, can also be seen as a response to ongoing efforts to address infrastructure deficiencies. This shift may reflect temporary adaptations rather than a complete failure of water access, as authorities work to upgrade and expand services.

Regarding sanitation, it is noteworthy that the majority of provinces have achieved high levels of access to flushing toilets, indicating significant overall progress. The reliance on bucket toilets in the Northern Cape, though still present, is a decreasing trend as governmental initiatives and community programmes aim to phase out such facilities. Furthermore, while the mixed situation in KwaZulu-Natal highlights the diversity of challenges faced, it also underscores the potential for targeted interventions customised to specific regional needs. Instead of solely focusing on the challenges, it is crucial to consider the progress made and the ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure, which may ultimately lead to better outcomes in these underserved areas. Thus, while challenges remain, there is also a narrative of resilience and improvement that should not be overlooked.

The vandalism of newly implemented facilities often reflects deeper societal issues tied to organised crime, political power struggles, and manipulation of public sentiment. Such acts are not merely random instances of destruction but are frequently deliberate attempts to assert control, destabilize initiatives, or send a message. Organised crime groups, or mafias, often resort to such acts to maintain dominance in certain areas. For example, they may sabotage facilities that challenge their monopolies, such as public transport systems or utilities that disrupt their control over resources. Vandals may also damage property to extort authorities or private entities, demanding protection money or forcing withdrawal from contested regions. By damaging public infrastructure, these groups sow fear and distrust, undermining government efforts and creating opportunities for exploitation (Reuters, 2024).

Political power struggles further exacerbate the problem, as vandalism becomes a tool for discrediting opponents. Facilities launched under a rival political party may be targeted to tarnish their image or portray their governance as ineffective. Additionally, some political groups incite followers to destroy facilities, framing such actions as resistance against perceived oppression or mismanagement. Misinformation and manipulation play a significant role, as people are often indoctrinated into supporting such destructive agendas. False narratives about the misuse or harmfulness of certain facilities are spread to provoke anger, while economically vulnerable individuals are exploited as pawns in these power games. In some cases, leaders normalise or even endorse such lawless behaviour, emboldening others to follow suit (ACCORD, 2021).

The consequences of this vandalism are far-reaching. It results in significant economic losses as funds are diverted to repair or replace damaged infrastructure, delaying other critical projects. Essential services such as water, electricity, and transportation are disrupted, inconveniencing the public and impacting livelihoods. Repeated acts of vandalism erode trust in the government and societal institutions, fostering a sense of hopelessness. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach. Strengthening security around public facilities, involving local communities in their

protection, and implementing effective surveillance systems are crucial. At the same time, the rule of law must be upheld, with swift and visible legal actions against perpetrators, regardless of their social or political affiliations. Public awareness campaigns can educate citizens about the value of shared infrastructure and the harm caused by vandalism. Disrupting the operations of organised crime networks and depoliticising development projects are also essential steps to prevent facilities from becoming symbols of partisan success or failure. By fostering a culture of accountability and shared responsibility, societies can work towards protecting public infrastructure from the destructive forces of vandalism (ACCORD, 2021).

Waste removal services have also improved, with the percentage of households in designated neighbourhoods receiving weekly refuse removal by local authorities or private services rising from 52.1% in 1996 to 66.3% in 2022. Western Cape (88.7%) and Gauteng (85.0%) had the highest rates of regular refuse removal, while Limpopo recorded the lowest at 32.0%, significantly below the national average (Statistics South Africa, 2023).

Electricity access has expanded dramatically, with over 90% of households having electricity for lighting in 2022, compared to just 58% in 1996. Western Cape (96.5%), KwaZulu-Natal (96.7%), and Limpopo (95.5%) slightly exceeded the national average of 94.7% (Statistics South Africa, 2023).

Despite the government's explicit development agenda, social protests against the lack of services have gained prominence since the apartheid era. In the last decade, numerous violent and prolonged service delivery protests have attracted attention from researchers and the media. Most of the literature is qualitative and relies on newspaper sources to document specific protests (Alexander, 2010: 25–40), resulting in a lack of systematic studies on the underlying motives. Poor service delivery, lack of accountability, unfulfilled expectations, and comparative poverty and inequality of access to services, among others, have all been cited as reasons for protests. Some South African protest literature attempts to quantify protests over time, using either the coding of media articles (De Visser & Powell, 2012) or aggregate figures from the police, occasionally reported in responses to parliamentary questions (Alexander, 2010: 69).

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Specific theories were identified to guide the current study. These include deterrence theory, general strain theory (GST), anomie theory, dual pathway model of collective action, and social learning theory. Note that although protests in South Africa are not necessarily illegal, the theories that focus on crime can be interpreted in the context of the escalation and/or onset of violence during protests. As such, the theories were used to assist in determining factors that could contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane metropolitan municipalities.

3.1 Deterrence theory

Deterrence theory is most closely associated with utilitarian philosophy of the 18th century, particularly the works of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, who argued that punishment should serve to deter crime through rational calculation. However, they were among several influential utilitarian thinkers of the era, including William Paley and Claude Adrien Helvétius, who also contributed to the development of utilitarian principles underpinning modern criminal justice.

Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham postulated that a reduction of unlawful behaviour will occur when the expected loss (punishment) outweighs the expected gain (the crime) (Choe, Rhee, Sanders & Yoo, 2014: 342). Based on deterrence theory, individuals choose to either follow or break the law after calculating the advantages and consequences of their actions. According to the deterrence theory, individuals are seen as rational actors who evaluate the costs and benefits of their actions before engaging in them. In the context of criminal behaviour, deterrence theory posits that fear of punishment, particularly if the punishment is swift, certain, and severe, can serve as a deterrent to criminal activity. The key idea is that people will avoid criminal behaviour if the perceived consequences of being caught and punished outweigh the potential benefits they might gain from committing the crime (Van der Westhuizen & Bezuidenhout, 2020: 143).

The deterrence theory further postulates that an individual who has previously committed a criminal offense and has been arrested and punished by the criminal justice system may be deterred from repeating the same offense due to the fear of being apprehended and punished again. This concept is referred to as specific deterrence (Piquero & Rorie, 2015: 71). On the other hand, general deterrence occurs when a potential offender, who has not yet committed a crime but is contemplating doing so, abstains from committing a crime because they fear apprehension and punishment (Piquero & Rorie, 2015: 71). Three components of deterrence are celerity, certainty, and severity. Celerity refers to the speed at which punishment for a crime is delivered. Certainty refers to ensuring that punishment will occur when undesired actions are undertaken. Severity is the degree of pain

that is given to those who commit a crime (the punishment must fit the crime). To effectively minimise crime, all three criteria, namely celerity, certainty, and severity, must be present (Williams & McShane, 2018: 16). From this we can deduce that for punishment to work, it has to be quick, severe enough, and certain (Van der Westhuizen & Bezuidenhout, 2020: 143).

Traditional deterrence theory has always concentrated on the aspects of formal punishment, including the severity, certainty, and swiftness of punishment, with the goal of deterring criminal behaviour. Punishment severity pertains to the harshness of the penalties for unlawful acts, while punishment certainty involves the likelihood of a punishment being imposed whenever a crime is committed. Punishment celerity refers to the promptness with which punishment is administered following a crime. Among these three constructs, punishment celerity is rarely discussed due to its measurement challenges and perceived lack of theoretical significance (Kuo, Talley & Huang, 2020: 1–12).

Although criminologists have widely applied deterrence theory, the evidence on the effectiveness of formal punishments is still mixed. For instance, both the severity and certainty of punishment can deter homicide, with certainty having a greater impact. While punishment certainty can deter most felonies, punishment severity is predominantly effective in preventing homicide. Some researchers (Kuo et al., 2020: 1–12) have suggested that informal punishments, such as shaming or appealing to moral beliefs, may have a stronger deterrent effect than formal penalties. Recent views on traditional deterrence theory emphasise the significance of informal punishment and propose that both formal and informal penalties should be considered when examining why individuals choose to engage in unlawful behaviour (Mokhomole, Khosa & Olutola, 2023: 2).

Deterrence theory posits that individuals are less likely to engage in criminal behaviour when they perceive that the punishment costs outweigh the benefits of such actions. It is grounded in rational choice theory, which assumes that people make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis (Mugari, 2021: 45–46).

Deterrence theory, as outlined by Mugari (2021: 45–46), offers several notable strengths. One of its key strengths is its intuitive appeal, as the core idea that punishment can deter crime resonates with common sense. The theory suggests that the presence of consequences for illegal actions can discourage criminal behaviour. Additionally, deterrence theory has had a significant impact on criminal justice policies, leading to the implementation of stricter laws and harsher penalties aimed at reducing crime rates. Empirical support for the theory further strengthens its credibility, as numerous studies have shown that certain types of punishment, particularly the certainty of punishment, can effectively deter crime. Research indicates that individuals are less likely to commit crimes in environments where the likelihood of apprehension is high. The theory also shifts the focus

from merely reacting to crime through punishment to preventing it by leveraging the threat of punishment. Furthermore, deterrence theory is highly flexible, allowing for its application across various types of crime and social contexts, providing broad interpretive possibilities within criminology.

Research indicates that the certainty of punishment is a more effective deterrent than the severity of punishment. For instance, if individuals who engage in violent behaviour during riots faced prompt and effective consequences, they would be less likely to escalate their actions in such situations.

Deterrence theory also has several weaknesses, as highlighted by Brooks (2021: 594-596). One key issue is its reliance on the rational actor assumption, which presumes that all individuals act rationally. However, many criminal acts are impulsive or influenced by emotional, psychological, or social factors, which can undermine the effectiveness of deterrence. Additionally, empirical support for deterrence is inconsistent, with mixed findings. While some studies suggest that increased punishment reduces crime, others show little to no effect, particularly concerning punishment severity. For example, individuals with personality disorders or psychopathic tendencies, who struggle to learn from punishment, may not be deterred by it. Another limitation is the theory's overemphasis on punishment, which can overshadow other important aspects of crime prevention, such as social intervention, rehabilitation, and addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour. Deterrence measures can also lead to inequality, disproportionately affecting Marginalised communities and contributing to systemic injustices within the criminal justice system. For instance, increased police operations in informal settlements during the festive season can unfairly target these areas. Finally, deterrence theory assumes that individuals comply with laws primarily due to the fear of punishment, but many people follow laws because of moral beliefs or social norms, suggesting that deterrence is not the sole driver of lawful behaviour (Brooks, 2021: 594-596).

The theory disregards factors such as moral values and social norms that influence behaviour. It assumes that people always act rationally and weigh the costs and benefits of their decisions. In reality, many individuals tend to act impulsively, especially in group settings. During collective events, individuals can lose their sense of rationality and become part of a collective mindset. Deindividuation often leads people to conform to group behaviour, as observed in protests, riots, and looting. As a result, using punishment as a deterrent in chaotic situations such as riots can be particularly challenging.

Deterrence theory has made significant contributions to criminology, as highlighted by Muthaphuli and Du Preez (2019: 34–46). One of its key contributions is its role in shaping criminal justice policies, where it has influenced legislative frameworks and law enforcement practices. Additionally, deterrence theory has provided a framework for extensive research in criminology, prompting

investigations into the effectiveness of various punitive measures and their impact on crime rates. The theory has also been integrated with other criminological theories, such as routine activity theory and social learning theory, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of criminal behaviour. Furthermore, the limitations and criticisms of deterrence theory have stimulated debate on the complexities of criminal behaviour, emphasising the need for multifaceted approaches to crime prevention. In response to these weaknesses, there has been a broader consideration of rehabilitative and restorative justice approaches, focusing on addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviour rather than relying solely on punishment. While deterrence theory remains a foundational concept in criminology, offering valuable insights into the relationship between punishment and crime prevention, its limitations highlight the importance of adopting a balanced approach that incorporates various strategies for addressing criminal behaviour. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective and equitable criminal justice policies (Muthaphuli and Du Preez, 2019: 34-46).

3.2 General strain theory (GST)

Agnew (1992) expanded on classic strain theory in response to studies that questioned its fundamental idea that adolescents turn to delinquency due to the inability to achieve goals, including middle-class status or economic success. Agnew explored additional sources of strain that are defined as conditions or events that individuals dislike (Swatt, Gibson & Piquero, 2007). Rather than relying on a single source of strain, three key sources were identified: (i) the inability to achieve positively valued goals, including the gap between expectations and actual outcomes, and the disparity between perceived and actual just outcomes; (ii) the loss or threat of losing valued stimuli already possessed (for example, the death of a parent or the end of a relationship); and (iii) exposure to negative stimuli, such as abuse (Bishopp, Piquero, Worrall & Piquero, 2019: 639). GST posits that crime and delinquency are precipitated by the experience of negative emotions, such as fear, disappointment, depression, anger, and frustration, which arise from various strains (Barbieri, Clipper, Narvey, Rude, Craig & Piquero, 2019: 2).Agnew (as cited in Craig, Cardwell & Piquero, 2017: 1656–1660), argued that much of this strain stems from negative relationships and the resulting emotions, such as anger, frustration, and resentment that arise from these interactions. Criminal behaviour can emerge as a response to these negative emotions, especially when the costs of crime are low, social control is weak, and the individual has a predisposition toward criminality. This behaviour may be driven by various motivations: to regain lost items, retaliate against perceived sources of stress, or the attempt to escape through means such as substance use (Teijón-Alcalá & Birkbeck, 2014: 412). However, developing effective coping mechanisms can help individuals manage these strains legitimately. Such coping resources include self-concept, social support, problem-solving skills, and mastery. Those who feel self-successful, possess strong social support

networks, and maintain a positive self-image are less likely to turn to crime in response to strain. Additionally, peer attitudes toward deviance can influence an individual's likelihood of resorting to crime. However, exposure to chronic strain can increase the chance of associating with criminal peers. Thus, understanding crime requires examining both exposure to strain and the coping mechanisms available to individuals, along with their peer influences (Craig et al.,2017: 1656–1660).

General Strain Theory (GST), developed by Robert Agnew, posits that crime and delinquency arise from negative emotions that individuals experience as a result of strain. These negative emotions—such as anger, frustration, disappointment, fear, and depression—are seen as emotional responses to various stressors or strains in an individual's life. GST suggests that when people experience strain, they often feel a strong emotional need to cope, and one of the ways they may cope with this distress is by engaging in criminal or delinquent behaviour (Barbieri, Clipper, Narvey, Rude, Craig & Piquero, 2019: 2).

Furthermore, GST extends beyond the direct strains caused by personal experiences to include indirect strains, which are associated with anticipated or vicarious stressors. Indirect strains occur when individuals are exposed to the stress experienced by others, or when they anticipate potential future stress. For example, witnessing the hardship or suffering of others—such as family members or peers—can evoke similar negative emotions and create an urge to act out in harmful ways. This extension of GST acknowledges that strain does not solely stem from personal experiences but can also be triggered by the strain or perceived strain of others (Barbieri et al., 2019: 2). In essence, GST emphasises that the emotional reactions to strain—whether direct or indirect—play a central role in motivating individuals to engage in criminal or delinquent behaviour as a form of coping with these overwhelming negative emotions (Barbieri., 2019: 2).

Recently, Agnew (2013) revised his original propositions regarding GST in relation to criminal coping. He contended that the mixed findings from previous GST studies assessing the conditioning effects on the strain–crime relationship may stem from the theory's broad nature. Agnew (2013: 666) noted that any individual conditioning effect, such as the influence of delinquent peers, social support, or social control, might not significantly impact the selection of coping strategies as there are numerous ways individuals can respond to strain. Consequently, it becomes challenging to identify which individuals and types of conditioning effects are most likely to result in criminal coping. While the original theory indicated a general relationship between strain and criminal coping, Agnew (2013) further elaborated on this connection by proposing that criminal coping is more probable among certain individuals in specific situational contexts. Three factors must merge for criminal coping to emerge as the most likely outcome (Craig et al., 2017: 1656–1660). These factors are:

- Exposure to strain or stress: Individuals experience significant pressure or adversity that they are unable to resolve through legitimate means.

- Limited access to legal or conventional coping mechanisms: A lack of resources, opportunities, or support systems makes lawful problem-solving difficult.

- Presence of criminal opportunities or influences: Availability of illegal avenues or the presence of peers and environments that encourage criminal behaviour.

While GST has been tested empirically, there has been limited effort to integrate its core principles with life course criminology, however, critiques of traditional strain theories may explain this oversight, since earlier theories struggled to account for the decline in crime and desistance observed in many offenders during early adulthood. Early strain theories suggested that crime should increase in young adulthood as individuals become more aware of their limited success opportunities (Broidy, 2001: 10). In contrast, Agnew's revised theory offers a convincing explanation as to why many young offenders significantly reduce their criminal behaviour in early adulthood. He argues that GST can be combined with biological, psychological, and sociological theories, particularly social control and social learning theories, to explain this trend, which is labelled "adolescent-limited" offenders. GST suggests that adolescents are more prone to engage in crime and deviance than children or adults because they are more likely to face strains conducive to criminal behaviour and more inclined to use crime as a coping mechanism (Wojciechowski, 2019: 866–881).

Several factors contribute to the heightened risk of strains for adolescents. Agnew (1992) identifies that adolescents (i) experience lower levels of social control than children, reducing the protective influence of parents and loved ones; (ii) tend to associate with delinquent peers who are more likely to engage in conflicts; (iii) navigate a larger, more demanding social landscape, which increases the likelihood of failure or negative treatment from peers and authority figures; (iv) are more likely to perceive their environment as hostile because they are influenced by increased egocentrism and a tendency to blame others; and (v) have limited autonomy to pursue immediate desires and goals, particularly those privileges reserved for adults (Wojciechowski, 2019: 866–881). This increased exposure to strain is compounded by a greater tendency to resort to crime as a coping strategy (Veenstra, Bushman & Koole, 2018: 98–103).

Agnew argues that adolescents often possess poorer problem-solving and social skills than adults. While children also lack these skills, they benefit from more parental protection. Additionally, teens generally have fewer coping options than adults, such as the ability to escape challenging situations or access financial resources to cope legally (Veenstra et al., 2018: 98–103). Compared to younger children, adolescents are more likely to engage in crime as a coping mechanism due to lower

perceived costs of criminal behaviour and peer influence, which can lead to crime as a socialisation tool or as a way to save face. Thus, crime and deviance are expected to peak during adolescence due to the convergence of increased exposure to strains and a higher likelihood of coping with negative emotions through criminal behaviour (Mazerolle, Piquero & Capowich, 2003: 131–157).

Agnew (as cited in Lilly, Cullen & Ball, 2019: 140–142) states that traditional strain theories focus on the difficulties in attaining positively valued goals, in other words, the failure to attain what one wants. He claims that because a person's goals can be obstructed, the capability to evade undesirable situations or stressful life events is possible. Theoretically it is required to avoid painful (or negative) conditions or events. Two general types of strain exist, namely objective and subjective strains. Objective strains refer to the strains that are generally disliked by most people in a particular group. Subjective stress is related to what a person might find personally objectionable. Both subjective and objective strains have to do with being faced with the loss of positively valued stimuli, including money, material possessions, and romantic partners, or with the appearance of negative stimuli. These are usually known as stressors, which could be physical or emotional abuse or a traumatic event. Along with the occurrence of strains themselves, there is the problem of the strength of the strains. The ones that are more probable to produce crime are lengthier, more severe and frequent, and have the tendency to be seen as long-term. Crime-producing strains signify a threat to what a person considers to be most important, for example, identity, needs, and values (Zhang, Liu, Wang & Zou, 2018: 2447–2460).

The presence of negative events or situations, generations of frustration and anger, and other negative emotions can drive a person to commit crime and delinquency. Additionally, they can decrease the social control surrounding the person. People with the best access to positive coping mechanisms are more likely to conform to societal norms. On the other hand, an absence of positive coping mechanisms or even a large number of non-conforming coping mechanisms can make a person susceptible to deviance (Zhang et al., 2018: 2447–2460).

"Generations of frustration and anger" refers to the intergenerational transmission of negative emotions and experiences that accumulate over time, especially in socially disadvantaged communities. These emotions are often rooted in long-standing structural inequalities, such as poverty, unemployment, systemic discrimination, inadequate service delivery, and lack of access to quality education and healthcare. Over decades, families and communities internalise these frustrations, which manifest in chronic stress, resentment toward authority, and weakened social bonds. In such environments, strain accumulates across generations, where children grow up observing and experiencing the same unresolved grievances as their parents and grandparents (Moors & Spapens, 2020: 227–241). This normalises a sense of hopelessness and distrust in formal

systems of control (e.g., police, government), reducing the internal and external social controls that typically deter crime. With limited access to positive coping mechanisms-like mental health services, supportive community structures, or employment opportunities-individuals may turn to deviant or criminal behaviours as a form of expression, escape, or means of survival. Thus, the absence of constructive outlets for dealing with these inherited frustrations can increase susceptibility to crime and delinquency (Moors & Spapens, 2020: 227–241).

A foundational theory that predates Agnew's GST is Robert King Merton's strain theory, introduced in 1938. Merton argued that the prevailing cultural values and social structure in society create strain, since a significant portion of the population is unable to attain or fully enjoy these societal values and associated benefits. This disconnection can lead individuals to experience frustration and alienation, potentially motivating them to engage in criminal behaviour as a means of coping with their inability to meet these culturally prescribed goals (Amir, 2021). Merton's original strain theory recognised one category of strain, which involved being obstructed from attaining the desired goals. Although distinct from Merton, Agnew did not concentrate solely on economic goals. He widened the type of strain to include obstruction from any positively valued goal. It not only includes not achieving economic success, but also not getting a promotion at work or not achieving status in one's peer group (Lilly et al., 2019: 140–142).

Further than innovation, two sources of strain are added. Firstly, strain can be produced from the "actual or anticipated removal (loss) of positively valued stimuli from an individual" (Lilly et al., 2019: 140–142). Strain can transpire, for example, when an individual loses their job, subsequently loses their house and belongings, and as a result ends up living on the streets. Many people adapt to their situation in different ways. In the mentioned situations, people might use drugs to manage the stress (they retreat from the situation), or resort to illegal methods (innovation) to replace things that were taken away (for example, stealing a car) or get revenge against the people who caused the strain (for example, kill an abuser or assault the person who fired them). Some can rebel against the situation and system that caused their demise. This can take the form of a riot. Secondly, strain can be encouraged by the actual or anticipated exposure to harmful or unpleasant stimuli. The negative stimuli can consist of experiences of inadequate living conditions, joblessness, or hunger (Lilly et al., 2019: 140–142). Taking the abovementioned into consideration, citizens could embark on violent protests as a means to an end to reach the goals that they feel would otherwise be unobtainable owing to daily strains, including load-shedding, inadequate service delivery, and the high crime rate (Krohn, Lizotte & Hall, 2009: 169–180).

Agnew's GST significantly reshapes traditional criminological perspectives by emphasising how social environments and individual experiences shape pathways to crime. A key strength of GST is

its acknowledgment that strain is not merely a universal experience but also heavily influenced by an individual's social context, which includes factors such as class, race, and gender. This recognition allows for a more comprehensive analysis of crime, especially in marginalised communities where individuals may encounter multiple, intersecting strains that increase their vulnerability to criminal behaviour (Krohn et al., 2009: 169–180).

Moreover, GST expands the discourse on the emotional processes that mediate the relationship between strain and crime. By focusing on emotions such as anger, frustration, and despair, Agnew offers insights into why some individuals turn to crime as a coping mechanism, while others do not. This emotional dimension is crucial because it suggests that addressing the psychological impact of strain, by providing support services or community interventions, can serve as a preventive measure against crime (Shadmanfaat, Kabiri, Solensten, Willits & Cochran, 2022: 543–555).

However, GST is not without its criticisms. The theory would benefit from more empirical testing to substantiate its claims, particularly regarding how different types of strain uniquely influence diverse populations. The theory also risks oversimplifying the complexities of human behaviour by potentially overlooking the roles of social learning and rational choice in criminal decision-making. Additionally, while GST highlights individual emotional responses, it may not fully consider structural inequalities that exacerbate strain, such as systemic poverty or discrimination (Shadmanfaat et al., 2022: 543–555).

Despite these limitations, Agnew's contributions to criminology are profound. By incorporating a focus on emotional and psychological responses to strain, GST has paved the way for interdisciplinary research that draws from psychology, sociology, and criminology. This integration not only enhances theoretical understanding but also informs practical approaches in criminal justice policy by emphasising the need for programmes that address both the emotional and structural factors that contribute to crime. Ultimately, Agnew's GST stands out for its ability to illuminate the complexities of human behaviour in the face of adversity. It encourages a more compassionate and informed approach to preventing and intervening in crime (Krohn et al., 2009: 169–180).

3.3 Anomie theory

Émile Durkheim developed the classic theory of anomie. Durkheim believed that anomie, which refers to a state of normlessness, could result in feelings of deep despair and worthlessness for individuals. Brown, Esbensen and Geis (2010: 237–238) state that Durkheim drew attention to how the structure of society may encourage people to break rules. Moreover, behaviour is regarded as being socially driven rather than individually motivated. The phrase was coined as collective conscience to describe a society that shares common ideals and beliefs. According to this concept,

any behaviour that offends the common conscience should be deemed illegal (Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2010: 52).

Anomie is regarded as a state of mind where the facts of the matter go against what is considered the generally accepted norm. In other words, when there is a discrepancy between the cultural goal of a society and the means to achieve that goal, a conundrum is developed because the expectations and values instilled in individuals clash with their lived realities. This dissonance creates a sense of confusion, disconnection, and despair, leading people to feel alienated from their community and its shared beliefs (Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2010: 52).

Individuals may experience feelings of helplessness and frustration when cultural goals, such as success, wealth, or social status, are elevated but the means to achieve these goals are inaccessible or inequitable. For example, in a society where economic mobility is highly valued but systemic barriers prevent certain groups from advancing, a profound sense of anomie can arise. This condition can erode trust in institutions, provoke social unrest, and lead to a breakdown in communal bonds (Williams & McShane, 2016: 8). Furthermore, anomie can manifest in various ways, such as increased crime rates, substance abuse, or mental health issues. When individuals feel that they cannot achieve societal expectations through legitimate means, they may turn to alternative, sometimes destructive, behaviours as a means of coping or expressing their discontent (Williams & McShane, 2016: 8).

To combat anomie, societies can strive to bridge the gap between aspirations and realities by addressing systemic inequalities, fostering inclusive opportunities, and promoting a sense of community. By doing so, they can help individuals feel more connected and empowered, thereby reducing the feelings of disillusionment and despair that characterise this state of mind. In essence, addressing anomie is not just about redefining cultural goals but also about ensuring that the pathways to achieving those goals are accessible and fair for all members of society (Teymoori, Bastian & Jetten, 2017: 1009–1023).

The resulting emotional frustration and personal confusion may reduce an individual’s efficiency in attaining their goals and bring about deviant behaviour (Brown et al., 2010: 237–238). Anomie can also be defined as a loss of social restraint that redirects human behaviour towards social goals. A state of normlessness and the resulting confusion are caused by a discrepancy between the cultural goal of society and its institutionalised means of satisfying that goal (Brown et al., 2010: 237–238). Normlessness is the term used to describe a state in which social norms, which are the unwritten rules that govern behaviour, are either absent or significantly weakened. When the expectations for how individuals should behave become ambiguous, this can lead to confusion and uncertainty about what is considered appropriate conduct. In such an environment, the social fabric begins to fray as

the established guidelines that facilitate cooperation and cohesion among members of a community are no longer effective (Brown et al., 2010: 237–238).

When normlessness prevails, individuals may find themselves grappling with a lack of direction. Without clear standards to guide their actions, people may resort to personal interpretations of acceptable behaviour, which can lead to conflict and social fragmentation. This breakdown of consensus around norms can foster an atmosphere of distrust and anxiety since individuals may feel isolated in their choices and unsure of how others will respond (Bernburg, 2002: 729–742).

The consequences of normlessness can be profound. Societies may experience increases in deviant behaviours because people seek alternative means to fulfil their needs when traditional paths are perceived as blocked or ineffective. This can manifest in higher rates of crime, substance abuse, or other forms of social unrest. Moreover, the absence of shared norms can hinder collective action, making it difficult for communities to address common challenges or work toward common goals (Bernburg, 2002: 729–742).

In order to address normlessness, it is essential for societies to actively cultivate and reinforce social norms that promote shared values and expectations. This may involve fostering open dialogue among community members, encouraging participation in civic life, and developing policies that support social cohesion. By re-establishing a sense of shared purpose and reinforcing the significance of collective norms, communities can mitigate the effects of normlessness and work towards rebuilding trust and cooperation among their members. Restoring clear social norms can serve as a vital foundation for a more stable and cohesive society (Messner, Rosenfeld & Hövermann, 2019: 161–177).

In South Africa, individuals participating in large-scale protests may experience a sense of anomie due to the sheer size of the crowd. This environment can lead to a diminished sense of personal accountability because the collective anonymity of the group might embolden participants to engage in unlawful behaviour. In such cases, the protest or the crowd itself can act as a shield, obscuring individual actions that might otherwise be scrutinised. Consequently, this dynamic can increase the likelihood of criminal acts occurring during protests.

Anomie theory remains one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in criminology, offering key insights into the relationship between social structure and criminal behaviour. Its enduring relevance is evident through several strengths that align with contemporary social issues and dynamics of crime. First, the foundational concept of anomie, introduced by Durkheim, describes a state of normlessness or disconnection from societal norms that guide behaviour. During periods of significant social change or disruption, individuals may feel alienated from the values that provide

meaning and direction, leading to higher rates of deviance and crime as they navigate unclear societal guidelines (Bernburg, 2002: 729–742).

One of the primary strengths of anomie theory is its emphasis on the social context of behaviour. Unlike theories that attribute criminality solely to individual choice or psychological factors, anomie theory situates crime within broader societal structures. This perspective allows criminologists to examine how economic disparities, social inequality, and cultural value shifts contribute to criminal behaviour, making it a critical tool for contemporary crime analysis (Novaković, 2023: 6681). Additionally, the theory's relevance to modern issues, including economic inequality, unemployment, and globalisation, underscores its utility in explaining evolving forms of crime. In a rapidly changing world, individuals may experience dislocation and disillusionment, leading to increased criminality. For instance, as economic realities shift and traditional norms are challenged, anomie theory provides a framework for understanding the rise of cybercrime and other non-traditional offences (Novaković, 2023: 66–81).

Another strength of anomie theory lies in its ability to integrate with other criminological frameworks, such as strain theory. Strain theory posits that societal pressures push individuals toward deviant behaviour when they cannot achieve culturally prescribed goals through legitimate means, building on the foundational ideas of anomie. This integration offers a more comprehensive set of analytical tools for understanding the complexity of criminal behaviour (Abrutyn, 2019: 109–136). Moreover, the theory's application to policy development highlights its practical value. By identifying the social conditions that foster anomie, policymakers can implement proactive strategies to reduce crime. Interventions such as enhancing economic opportunities, fostering social cohesion, and encouraging community engagement can mitigate the underlying causes of criminal behaviour (Abrutyn, 2019: 109–136).

Empirical research continues to validate anomie theory, reinforcing the link between social disintegration, economic hardship, and crime rates. This evidence underscores the importance of addressing structural factors in crime prevention (Faizi & Nayebi, 2023: 280–297). Finally, the evolution of anomie theory reflects its adaptability to contemporary challenges. As technology and the internet reshape social interactions and create new opportunities for crime, traditional notions of anomie require re-examination. The expansion of digital spaces changes how individuals relate to societal norms, further demonstrating the need to adapt the theory to modern contexts (Faizi & Nayebi, 2023: 280–297). Together, these strengths make anomie theory a cornerstone of criminological thought, providing valuable insights into both historical and contemporary patterns of crime.

The enduring significance of anomie theory in criminology stems from its foundational insights into the relationship between societal conditions and criminal behaviour. Its ability to contextualise crime within broader social frameworks, adapt to contemporary challenges, and inform policy initiatives ensures that anomie theory remains a critical component of criminological discourse. As society continues to evolve, the lessons drawn from anomie theory will be essential for understanding and addressing the complexities of crime in the modern world (Faizi & Nayebi, 2023: 280–297).

Some critics have indicated that the most important limitation of the anomie theory is its somewhat deterministic nature, which can oversimplify the complex relationship between social structures and individual behaviours. In terms of this, it should be contextualised as a reflection of several interrelated factors that challenge the robustness of the theory in explaining the nuances of criminality (Collins & Menard, 2021: 420–448).

Some additional criticisms are firstly, one of the primary criticisms of anomie theory is that it tends to portray individuals as passive recipients of societal influences, potentially overlooking the agency that individuals possess in navigating their circumstances. By suggesting that social disintegration directly leads to criminal behaviour, the theory risks downplaying the role of personal choices, motivations, and resilience. Critics argue that not all individuals exposed to the same societal pressures will engage in criminal behaviours; some may respond by seeking constructive alternatives (Collins & Menard, 2021: 420–448).

Anomie theory can sometimes oversimplify the complex interplay between various societal factors that contribute to crime. For instance, it may focus predominantly on economic factors while neglecting the influence of cultural, familial, and psychological variables. This limitation suggests that a singular focus on anomie fails to account how different contexts, such as community dynamics, educational opportunities, and family structures, intersect to influence individual behaviour. A more holistic approach is needed to understand the multifaceted nature of crime (Messner & Richard, 1994, cited in Cullen, 2017: 127–139).

When cultural variability is taken into account, the application of anomie theory may encounter difficulties as well. Different societies have distinct norms and values, and the degree to which individuals experience anomie can vary widely across cultural contexts. However, the theory may not adequately address how cultural differences shape perceptions of normlessness and influence responses to societal change. This limitation highlights the need for a more culturally sensitive analysis of crime and deviance (Messner & Richard, 1994, cited in Cullen, 2017: 127–139).

Anomie theory often presents a generalised view of society, which can overlook the existence and influence of subcultures that operate outside mainstream norms. These subcultures may have their

own values and systems of meaning that do not necessarily align with the dominant societal expectations. Consequently, individuals may engage in criminal behaviour not solely due to a sense of anomie but also as a way to conform to the norms of their specific subculture. This aspect complicates the application of anomie theory to diverse populations and settings (Messner & Richard, 1994, cited in Cullen, 2017: 127–139).

The theory does not fully account for the temporal dynamics of societal change. Anomie can be a transient state influenced by rapid social shifts, such as economic recessions or technological advancements. The theory may fail to recognise that feelings of anomie can fluctuate over time, leading to varying rates of criminality. This temporal consideration is crucial for understanding how crime trends evolve and for developing effective interventions (Messner & Richard, 1994, cited in Cullen, 2017: 127–139).

While anomie theory has garnered some empirical support, critics point to challenges in measuring anomie and its direct impact on criminal behaviour. The conceptualisation of anomie is often vague, making it difficult to operationalise in research. As a result, studies attempting to validate the theory may yield inconsistent findings, raising questions about its applicability across different contexts and populations. This empirical limitation calls for more rigorous research methodologies that can adequately capture the nuances of anomie (Teymoori al., 2016).

The critique of anomie theory also invites interdisciplinary perspectives that can enrich our understanding of crime. Incorporating insights from psychology, sociology, and anthropology can provide a more comprehensive framework for analysing criminal behaviour. For instance, psychological theories focusing on individual motivation and behaviour can complement the structural focus of anomie theory, leading to a more integrative approach to understanding crime (Teymoori et al., 2016).

In summary, while anomie theory has significantly contributed to criminological thought, its limitations, especially its deterministic nature and oversimplification of societal influences, highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social structures and individual behaviour. Contextualising these criticisms within broader sociocultural frameworks can help illuminate the complexities of criminality and underscore the importance of considering individual agency, cultural variability, and interdisciplinary insights in the study of crime. Addressing these limitations can enhance the relevance and applicability of anomie theory in understanding contemporary social issues and criminal behaviour.

3.4 Dual-pathway model of collective action

Over the past 20 years, social psychologists have developed a collection of dual pathway model for collective action that consider efficacy and emotion as complementary routes to mobilisation. Fundamental to the understanding of the model is the idea that actors are passionate economists who think through emotions; purposive actors who are concurrently motivated by instrumental interests and feelings (Robbins, Pfaff & Matsueda, 2021: 3). Walker and Smith (in Shi, Hao, Saeri & Cui, 2015: 46–65) state that actors in this model not only respond to incentives and calculate advantages but are also motivated by feelings that influence the intensity of grievances and protest intentions.

The dual pathway model of collective action was developed by sociologists such as Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow. The model focuses on understanding how social movements and collective action arise through two interrelated pathways: resource mobilisation and framing processes. The resource mobilisation pathway emphasises the importance of harnessing financial support, organisational capacity, and human capital for the formation and success of collective actions. It suggests that effective mobilisation requires groups to strategically utilise these resources to advance their causes (Abrams, Travaglino, Gardner & Callan, 2022: 89).

In contrast, the framing processes pathway pertains to how social movements articulate their grievances and craft their messages to resonate with potential supporters. This involves creating a collective identity, defining key issues, and persuading others to join the cause. Effective framing can enhance solidarity and motivate individuals to participate in collective actions. The dual pathway model illustrates the interplay between these two pathways, highlighting that a well-resourced movement may struggle without effective communication, while a poorly resourced group with strong framing can still engage supporters meaningfully. Overall, the model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of social movements, underscoring the critical role of both resource mobilisation and strategic framing in mobilising collective efforts for social change (van Zomeren, Leach & Spears, 2012: 180-199).

For years, research has focused on the psychological settings of collective action, in which people act in support of their group to fight against disadvantage or injustice. This proposed model describes why people escalate collective action as an extension of an individual coping strategy approach at the collective level. Radke, Kutlaca and Becker (2022: 1–2) mention the following:

> This model results in a prediction that group members' emotional experiences of a collective problem and their perception of the group efficacy to create social change are two independent pathways that can mobilise individuals to take collective action.

Dual pathway model utilises integrations of key insights from relative deprivation theory, resource mobilisation theory, and social identity theory by suggesting that grievances or prospective benefits trigger enough intention for protest. Other than the cognitive dimensions of motivation, members of a group must also identify with the group and believe that they are unfairly suffering as part of it.

When the experience of group-based deprivation increases the salience of social identity, decision-making is simultaneously influenced by influential considerations and emotions. The aforementioned understanding of collective actors produces several advantages, including its reliability with a great body of cognitive research, its capability to integrate subjective utility models with social identity models, and its capacity to formulate predictions about the situations and processes that push individuals toward protest (Van Zomeren, Leach & Spears, 2012: 185–186).

The dual pathways of anger and efficacy function on multiple levels of analysis. The impact of anger on protest intentions follows two routes, namely dispositional and situational, while the effect of efficacy travels using a situational channel (Van Zomeren et al., 2012: 185–186). The dual pathways of anger and efficacy function on multiple levels of analysis. The impact of anger on protest intentions follows two routes, namely dispositional and situational, while the effect of efficacy travels using a situational channel. In this context, dispositional factors refer to individuals' inherent personality traits, emotional tendencies, and past experiences that shape their predisposition to feel anger in response to perceived injustices. People who have a strong dispositional tendency toward anger may be more likely to interpret events as unjust and thus be motivated to engage in collective action. This pathway highlights how personal characteristics influence emotional responses and subsequent behavioural intentions (Van Zomeren et al., 2012: 185–186).

On the other hand, situational factors involve the specific context or environment in which individuals find themselves. This includes the presence of triggering events, social cues, or external stimuli that can provoke feelings of anger or mobilise individuals to act. For example, witnessing an act of injustice in a public setting or being part of a group that discusses grievances can significantly enhance situational anger. In this case, the immediacy and visibility of the situation can galvanise individuals to protest, regardless of their dispositional traits. Thus, while dispositional factors shape the baseline emotional tendencies of individuals, situational factors play a crucial role in the moment-to-moment experiences that lead to protest intentions (Van Zomeren et al., 2012: 185–186).

The aforementioned suggests that certain changes to a situation can trigger anger and efficacy, which sequentially influence protest intentions. Distinct from efficacy, certain individuals are prone to anger. That dispositional anger (or mood) is related to tendencies for protest. Furthermore, social identity has a trivial role in driving anger, efficacy, and protest intentions, while collective disadvantage accounts for all three (Robbins et al., 2021: 3).

The dual pathway model of collective action offer several advantages that can significantly contribute to the current study. These advantages encompass a comprehensive understanding of collective action dynamics, insights into emotional and situational influences, and practical implications for policing and public policy, including the following (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Klandermans, 1997; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, Kramer & Goldman, 2018: 750–757):

- Holistic understanding of protest dynamics: The dual pathway model provide a nuanced framework for understanding the motivations behind collective action, particularly the interplay of anger and efficacy. By examining how these emotions drive individuals to protest, the research can uncover deeper insights into the factors that escalate violence. POP officials can benefit from understanding that not all protests are driven by uniform motivations. Some protests may stem from deep-seated anger towards systemic issues, while others may arise from a sense of efficacy, which suggests that participants believe their actions can effect change. This understanding can inform how police approach different protests, customising their responses to the emotional and motivational landscapes at play.
- Focus on dispositional and situational factors: The emphasis of the dual pathway model on both dispositional and situational factors allows for a more comprehensive analysis of protest dynamics. In the context of this dissertation, investigating how individual characteristics, such as past experiences with law enforcement, socio-economic status, and cultural background, influence protest intentions can yield valuable insights into why certain groups may be more prone to violence. Simultaneously, the situational factors, such as the presence of provocative police actions, media coverage, and the socio-political environment, can be analysed to understand their role in escalating tensions. This dual focus helps to create a more complete picture of the circumstances leading to violence, enabling the development of better strategies for de-escalation.
- Insights into emotional responses: Understanding how anger operates in both a dispositional and situational manner provides critical insights into the emotional landscape of protests. For instance, if police officials can identify specific triggers that exacerbate anger among protesters, such as heavy-handed policing or inflammatory rhetoric, they can adjust their strategies to mitigate these triggers. By recognising the emotional underpinnings of protests, police can engage in practices that promote dialogue rather than confrontation, potentially reducing the likelihood of violence.
- Customised policing strategies: The findings from applying dual pathway model can inform the development of customised policing strategies for different types of protest. Police can adopt varied approaches by distinguishing between protests driven by anger and those

motivated by a sense of efficacy. For instance, protests characterised by high levels of anger may require more sensitive engagement strategies focused on communication and negotiation, while those fuelled by efficacy may benefit from structured dialogue aimed at addressing grievances. This customised approach can enhance public safety and maintain order while respecting the right to protest.

- Policy implications and community relations: The application of dual pathway model can contribute towards the development of policies that enhance community relations and promote peaceful protests. By providing empirical data on the emotional and situational factors that lead to violence. The findings of the current research could inform training programmes for police officers in future. Training can emphasise the importance of emotional intelligence, situational awareness, and community engagement strategies, ultimately fostering better relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.
- Contribution to academic discourse: Finally, the dissertation can contribute to the broader academic discourse on collective action and protest dynamics, particularly in the South African context. By incorporating dual pathway model, it situates itself within a contemporary theoretical framework that emphasises the complexity of social movements. This can pave the way for further research that explores similar dynamics in different regions or contexts, enriching the field of social movement studies and contributing to a deeper understanding of public order policing in diverse settings.

In summary, the advantages of dual pathway model of collective action provide a robust framework for analysing the factors that escalate violence during protests. By focusing on the interplay between emotional and situational influences, this model can inform public order policing strategies, enhance community relations, and contribute to academic discourse. The insights gained from this approach can ultimately lead to more effective and compassionate policing practices in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas, promoting social order while respecting the right to peaceful protest (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Klandermans, 1997; Kramer & Goldman, 2018; Roth & Kahn, 2020; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007).

Some criticism has been posed against the dual pathway model, particularly regarding its potential oversimplification of the complex emotional and situational dynamics involved in collective action. Critics argue that by categorising motivations strictly into anger and efficacy, the model may overlook other significant emotional responses, such as fear, hope, or solidarity, which can also play critical roles in shaping protest behaviours. Furthermore, there is concern that the model might not adequately address the interactions between different emotions or the broader socio-political context

that influences these pathways (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Klandermans, 1997; Kramer & Goldman, 2018; Roth & Kahn, 2020; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007).

However, for the purposes of the current study, this is seen as a strength because it allows for a focused examination of the primary motivations that drive protest behaviours in the specific context of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane. By concentrating on anger and efficacy, the study can delve deeply into how these two pathways manifest in protest situations, providing a clearer framework for understanding how public perceptions of police actions may escalate violence. This focused approach facilitates the identification of key triggers and motivations that can inform effective policing strategies and community engagement efforts. Additionally, acknowledging the limitations of the model invites further exploration of other emotional factors in future research, creating opportunities for a more comprehensive understanding of collective action dynamics (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Klandermans, 1997; Kramer & Goldman, 2018; Roth & Kahn, 2020; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007).

3.5 Social learning theory

Several social learning theories have been developed. In short, social learning theory suggests that social behaviour is learned by observing and imitating the behaviour of others (role models). Therefore, specific individuals learn to commit crimes using the same process through which other people learn conforming behaviour (Eriksson, Enquist & Ghirlanda, 2007: 67–87). The social learning theory of Albert Bandura is often recognised as one of the most influential theories in this domain. Bandura believed that humans acquire new behaviours and knowledge by watching others, a process he coined as vicarious learning (Triplett, 2015: 1). Importantly, the social learning theory supposes that individuals do not have the motivation to conform or commit a crime at birth. Subsequently, learning theorists ask why an individual commits a crime. To answer this question, they emphasise the processes of learning, which include the interaction between behaviour, environment, and thought or cognition (Triplett, 2015: 1).

Social learning theory is one of the leading explanations of criminal behaviour. It states that crime is learned and has an increased likelihood to occur when people differentially associate with individuals who experience more contact with delinquent models, are criminally involved, anticipate or get increased rewards and fewer punishments for crime, and have more definitions that are favourable to crime (Ward & Brown, 2015: 409–414). Therefore, many children and young adults who experience violent protest actions daily in their neighbourhoods learn that the only way to achieve better service delivery and infrastructure is to protest against the authorities. Consequently, protest actions become learned or conditioned behaviour, and people participate in protests that are likely to turn violent.

In this context, Bandura asserted that “some cultures and societies breed aggression by modelling it and attaching social importance to it” (Bartol & Bartol, 2021: 45). There are three primary types of models that influence aggressive behaviours: family members, members of one’s subculture, and symbolic models provided by mass media.

Family members, especially parents, serve as significant role models for children, shaping their behaviours and attitudes toward aggression during early childhood and into early adolescence. As children mature, the influence of peer models becomes increasingly prominent. By early adolescence, peers often have a greater impact on an individual’s behaviour, which leads to a shift in the sources of modelling for aggression (Rademacher, Zumbach & Koglin, 2023: 1-10).

Research indicates that the highest incidence of aggressive behaviour tends to occur in communities and groups where aggressive models are prevalent and where attributes such as fighting ability are esteemed. This correlation suggests that environments that glorify aggression foster similar behaviours among their members (Bandura, 1983; Lacourse, Nagin, Tremblay, Vitaro & Claes, 2003; Thornberry & Burch, 1997).

In addition to family and peers, mass media plays a crucial role in shaping societal norms and expectations regarding aggression. Various forms of mass media, including television, films, electronic videos, magazines, newspapers, and literature, offer numerous symbolic models that can influence the perceptions and behaviours of viewers. In today’s digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful conduit for these influences. Platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram allow for the rapid dissemination of content, including comments, memes, and videos, that often portrays cruelty and violence. The seemingly endless streams of such material can normalise aggressive behaviour and desensitise individuals to its consequences, further perpetuating a cycle of aggression in society. Thus, understanding these diverse models and their impact is essential for comprehending how aggression is learned and reinforced within various cultural and social contexts (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006: 393-415).

One of the key strengths of social learning theory is its emphasis on the importance of social interactions and environmental factors in shaping behaviour. Unlike traditional behaviourism, which primarily focuses on direct reinforcement and punishment, social learning theory acknowledges the role of cognitive processes. This integration of cognitive factors means that individuals are not merely passive recipients of external stimuli; rather, they actively interpret and evaluate the behaviours they observe, which allows for more complex forms of learning (Eriksson et al., 2007: 67–87).

Furthermore, the theory has broad applications across various fields. In education, it provides insights into effective teaching strategies that leverage peer modelling and collaborative learning. In

psychology, it offers a framework for understanding behaviours ranging from aggression to addiction, illustrating how social environments influence personal choices (Rumjaun& Narod, 2020: 85–99).

However, social learning theory is not without its criticisms. It may overemphasise the role of social influence while underestimating biological and individual factors that also contribute to behaviour. Additionally, the theory has been criticised for its limited focus on the emotional and motivational components of learning, which can also play a crucial role in behaviour development. A more integrated approach that combines social learning with other psychological theories, such as cognitive development or biological predispositions, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of learned behaviour. In summary, while social learning theory has profoundly impacted our understanding of behaviour and learning, its strengths are balanced by some level of criticism. Addressing these critiques may enhance the theory's applicability and relevance in a broader psychological context (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020: 85–99).

Social learning theory, as conceptualised by Albert Bandura, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals acquire and modify behaviours through their interactions with others and their environments. It emphasises the importance of observing, imitating, and modelling the behaviours of others, particularly those perceived as role models. The theory integrates behavioural and cognitive components, highlighting the complex interplay between individual actions and social influences.

Social learning theory, as outlined by Akers and Jennings (2019), emphasises the process through which individuals acquire new behaviours, particularly through observing others. One of the key aspects of this theory is observational learning, which involves four essential stages. First is attention, where individuals must focus on the behaviour being demonstrated. Factors like the model's attractiveness, status, or relevance can significantly influence the level of attention given. The second stage is retention, where individuals must encode and store the observed behaviour for later use. Next is reproduction, where individuals must have the physical and mental capacity to replicate the behaviour they've observed. Finally, motivation plays a critical role; people are more likely to adopt a behaviour if they anticipate rewards or if the behaviour aligns with their personal goals and desires (Akers & Jennings, 2019: 113–129).

Another important element in social learning theory is the concept of reinforcement and punishment, which Bandura expanded upon in his work. Positive reinforcement, such as praise or rewards, increases the likelihood that a behaviour will be repeated, while punishment or negative consequences work to decrease its recurrence. These consequences can either be experienced directly or observed in others, highlighting the importance of the social context in shaping behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2019: 113–129).

Furthermore, cognitive processes are central to social learning theory, distinguishing it from purely behaviourist approaches. Cognitive factors such as beliefs, expectations, and attitudes influence whether an individual decides to imitate an observed behaviour. For instance, if a person believes that a specific behaviour will lead to a favourable outcome, they are more likely to engage in it. Additionally, self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to perform a specific task, is crucial in determining whether an individual will attempt a particular behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2019: 113–129). Finally, reciprocal determinism is a fundamental principle of social learning theory, which underscores the dynamic interplay between personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour. Bandura suggests that these elements are interdependent; an individual's behaviour is shaped by their environment and personal characteristics, while their actions can also influence the environment around them. For example, a confident student (personal factor) who actively participates in class (behaviour) may foster a positive learning environment (environmental influence), which, in turn, reinforces their ongoing engagement (Akers & Jennings, 2019: 113–129).

In summary, social learning theory bridges the gap between behaviourism and cognitive psychology, offering a nuanced understanding of how individuals learn and adapt within social contexts. By acknowledging the roles of observation, reinforcement, cognitive processes, and the reciprocal relationship between behaviour and the environment, this theory provides valuable insights into the mechanisms of learning and the factors that shape human behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2019: 113–129).

3.6 Summary, interpretation and conclusion

Against the background of the deterrence theory one can assume that the lack of arrests and conviction rates can serve as a motivator to embark on further violent protests. Furthermore, the dual pathway model of collective action could explain why people decide to protest. One pathway concerns the calculation of the costs and benefits of participation and the other pathway concerns collective identification processes as suggested by the social identity approach. Whereas the model's calculation pathway can be interpreted in terms of group members' instrumental involvement motivated by specific extrinsic rewards, the identification pathway seems to represent intrinsic involvement based on the internalisation of group-specific behavioural standards. In addition to the aforementioned factors, strains experienced, such as inadequate service delivery of water, electricity and/or housing, and the feeling of the unjust situation in conjunction with the anomie experienced in a big group can all be contributing factors in the increasing probability of violent protest action.

Learning to riot or protest can be understood through social learning theory, which highlights the role of observation, imitation, and social context. Individuals often learn these behaviours by watching role models, such as community leaders or media representations of protests, which can motivate

participation. Vicarious reinforcement also plays a role; seeing others rewarded for their actions can encourage individuals to engage.

Group dynamics also influence participation, especially during emotionally charged moments where people are driven to act collectively through strong identities and the desire to conform. The broader social and political climate shapes these behaviours, with periods of unrest increasing the likelihood of protests. Historical precedents, such as successful movements, reinforce these behaviours. However, while social learning theory provides valuable insights, it may overlook individual agency and socio-economic factors. Not everyone who observes protests will participate, highlighting the importance of personal beliefs and experiences. In general, the theory is helpful in explaining collective action, but it could benefit from integrating other perspectives. These theories combined with the utilisation of previous unrest history in the area, previous protest analysis, and common factors about the protest action in question can all be used to identify factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in South Africa.

In conclusion, the literature review on “Perceptions of POP officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas” provides a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between social dynamics, economic conditions, and police practices that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests.

The application of various theoretical frameworks further enriches our understanding of these dynamics. Deterrence theory suggests that the perceived likelihood of police intervention can influence protest behaviour significantly. When police are seen as a credible deterrent, the expectation of consequences may inhibit violent actions. Conversely, if protesters perceive police responses as being overly aggressive or unjustified, it may escalate tensions and provoke violence. This highlights the importance of strategic law enforcement practices that balance the need for public order with the rights of individuals to protest peacefully.

GST posits that individuals experiencing social and economic pressures are more likely to engage in deviant behaviour, including violence. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane areas, where high levels of unemployment and social inequality create a fertile ground for frustration and unrest.

Anomie theory complements this understanding by emphasising the breakdown of social norms and values that often accompany rapid social change or economic distress. In communities where there is disillusionment with political structures and a lack of trust in authorities, the absence of clear norms can result in increased collective frustration and disorder. This theory underscores the necessity of

rebuilding social cohesion and trust between the community and law enforcement to mitigate the risk of violent escalations.

The dual pathway of collective action theory provides a nuanced view of how both individual motivations and group dynamics influence protest behaviours. It recognises that while some individuals may join protests for social or political reasons, others may be drawn in by the dynamics of the crowd, potentially leading to escalated violence.

Social learning theory enhances this discussion by illustrating how individuals learn behaviours through observation and imitation. In protest contexts, the visibility of violent actions, whether by protesters or police, can set a precedent that encourages similar behaviours among others. This highlights the need for law enforcement to model restraint and professionalism during protests, as their actions can directly influence the behaviour of those involved.

Moreover, fostering community engagement, encouraging political will and dialogue can help rebuild trust and understanding between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Such initiatives could lead to more peaceful protests and a reduction in violence. Ultimately, addressing the underlying issues and employing strategic law enforcement practices could significantly enhance the effectiveness of policing in the studied municipal areas, paving the way for a more stable and cohesive social environment.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods that were utilised to determine the factors that escalate violence during protest action in the three metropolitan municipalities in Gauteng. Prior to data collection, methodologies were selected that would yield the most accurate results. The research approach, purpose and type of research, and research design are discussed. The study population and sampling procedure, data collection, data analysis, pilot study, and ethical considerations are also reflected. Moreover, the challenges surrounding the methods utilised are scrutinised. Methodology refers to the approach we take not only to address problems, but also to discover solutions. In the realm of social sciences, it pertains to the methods employed in research. Our assumptions, interests, and objectives influence the choice of methodology. At its core, debates over methodology revolve around assumptions, objectives, theory, and perspective (Taylor, 2015: 15).

4.2 Research approach

A qualitative approach was employed in this study as it involves a methodical investigation of social phenomena that occur within our physical environment. The social phenomena can include how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups conduct themselves, how organisations operate, and how socialisation shapes relationships (Teherani et al., 2015: 669). The main purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of the overall human experience (Lichtman, 2017: 1-4). The qualitative approach will provide a better understanding of the phenomena in this study, namely protests and the factors contributing to the escalation of violence during protests. It is the researcher's role to bring understanding, interpretation, and meaning as they examine the data in question (Lichtman, 2017: 1-4). The researcher investigates why certain situations occur, what happens, and what those occurrences mean to the participants involved (Behar-Horenstein, 2018: 1341).

Qualitative researchers delve into how individuals perceive and interpret their surroundings, often encountering phenomena that are not adequately explained by conventional theories. Unlike positivist researchers, who rely on deductive reasoning, qualitative inquiry adopts an inductive approach. Here, researchers gather data not to test predefined hypotheses, but to construct concepts, hypotheses, or even theory from the ground up. Through immersion in the field, they cultivate insights and observations, gradually shaping these into thematic elements, categories, typologies, or tentative theories that reflect the participants' lived experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019: 6).

In essence, qualitative research aims to capture the nuanced perspectives of those involved, resulting in richly descriptive findings. Rather than reducing phenomena to numerical data, qualitative studies employ words, and sometimes visual aids, to convey the researcher's deepened understanding. Consequently, the narrative of a qualitative inquiry typically encompasses detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, and focal activities. These findings are underpinned by direct quotations from interviews, excerpts from relevant documents or field notes, and visual materials such as photographs or video clips, serving as tangible evidence supporting the study's conclusions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019: 6).

Phenomenology emphasises the interpretation and description of individuals' experiences, and it is strongly grounded in philosophical assumptions (Ryan, 2018: 18). Phenomenology is a philosophy centred on experience. It asserts that the lived experiences of human beings are the ultimate source of all meaning and value. According to phenomenology, all philosophical systems, scientific theories, and aesthetic judgements are merely abstractions derived from the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the lived world (Smith, 2018).

Two primary theoretical perspectives have dominated the landscape of social science methodology, namely positivism and phenomenology. The first perspective, positivism, finds its roots in the works of influential thinkers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly Comte and Durkheim. Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte was a French philosopher, mathematician, and writer known for developing the doctrine of positivism. In his *System of Positive Polity*, Comte outlined his vision for an ideal positivist society. He argued that the organisational structure of the Roman Catholic Church, separated from Christian theology, could serve as a model for this new society. However, instead of worshiping God, he proposed a "religion of humanity". In his vision, a spiritual priesthood of secular sociologists would oversee societal guidance, education, and public morality. Meanwhile, the actual governance and economic management would be led by businessmen and bankers, with women, in their roles as wives and mothers, responsible for upholding private morality (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

Within Western philosophy, positivism refers to any system that limits itself to empirical data and dismisses a priori or metaphysical speculation. Positivists seek to uncover the facts or causes behind social phenomena, independent of individual subjective experiences. The fundamental principles of positivism include: (i) that all factual knowledge is derived from the "positive" data of experience, and (ii) that the domain of pure logic and mathematics lies beyond factual matters (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

The second major perspective, referred to as the phenomenological perspective, has deep roots in philosophy and sociology. Phenomenologists or interpretivists aim to comprehend social

phenomena from the perspective of the actors involved and explore how individuals experience the world. The driving forces behind human behaviour are rooted in meaningful experiences, internal ideas, feelings, and motives. As positivists and phenomenologists address different types of inquiries and pursue different kinds of insights, their research methodologies differ accordingly (Taylor, 2015: 19).

Positivists adopt a research model akin to natural sciences, seeking causes through methods such as questionnaires, inventories, and demographic analyses, which generate data suitable for statistical examination. On the other hand, phenomenologists employ qualitative methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews to produce descriptive data. Unlike adherents of the natural science approach, phenomenologists aim for verstehen, or personal understanding, of the motives and beliefs underlying people's actions (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011: 12–14).

Note that the current research used a phenomenological lens. The foremost aim of phenomenological research is the study of the lived experiences of individuals relating to a particular concept or phenomenon. Phenomenological research intends to comprehend and define the general essence of a phenomenon. The approach studies the daily experiences of people while suspending the predetermined beliefs of the researcher about the phenomenon. Phenomenological research aims to obtain an improved understanding of how individuals understand their experiences by studying lived experiences. This approach presumes that individuals use an essence or universal structure to understand their experiences. Researchers utilise this approach to elucidate the essence of the phenomenon being studied by interpreting participants' perceptions feelings and beliefs (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022).

Essentially, researchers use phenomenological research designs to understand a phenomenon's universal nature by means of studying the opinions of the people who have experienced it (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). The current study adopted an approach rooted in the phenomenological domain, focusing on exploring and understanding individuals' lived experiences and subjective perceptions. Phenomenology, as a qualitative research methodology, seeks to uncover the essence of phenomena as experienced by individuals, aiming to describe these experiences in rich, detailed, and meaningful ways.

By emphasising the participants' perspectives, the study sought to delve deeply into their realities, uncovering patterns, meanings, and insights that may not be readily observable through other methods. This approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social issues, emotional states, or processes that involve personal interpretation and meaning making. Through in-depth interviews the study captured the nuanced and textured nature of participants' experiences, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, including the contextual factors, subjective

experiences, and social dynamics that shape individuals' actions and perceptions. This depth of inquiry allows researchers to construct a rich, holistic account of how people make sense of their world, revealing hidden dimensions and underlying motivations that quantitative methods might overlook. The qualitative approach further facilitates the exploration of diverse perspectives, enhancing the understanding of variability in human behaviour and the complexity of social interactions within the studied context.

4.3 Research paradigm

The research paradigm employed in the current research is interpretivism. Interpretivism uses qualitative research methods that emphasises persons' motivations, beliefs, and reasoning over quantitative data to increase understanding of social interactions. Interpretivists adopt the idea that access to reality occurs by means of social constructions, for example, consciousness, language, instruments, and shared meanings. Interpretivist approaches towards the social sciences state that it is important for researchers to value the differences between individuals and aim to comprehend in what way the differences inform how people find meaning, as meaning exists through the lens of people (Nickerson, 2023).

Interpretivism refers to a set of approaches within social science that are based on specific ontological and epistemological assumptions. The key idea is that the subject matter of social sciences is fundamentally different from that of natural sciences, meaning that the methods used in natural sciences are not suitable for social sciences. To study social phenomena, one must understand the social worlds people inhabit. These worlds have been interpreted by individuals through the meanings they create and maintain in their daily interactions. While natural scientists interpret nature using scientific concepts and theories, making decisions about what is relevant to their research, social scientists study phenomena that have already been interpreted by those they study (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Futing Liao, 2004: 509).

Interpretivism also states that individuals have consciousness, which signifies that people are not solely forced puppets that react to social pressures. In short, diverse individuals in a society comprehend and experience the identical objective reality in different ways and therefore have different motives for their actions. Owing to the fact that interpretivists understand social reality as rooted within and difficult to separate from their social settings, they endeavour to make sense of reality instead of testing hypotheses (Nickerson, 2023).

Similar to positivism, interpretivism finds its historical roots in anthropology but stands in opposition to it, which is often termed anti-positivism (Flick, 2014). Interpretivism asserts that truth and knowledge are subjective, culturally and historically situated, and shaped by individuals' experiences

and their interpretations thereof. Since researchers can never entirely divorce themselves from their values and beliefs, these factors inevitably influence how they gather, interpret, and analyse data (Ryan, 2018: 14).

Critiques of interpretivism have arisen both internally and externally. For instance, suggesting competent social actors engage in continual monitoring of their behaviour, fully aware of their intentions and actions, is misleading. Reflection typically occurs only retrospectively, when prompted by external queries, or when action is disrupted. Often, action proceeds without reflective monitoring (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004: 510).

In response to the view held by some interpretivists that social scientists should simply report social actors' accounts without interpreting or theorising, Rex (1974), Bhaskar (1979), Outhwaite (1987), and Giddens (as cited in Lewis-Beck et al., 2004: 510) contend that social scientists should provide alternative and competing explanations for the actions of social actors. This linguistic fallacy, highlights the failure to acknowledge that reality extends beyond what social actors express through language. Additionally, interpretivism commits the epistemic fallacy by assuming that our only means of accessing the social world is through interpretive processes. Critics, including Giddens and Rex, assert that interpretivism neglects institutional structures, particularly power relations and divisions of interest (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004: 510). In the context of the current study, the researcher will strive to maintain objectivity while analysing and interpreting the data collected. This involves approaching the information with an open mind, minimising personal biases, and ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the perspectives and experiences of the participants rather than the researcher's preconceived notions or assumptions.

To achieve this, the researcher will adopt strategies such as bracketing, where prior beliefs and judgments are consciously set aside, and will rigorously follow systematic data analysis procedures to ensure transparency and trustworthiness. By prioritising neutrality and fidelity to the data, the researcher aims to produce interpretations that are credible, balanced, and grounded in the evidence provided by the participants.

4.4 Research purpose

Exploratory research, which is the research purpose for the current research, is demarcated as research utilised to examine a problem that is not evidently defined. While the aim of exploratory research is to improve the understanding of existing research problems, it does not deliver definite results. Within exploratory research, the researcher starts with an overall concept/idea and utilises exploratory research as a means to recognise issues that could be the focus for future research. With this type of research, the researcher should be prepared to alter their course based on their

exposure to different data or understanding. Exploratory research is typically undertaken when the problem is at an opening stage. It is also often referred to as a grounded theory approach or interpretive research as it is usually employed to answer questions such as why, what, and how (George, 2021). As such, exploratory research was employed in this current research.

4.5 Type of research

The current research report is based on basic research. The choice to pursue basic research was based not only on its lack of immediate results upon completion, but also on its primary objective of enhancing comprehension of a phenomenon (Given, 2012: 57–59). Basic research is not as concerned with solving practical problems; it attempts to develop a large amount of knowledge that does not necessarily have a direct or clear practical application. This is the aim of this research – to simply describe the phenomenon in question (OECD, 2015: 44). The research does not aim to develop an intervention tool to address violent actions during protests. Therefore, the aim is to identify the core factors that contribute to the use of violence during protests. As such, the research is basic in nature and not applied. It is expected that the researcher will pursue a doctoral degree after completing her master's degree. During the doctoral research, she will focus on doing applied research and to develop an intervention tool to address the issue of violence during protest actions.

4.6 Research design

The current study follows case study research. Firstly, case study research aims to produce an in-depth understanding of real-world behaviour and its meaning, while also providing new learning opportunities. Secondly, it acknowledges and elaborates on the personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, and feelings of research participants. It identifies the key aspects of the research question on hand and consequently elaborates on, finds relationships, and draws accurate conclusions about the research question (Starman, 2013: 31).

Case studies typically excel in areas where quantitative studies may falter. They offer high conceptual validity, provide robust methods for generating new research themes, allow for in-depth examination of causal mechanisms within individual contexts, and are adept at addressing intricate causal relationships (Starman, 2013: 36–37).

Case studies offer conceptual validity by identifying and measuring the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts a researcher seeks to evaluate. Many of the variables of interest to social scientists, such as democracy and power, are challenging to quantify. As a result, researchers must perform contextualised comparisons, which inherently seek analytically equivalent phenomena, even if expressed in different terms and contexts. This process demands careful attention to

contextual factors. While quantitative research often struggles with conceptual stretching, grouping dissimilar cases together to increase sample size, case studies enable conceptual refinement and yield higher validity with fewer cases (Starman, 2013: 36–37).

4.6.1 Deriving new variables

Case studies are particularly advantageous for the heuristic function of inductively identifying new variables since they enable researchers to explore complex social phenomena thoroughly. By focusing on specific instances or contexts, case studies allow for the examination of qualitatively intricate events by facilitating a nuanced understanding of how multiple factors interact. This approach is beneficial because it does not rely on large sample sizes or a restricted set of variables, which are typically required for quantitative research. Instead, case studies can accommodate a broader array of variables, reflecting the multifaceted nature of real-world situations (Starman, 2013: 36–37).

Moreover, case study researchers are not limited to variables that can be easily quantified or to predefined data sets. This flexibility is crucial for capturing the complexities of human behaviour and social dynamics. While quantitative methods may identify outlier cases that warrant further exploration, they typically do not provide the tools needed to formulate new hypotheses without additional qualitative analysis. Techniques such as open-ended interviews, participant observation, and document analysis are essential for uncovering omitted variables and gaining deeper insights through inductive reasoning (Starman, 2013: 36–37). These qualitative methods allow researchers to engage with participants' perspectives, revealing subtleties that may be overlooked in purely quantitative studies.

In the current study, it is expected that employing a case study approach will yield new insights into the dynamics of public order policing during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas. The research aims to uncover previously unexamined variables that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests by conducting in-depth interviews with police officials and community members. This qualitative exploration will not only enhance the understanding of the interplay between emotional and situational factors but will also inform practical recommendations for policing strategies and community engagement efforts. Ultimately, the case study method will facilitate a richer, more comprehensive analysis of the issues at hand, paving the way for further research in the field of social movement studies.

4.6.2 Exploring causal mechanisms

Case studies are closely related to the current study as they underscore the methodological framework on which the research is based. Case studies are particularly suited for examining the intricate causal mechanisms that operate within specific contexts, allowing for a detailed exploration of various intervening variables. This depth of analysis is crucial for understanding the complexities of public order policing and the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas (Starman, 2013: 36–37).

By focusing on individual cases, the research can uncover unexpected aspects of causal mechanisms and identify specific conditions that activate these mechanisms. This contrasts with quantitative studies that often rely on correlations, which may miss contextual factors that could significantly influence outcomes (Starman, 2013: 36–37). The current study aims to move beyond mere correlation by utilising case studies to capture the nuanced dynamics of police-community interactions during protests.

The decision to employ instrumental case studies is particularly relevant since these studies allow for the exploration of participants' experiences while emphasising the broader issues related to the phenomenon under investigation. As highlighted by Baxter and Jack (2008: 549), the case itself serves as a lens through which important aspects of the research topic can be illuminated. This approach aligns with the study's goal of understanding the interplay between emotional and situational influences in protest dynamics.

The use of case studies has many advantages, including ensuring exhaustive data collection and fostering close relationships between the researcher and participants, which contribute to the credibility of the findings. Establishing these relationships can lead to richer, more accurate data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in public order policing. However, the potential for participants to modify their responses in the presence of the researcher is an important consideration, as noted in the text. Acknowledging this limitation, the study will strive to create an environment that encourages honest and open dialogue (Creswell, 2017: 74).

Finally, while the case study method can be time-consuming (Creswell, 2017: 74), the depth of insight it provides into the factors that influence protest dynamics justifies the investment. The current study anticipates that such a thorough approach will yield valuable findings that contribute to both academic discourse and practical recommendations for policing strategies in the specific contexts being examined. Overall, these methodological considerations directly support the aims of the study, highlighting the importance of a case study approach in addressing the complexities of the research question.

4.7 Study population and sampling

This section discusses the study population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, data quality, and pilot study.

4.7.1 Study population

The study population consisted of POP members from the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane metropolitan municipal areas. The study population was reached by determining which areas were within a reachable and realistic radius and which experienced the most protests. Permission was requested and granted by the SAPS Head Office to approach POP members as research participants (Annexure D). Moreover, following approval by SAPS Head Office, consent letters were provided to members who agreed to participate.

4.7.2 Sampling

Non-probability sampling was chosen to select the sample. This method is not as systematic as probability sampling due to several limitations. These limitations include factors such as the convenience of subjects, purpose of the study, different criteria, and other non-statistical measures (Denscombe, 201422–25). Purposive sampling was used because the researcher specified the characteristics of the population being sampled (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015: 171). In addition, there was a specific group of individuals with knowledge and opinions about the specified topic. They possess knowledge regarding factors that potentially escalate violence during protests. In conjunction with purposive sampling, snowball sampling, which is also known as chain-referral sampling, was used. Snowball/chain-referral sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which existing study subjects identify future subjects from among their acquaintances, which results in the sample group growing like a rolling snowball (Denscombe, 2014: 22–25).

It should be noted that the interviews predominantly focused on POP members because they are deployed into protests more often. Nine participants from the City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, and City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality were interviewed. The inclusion criteria for participating in the research were POP officials who had been deployed to protests at least once and were available for interviews. Exclusion criteria were POP officials who had not been deployed to protests, those who were not willing and/or able to participate in the interviews, and members who were not able to speak English and/or Afrikaans. Brigadier Kobus Schwartz from the SAPS Head Office was the intermediary contact person who assisted with the research and processes at SAPS. The researcher contacted the designated person, Colonel WJ du Pisanie from the POP Unit in Pretoria via email. Following this,

arrangements were made for the researcher to conduct the interviews at the Rosslyn POP Unit, where personnel are deployed to the relevant municipal areas. Arrangement was made in the following manner: Colonel WJ du Pisanie asked participant 1 if he/she had the time, if they would like to participate in the study and was also requested to ask their colleagues. Participant 1, then asked participant 2, who asked participant 3 and the sample grew larger in this manner. Colonel W.J. du Pisanie, the Unit Commander of the Public Order Police Unit in Pretoria, is stationed at this office. Furthermore, the POP officials present at the office on the day of the interviews are also deployed to protest actions in other metropolitan municipal areas, including Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg, due to the limited availability of POP personnel. As such, the sample population included POP officials who have been deployed into protests that occurred in all three Metropolitan Municipal areas.

4.7.3 Data-gathering method

Face-to-face and semi-structured interviews, also known as in-person interviews, were employed as the data-gathering method. Interviews are beneficial in decreasing non-responsiveness and boosting the quality of data given by participants (Pedersen & Kristensen, 2013: 5). There are many advantages to conducting face-to-face interviews. The interviewer can explain questions and gain valuable insights, and face-to-face interviews are cost-effective and have high response rates (Pedersen & Kristensen, 2013: 5). The disadvantages of face-to-face interviews often dot grant participants a great deal of freedom with regard to the time provided to answer questions, which can result in answers that are not thought through properly. Privacy can be an issue because one has to establish rapport between the interviewer and the group of interviewees before sensitive questions can be asked. The interviewer effect has to be considered where interviewee statements can be affected by the identity of the interviewer (Pedersen & Kristensen, 2013: 5). The reason for choosing a semi-structured interviewing approach is because it permits a set of standardised questions to be asked but still enables the research participant to digress from a specific question. This is not necessarily considered a negative occurrence because there is a possibility that it could provide other meaningful information that must be noted and regarded as beneficial to the research process.

Transcripts were obtained from the audio recordings of the interviews. Consent to record the interviews was requested. Recordings guarantee that the gathered data is relayed accurately, credibly, and contextually. It also allows the researcher to replay (should it be necessary) and analyse direct quotes from the interviewee. As most of the research data is based on the perception, beliefs, and knowledge of research participants, all information must be gathered accurately. The researcher has to refer to the information while compiling the final report and the exact nature must be shared in an accurate manner. Additionally, transcripts allow for content analysis to take place

effectively as the content of all the interviews can be seen, which leads to themes being drawn from the content (Lune & Burg, 2017: 90). After conducting the necessary data analysis, common themes were determined to categorise the factors, which may aid in the creation of a framework regarding violence (onset or escalation) during riots and eventually a typology, which could serve as a potential topic for a doctoral thesis. An interview guide (Annexure B) was used during the interview process. In order to maintain relative privacy and confidentiality, the interview took place in a boardroom at the POP office. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, the interview was held in a boardroom at the POP office in Pretoria (PTA). The location was chosen to provide a neutral and private setting, free from distractions and interruptions, which is crucial for maintaining the confidentiality of the interview process. As for the logistics, if individuals from Johannesburg or Ekurhuleni participated, they would have travelled to the Pretoria office for the interview. This arrangement is typical when coordinating interviews across different regional offices, ensuring that the right participants are present in a secure environment for the discussion. The choice of location emphasises the importance of safeguarding sensitive information and providing a professional atmosphere for the interview.

Geyer (2021) emphasises the importance of a structured yet flexible interview guide for research at the grassroots level. The guide should begin with clear objectives that focus on what the researcher aims to learn. It should include open-ended questions that encourage participants to share their experiences and insights, while being sensitive to the cultural, social, and environmental context of the participants. Probing questions are also crucial to explore deeper meanings and unexpected themes, without leading the participant towards a specific answer. Flexibility is key, allowing the interviewer to adapt based on the flow of conversation, which helps uncover new ideas. Ethical considerations, such as respecting privacy and ensuring informed consent, are also vital to the process. This approach ensures that the interview guide effectively supports meaningful, contextually relevant data collection at the grassroots level (Geyer,2021: 33-45).

4.7.4 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is used to search for patterns in the data to clarify why these patterns are there in the first place. It refers to the range of processes and procedures whereby researchers move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the people and situations being investigated (Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2017: 5). Qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretative philosophy, with the idea of examining the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. It can also be defined as the process of systematically applying logical techniques to describe, illustrate, condense, recap, and evaluate data (Bernard et al., 2017: 2).

For qualitative research to be regarded as trustworthy, researchers must prove that data analysis was performed in a reliable, thorough, and exact way by means of recording, systematising, and revealing the analysis methods with sufficient information to allow the reader to establish whether the process is credible. In this study, the researcher themed, coded, recontextualised, and decontextualised the data. Thematic analysis was employed for the current research. Thematic analysis is a way of identifying, analysing, systematising, depicting, and reporting themes uncovered in data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 80).

Thematic analysis offers an extremely docile approach that could be customised according to the requirements of the study, offering a productive and detailed, albeit multifaceted account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 90–91). It is beneficial because the perceptions of different research participants are revealed, emphasising parallels and differences, and also creating unexpected understandings. Thematic analysis can condense important aspects of large data sets since it pushes the researcher to adopt a method that is well structured to manage data in generating a well-defined and organised report (Nowell et al., 2017: 2).

In the current study, Creswell's (2013) method of qualitative data analysis was employed. Creswell outlines six key steps that guide the process of analysing qualitative data. The first step involves organising and preparing the data for analysis, which includes transcribing interviews, reviewing the material thoroughly, and cataloguing visual data, among other tasks. This preparation ensures that the data is structured and ready for the next stages of analysis (Creswell, 2013: 183)

The second step entails reading through all the collected data. This step is crucial for gaining an overall sense of the information, allowing the researcher to reflect on its broader meaning before diving into more detailed analysis. By thoroughly engaging with the data at this stage, the researcher is able to identify key impressions and patterns that will inform subsequent analysis (Creswell, 2013: 186).

The third step involves coding the data. In this phase, the researcher organises the collected information by categorising textual and visual data, then labels each category with a relevant term. This process of coding is essential for organising large volumes of data and making it manageable for analysis, allowing the researcher to identify themes and relationships within the data (Creswell, 2013: 188).

In the fourth step, the researcher uses the codes to develop detailed descriptions of the people, settings, or categories/themes relevant to the research. This step is vital for creating rich, context-specific descriptions that provide insight into the data and help build a nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013: 19.).

The fifth step requires the researcher to determine how the themes and descriptions will be represented in the qualitative narrative. For example, the researcher might choose to present the findings through a narrative format, illustrating key points and patterns with direct quotes, descriptions, or other forms of representation. This step helps shape the way the research findings are communicated to the audience, ensuring clarity and coherence (Creswell, 2013: 191).

Finally, the sixth step involves interpreting the findings. At this stage, the researcher reflects on the meaning of the results, considering the lessons learned and the implications of the findings. This interpretation not only helps in understanding the data but also contributes to drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on the research (Creswell, 2013: 194).

All of these steps are critical to the evaluation and successful interpretation of qualitative research. In the current study, the researcher will report the findings in the MA dissertation, present them at academic conferences, and publish them in scientific journal articles, ensuring that the research contributes to the broader academic discourse (Creswell, 2013: 195).

The methodological framework described by Bernard, Wutich, and Ryan (2017) as well as Braun and Clarke (2006) were directly applied in this study to interpret the perceptions of POP members regarding the escalation of violence during protests. Thematic analysis, in particular, served as the guiding analytical approach, allowing the researcher to explore, categorise, and interpret complex qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews. The rationale for using thematic analysis lies in its capacity to uncover patterns and meanings that emerge from participants' narratives, particularly in relation to emotionally charged and situationally complex topics such as protest dynamics.

The thematic analysis allowed for the systematic identification and reporting of key themes in the interview data, revealing both commonalities and variances in participant perspectives. These themes were not predetermined but rather emerged organically from the coding process, allowing the data to speak for itself. The flexibility of thematic analysis proved valuable given the range of experiences and interpretations shared by POP officers regarding protest escalation. Braun and Clarke (2006: 80–91),

To ensure the rigour and transparency of the analysis, the study followed Creswell's (2013) six-step model for qualitative data analysis. The first step, which involved organising and preparing the data, was carried out through transcription of the interview recordings and manual review of the transcripts to familiarise the researcher with the content. In line with Creswell's second step, the researcher read and reread the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data and to begin forming initial impressions (Creswell, 2013: 186).

In the third step, data coding was performed manually. Key statements and recurring phrases were identified, marked, and grouped under preliminary categories. These codes served as the foundation for theme development. For instance, codes such as “lack of service delivery,” “anger,” “frustration,” and “seeking attention” appeared frequently and were later consolidated into broader themes, demonstrating consistency in participant views (Creswell, 2013: 188).

Following this, the fourth step involved crafting detailed thematic descriptions based on the coded data. This step brought clarity to how certain perceptions-such as the belief that violence is used to gain attention from government authorities-were consistently expressed across different interviews. The fifth step was reflected in the way the themes were narrated and supported using verbatim quotes from POP participants. These excerpts illustrated how individual officers interpreted protest behaviour and its escalation (Creswell, 2013: 191).

Finally, in the sixth step, interpretation of the findings was undertaken. This included reflection on the implications of POP officers’ perceptions-particularly how these might influence their operational responses to protests. The interpretation was not limited to a descriptive account, but also considered deeper meanings and possible policy implications. For example, if officers consistently perceive protesters as manipulative or as being influenced by external instigators, this could affect how they approach crowd management strategies and the use of force (Creswell, 2013: 194–195).

The analysis also followed the process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation, as outlined by Bernard et al. (2017). This approach involved first extracting relevant data segments from their original context to examine patterns and meanings, and then reintegrating these insights into broader thematic interpretations. This method ensured that the findings remained both analytically robust and grounded in the original data.

Furthermore, the researcher took specific measures to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the data analysis process. This included keeping a detailed audit trail, documenting decisions around theme development, and engaging in reflexivity to remain aware of potential bias. These steps helped to ensure the analysis was both methodical and transparent (Nowell et al., 2017: 2).

While thematic analysis offered a useful and adaptable method for analysing qualitative data in this context, the researcher remained mindful of its limitations. Braun and Clarke (2006: 80) caution in this regard, that the flexibility of thematic analysis can sometimes lead to discrepancies between research questions and analytic outcomes. To address this, the research questions were consistently revisited during theme development to ensure alignment.

The application of thematic analysis and Creswell's data analysis framework enabled a thorough, trustworthy, and insightful examination of POP members' perceptions of protest violence. The chosen method supported the development of a structured, yet nuanced, understanding of how law enforcement interprets protest escalation, offering implications for both policy and practice in the field of crowd management.

This method can be overwhelming for beginner researchers as they might feel unsure about the exact procedure of conducting a rigorous thematic analysis. A disadvantage of thematic analysis includes possible discrepancies among theory and analytic claims, or concerning the research questions and the form of thematic analysis utilised (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 80). Although thematic analysis is considered flexible, the flexibility can result in inconsistencies and inadequacies relating to the coherence when developing themes drawn from research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003: 350). Therefore, the researcher should take active steps to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the data. These steps will be explained next.

4.8 Data quality and trustworthiness

To ensure quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research, the researcher must apply rigorous and transparent procedures that demonstrate the reliability and credibility of the findings (Nowell et al., 2017: 1). According to established qualitative research principles, four key criteria support trustworthiness: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Adler, 2022: 599; Ahmed, 2024: 1–2; Anney, 2014: 276–277; Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020: 597). In this study, these criteria were addressed through specific, clearly documented strategies relevant to the research context.

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the research process. This was addressed through the development of an audit trail that recorded all decisions and methodological steps, including interview transcription, coding, and theme development (Nowell et al., 2017: 3). A pilot study was also conducted to test the suitability of the interview guide and ensure alignment with the research goals. Additionally, a reflexive approach was applied, with the researcher actively examining how personal assumptions and positionality may have influenced the research process (Lietz & Zayas, 2010: 191–198). Dependability was enhanced through a clear and detailed audit trail documenting the research process. This included interview guides, audio recordings, full transcripts, coding decisions, and theme development procedures. A pilot interview was conducted in advance to test and refine the interview schedule, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. Reflexivity was also embedded within the process. The researcher kept a reflective journal throughout data collection and analysis, noting personal reactions, uncertainties, and evolving interpretations. This

allowed for critical self-awareness and helped minimise unconscious bias in data interpretation (Lietz & Zayas, 2010: 191–198).

Credibility, which focuses on the truth value of the findings, was reinforced through prolonged engagement and iterative questioning during interviews. Participants were encouraged to reflect deeply, and follow-up questions were used to clarify or elaborate on responses (Adler, 2022: 588). Member checking was used to verify that the interpretations accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

Although peer debriefing was initially considered, it was not conducted due to the nature of the study and available resources. However, participants were informed that they could speak with a professional psychologist if they experienced emotional discomfort during or after the interview. Contact details of a registered psychologist were made available for this purpose, aligning with ethical requirements for participant care and emotional wellbeing.

Transferability was supported by providing thick, rich descriptions of the research context, including the protest environments and the roles of POP officials. These contextual insights allow readers to evaluate the extent to which the findings may apply to similar settings (Ahmed, 2024: 2; Treharne & Riggs, 2015: 58). Instead of making generalised claims, the researcher provided detailed contextual information so readers can determine applicability. Detailed information was recorded about each participant's rank, deployment history, and the protest environments in which they operated. By providing this contextual detail, readers are equipped to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to similar settings (Treharne & Riggs, 2015: 58; Ahmed, 2024: 2). Representative quotes were also used to illustrate common themes, offering insight into the meanings attached to protest escalation by Public Order Policing (POP) members.

Confirmability was ensured by aligning interpretations with direct evidence from the data. The audit trail documented each step of data handling and theme generation, offering transparency in how interpretations were drawn (Nowell et al., 2017: 3; Forero et al., 2018: 3). Member checking further contributed to confirmability by giving participants an opportunity to review and affirm the findings. Confirmability was further achieved by documenting the analytical process and grounding interpretations in the data. The audit trail not only recorded methodological decisions but also included thematic development logs and notes from reflexive journaling. The use of direct quotes from participants throughout the findings section demonstrated a clear link between data and interpretation. Member checking was also applied: participants were invited to review their transcript summaries and confirm the accuracy of what was captured. Their feedback confirmed that their views were reflected appropriately.

In discussing triangulation, it is important to clarify its appropriate application. While multiple theoretical perspectives were applied-such as general strain theory, anomie theory, and social learning theory-to interpret the data (theoretical triangulation), source triangulation was not used in the strict sense. Although participants were drawn from various deployment experiences and municipal contexts, they belonged to a single stakeholder group: POP officers. Therefore, the original reference to “various stakeholders” has been revised to more accurately reflect the participant composition. Instead of collecting data from multiple groups, this study focused on one targeted group with varied practical exposure to protests. The diversity within this group was used to explore differing perspectives, but this does not meet the criteria for full source triangulation as originally stated (Shenton, 2004: 65).

Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in reflexive practice to identify and mitigate personal biases and assumptions that could influence data interpretation. This was achieved through consistent journaling, where reflections were recorded after each interview and during data analysis. These journal entries captured the researcher’s initial reactions, emerging thoughts, and concerns about potential subjectivity, allowing for ongoing self-evaluation.

For example, the researcher noted pre-existing assumptions about the role of law enforcement in protests, which were shaped by public narratives and prior academic exposure. By acknowledging these views early, the researcher remained consciously open to participants’ unique perspectives. Reflexivity was maintained by comparing personal expectations with the data as it emerged, which helped to identify discrepancies between assumptions and participants' lived realities.

In addition, the researcher regularly revisited the research questions and coding framework to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the data rather than in preconceived ideas. Themes were developed inductively, and direct participant quotations were used to support interpretations, further anchoring findings in the actual data. Discussions with the research supervisor also provided external input, helping to highlight areas where subjective interpretations could have influenced coding or theme development.

By documenting these reflections and incorporating systematic checks throughout the analysis, the researcher was able to approach the data with a greater level of critical awareness. This process not only enhanced the credibility of the findings but also ensured that the final interpretation accurately reflected participants’ perspectives rather than the researcher’s preconceptions.

The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced through a cohesive application of established qualitative standards. Redundancies such as repeated mentions of member checking and thick description have been addressed by embedding them within the relevant trustworthiness categories.

The study adhered to a rigorous and transparent data analysis process, ensuring that the findings are both credible and grounded in the lived experiences of the participants.

4.8.1 Pilot study

A pilot study, also known as a feasibility study, was conducted as a small-scale preliminary phase to refine the research instrument and methodology before undertaking full-scale data collection. Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour (2014: 1) note that pilot studies help identify potential challenges in participant engagement, test the appropriateness of research instruments, and assess methodological alignment with study objectives.

In this study, one participant was interviewed prior to commencing data collection with the remaining participants. This pilot interview was used to test the full research process-from participant communication and consent to question clarity, interview flow, and data recording. The steps outlined below were conducted with this single pilot participant:

i. The interview was conducted using the same protocol intended for the main study.

ii. Feedback was requested from the participant to identify unclear or confusing questions.

iii. The interview duration was noted and evaluated for feasibility (in this case, approximately 30 minutes).

iv. Ambiguous or repetitive questions were adjusted based on both participant feedback and the researcher's observations.

v. Each question was evaluated for its ability to produce meaningful and varied responses.

vi. Responses were reviewed to ensure alignment with the study objectives.

vii. Care was taken to ensure that all questions were addressed during the session.

viii. Questions that did not elicit clear or useful data were reworded or removed.

ix. Where needed, questions were shortened for clarity.

Insights from the pilot indicated that most of the questions were well understood and required minimal revision. Minor wording adjustments were made to enhance clarity and ensure consistency in tone. Because the changes were not substantive and did not affect the overall design of the study, the pilot participant was included in the final sample, bringing the total number of participants to eight, not nine as previously stated.

This process aligns with the guidance of Kannan and Gowri (2015: 207), who emphasise the value of pilot studies in refining interview schedules and enhancing methodological soundness. It also allowed the researcher to assess logistical factors such as scheduling, interview environment, and participant engagement (Kim, 2011: 191; Malmqvist et al., 2019: 1).

The pilot interview played a valuable role in identifying minor procedural and linguistic adjustments. Its successful execution confirmed the feasibility of the data collection plan and improved the effectiveness of the interview instrument, thereby contributing to the reliability and credibility of the research.

4.9 Ethical considerations

The following ethical considerations were taken into account: confidentiality, no harm to the respondent, informed consent, voluntary participation, and access to the researcher. There are always more ethical considerations to consider, but for the intended research, only the mentioned considerations were anticipated. The current research was approved by the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria with approval number HUM041/0623 (Annexure C) as well as by SAPS (Annexure D).

4.9.1 Informed consent

To ensure informed consent, participants were informed of exactly what was expected of them, and they were made aware that their consent had to be given freely. Each participant was provided with a letter that explained exactly what the research entailed (Annexure A). If they were confused, the interviewer explained the details (Curran, 2019: 199). The participants were informed that they were not obligated to participate in the study and could withdraw at any time if they chose not to continue.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, it is important to keep the identities of the research participants anonymous when compiling the research report. All-inclusive anonymity could not be guaranteed since the researcher interviewed participants. However, the researcher ensured that the identity of the research participants remained unknown to individuals who were not part of the interviewing process, but assignment of participant numbers (Dumay & Qu, 2011: 238–261).

4.9.2 Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, the interviewer did not provide the names of the participants whose direct quotes are used, and the documents were kept secure at all times. All the information obtained in this study was and will be treated with confidentiality. Comments made by the interviewees during the interview were crucial to the objectives of the study and were included in the final research report.

Comments made during the interviews were intended for this study and will not be used for any purposes outside of this study (Dumay & Qu, 2011: 238–261).

Confidentiality pertains to the manner in which the participant's information is used and protects the individual's identity. Identifying information was forthcoming only after acknowledging and signing the consent letter. If the participant requested confidentiality, the researcher ensured that no identifying information was included in the research study or any platform used to disseminate the research findings. Therefore, no names or identifying details were or will be revealed. The researcher used numerical values to refer to participants (for example, Participant 1 postulates that …') except if the participant agreed to be identified by name.

4.9.3 Prevention of harm

The participants were briefed and informed about the requirements for participants. The researcher did not deliberately put the participants in harm's way. It is important to note, however, that the stress and trauma that police members experience in the line of duty could have a negative impact on their health and well-being (Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018: 1). As such, if the interview caused discomfort, the researcher was willing to end the interview and ensure that the police official got assistance from a councillor free of charge. SAPS offers free internal counselling services to its members at any time. The Employee Health and Wellness section within SAPS employs professionals across four support professions, including psychological service staff, chaplains, social work services, and occupational health practitioners. The section presently employs 604 practitioners nationwide. The service is available to all SAPS/POP members, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, the researcher had a psychologist, Dr Michelle Finestone, on standby in case participants required additional support (Annexure E).

4.9.4 Access to the researcher

Access to the researcher was guaranteed by providing the relevant contact information of the researcher; however, clear boundaries were set regarding convenient timeframes to contact the researcher (Curran, 2019: 199).

4.10 Limitations of the study and challenges experienced

There are certain limitations that must be acknowledged in this study. The small sample size is a limitation in this study. The difficulty to get more respondents could be seen as a limitation since it restricts the generalisability of the findings. It is important to recognise that the goal of this research was not to make statistical generalisations but to deeply explore the experiences of the participants. Given the phenomenological approach, the focus was not on the sample size, but on the richness

and depth of the data collected from the participants. However, this is a limitation that must be acknowledged, and further research with larger samples might yield more generalised findings. It must also be considered that to reach the target participant group was extremely difficult due to POP contact details not being readily available as well as the POPs members actual willingness to participate.

Regarding data saturation, it is important to note that saturation, where no new themes or insights are discovered in the data, may not have been fully reached since the sample was relatively small. In a larger study, additional, undiscovered aspects of the phenomenon might have emerged. Nevertheless, the data collected provided valuable and insightful perspectives on the research question.

Participant recruitment was also a challenge. It was difficult to recruit participants who were willing to take part in the study, which is often the case in research involving sensitive topics like violence and protest. The research strategically focused on a small, specialised group to ensure that participants were relevant to the study. The recruitment issue was handled by providing a clear explanation of the study's objectives and ethical procedures, along with assurances of privacy and confidentiality, which increased participants' willingness to engage. Those POP members who were included were willing to participate in the study. Many POP members declined the offer to participate in the study. The POP members interviewed for this study possess direct experience in riot management and have been actively deployed in protest-affected areas within the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal regions.

Additionally, the limited time and resources for the research presented other challenges, which impacted the scope and depth of data collection. These limitations were acknowledged, but they did not necessarily undermine the quality of the insights gained. While these limitations exist, the study still provided valuable insights that are relevant to the research question. However, further research is needed to expand on these findings.

4.11 Summary of Chapter

- Research approach: A qualitative research approach was employed with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of human experiences and behaviours related to protests and violence escalation. This approach involved investigating why certain situations occur and what they mean to the participants involved.
- Theoretical perspectives: The research adopted a phenomenological lens with the aim of studying the lived experiences of individuals regarding protests and violence escalation. Phenomenology focuses on understanding how individuals perceive and interpret their

experiences, suspending predetermined beliefs to grasp the essence of the phenomenon. The methodological lens for this research would align with a qualitative research methodology, as it seeks to explore the deep, subjective experiences of individuals involved in protests and the escalation of violence. A qualitative approach is fitting for this type of study as it allows for in-depth exploration of personal narratives, perceptions, and interpretations, providing rich, contextual data. This methodology involves techniques such as interviews, focus groups, or observational methods, which facilitate the gathering of detailed, first-hand accounts of the participants' experiences. Through this lens, the researcher can capture the complexities and nuances of individual responses to the phenomenon, focusing on how meanings and experiences are constructed within specific social and cultural contexts. The use of phenomenology within the qualitative methodological framework helps to ensure that the study remains focused on the lived experiences of participants, while remaining open to the emerging themes and interpretations.

- Research purpose and design: The research served an exploratory purpose, seeking to gain a better understanding of the research problem without providing definite results. It utilised a basic research design with the aim of comprehending the phenomenon without necessarily developing practical interventions. The research design involved instrumental case study research, which provided in-depth understanding and allowed for the exploration of causal mechanisms within individual contexts.
- Research methods: Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from POP members within specific metropolitan areas. Non-probability sampling methods, such as purposive and snowball sampling, were employed to select participants who have experience with protests. The data collected from interviews was transcribed and analysed to identify common themes and categories related to the factors contributing to violence escalation during protests. Overall, the study followed a rigorous qualitative research methodology aimed at gaining insights into the complex dynamics of protests and violence escalation.
- Data analysis: Qualitative data analysis procedures were outlined, emphasising thematic analysis as the chosen method. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and reporting themes found in the data set, providing a flexible yet structured approach to understanding qualitative data.
- Data quality and trustworthiness: To ensure trustworthiness of the research, criteria such as transferability, credibility, confirmability, dependability, and authenticity were discussed. Strategies to enhance trustworthiness included engagement over prolonged periods, triangulation, reflexivity, and conducting a pilot study.

- Consent and ethical considerations: Consent was guaranteed by requesting the participants to voluntarily sign a consent form. Ethical considerations highlighted included confidentiality, prevention of harm, informed consent, and access to the researcher. Measures were taken to protect participants' confidentiality, ensure their well-being during the study, obtain informed consent, and provide access to support services if needed. Overall, the research plan demonstrated a comprehensive approach to conducting qualitative research while upholding ethical standards and ensuring the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Introduction

The goal of the study was to identify the factors that contribute to the onset and/or the escalation of violence during protest actions and marches by exploring the perceptions of POP officials in the Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane metropolitan municipalities. Interviews were conducted with POP members that have been deployed to at least one protest in the aforementioned municipalities. The purpose of the current chapter is to present, analyse, and interpret the data gathered in the study, focusing on the themes identified from the participants' responses.

5.2 Organisation of the data

The demographic information of the participants and identified themes are presented in tables, followed by a discussion and analysis. First, the demographic data, namely participants', years of POP experience and race will be provided. Next, the themes that are representative of the reasons protestors resort to violence during protest actions will be presented. In the current study, participants were selected based on availability and predetermined exclusion criteria, rather than gender. The gender of each participant was not a factor in the selection process and was unknown until after their inclusion. Therefore, gender did not influence the decision to include participants, and the gender of each participant was incidental to the research process and will not be focused on. The section concludes with the themes that were identified in relation to the factors that contribute to protests". The findings are presented in an integrated manner, supported by verbatim quotations from the participants' face-to-face interviews.

5.2.1 Demographic information

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the nine participants.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Participant	Race	Years' experience
Participant 1	Black	10
Participant 2	Black	20
Participant 3	Black	5
Participant 4	Black	<2
Participant 5	Black	1
Participant 6	White	14
Participant 7	Black	30

Participant	Race	Years' experience
Participant 8	White	34
Participant 9	Black	21

Table 1 shows that all nine research participants were deployed to protests actions. Moreover, seven participants had 5 or more years' policing experience, and three participants had 5 years' or less experience.

5.2.2 Reasons for use of violence during protests

Thematic analysis extends beyond the mere counting of explicit words or phrases. It focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit concepts within the data, which are referred to as themes. Thereafter, codes are usually created to represent these themes, which are applied to the raw data as summary markers for subsequent analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012: 3–20). The information collected from the question, "Why do protesters utilise violence during protest actions?", was organised into five themes (Table 2). Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011: 410) assert that qualitative analysis should typically report at least five themes.

Table 2: Themes in relation to the reasons for the use of violence during protests

	Themes identified
1	Frustration and anger
2	Inadequate service delivery
3	Attention
4	Non-consideration
5	Influence of community leaders

The themes are discussed in detail below.

5.2.2.1 Frustration and anger

Eight out of the nine participants indicated that demonstrators resort to violence as a result of frustration and anger:

> Participant 1: In most cases it's frustration, because they try by all means to talk, and they escalate to violence.
>
> At times it is a matter of anger, not getting what they wanted so they show their anger.

Frustration and anger may stem from believing that no one is listening, or it could be related to anger owing to inadequate service delivery. While it is difficult to ascertain the specific causes of the frustration and anger, it is important to note that the protesters are experiencing these emotions and that deployed POP members are aware of these feelings.

5.2.2.2 Inadequate service delivery

Most research participants indicated that inadequate service delivery was one of the primary reasons they believed led to the use of violence during protests. The perceived lack of basic services included insufficient housing, water, and road infrastructure. The following are direct quotes from the participants:

Participant 1 stated:

> Inadequate service delivery is at the top of the list.

Participant 2 stated:

> Poor service delivery, lack of infrastructure, electricity, water.

Participant 3 stated:

> I think that's the biggest one in our country, service delivery.
> Poor service delivery is the main objective.

Participant 4 stated:

> Service delivery is the most, most of the protests they will tell you service delivery, in the middle of the night they close the road and tell you there's no lights, there's no water.

The participants in the study identified inadequate service delivery as a key factor driving the use of violence during protests. Their responses suggest that frustrations stemming from unmet basic needs, such as housing, water, and road infrastructure, are central to the grievances fuelling such protests. The recurring theme in the participants' statements is the belief that poor service delivery is the primary catalyst for social unrest.

For example, Participant 1 emphasises that inadequate service delivery is the most significant issue, suggesting that it tops the list of concerns that drive protests. Participant 2 specifically lists a lack of essential services—such as infrastructure, electricity, and water—highlighting the tangible effects of these shortages on daily life. Participant 3 concurs, stressing that service delivery is the "biggest" issue in the country, and further reinforces that it is the main objective of many protests. Similarly, Participant 4 provides a concrete example, describing how people take to the streets in protest during the night, citing the absence of electricity and water as the cause for their actions.

Overall, these direct quotes indicate that inadequate service delivery, particularly in relation to basic infrastructure and utilities, is seen by the participants as a significant trigger for public dissatisfaction, which often manifests in violent protests.

5.2.2.3 Seeking attention from government

Six of the nine members of POP suggested that, in their view, protests escalate into violence because protesters seek to capture the government's attention. The participants indicated that protesters engage in demonstrations to highlight issues they are dissatisfied or angry about. Furthermore, it was noted that protesters resort to violence because they believe it will compel the government to meet their demands. The following quotes were provided by the participants:

> Participant 3: They normally think it's the best way to get attention from the government or whoever, but ja, the only way to get their attention is to use violence.
>
> Participant 4: To get their message across.
>
> Participant 8: They think if they use violence the government will succumb to their demands.
>
> Participant 9: There is a lot of different reasons, but most of it is to draw attention.

The responses from six of the nine members of the POP team suggest that protests often escalate into violence because protesters believe that this is the most effective way to capture the government's attention. The participants explained that individuals resort to demonstrations as a way of expressing dissatisfaction or frustration with various issues, and they believe that using violence is a means of forcing the government to respond to their demands.

For instance, Participant 3 highlights that protesters view violence as the best strategy to attract attention from the government, underscoring the belief that nonviolent methods are ineffective in securing a response. Participant 4 succinctly notes that protests are meant to communicate a message, implying that the intensity of the protest, including violence, serves to amplify the message. Participant 8 further emphasises the notion that protesters believe violence will pressure the government into yielding to their demands. Participant 9 reflects that while there are various reasons for protests turning violent, drawing attention is the central motivator for many participants.

Overall, these quotes suggest that the escalation of protests into violent actions is seen by the protesters as a strategic move to highlight their grievances and force government action. This belief in the efficacy of violence underscores the importance of addressing the underlying issues that drive people to such extreme measures.

5.2.2.4 Non-consideration

The fourth theme identified was non-consideration. Participant 1 stated:

> If ever you have been promised clean water for the past 24–30 years, and then water up until today is not as it was supposed to be after the first 2 years of democracy, it can't take 30 years to give them water.

Additionally, Participant 3 stated:

> Empty promises, you know, there are commitments but there are no time frames, so people get commitments but no time frames, so not promising them clean water with no frame.

What the research participants could have been trying to convey is that community members often feel that the government, for example, promised to provide them with water, but has not delivered on those promises or taken into account their need for new projects to provide water to their communities. Moreover, when members provide feedback, suggestions, or express concerns, and those are not acknowledged or addressed, it can lead to feelings of being undervalued. If key decisions are made without consulting or involving the broader community, members may feel excluded and devalued.

5.2.2.5 Influence of community leaders

The last theme identified was the influence of community leaders on protests. Community leaders play a significant role in influencing protests in various ways. Their influence can shape the nature, direction, and impact of protests. Community leaders can rally people by calling for protests in response to specific issues. Their credibility and leadership can inspire participation. They are often responsible for organising the logistics of protests, including the time, place, and manner of the demonstration, ensuring the protests are well coordinated and effective. Leaders can also help define and articulate the reasons for protests, framing the issues in a way that resonates with the community and attracts broader support. In addition, community leaders often serve as intermediaries between protesters and authorities. They can negotiate demands, seek compromises, or advocate on behalf of protesters to achieve specific goals. Community leaders, therefore, are pivotal in shaping the course and impact of protests, from inception to resolution. Their leadership can determine whether protests remain peaceful, gain widespread support, and ultimately achieve their objectives. Pertaining to the influence of community leaders, participant 6 and 9 stated the following:

> Participant 6: Lack of leadership and proper consultation. Leaders should be more truthful and should clarify more, and community leaders do that.
>
> Participant 9: Leaders of the protesting group is the most important factor that escalate violence.

5.2.3 Factors that contribute to protests

The information collected in relation to the factors that contribute to protests, was organised into six themes as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Themes identified in relation to the factors that contribute to protests

	Themes identified
1	Inadequate service delivery
2	Employment opportunities and demand for increased wages
3	Dissatisfaction with crime
4	Unfulfilled promises
5	Poverty
6	Illegal immigration

5.2.3.1 Inadequate service delivery

Interestingly, as previously noted, dissatisfaction with inadequate service delivery was both a reason for the utilisation of violence and a cause for protests. Inadequate service delivery has been a significant issue in South Africa for many years, leading to widespread protests across the country. These protests are often sparked by frustrations with the government's failure to provide basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation, housing, and health care, particularly in impoverished and rural areas, as confirmed by Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9. A selection of responses includes:

> Participant 6: Inadequate service delivery, you can write a whole book about that. In South Africa Service delivery is not good.
>
> Participant 7: Service delivery is the most, because most of the protesters will tell you service delivery, because the protesters they close the road in the middle of the night, because there is no lights, there's no water.
>
> Participant 8: Service delivery, water, electricity.
>
> Participant 9: Poor service delivery.

Therefore, dissatisfaction with inadequate service delivery emerged as both a driving force behind the use of violence and a primary cause of protests. The lack of basic services, including water, electricity, sanitation, housing, and healthcare, has been a longstanding issue in South Africa, particularly affecting impoverished and rural communities. This widespread dissatisfaction has fuelled numerous protests across the country, as protestors express frustration with the government's failure to meet these essential needs.

The participants' responses clearly reflect the centrality of service delivery issues in motivating protests. Participant 6 emphasises the magnitude of the problem, suggesting that the topic of service delivery speaks volumes, highlighting the deep frustration it causes. Participant 7 underscores the urgency of service delivery by noting that many protesters cite it as the main reason for their actions, specifically pointing to disruptions such as road blockages in the middle of the night, caused by a lack of basic utilities like electricity and water. Similarly, Participant 8 identifies service delivery, particularly water and electricity, as key issues driving protests. Participant 9 reinforces this sentiment, stressing that poor service delivery is the core issue behind the unrest.

Overall, these responses illustrate that inadequate service delivery is not only a common cause of protests but also a significant factor contributing to their escalation into violent confrontations. The failure to address these basic needs has led to heightened tensions, with many citizens resorting to protests as a means to demand attention and action from the government.

5.2.3.2 Employment opportunities and wage increases

Another theme identified during the interview process was the demand for employment opportunities and/or wage increases. Participant 3 expressed the belief that protests occur due to an impasse in wage negotiations, when employees demand wage increases. Additionally, Participants 4 and 10 indicated that protest actions arise and/or escalate due to the demand for employment opportunities. Participants 7 and 9 also elaborated that the demand for wage increases could be a contributing factor to protest actions.

> Participant 3: Besides negations going into a deadlock.
>
> Participant 4: Employment.
>
> Participant 6: Lack of jobs.
>
> Participant 9: Unemployment, that's leads to loitering etc, because people don't have jobs so they just stand around, and they have time to protest.

Therefore, a prominent theme that emerged during the interview process was the demand for employment opportunities and/or wage increases. Several participants linked protests to unresolved issues related to wage negotiations and a lack of job opportunities. Participant 3 highlighted that protests often arise when wage negotiations reach a deadlock, signalling the frustration of workers demanding fair wage increases. This notion was echoed by Participants 4 and 10, who specifically noted that protests often stem from a lack of employment opportunities, particularly in areas with high unemployment rates.

Participants 7 and 9 further expanded on this theme, with Participant 7 referencing the broader issue of unemployment as a contributing factor to protests. Participant 9 emphasised that unemployment can lead to idleness, as individuals without jobs have more time to engage in protests or loiter in public spaces. This connection between unemployment and protest actions underscores the social pressures created by a lack of economic opportunities, which can manifest in collective actions such as protests.

Together, these insights suggest that the demand for employment opportunities and fair wages is a critical factor in the escalation of protests. The inability to secure meaningful employment or fair compensation can foster significant dissatisfaction, driving people to take action in the form of demonstrations.

5.2.3.3 Dissatisfaction with crime

Two participants stated that they believed protests occur and/or escalate into violence due to the dissatisfaction of protesters with the perceived high crime rate and/or due to interference from criminal elements. Criminal elements, with reference to the participants, are mentioned in the following quote:

> Participant 3: Elements of criminality, you know wherein the protest can start as a good thing, one person does something wrong in between that then it turn into violence. So criminals normally try to hijack those peaceful protest to do wrong things. For example, a march that would be moving through the city centre, criminals see that as an opportunity to loot so they basically just get into the crowd and start doing those wrong things in between the crowd. So what then happens is that the police tend to look at the group as a violent group, when it is actually just a few individuals influencing others.
>
> P1: Crime.
>
> P2: Crime, lack of job opportunities and lack of infrastructure.

Two participants indicated that protests often escalate into violence due to the dissatisfaction of protesters with the perceived high crime rate or the interference of criminal elements. According to these participants, criminal elements can hijack peaceful protests, turning them into violent confrontations. Participant 3 elaborates on this, explaining that what may begin as a peaceful protest can quickly spiral into violence when individuals with criminal intentions infiltrate the crowd. These criminals view protests as opportunities to engage in illegal activities, such as looting.

Participant 3 provides a specific example: a march moving through the city centre, where criminals blend into the crowd and exploit the situation for their own benefit. This interference by criminal elements often leads to the police perceiving the entire protest group as violent, when in fact only a few individuals within the crowd are responsible for the disturbances. The participant's observation suggests that the actions of a few criminals can significantly impact the overall dynamics of a protest, leading to its escalation into violence and complicating the police response.

Participant 1 and 2 indicated that they have seen demonstrators protesting due to their dissatisfaction with the perceived high crime rate in the specific area and/or South Africa. Moreover, participant 1 and 2 stated when asked the question “If you had to protest, what reasons would you protest for?”, they both said crime.

Overall, this insight reveals how criminal interference can transform the nature of a protest, turning a peaceful demonstration into a chaotic and violent event.

5.2.3.4 Unfulfilled promises

Participant 1 stated that unfulfilled or false promises, is one of the reasons why he believes protests occur:

> Frustrations, because they try to talk and no one want to listen.

Participant 3 stated:

> Inadequate service delivery is at the top of the list however, empty promises, there are commitments but you have no time frame so people get commitments but no time frames. You can't expect a water plant to be built in a day, so you need to be realistic and not promise people but no time frame to actually deliver it.

Participant 1 expressed that unfulfilled or broken promises contribute to the occurrence of protests, emphasising that frustrations arise when people try to voice their concerns, but no one listens to them. This lack of response fuels dissatisfaction and motivates people to take more drastic actions, such as protesting.

Participant 3 further elaborated on this issue, highlighting the role of empty promises in escalating tensions. While acknowledging that inadequate service delivery is a significant factor, Participant 3 pointed out that promises made by authorities often lack specific timeframes for delivery. This creates a sense of hopelessness, as people are given commitments without clear timelines for when those promises will be fulfilled. The participant used the example of a water plant, explaining that while it's unrealistic to expect such large-scale infrastructure projects to be completed quickly, the lack of a timeline for completion leaves people feeling frustrated and distrustful.

Both participants underscore the importance of not just making promises, but ensuring they are accompanied by realistic timelines and actions. When commitments are vague or unfulfilled, it deepens the sense of injustice and contributes to the public's decision to protest.

5.2.3.5 Poverty

Interestingly, only one research participant cited poverty as a reason behind protest action. However, it is plausible that poverty is interconnected with all the identified themes, since it is often asserted that inadequate service delivery predominantly occurs in areas that could be described as poverty-stricken. Participant 4 stated in this regard, “Poverty”.

5.2.3.6 Illegal immigration

One research participant stated that dissatisfaction with the supposed high illegal immigration rate could be a factor contributing to protests. This belief could be attributed to the idea that illegal immigrants are taking jobs that could rather be given to local citizens. This perception can lead to

protests, especially in economically disadvantaged communities. Additionally, when citizens feel that basic services are stretched thin or that they are receiving less access to services due to illegal immigrants, it can lead to frustration and protests. In some cases, illegal immigrants may be blamed for specific crimes, leading to community backlash and protests.

To highlight this, Participant 9 stated that:

> … services, housing, salary and undocumented persons, undocumented immigrants.

5.3 Additional noteworthy findings

Apart from the main themes identified above, the researcher noted several thought-provoking answers to the interview questions. One of them was that five participants believed peaceful protests to be more effective, while the other four believed violent protests to be more effective. Moreover, four participants stated that the South African Government should not impose stricter regulations on protests, while three argued in favour thereof. The remaining three participants said, “Yes and No”. The researcher further probed this response at which time the participants explained their hesitance by indicating that it is a Constitutional Right of South Africans to protest and by querying how else citizens are supposed to get their point across. The “Yes” response was related to the fact that protestors cannot do what they want during protests and that they still have to abide by the law. Participant 3 also brought up an important aspect, which is the role that the media plays in protests. For example, peaceful protest marches are often not covered by the media. However, as soon as the situation turns violent, articles are written about it and cameras and journalists show up on the scene, grabbing the attention of relevant people.

Moreover, despite compelling research evidence which confirms that xenophobia is one of the main causes of protests, only Participant 9 expressed the belief that illegal immigrants are a contributing factor to protest action. The South African Human Rights Commission (2019) has published reports that discuss xenophobic violence and how it affects communities. These reports indicate that economic grievances may be misdirected towards foreign nationals, highlighting the intersections between xenophobia, economic hardship, and social protests in South Africa. For example, research by scholars such as Misago (2015: 33-53) demonstrates how xenophobia emerges during economic downturns and among high unemployment rates.

This implies that while many studies, including those by the South African Human Rights Commission (2019) and scholars such as Misago (2015), highlight the role of xenophobia as a contributing factor to protests, particularly in contexts of economic hardship and high unemployment, only Participant 9 in this study specifically identified illegal immigrants as a factor influencing protest actions. The discrepancy between the broader research findings and the singular response of

Participant 9 suggests that while xenophobia is recognised in the literature as a significant driver of social unrest, its prevalence or perception among the participants in this study may vary.

The research by Misago (2015) and the South African Human Rights Commission underscores how economic struggles can be misdirected towards foreign nationals, particularly during times of economic downturn. This suggests that in South Africa, tensions related to job scarcity, economic inequality, and xenophobic sentiments can intersect, influencing protest actions. The response from Participant 9, therefore, aligns with these studies, but it may not fully reflect the broader sentiment among other participants, who might focus on other issues such as service delivery or unemployment as primary causes of protests. This highlights the complexity of understanding the root causes of protests, where multiple factors, including economic hardship and xenophobia, intertwine in shaping public dissent.

The statement from Participant 1 and 3 touches on two important dynamics that can shape the nature of protests:

> … instigators have their own agenda for protests, who then hijack the protest.
>
> … instigators recruit people who are not even involved.

The statements from Participant 1 and Participant 3 highlight the significant role of instigators in shaping the dynamics of protests. Participant 1's statement that "instigators have their own agenda for protests, who then hijack the protest" suggests that certain individuals or groups may initiate or manipulate protests for their own specific goals, diverting the focus away from the original cause. This indicates that protests may not always unfold as initially intended, with external actors influencing the direction and goals of the movement.

Participant 3’s statement, “instigators recruit people who are not even involved,” further emphasises the idea that instigators actively seek out individuals who may not have been originally motivated to join the protest. This can broaden the scope of the protest but may also lead to chaos or unintended consequences if individuals with different motives participate. The recruitment of uninvolved individuals may dilute the core message or shift the protest's dynamics, potentially leading to more aggressive or violent outcomes as people with varying motivations interact.

Together, these statements suggest that the influence of instigators in protests can be a key factor in their escalation or diversion, which may contribute to an increase in violence or disorganisation. Instigators can alter the protest’s trajectory by manipulating its participants and their actions, leading to complex and unpredictable outcomes.

5.4 Key deductions

The findings offer valuable insights into the motivations and dynamics of protests, particularly in the South African context. One of the key deductions drawn from the analysis of the responses is that there is an interconnection between themes, and inadequate service delivery is a significant catalyst for frustration and anger among protesters. This suggests that there is a systemic issue, where the failure to meet basic needs, such as access to water and electricity, directly fuels unrest. Another recurring theme is the issue of unfulfilled promises. Participants expressed a strong opinion that protesters feel a deep sense of betrayal because the government has failed to fulfil its long-standing commitments, which has contributed to a culture of distrust and heightened tensions.

Their responses also reveal that many protesters perceive violence as a necessary tool for communication. Participants believe that peaceful protests are frequently ignored, leading to the perception that escalating actions into violence is the only way to gain government attention and make their voices heard. This cycle of violence as the default strategy highlights the deep frustrations within communities. Furthermore, the role of community leaders is seen as pivotal in shaping the nature of protests. These leaders play a crucial role in mobilising people, framing issues, and acting as intermediaries between the community and authorities. Their actions can either escalate tensions or help mitigate them, emphasising the importance of effective leadership in community dynamics.

The responses from the respondents also point to broader social issues, such as poverty and illegal immigration, which contribute to protests. These issues often stem from fears of economic competition and resource scarcity, suggesting that addressing underlying social inequalities is essential for long-term stability. Additionally, the media's influence in shaping public perception is evident. The contrasting media coverage of peaceful versus violent protests raises questions about the portrayal of social movements. Violence tends to attract more media attention, which could perpetuate a cycle of unrest, because groups may feel that escalating their actions is necessary to achieve visibility.

There is also a notable division of opinions on protest effectiveness. The varying views on the effectiveness of peaceful versus violent protests indicate a community grappling with strategic choices and a lack of consensus on the best approach to advocate for change. This statement reflects the diverse experiences and expectations of the participants involved in the study. Moreover, the potential for escalation is acknowledged, with criminal elements infiltrating protests. This complicates the narrative around protests, as violence may be misattributed to an entire group, potentially alienating public support.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, these responses reveal the complex landscape of grievances and responses to these grievances within communities. Addressing underlying issues, particularly inadequate service delivery, unfulfilled promises, and fostering positive community engagement, will be crucial for reducing the reliance on violence as a protest tactic. Additionally, engaging with community leaders and constructively using media narratives could play a key role in shaping the outcomes of future protests. The responses and themes will be interpreted in the next chapter. The thematic responses will be interpreted against the backdrop of the literature review and the theoretical framework as was highlighted in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6: Key Findings and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 focuses on discussing the findings and recommendations of the study. Recommendations are discussed in this chapter, and the researcher indicates whether the research objectives have been met.

6.2 Key findings and application of the theoretical framework

The demographic information of the participants and the identified themes were presented in tables in Chapter 5, followed by a general discussion and an analysis of the data. The findings were integrated and supported by verbatim quotations from the interviews. Themes identified include reasons for violence during protests and factors contributing to protests, such as inadequate service delivery and poor water quality. The thematic analysis identified key themes related to the reasons for violence during protests. The factors contributing to protests included: Frustration and anger, as protesters use violence to express frustration and anger, often because they feel unheard or due to inadequate service delivery. Secondly, inadequate service delivery, which was a significant factor with references to housing, water, and road infrastructure. Thirdly, seeking attention from the government, whereby violence is seen as a method to get attention from government or local authorities and media outlets. Fourthly, non-consideration, where protesters feel ignored or overlooked by the government, leading to resentment. Lastly, the influence of community leaders as community leaders can mobilise, organise, and shape protests, influencing their course and outcomes.

- Moreover, while some participants believed that peaceful protests were more effective, others held the view that violent protests are more impactful. The role of the media in highlighting violent over peaceful protests was also highlighted. The theoretical framework for the study was explicated in Chapter 2. The findings of the study will be interpreted using the theoretical framework in the current chapter (Chapter 6): Deterrence theory: The lack of punitive measures against violent protests suggests that the fear of punishment does not deter such actions.
- General strain theory: Socio-economic stressors and inequalities create strains that lead to negative emotions, including anger and frustration, which can fuel protests.
- Anomie theory: The disconnection between societal goals and means leads to normlessness and deviance, as seen in the failure of expected social and economic improvements post-apartheid.

- Dual pathway model of collective action: Protests are driven by both emotional responses (anger) and strategic beliefs (group efficacy) in the effectiveness of collective action.
- Social learning theory: This theory suggests that people learn behaviours and attitudes by observing others in their social environment. In the case of inadequate service delivery, individuals may learn to protest or demand change, by seeing others take similar actions. If the protests succeed and government addresses inadequate services in the specific area, protesters are reinforced and will use riots again in future to address any struggles. When it comes to employment opportunities and wage demands, workers may choose to employ collective bargaining tactics after observing their peers or unions succeed. Similarly, feelings of dissatisfaction with crime can prompt individuals to join movements or engage in behaviours they have observed others use to address perceived injustices. Unfulfilled promises by authorities can prompt individuals to protest, especially if they witness others responding in similar ways. People in poverty may learn to challenge the system by observing others who fight for better conditions. Lastly, illegal immigration may encourage individuals to take risks or engage in advocacy after witnessing others doing the same, driven by social norms and collective action.

In the context of South Africa, these theories provide a framework for understanding the complex motivations behind protests. General Strain Theory (GST) highlights the role of socio-economic stressors, anomie theory emphasises the breakdown of social norms and expectations, and the dual pathway model of collective action explores the emotional and strategic dimensions of protest. Together, they offer a comprehensive perspective on why and how people in South Africa engage in protests as a response to various forms of strain, social disillusionment, and the pursuit of social change. Additionally, social learning theory suggests that individuals learn behaviours, including protest participation, through interactions with others in their social environment. This means that individuals may adopt protest behaviours by observing others, particularly in contexts where protest is seen as a legitimate or necessary response to social issues. Lastly, deterrence theory underscores the role of perceived consequences in shaping behaviour, implying that the likelihood of protests may be influenced by the perceived risks and consequences of engaging in protest actions. When individuals feel that the benefits of protesting outweigh the risks or that punitive measures are unlikely to deter them, they may be more inclined to participate. Together, these theories provide a well-rounded lens for understanding the multifaceted nature of protests in South Africa, driven by social pressures, learned behaviours, and the calculation of potential outcomes.

In the following section the applicability of the theoretical framework to the findings of the study will be discussed.

6.2.1 Deterrence theory

The deterrence theory suggests that both potential and actual legal punishment can prevent crime. The idea that people respond to incentives and are discouraged by the threat of punishment is the philosophical foundation of all criminal law systems. As stated in Chapter 2, deterrence can occur in situations where an individual who had committed a crime and faced punishment chooses not to reoffend out of fear of being caught and punished again. This is known in criminological literature as specific deterrence. On the other hand, deterrence also applies to potential offenders, who are those people who have not yet committed a crime but are considering it. They refrain from criminal activity due to the fear of apprehension and punishment. Both specific and general deterrence serve as utilitarian justifications for law enforcement and punishment. The underlying logic is that a system of punishment causes harm to individuals. In a deterrence framework, this harm is justified only if the prevention of crime through deterrence outweighs the harm caused by punishing offenders (Piquero & Pogarsky, 2002: 155).

The Constitution of South Africa, Chapter 2, The Bill of Rights Section 17 states that everyone has the right to demonstrate, picket, and present petitions, peacefully and unarmed (Duncan, 2020: 228). However, this right must be exercised in accordance with section 17 of the Constitution, which mandates that protests must be peaceful and must not infringe on the rights of others. The Constitution does not protect violent protests or those where participants are armed. Everyone is equal before the law and should be treated equally (South African Human Rights Commission, 2023).

Protesters who engage in violent actions during demonstrations are acting in violation of the law. However, it is possible that their strong convictions may render them impervious to deterrence, leading them to commit acts of violence. Although protests may initially begin peacefully, as is the right of citizens, they can escalate into violence due to the involvement of criminal elements, as highlighted in one of the identified themes discussions in the current study. This escalation is often attributed to the absence of deterring factors. In other words, individuals who resort to violence during protests do so without fear of apprehension or punishment. It has been noted that section 17 is frequently disregarded by many protesters, with most service delivery protests in South Africa reported to be violent and disruptive, and infringing upon the rights of other citizens who are not participating (Mokhomole, Khosa & Olutola, 2023: 2).

Even with South Africa's history of violent protests stemming from the apartheid struggle, citizens continue to normalise violent service delivery protests and related criminal activities, including confrontations with the police, vandalism and looting behaviours. This normalisation is partly due to the absence of punitive measures against such lawlessness by the South African Criminal Justice

System, particularly through the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) (Madero-Hernandez, Lee, Wilcox & Fisher, 2022: 327–353). The NPA has been criticised for prioritising easily winnable cases across various crimes at the expense of addressing acts of vandalism, traffic law infringements through road blockades, the burning of tires, and malicious damage to property during service delivery protests. The lack of prosecution for those who violate the law during protests creates a vacuum, further normalising vandalism, malicious damage to property, and road blockades by protesters dissatisfied with government services (Davis, 2022). It is often impossible to arrest all the protesters to ensure deterrence in future. In most cases only a few thugs are selectively arrested which exacerbate the issue of non-deterrence as the masses continue to escape justice for their violent criminal actions.

Perpetrators of service delivery protests may also be charged with intimidation under section 1(1) (a) and (b) of the Intimidation Act, 72 of 1982. However, this Act is contentious as it was enacted during the apartheid era and has not been repealed in the modern South African democratic dispensation (Skelton & Nsibirwa, 2017: 46–47). Furthermore, sections 1(1) (b) and 1(2) of the Intimidation Act were declared unconstitutional and invalid by the Constitutional Court. Khumalo (2015: 593) stated that those few suspects who are arrested for being involved in service delivery protest crimes often receive lenient sentences from the courts or are released with a warning by the police after arrest. Such outcomes of prosecutorial and judicial processes may be perceived by other protesters as loopholes, encouraging the belief that they might evade punishment for violent acts and certain crimes committed during service delivery protests. Buthelezi (2019) suggests that when a service delivery protest is declared unlawful, protesters may face charges of organising a gathering without proper notice and participating in an illegal gathering, public violence, malicious damage to property, and assault. Buthelezi (2019) further expresses concern that South Africa is continuing to witness violent service delivery protests characterised by malicious damage to both public and private property. It has been established that perpetrators of crimes associated with service delivery protests are charged with public violence and intimidation under the existing legislation.

Therefore, deterrence theory can be applied to this study to examine how individuals' perceptions of consequences influence their decisions to engage in protests, particularly violent ones. According to deterrence theory, people are less likely to engage in disruptive behaviour if they believe that the potential consequences — such as legal penalties, punishment, or social sanctions — are severe, certain, and immediate. In the context of the study, the severity of consequences could deter protesters from resorting to violence, especially if they believe that severe punishments, such as imprisonment or heavy police intervention, will result from their actions. However, if protesters perceive these consequences as minimal or unlikely to be enforced, they may feel emboldened to

escalate protests into violent actions, believing that such tactics may attract the government's attention and force it to respond (Choe, Rhee, Sanders & Yoo, 2014: 342).

The certainty of punishment also plays a significant role in deterrence. If protesters believe there is a high likelihood of facing legal repercussions or police intervention, they may be deterred from engaging in violence. On the other hand, if they believe that law enforcement will not respond decisively or that the government will ignore their demands, they may be more inclined to escalate their protest into violence, as some participants suggested. Additionally, the swiftness with which punishment is applied can influence whether or not protesters are deterred. If authorities act swiftly to impose order during protests or punish offenders, it could reduce the likelihood of violent protest actions. However, if the government delays action or fails to punish offenders in a timely manner, protesters may feel that their actions will go unpunished, reinforcing the idea that escalating violence is an effective means of expressing dissatisfaction (Piquero & Rorie, 2015: 71).

Finally, social influence and moral deterrence also play a role. Some participants noted that protests often begin peacefully but can escalate when individuals with criminal intentions infiltrate the crowd and introduce violence. If participants perceive that violence is socially acceptable or even necessary to achieve their goals, they may be more likely to engage in violent behaviour. This suggests that deterrence is not only about external consequences but also about the social dynamics within protest movements. If the state responds more consistently and swiftly to violent protests, it could potentially reduce the likelihood of violence, provided that the consequences are perceived as certain, severe, and immediate (Kuo, Talley & Huang, 2020: 1–12).

6.2.2 General strain theory

GST suggests that crime and delinquency stem from negative emotions, such as fear, disappointment, depression, anger, and frustration, which arise from various forms of strain. Negative emotions can create a need for coping, and one way people cope is by engaging in crime or delinquency. GST identifies three types of strain: the inability to attain positively valued goals (goal blockage), the loss or threat of losing positively valued stimuli, and the presence or threat of harmful stimuli. GST suggests that the sources of strain are not limited to societal pressure for success. The negative emotions as described in GST can result from either direct or indirect strains. Direct strains are associated with personal experiences, whereas indirect strains are linked to anticipated or vicarious stressors (Barbieri, Clipper, Narvey, Rude, Craig & Piquero, 2019: 2).

In short, GST suggests that individuals may resort to deviant or criminal behaviour when they experience strain or stress that leads to negative emotions such as anger, frustration, or depression.

The strain can come from various sources, including the inability to achieve culturally valued goals, loss of positive stimuli, or the presence of negative stimuli.

In South Africa, high levels of poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality can create significant strain among the population, particularly among the youth and marginalised communities. When people are unable to achieve their aspirations due to socio-economic barriers, they may express their frustration through protest. The lingering effects of apartheid and ongoing racial and economic inequalities contribute to a sense of exclusion among certain groups. This strain can manifest in protests as a way for these groups to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

The GST, as developed by Robert Agnew, can therefore be effectively applied to this study to analyse the factors that contribute to protest actions, particularly violent protests. GST suggests that individuals experience strain when they are unable to achieve culturally approved goals, face the removal of positively valued stimuli, or are confronted with negative stimuli, such as injustice or frustration. When individuals experience strain, they may resort to various coping mechanisms, including criminal or disruptive behaviours like protesting, particularly if they perceive no other viable outlet to express their frustrations (Teijón-Alcalá & Birkbeck, 2014: 12).

In the context of this study, several participants pointed to inadequate service delivery as a major source of strain. For instance, frustrations with the lack of basic services like housing, water, and electricity were frequently mentioned as key reasons for protests. These unmet needs can be seen as a form of strain, as individuals in impoverished communities are unable to achieve their basic goals or access essential services, which are critical for their well-being. According to GST, the inability to achieve these goals — such as access to clean water or reliable electricity — can result in emotional responses like anger, frustration, and resentment. If these individuals feel powerless to change their circumstances through conventional means (such as through dialogue with authorities or legal action), they may resort to protest as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction (Craig., 2017: 1656–1660).

Additionally, the theory's tenet of "removal of positively valued stimuli" can be applied to the sense of deprivation experienced by participants in the study. Many individuals, especially those in marginalised communities, are deprived of basic necessities or see a reduction in their quality of life due to government neglect or poor service delivery. This can increase the likelihood of protests, as individuals seek to reclaim what they believe is rightfully theirs. The theory also posits that individuals who experience strain may experience a sense of injustice, which can motivate them to protest as a way of confronting those they hold responsible for their suffering, such as the government (Craig., 2017: 1656–1660).

In the case of violent protests, GST suggests that when individuals experience strain, and perceive that legitimate means of addressing their grievances (such as peaceful protest, negotiation, or legal action) are unavailable or ineffective, they may resort to violent or illegal forms of protest. Participants in the study who indicated that protestors felt ignored or unheard by the government may see violence as the only way to draw attention to their demands and compel action. This aligns with the theory's assertion that when people are unable to cope with strain through conventional means, they may engage in deviant behaviour as a form of emotional release or to achieve their desired outcomes (Wojciechowski, 2019: 866–881). While participants in the study expressed that protestors may feel ignored or unheard by the government, leading them to view violence as a means of gaining attention, it is important to recognise that these perceptions may be shaped by the participants' own experiences or preconceived notions about protestors. As such, these views should be considered in the context of the participants' unique backgrounds and the cultural, social, or political lenses through which they interpret protest behaviours. The study aims to capture the perspectives of participants without assuming that their views fully represent the motivations or actions of all protestors.

In conclusion, GST offers a useful framework for understanding how the strain caused by unmet needs and perceived injustice contributes to protest actions. The study's findings, which highlight dissatisfaction with service delivery, unemployment, and government promises, suggest that participants are experiencing strain and, in response, are resorting to protest as a way of coping with their frustrations. By applying GST, a deeper understanding is gained of how individuals in South Africa, particularly those from marginalised communities, may resort to protest — especially violent protest — as a means of confronting the strain and injustices they face.

6.2.3 Anomie theory

The anomie theory suggests that as society evolves, it loses social control and unity, leading to disorganisation and fragmentation. This results in a state of anomie, where lawlessness and individualism rise, fostering social isolation, especially in urban areas. In this environment, crime emerges as actions that violate the collective values of society (Novaković, 2023: 68–69).

Social isolation takes its greatest forms in the centres of large cities and informal settlements where isolation and shattering are replaced by tavern life, alcohol consumption, and various other similar pleasures. This social condition is known as a state of anomie, marked by lawlessness and a lack of social cohesion. In such an anomic state, where societal norms are weakened and inhibitions diminish, a culture of isolation and individualism may emerge, potentially leading to criminal behaviour and civil unrest. These actions are viewed as crimes because they offend the collective sentiments of society, and the legal system responds by criminalising these behaviours to protect

social order. In this context, an act is considered criminal when it violates the established and well-defined collective consciousness of society, particularly those segments that are not experiencing the anomic conditions — typically the middle and upper classes (Novaković, 2023: 68–69).

As such, anomie theory refers to a state of normlessness or a breakdown of social norms and values amongst a specific group within a society. This can occur when there is a disconnection between societal goals and the means available to achieve them, leading to deviance or social unrest (Novaković, 2023: 68–69). In this context, an act is considered criminal when it violates the collective consciousness-that is, the shared beliefs, values, and moral attitudes that unify members of a society. This collective moral framework is typically upheld by the more stable segments of society, such as the middle and upper classes, who are less affected by social instability or anomie. Anomie theory refers to a condition of normlessness, where traditional norms and values lose their influence over behaviour, particularly among groups experiencing rapid social change or inequality. When individuals or groups become disconnected from widely accepted societal goals or lack legitimate means to achieve them, this disconnection can lead to deviant behaviour or social unrest (Novaković, 2023: 68–69).

South Africa’s history of apartheid and the subsequent transition to democracy raised expectations for widespread social and economic improvements. However, the persistence of inequality and corruption has led to a gap between what people expect and what they experience. This state of anomie can fuel protests as people seek to challenge a system they perceive as failing to deliver on its promises. The erosion of trust in political institutions, due to corruption and ineffective governance, can lead to a sense of anomie. This disillusionment can drive collective action, including protests, as people feel alienated from traditional means of achieving change (Williams & McShane, 2016: 8).

In relation to the current study, the application of anomie theory offers a valuable lens through which to understand the social dynamics driving protests and violent demonstrations. The theory suggests that as societal unity and control erode, particularly in environments where social fragmentation and lawlessness prevail, individuals may experience a breakdown in societal norms. In the context of this study, the frustrations and grievances highlighted by participants—such as dissatisfaction with service delivery, unemployment, and unmet government promises—are not their own personal experiences, but rather their perceptions of the challenges faced by protestors. These perceptions reflect a broader understanding of the social pressures and frustrations that may contribute to an anomic state, where individuals feel disconnected from societal structures, leading to increased social isolation, individualism, and lawlessness. This perceived state of anomie could potentially explain the reasons behind protestors' actions, including civil unrest (Teymoori, Bastian & Jetten, 2017: 1009–1023).

The urban and impoverished areas where protests often occur, particularly in informal settlements, are prime examples of environments where social disintegration, economic disparity, and a lack of cohesive community support systems create fertile ground for anomie. As described in the study, participants expressed that these communities often feel disconnected from the larger society, which exacerbates feelings of alienation and fuels protest movements. The absence of effective channels for communication and the failure of institutions to provide basic services can lead individuals to seek alternative means of addressing their frustrations, including violent protests. This aligns with anomie theory, which posits that when people cannot achieve their desired goals through conventional means, they may resort to deviant or disruptive behaviour (Brown et al., 2010: 237–238).

Furthermore, the concept of crime as actions that offend collective values and are criminalised by law is also relevant to this study. When individuals resort to protests, particularly violent ones, they challenge the societal norms upheld by the government and other authority figures. The legal system, in turn, criminalises such actions to maintain social order. In the current study, participants revealed that they believe protests, and even violence, are effective ways to capture the government's attention and force it to address grievances. This reflects the disconnection between societal goals (such as improved service delivery and job opportunities) and the means available to achieve them, further fuelling unrest and contributing to the broader state of anomie (Bernburg, 2002: 729–742).

Thus, anomie theory helps to contextualise the study’s findings by linking the social and economic disparities faced by protestors with the broader societal breakdown that results in crime, civil unrest, and the erosion of collective social norms.

6.2.4 Dual pathway model of collective action

Participation in collective action is driven by individuals’ belief in the effectiveness of such actions in addressing perceived injustices. Group efficacy – the belief that a group can collectively solve its problems – is a strong predictor of non-violent collective action. Additionally, theories such as social identity theory and relative deprivation theory emphasise the role of perceived injustice in motivating collective action. However, emotional responses, particularly anger, are seen as more direct triggers for such action (Saab, Tausch, Spears & Cheung, 2015: 540).

The dual pathway model suggests that group efficacy and emotions are distinct yet complementary in motivating collective action. In summary, people engage in collective action, such as protests, through emotion-driven and efficacy-driven pathways. The emotion-driven pathway is motivated by feelings of anger or moral outrage, while the efficacy-driven pathway is based on the belief that collective action can effectively bring about change (Saab et al., 2015: 540).

In South Africa, protests are often fuelled by anger and frustration stemming from issues such as service delivery failures, police brutality, and economic disparities. These emotions mobilise individuals to join protests as a way to express their grievances. Moreover, the belief that collective action can lead to meaningful change is a strong motivator. In South Africa, various social movements and grassroots organisations have successfully mobilised people around specific causes, such as the *#FeesMustFall* movement, which sought to address the high cost of education. This sense of efficacy can sustain and amplify protest actions (Common Dreams, 2015).

The application of the dual pathway model in the context of this study provides a valuable framework for understanding the motivations behind participation in protests and collective action. In this study, many participants identified frustration and dissatisfaction with issues such as inadequate service delivery, unemployment, and unmet promises from the government as key reasons for the involvement of protestors in protests. These grievances are emotionally charged, which aligns with the emotion-driven pathway of collective action. The feelings of anger, moral outrage, and frustration identified by participants in the study reflect their perceptions of the emotional triggers that drive individuals to engage in protest. These emotions, which align with the emotional drivers identified in Saab et al.'s (2015) work, are seen by the participants as significant factors motivating protestors' actions. This suggests that protest, in their view, is often rooted in deep dissatisfaction with social and political conditions.

The study's findings indicate that many participants believe protests, even if violent, are necessary to capture the government's attention and bring about change. This belief is consistent with the efficacy-driven pathway, which posits that individuals participate in collective action because they believe their collective efforts can lead to positive change. According to the research participants, demonstrators who were dissatisfied with the government’s response to their grievances, and who felt unheard or ignored, likely saw protest as the only viable means to force the government to address their concerns. This belief in the effectiveness of collective action can be seen as an example of group efficacy, where protestors believe that through organised action, they can challenge the existing power structures and bring about a solution to the problems they face (Robbins, Pfaff & Matsueda, 2021: 3).

Additionally, although social identity theory and relative deprivation theory are not core components of the theoretical framework for this study, they provide explanatory value in understanding the findings. Participants’ sense of injustice, particularly the disparities in access to basic services and employment opportunities, aligns with the concept of relative deprivation. This theory suggests that, demonstrators perceive themselves as deprived in comparison to others, which may drive them to engage in collective action as a means of addressing these perceived inequalities. Therefore, while

not a central focus of the study, this theory contributes to the overall understanding of the dynamics at play. Social identity theory further suggests that collective action is often driven by individuals' identification with a group that shares common grievances, in this case, individuals from disadvantaged communities who experiences the same frustrations and injustices (Radke et al., 2022: 1–2).

In summary, the dual pathway model of collective action helps explain the motivations for protest in this study, highlighting that both emotional responses, particularly anger and frustration, as well as beliefs in the effectiveness of collective action, drive individuals to participate in protests. This model illustrates the complex and multi-faceted nature of collective action, where emotions and perceptions of group efficacy work together to motivate individuals to engage in protest as a means of addressing perceived injustices and societal inequalities (Van Zomeren et al., 2012: 185–186).

6.2.5 Social learning theory

Social learning theory, developed by Bandura, posits that people learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling. Key components of this theory include:

- Observational learning: Individuals can learn new behaviours by watching others, particularly role models. This process involves attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (de la Fuente, Kauffman & Boruchovitch, 2023: 1-4).
- Reinforcement and punishment: Behaviours that are rewarded are more likely to be repeated, while those that are punished are less likely to occur. This reinforces the idea that social context plays a significant role in shaping behaviour (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018).
- Cognitive processes: Learning is not purely behavioural; cognitive factors, such as beliefs and expectations, also influence whether individuals will adopt observed behaviours (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022: 315-322).
- Reciprocal determinism: This principle suggests that personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour all interact and influence one another (Fryling, Johnston & Hayes, 2011: 191).

The application of social learning theory to this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of protest participation and the emergence of violent behaviours during protests. According to Bandura's social learning theory, individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling, especially from role models or people they identify with. In the context of this study, individuals participating in protests might be influenced by others who have engaged in similar actions, particularly if those protests have been perceived as successful in achieving their goals. The

process of observational learning — where protestors witness others' actions, such as blocking roads or engaging in violent behaviour — can influence their decision to engage in similar actions. If individuals see others achieving their goals through protest, they may be more motivated to imitate these behaviours (Triplett, 2015: 1).

In terms of reinforcement and punishment, social learning theory suggests that behaviours that are rewarded are more likely to be repeated. In the case of protests, if demonstrators perceive that their actions, whether violent or non-violent, lead to a positive outcome (such as government attention or a change in policy), they may be more likely to repeat those actions in future protests. For example, some demonstrators (that participants mentioned in the study) may have seen previous protests, where violence was used to gain attention, leading to successful outcomes (e.g., promises of service delivery or job creation). This reinforcement encourages further participation and potentially escalates the use of violence in subsequent protests (Triplett, 2015: 1).

Cognitive processes, a key component of social learning theory, also play a crucial role in this study. The beliefs and expectations of the protesters influence their decision to engage in collective action. For instance, protestors may hold the belief that protests, especially violent ones, are effective in compelling the government to address their concerns. These cognitive factors influence whether individuals will adopt observed behaviours, such as engaging in protests or resorting to violence, especially if they believe such actions will lead to meaningful change. Furthermore, the frustration and anger experienced by protestors, along with their belief in the effectiveness of protests, can increase their motivation to act (Ward & Brown, 2015: 409–414).

Lastly, the principle of reciprocal determinism, which highlights the interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour, is highly relevant in this context. Personal factors, such as an individual's frustration with inadequate service delivery or unemployment, interact with the social and environmental context — such as the influence of community leaders, peers, or social media — reinforcing the decision to engage in protest. Environmental factors, such as living in impoverished or underdeveloped areas where people feel neglected by the government, create a context in which protests are likely to emerge. This reciprocal interaction helps explain why some individuals, even if initially reluctant, may eventually join in protests or resort to violence after observing others engage in these actions (Bartol & Bartol, 2021: 45).

In summary, social learning theory helps to explain how behaviours associated with protest participation, including the escalation to violence, can be learned and reinforced through social interactions, observation, and modelling. The study’s findings align with the theory’s key components, showing how individuals are influenced by their social environment, the actions of others, and their cognitive beliefs about the effectiveness of protests in achieving desired outcomes.

In the context of the present study, social learning theory provides valuable insights into how protest participation and the escalation to violence can be shaped by social influences. In terms of modelling behaviour, a key aspect of the theory is that individuals learn by observing others, particularly those in their immediate social circles or those with whom they identify. This is particularly relevant in protests, where the behaviour of prominent leaders, influential activists, or even peers can serve as models for others to imitate. As individuals witness others engaging in protests, including acts of violence, they may internalise these behaviours, perceiving them as legitimate or effective ways to achieve their goals.

Additionally, the concept of reinforcement and punishment also plays a significant role. In protest contexts, behaviours that are rewarded—such as media attention or political outcomes—are more likely to be repeated, reinforcing the idea that protest actions, including violent ones, are successful in achieving desired changes. On the other hand, if certain protest actions are punished or result in negative outcomes, participants may adjust their behaviour to avoid similar consequences. The cognitive processes within social learning theory also highlight that individuals' beliefs about the effectiveness of protest actions—shaped by previous experiences or observed outcomes—can influence their engagement in these activities.

Therefore, social learning theory not only helps to explain how protest behaviour develops but also provides a framework for understanding how protest actions, including violence, can be perpetuated through the modelling of behaviour, reinforcement, and cognitive beliefs in a social context.

Key aspect of social learning theory is highly relevant in understanding both the actions of POP officials and protesters during protests. POP officers, for instance, may observe their colleagues handling protest situations and learn from their behaviours. If officers witness other colleagues successfully de-escalating tension through calm communication and non-violent methods, they are likely to adopt similar strategies. This can create a positive cycle of peaceful protest management, where officers learn that non-aggressive tactics are effective in maintaining order and reducing violence. In this case, positive behaviours are modelled and reinforced, leading to improved management of protests. However, if POP officers observe colleagues using aggressive tactics that result in increased violence, they may come to believe that these methods are effective for controlling protests. This creates a cycle of aggression, where violence is used more frequently, potentially escalating the situation and resulting in more harm to both protesters and police. Similarly, protesters can also model their behaviour based on what they observe from others in the protest environment. If protesters witness others achieving their goals through violent means — such as road blockages, destruction of property, or clashes with police — they may believe that resorting to violence is the most effective way to get attention and force authorities to address their demands. This belief can

prompt them to mimic these violent behaviours in hopes of achieving similar results. Thus, both police officers and protesters are influenced by the behaviours they observe in others, which can either escalate or de-escalate the level of violence in protests. The cycle of violence may be perpetuated when both parties model behaviour that reinforces the idea that aggression is an effective response, whether it is for managing protests or for making demands. This dynamic illustrates how behaviours can be learned through observation, and how these learned behaviours may either contribute to or help prevent the escalation of violence during protests.

In terms of reinforcement mechanisms, when police officials receive positive feedback for employing forceful measures during protests, such as praise from superiors or the perceived success of crowd control, they are more likely to repeat these behaviours. Conversely, if peaceful resolutions are rewarded, officers may be more inclined to pursue non-violent strategies. Additionally, the perceptions of POP officials are shaped not only by their own experiences but also by community attitudes toward protests and policing. Observing community reactions to police actions, whether supportive or critical, can influence how officers approach their roles in future protests.

Cognitive factors also play a significant role; police officials' beliefs about the motivations of protesters and the legitimacy of their grievances can affect their responses. If they perceive protesters as predominantly violent or irrational, they may be more prone to escalating tensions. However, understanding the underlying issues driving protests may lead to more empathetic and effective policing strategies. Finally, the broader socio-political environment in which police operate also influences protest dynamics and policing. For instance, if police are exposed to narratives that frame protests as threats to public order, they may resort to more aggressive tactics, further reinforcing a cycle of violence.

The application of social learning theory to the study of POP officials' perceptions regarding factors that escalate violence during protests highlights the importance of observation, reinforcement, and cognitive processes in shaping behaviours. Having an understanding of these dynamics can inform training and operational strategies for police officials, which can lead to more effective and peaceful engagement with communities during protests. Fostering an environment where positive behaviours are modelled and rewarded may reduce violence and improve public order during demonstrations.

The preceding section explored how various theories relate to findings of the study. Each theory, which has been discussed comprehensively in Chapter 2, provides insights into the underlying factors that contribute to violent behaviour during demonstrations.

As outlined in the literature, deterrence theory argues that the threat of punishment serves as a mechanism to prevent crime. However, within the South African context, many protesters perceive

little threat of consequences for violent actions, fostering a cycle of impunity. The failure of the justice system to effectively address acts of violence during protests contributes to this phenomenon. As noted in various studies, including reports from the South African Human Rights Commission, the cycle of impunity persists, as authorities often fail to prevent or adequately respond to violent acts, thereby normalising violence as an acceptable form of protest (Human Rights Commission, 2019). This is evident in the repeated incidences of violent protests, despite the legal framework that allows for peaceful demonstrations.

In the GST it is posited that negative emotions arising from strain — such as economic hardship, inequality, and unemployment — can lead individuals to express their frustrations through protest. The literature review highlighted how the socio-economic conditions in South Africa, especially among marginalised communities, contribute to a sense of exclusion and disillusionment. Studies show that the enduring inequality and lack of basic services, such as housing, water, and electricity, are major drivers of protests, with participants voicing frustrations over unmet needs. According to participants in the current study, demonstrators' dissatisfaction with service delivery emerged as a central theme, aligning with the literature that links social strain to protest and subsequent violence.

Anomie theory, as described in the literature, explains how societal disorganisation and the breakdown of norms can lead to lawlessness. This theory is particularly relevant in the South African context, where there is a pronounced gap between societal expectations and the reality of widespread inequality, corruption, and ineffective governance. The literature points to the feelings of disillusionment and frustration experienced by individuals who perceive the state as failing to deliver on its promises. This sense of normlessness often manifests in protests that challenge the political and social systems. The research confirms that inadequate service delivery and the failure to meet basic needs exacerbate the sense of anomie, contributing to the escalation of protest actions and the potential for violence.

The dual pathway model of collective action highlights the dual role of emotions and group efficacy in motivating collective action. In South Africa, protests are often driven by both anger and a belief in the efficacy of collective action to bring about change. As participants in the study revealed, emotions such as frustration, anger, and moral outrage are central to initiating protests, particularly when demands for service delivery and employment are unmet. Simultaneously, the belief in the power of collective action sustains these movements, even in the face of governmental resistance. The model underscores the emotional triggers and the belief in the potential for change, both of which are critical in understanding the dynamics of protests in South Africa, as seen in both past and present movements.

Social learning theory, as applied in this study, provides insight into how behaviours are learned through observation and reinforcement. The perceptions of POP officials, as outlined in the literature, illustrate how police behaviour during protests is shaped by past experiences, societal norms, and observed responses to previous protest actions. Positive behaviours, such as de-escalation and effective communication, can be modelled and reinforced through training and peer learning, leading to peaceful engagement in future protests. Conversely, if violent tactics are observed to be effective in the eyes of both protesters and police, such behaviours may be replicated, contributing to the cycle of protest violence. This dynamic is evident in the study's findings, where POP officials and protesters alike learn from the actions of others, influencing the nature of future protests. Social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura, posits that individuals acquire behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling. In the context of protests, both protesters and POP officials learn from each other's actions, which can significantly influence the nature of future demonstrations. Protesters and law enforcement officials observe each other's behaviours during protests. When police employ de-escalation tactics and effective communication, these actions can be modelled and reinforced, leading to peaceful engagement in future protests. Conversely, if violent tactics are observed to be effective, such behaviours may be replicated, contributing to a cycle of protest violence. Integration of these theories into the current study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to protest violence in South Africa. The study confirms that socio-economic inequalities, frustrations over unmet needs, and a lack of trust in the government's ability to address these issues are key drivers of protests. Additionally, the failure of deterrence mechanisms, societal disorganisation, and the learned behaviours observed in both protesters and police contribute to the escalation of violence. The findings are consistent with the broader literature, including works by Misago (2015) and the South African Human Rights Commission (2019), which highlight the intersection of economic grievances, xenophobia, and the socio-political environment in shaping protest dynamics.

The application of these theories to the current study reinforces the complexity of protest violence in South Africa. It underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the structural causes of protests and the behaviours that emerge within protest contexts. Effective governance, improved service delivery, and better training for law enforcement are crucial steps toward mitigating the escalation of violence and fostering more peaceful forms of collective action.

6.3 Noteworthy findings not captured as themes

There are certain observations that emerged from the data but could not be thematically crystallised. This may be because the participants only referred to them superficially or did not have the

opportunity to elaborate further on the topic. Some participants indirectly suggested the theme, and despite the use of probing questions, it was not possible to gather more detailed information from them. It is important to note, however, that the literature does support the observations that could not be explored further, indicating that these aspects are relevant, but perhaps not discussed in depth by all participants.

6.3.1 Instigators and recruiters

Instigators and recruiters play a crucial role in the dynamics of protests, as they are often the individuals who spark or escalate the movement. These individuals typically have specific agendas or grievances that they wish to advance, and they may seek to mobilise others by framing the protest in ways that resonate with potential participants. Instigators often adopt persuasive tactics to encourage involvement, while recruiters actively engage in the process of attracting individuals who may not have originally planned to join the protest. Let us delve deeper into both aspects (Brown & Green, 2019: 45-68):

6.3.1.1 Instigators who exacerbate protests

Instigators, whether individuals or groups, deliberately escalate tensions during protests, often driven by political, ideological, or even personal motives. Their actions tend to escalate situations, sometimes transforming peaceful protests into violent or chaotic events. This can happen in various ways:

- Provocation and aggression: Instigators may intentionally provoke law enforcement or other protesters, leading to clashes that turn violent. They may throw objects, incite verbal altercations, or create disturbances to push the protest toward confrontation (Brown & Green, 2019: 45-68).
- Disinformation or misinformation: Some instigators spread false information, either to mislead protesters into believing they are under attack or to create division among the protest participants. This can drive further animosity and complicate the message or goals of the protest (Brown & Green, 2019: 45-68).
- Radicalisation: Certain individuals may seek to use protests as a platform to promote radical or extreme ideologies. These instigators may hijack a protest's core message, transforming the event from one focused on a specific cause to a broader political statement, sometimes with dangerous or violent undertones (Brown & Green, 2019: 45-68).
- Media sensationalism: In some cases, instigators may seek media attention by creating dramatic situations, knowing that the media will focus on disruptive or violent moments. Not

only does this escalate tensions within the protest group, but it also skews the public's perception of the purpose of the protest (Brown & Green, 2019: 45-68).

The presence of instigators can lead to a dramatic shift in the public's perception of a protest, turning it from a legitimate act of civil disobedience to one that is perceived as being out of control, dangerous, or illegitimate.

6.3.1.2 Recruiters who lure in uninformed participants

Recruiters, on the other hand, play a role in swelling the ranks of protests by luring in individuals who may not fully understand the issues at hand. This dynamic can be problematic for several reasons (De Vydt and Walgrave, 2023: 2-12):

- Lack of understanding: Some individuals may join protests without fully grasping the underlying cause or specific demands being made. Recruiters may target those who are looking for social engagement or solidarity without being well-informed about the cause, which can dilute the focus and clarity of the protest's message.
- Unintended disruptions: Inexperienced or uninformed participants may inadvertently disrupt the flow of a protest. They may not know how to behave appropriately in a protest setting, such as respecting non-violent principles or adhering to agreed-upon tactics. This could result in uncoordinated actions that weaken the overall impact.
- Exploiting social networks: Recruiters often leverage social networks by using peer pressure or group loyalty to bring people in. They may frame the protest in terms of solidarity, social justice, or activism to appeal to emotions rather than facts. This can lead to participants joining a cause without fully understanding the political or social context.
- Co-optation of the message: In some cases, recruiters may actively reshape the focus of a protest for their own purposes. For example, political groups might recruit people to support causes that are not central to the protest's main goals, diverting attention and potentially splitting the movement.
- Increased risk of violence or chaos: By bringing in individuals who do not know the protest's aims or protocols, recruiters might unintentionally increase the likelihood of miscommunication and disorder. People who are not familiar with the cause or the tactics of protest movements may engage in disruptive behaviour, which can amplify tensions with authorities or other protesters.

6.3.1.3 Interplay between instigators and recruiters

The combined effect of instigators and recruiters can result in a volatile environment during protests. While instigators deliberately worsen tensions, recruiters may inadvertently introduce people who do not understand the protest's purpose, making it harder to maintain unity and focus. In the worst-case scenario, this can create a cycle of escalation: violence and chaos brought on by instigators attract more uninformed recruits, who may then inadvertently add fuel to the fire. This dynamic can undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of protests, making it harder for organisers to convey their message and achieve their goals.

In summary, Participant 1 highlighted two critical, yet often overlooked, elements of protests: the instigators who intentionally exacerbate tensions and the recruiters who bring in individuals without a clear understanding of the cause. Both groups have the potential to distort the message of a protest, which can compromise its effectiveness and even undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Uninformed recruits, lacking a proper understanding of the issues at hand, are often more susceptible to acting on misinformation. This can lead to a shift in focus from the core grievances to actions that may be driven by misunderstanding or manipulation, ultimately weakening the overall impact and goals of the protest. To maintain focus, unity, and non-violent action in pursuit of their goals, protest organisers must understand and address these dynamics crucially to prevent miscommunication or a distorted message. Participant 4 stated that:

> … miscommunication can lead to the escalation in violence, such as the police being confrontational.

Participant 4's statement about how miscommunication can escalate violence, particularly in situations involving the police, speaks to a critical issue in law enforcement interactions. Miscommunication, in this context, refers to any breakdown in the exchange of information between police officers and civilians, which can lead to misunderstandings, heightened tension, and, often, violence. For example, police officers might misinterpret a civilian's behaviour, such as body language or speech, as being threatening, prompting them to respond with aggression or force. A sudden movement, an unclear response, or perceived act of defiance might be regarded as a sign of resistance, even if no harm was intended. Similarly, civilians can misunderstand the intentions of police officers – especially recruited protesters who are not informed about the main reasons for the protest, which may lead to unnecessary confrontations and heightened violence during protests. When officers give unclear or conflicting commands, or adopt a confrontational tone, non-protesting civilians may feel threatened or unfairly targeted, leading to defensive reactions that can escalate the situation further.

6.3.2 Challenges that both protest organisers and positions of authority face

Participant 3's comments address several crucial points regarding the challenges faced by protest organisers and those in positions of authority or management when it comes to dealing with protests. These insights address the tension that arises between protesters and those who are tasked with responding to or managing protests. This could be the management of a company, public order officials, or law enforcement.

For example, Participant 3 observed that management, such as the leadership of a company facing striking employees, often struggles to properly address or engage with protesters, particularly when a protest involves anger or dissatisfaction. This issue highlights a common gap between organisational leadership and the employees or protesters with whom they are interacting. If management is unprepared or uninformed, it may exacerbate tensions and lead to a breakdown of communication. Some reasons include (LRI Online, n.d):

- Lack of empathy or understanding: Company leaders may view a protest, particularly a strike, through a purely operational or financial lens, failing to recognise the underlying emotional and personal stakes of the protesters; for example, workers who are protesting for better wages, working conditions, or job security. This disconnect can make a company's response seem dismissive, antagonistic, or unsympathetic, which may result in further escalation.
- Limited training in conflict resolution: Many organisational leaders are not trained in conflict management or crisis communication, which are key skills when dealing with protests. Instead, they may become defensive, avoid dialogue, or even issue ultimatums instead of attempting to negotiate or address the concerns of employees. This can backfire, especially in situations where workers feel their grievances have been disregarded for a long time.
- Failure to negotiate or engage in dialogue: Effective conflict resolution in the context of protests or strikes often requires negotiation skills and a willingness to engage in good-faith dialogue. Companies that do not engage in meaningful communication or show a genuine interest in resolving issues are more likely to experience prolonged disruptions or escalation.
- Reactive vs proactive management: Often, management only reacts when protests become disruptive, rather than proactively engaging with employees or protest groups ahead of time to prevent grievances from escalating. Early interventions can reduce the likelihood of major disruptions. Interventions include engaging in regular feedback loops with workers or addressing concerns before they snowball into larger issues.

6.3.3 Public order officials and law enforcement

Participant 3 raised a second point that public order officials, such as law enforcement or public safety officers, often lack the skills to manage protests or handle crowd situations effectively. This is a critical issue, especially when protests are large, vocal, or tense. Here, the core issues revolve around the training and readiness of law enforcement to deal with these delicate situations.

Many public order officials or law enforcement agencies may lack specific training in dealing with protests, especially non-violent ones. Crowd-control techniques are often used to manage violent or unruly crowds. However, if officers are not properly trained in de-escalation, communication, and understanding the social and political context of a protest, they may resort to heavy-handed tactics. This can escalate tensions and even lead to confrontations (Schwartz & Mmamabolo, 2023: 401-405). Misunderstanding the nature of a protest or misreading the crowd's intent can lead to inappropriate responses from law enforcement, such as the use of force or aggressive tactics. For example, police might assume that a protest is inherently violent and overreact as a result. This can trigger greater anger and lead to violent clashes, which undermine the protest's goals and can attract negative media attention (Schwartz & Mmamabolo, 2023: 405-415).

It is essential for public order officials to be trained not only in physical crowd control but also in negotiation techniques and de-escalation strategies. Many protests are primarily about expressing discontent. Maintaining a peaceful and open dialogue with protesters can help manage the situation without resorting to force. This involves learning how to approach protesters in a way that fosters cooperation rather than antagonism (Hlongwane, 2023: 200–208). Moreover, law enforcement needs to be aware of the specific grievances being expressed in the protest. A lack of understanding of the social, economic, or political context can result in missteps, such as misidentifying the goals of the protest or mistakenly interpreting peaceful actions as aggressive. Training should include an emphasis on cultural sensitivity and contextual awareness (Hlongwane, 2023 : 200–208).

6.3.4 Criminals hijacking protests

Both Participant 3 and Participant 8 noted that criminals can hijack protests, turning the protests into chaotic or violent events. This is a significant concern because the presence of criminal elements can undermine the integrity and goals of a protest movement, detract from its message, and sometimes provoke violent responses from authorities. Here is a deeper look into how this can happen:

- Criminal opportunism: Some individuals or groups may attend a protest – not to support the cause but to take advantage of the situation for personal or financial gain. This can include

acts of vandalism, looting, or other forms of criminal behaviour. Criminals can exploit the chaos of a protest to carry out illegal activities that have nothing to do with the original cause (CNN, 2021).

- Terrorist or extremist groups: In some cases, organised extremist groups, either far-left or far-right, may exploit a protest as a platform for their own agendas. These groups may attempt to hijack the protest by pushing a separate, often violent, agenda that detracts from the original cause and turns protesters against the police or the public (CNN, 2021).
- Violence as a distraction: Criminals may also escalate the level of violence during a protest to create confusion. This not only shifts attention away from the protest's original goals but also strains the response from law enforcement, who may focus more on controlling violence than addressing the actual issues being raised by protesters (News24, 2022).
- Creating divisions: The presence of criminal actors within a protest can create divisions among the protesters themselves. Some protesters may advocate for peaceful tactics and non-violence, while others, influenced or coerced by criminal elements, may advocate for more aggressive or unlawful actions. This can undermine the unity and discipline of the protest movement (News24, 2022).

6.4 Recommendations for avoiding violent protests

Based on the information presented in the dissertation up to this point, the following recommendations are made. The recommendations are based on the findings of the present study and they relate to broad government and practice in general to avoid violent protests.

6.4.1 Improve service delivery

Overall, the insights gathered from POP officials, framed within these theoretical perspectives, underscore the necessity for comprehensive strategies that address both the root causes of dissent and effective crowd management practices. By acknowledging the socio-economic and political factors that contribute to unrest, law enforcement agencies can develop more informed approaches to policing protests that respect the rights of citizens to assemble and express themselves while maintaining public order.

The government should prioritise providing consistent and reliable access to essential services, including clean water, electricity, and sanitation, especially in underserved communities. By addressing these basic needs, a significant portion of public frustration can be reduced. The growing demand for housing and the ever-growing informal settlement challenge in South Africa need to be addressed in all earnest, as inadequate housing contributes significantly to social inequality and

public dissatisfaction. Unmet housing needs can exacerbate frustrations, leading to protests and unrest. By prioritising affordable housing and improving infrastructure in these areas, the government can reduce the risk of social instability and create a more equitable society. This will not only provide basic shelter but also ensure that communities have access to essential services such as water, electricity, and sanitation, thus addressing the root causes of many protests (Chiwarawara, 2024: 1-15).

Local governments need to be adequately resourced and equipped to handle service delivery more efficiently. Capacity-building programmes, combined with measures to improve accountability and transparency, will help ensure that communities' grievances are met with timely responses. Training and client service training will enhance the ability of local government employees to understand and address community needs, fostering greater trust and cooperation between officials and citizens. This improved efficiency and responsiveness will not only improve service delivery but also contribute to social stability by reducing frustration and dissatisfaction that can lead to protests and unrest (Nyar & Wray, 2012: 25–26).

Frequent changes in management within municipalities contribute significantly to the challenges of service delivery in South Africa, often fuelling public frustration and leading to protests. Municipalities, which are responsible for providing essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and healthcare, are key to the well-being of communities. However, frequent turnover in municipal leadership leads to administrative disruptions and inefficiencies. Each time new leadership is introduced, they need time to familiarise themselves with existing projects, budgets, and community needs, which often stalls progress and delays the delivery of services (Alexander,2011: 31–32). This lack of continuity can result in backlogs in infrastructure projects, such as road maintenance or water supply, as new leadership frequently shifts priorities or abandons ongoing initiatives. Management integrity is essential to ensuring proper leadership within municipalities. Appointing competent, skilled managers is vital for maintaining stable governance and service delivery. Unfortunately, the practice of nepotism, where leaders are appointed based on personal connections rather than merit, often undermines the integrity of management and hinders the efficiency of local governance. Addressing these leadership issues is crucial for improving service delivery and fostering public trust (Alexander, 2011: 31–32).

For residents, particularly those living in underserved areas, the failure to see tangible improvements in service delivery leads to a growing sense of frustration. Many communities already grapple with poor infrastructure, water shortages, inadequate sanitation, and electricity outages, and the constant changes in leadership only exacerbate these issues. When incompetent local officials fail to take decisive action or are replaced too frequently, it creates a sense of disillusionment. This can lead to

many people losing trust in the government's ability to meet their needs. This disillusionment often manifests in protests, as communities demand better services and accountability. The problem is often exacerbated by political instability within municipalities, which can be caused by internal party conflicts or leadership changes resulting from poor performance, nepotism and bias. Leaders may prioritise their political agendas over addressing urgent service delivery issues, which can further alienate the public (Netswara & Phago, 2013: 24–39).

In addition to administrative and political instability, frequent leadership changes also contribute to financial mismanagement. Budget allocations for essential services may be misdirected, and critical projects may not be managed or monitored properly. As a result, backlogs in service delivery grow and communities continue to suffer from poor service delivery. To address these challenges, it is crucial for municipalities to prioritise stability in leadership and ensure that officials are held accountable for their actions. Stable leadership allows for long-term planning and ensures that service delivery is unaffected by short-term political interests. Professionalising municipal management, by hiring skilled and experienced managers, could help bring consistency to service delivery and reduce the occurrence of protests driven by dissatisfaction with local governance. Ultimately, reducing the frequency of leadership changes and ensuring that municipalities are managed efficiently are pivotal to improving service delivery and addressing the root causes of community protests (Botes, 2018: 246).

According to social learning theory, individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling. When people witness others protesting due to inadequate service delivery, they are more likely to imitate those actions, especially if they perceive protests as a means to achieve their objectives. Improved service delivery, by addressing public grievances, can reduce the tendency for individuals to resort to protests as a means of expressing dissatisfaction (Bandura, 1977).

Positive reinforcement from effective service delivery (e.g., improved access to basic resources) can reinforce the idea that peaceful means of addressing issues are more effective than protest. Conversely, the lack of service delivery may push individuals towards negative behaviours, including participation in violent protests, which further escalates social tensions. Frustration, which arises from unmet needs, is a key trigger for aggressive behaviour, including protests. Improved service delivery directly addresses the frustration caused by the lack of basic resources, potentially preventing violent or disruptive protest actions. Literature suggests that when communities experience tangible improvements in service provision, the sense of frustration that fuels aggression is alleviated, thereby reducing the likelihood of protest (Lipsky, 2010).

Effective governance and the delivery of public services are strongly linked to public trust. When governments fail to meet citizens' needs, particularly in areas like infrastructure and social services,

they risk creating a disillusioned populace that may resort to protest. Improved service delivery, however, signals government responsiveness and reinforces public confidence, which can reduce the perceived need for collective action. By addressing citizens' demands, governments can prevent the escalation of grievances into protests, especially in communities where service delivery has historically been a point of contention (Robinson, 2016: 261-275).

Studies have demonstrated that improvements in service delivery, such as access to clean water, electricity, and healthcare, contribute to social stability and economic development. When people's basic needs are met, they are less likely to view protest as a necessary or effective tool. As such, improvements in service delivery can break the cycle of unrest by addressing the fundamental causes of public dissatisfaction, promoting a more peaceful social environment. Furthermore, when service delivery improves, the legitimacy of protests becomes more difficult to maintain. If the government can demonstrate tangible progress in meeting public demands, it erodes the foundation for protest movements, reducing the likelihood of both violent and non-violent protests (Graham and Low, 2019: 634-650).

Empirical studies in various regions, including South Africa, show that communities experiencing significant improvements in service delivery report higher levels of public satisfaction and lower rates of protest. For example, the provision of basic services in areas with high levels of poverty has been linked to reduced instances of violent protests (Graham & Low, 2019). Conversely, the lack of improvement in essential services often leads to escalating tensions, which manifest in public protests as a form of communication.

6.4.2 Combat economic inequality and address corruption

The government should invest in programmes focused on creating sustainable employment, particularly for the youth who face high unemployment rates. Public works programmes, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support can help reduce the economic desperation that drives protests (Mothelesi et al., 2022: 41). Support for small businesses: Providing financial and technical support to small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in historically disadvantaged communities, can stimulate local economies and create more opportunities for economic participation (Kali, 2023; Mothelesi et al., 2022: 42). Speeding up the implementation of equitable land reforms and providing affordable housing is crucial. The slow pace of land redistribution has been a major grievance, and addressing this can help reduce social tensions (Lolwane, 2016: 1). Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) emerged as a critical recommendation from participants, particularly in historically disadvantaged communities. Stimulating local economies through targeted financial and technical assistance to small businesses can foster economic inclusion and resilience. Participants highlighted that strengthening SMEs not only enhances

livelihood opportunities but also mitigates the socio-economic marginalisation that often underpins protest activity (Kali, 2023; Mothelesi et al., 2022: 42).

Corruption at all levels of government undermines trust. Strengthening institutions that combat corruption, including the Public Protector's office and the NPA, will enhance accountability. More severe punishments for government officials (police included) should be implemented to deter corrupt activities. The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (PRECCA) in South Africa stipulates penalties for corruption, including imprisonment and fines. However, the effectiveness of these penalties depends on consistent enforcement and the political will to prosecute offenders (Public Affairs Research Institute, n.d.). Ensuring transparent processes in government procurement, spending, and decision-making can build public confidence. Implementing clear reporting systems for corruption cases and providing whistle-blower protection can also help curb the issue (Corruption Watch, 2021).

6.4.3 Enhance political accountability

Promoting participatory governance by including citizens in policymaking and local decision-making processes can reduce frustration. Regular forums for dialogue between government representatives and communities would allow grievances to be addressed before they escalate into protests (Reuters, 2024). In addition, electoral reform is essential for improving the representation and accountability of public officials in South Africa. Citizens need to feel that their elected leaders are responsive to their concerns and genuinely act in their best interests. Currently, many South Africans feel disconnected from their elected representatives, which leads to frustration and protests over issues such as service delivery. Reforming the electoral system to ensure greater local accountability, for example, through ward-based voting or proportional representation, could result in leaders being more accountable to the communities they serve. Additionally, reforms that focus on merit-based selection of candidates could ensure that officials are competent and committed to public service, rather than being driven by party loyalty. Such reforms would foster a sense of trust and effectiveness in the political system, helping to reduce public dissatisfaction and the resulting protests. Ultimately, electoral reform could create a more responsive government that better addresses local needs, particularly in service delivery, and strengthens democracy overall (ActionSA, 2023).

6.4.4 Address social justice issues

Fast-tracking land restitution and housing initiatives is critical in addressing long-standing grievances around land ownership and distribution. Equitable land reforms that benefit marginalised groups can help prevent land-based protests (Morudu, 2017: 4). Gender equality and racial justice**:** Policymaking

should actively address gender-based violence, racial discrimination, and inequality in access to resources. Empowering historically marginalised groups can mitigate social tensions that frequently lead to unrest (Bedasso & Obikili, 2016: 130–146).

By addressing the core issues of economic inequality, corruption, political accountability, and social justice, South Africa can mitigate the frequency and intensity of protests while ensuring that grievances are addressed in a sustainable and constructive manner.

The findings of the study demonstrate and the researchers suggest that monitoring and analysing protests in South Africa is crucial for understanding the intricacies of the connection between the causes of protests and the use of violence during demonstrations. A well-established monitoring system helps the government and relevant authorities respond proactively to grievances before they escalate into large-scale unrest.

6.4.5 Ensure early identification of grievances

A proactive response is crucial for preventing protests and addressing community dissatisfaction before it escalates. Through effective monitoring, the government can detect early signs of unrest, such as rising unemployment, poor service delivery, or increasing community complaints. By identifying these issues early, authorities can intervene before they reach a critical point, reducing the risk of protests or riots (Schwella, 2021: 141-157). Early intervention is far more effective than waiting until social tensions boil over. Using local intelligence and gathering real-time feedback from communities allows the government to implement preventative measures, such as targeted job creation programmes, improved service delivery, or addressing specific grievances, before they trigger larger-scale unrest. Using local intelligence and gathering real-time feedback from communities allows the government to implement preventative measures, such as targeted job creation programmes, improved service delivery, or addressing specific grievances, before they trigger larger-scale unrest. In this regard, Schwella (2021) postulates that proactive government interventions are crucial in preventing social unrest by identifying issues early and addressing them before they escalate. This implies that effective monitoring and timely interventions not only help in managing public dissatisfaction but also strengthen the relationship between the government and citizens, fostering trust and ensuring social stability. Taking a proactive approach not only helps manage public discontent, but also fosters trust between citizens and the government. This is because people can see that their concerns are being addressed in a timely and effective manner (Schwella, 2021: 141-157).

By tracking protest-related data, including frequency, locations, and causes, policymakers can identify patterns in unrest and develop tailored interventions. For example, monitoring economic

disparities or housing backlogs can guide resource allocation to the most affected areas. Holding regular meetings with the community to keep them informed about progress in this regard will contribute to prevention (Mhlanga & Mbohwa, 2017: 1-10).

6.4.6 Predict high-risk areas

Regular monitoring of socio-economic indicators, including unemployment, inequality, and service delivery issues, can help identify protest hotspots. This allows for the deployment of conflict prevention measures, such as increased community engagement or investment in local development. The grass roots issues need to be identified and prioritised by government. They need to intervene immediately and make good on their promises. Monitoring and follow-up mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that actions are being taken to address the root causes of unrest, and that progress is transparently communicated to the affected communities to maintain trust and prevent further escalation (Bromley & Sadeghi, 2017: 423-439).

Community sentiment analysis tools such as social media monitoring and public opinion surveys can be invaluable in identifying rising dissatisfaction in specific communities. According to Zencity (2023), by tracking online conversations and gathering feedback from local residents, authorities can spot early signs of tension or discontent, whether related to poor service delivery, unmet expectations, or other issues. Identifying such tensions early enables the government to implement outreach programmes that address concerns and provide platforms for dialogue. These programmes may include town hall meetings, community workshops, or direct engagement through local leaders, with the aim of calming frustrations and finding collaborative solutions. Additionally, when high-ranking government officials visit affected communities and engage with them, it can leave a significant impact by demonstrating that the government is attentive to their concerns. Direct interaction fosters trust, humanises decision-makers, and demonstrates a commitment to resolving issues before they escalate into larger-scale protests. By combining sentiment analysis with proactive outreach, the government can create a more responsive, transparent, and engaged relationship with the public.

6.4.7 Ensure timely government intervention

Continuous monitoring allows for timely government interventions, such as negotiating with community leaders or increasing service delivery efforts in neglected areas. Addressing grievances early, prevents small protests from escalating into large-scale, violent demonstrations (National Governors Association, 2020). In the event of a protest, real-time monitoring provides authorities with crucial information about the size, scope, and nature of the protest. This helps ensure that security forces are deployed appropriately, avoiding heavy-handed responses that could exacerbate tensions (ACLED, n.d.).

6.4.8 Ensure accountability and transparency

Monitoring systems, if transparent and accessible to the public, can foster trust between the government and citizens. If people see that their grievances are being actively monitored and addressed, they might be less likely to resort to protests as their primary form of communication. Anonymous telephone lines in the form of hotlines or digital platforms can ensure transparency by allowing citizens to report issues or voice concerns without fear of retaliation. These channels can provide real-time feedback to authorities, ensuring that community issues are heard and acted upon promptly. Additionally, the public can track the resolution of their complaints, which fosters trust in government institutions and reduces the likelihood of frustration leading to protests (BDO South Africa, n.d.).

Establishing clear lines of communication through monitoring systems, such as community feedback platforms, ensures that the government remains accountable and responsive to the public's needs. This can help reduce feelings of neglect and frustration that often fuel protests. The community needs to be involved, and if bureaucrats do not perform in terms of goals and targets, harsh tangible consequences need to be forthcoming, such as performance reviews, sanctions, or dismissal. These measures ensure that public officials are held accountable for their actions, fostering greater trust between the government and the people (Ngubane, 2022: 32-39).

6.4.9 Improve resource allocation

Monitoring helps the government identify where resources should be concentrated. For instance, areas with high unemployment rates, poor service delivery, or failing infrastructure can be prioritised for intervention, preventing the build-up of public dissatisfaction. New infrastructure and services must be safeguarded, as it is not unusual for criminal groups to sabotage them. Municipalities across South Africa continue to sound the alarm over widespread vandalism of water infrastructure, which not only worsens the country's water crisis but also lines the pockets of criminals (BusinessTech, 2023).

By using data from protest monitoring, the government can make informed policy decisions that address the root causes of unrest. This can reduce the frequency of protests by improving living conditions and addressing the core issues of inequality and service provision (Mythen & Walklate, 2006: 149–155).

Monitoring the factors that lead to protests in South Africa is essential for preventing and managing unrest. It provides a comprehensive understanding of where and why protests occur, enabling timely interventions, better governance, and improved communication with the public. An effective

monitoring system helps address grievances at the source, reducing the need for protests and fostering a more stable society (Scheepers & Schultz, 2019: 1–9).

6.4.10 The need for training and preparedness

It is clear that training is a critical aspect in preparing both management and law enforcement to effectively engage with protesters and prevent the situation from spiralling into conflict or chaos (Wöcke, Grosse, Mthombeni & Pfeffer, 2023). The below are some recommendations in this regard:

Firstly, companies and organisations should invest in crisis communication and conflict resolution training to prepare leadership to handle protests and strikes. Leaders should be equipped to engage with protesters calmly, address their grievances, and negotiate solutions. They should also be trained in recognising the early signs of unrest and proactively managing employee relations to prevent escalation. Secondly, law enforcement agencies need specific training in crowd control, de-escalation techniques, and negotiation strategies with protesters. This includes learning how to engage with protesters without resorting to violence and understanding the motivations and needs of different protest groups. Thirdly, some police stations have introduced community liaison officers whose role is to build trust with protest groups before situations escalate. These officers can act as intermediaries, facilitating communication and helping to ensure that the protest stays peaceful and productive. Lastly, addressing the potential for criminal elements to hijack protests involves better coordination between protest organisers, law enforcement, and community leaders. Preventive measures, such as ensuring clear communication channels between protest organisers and authorities, and preparing protesters to recognise and resist outside provocateurs, can help maintain the integrity of the protest.

Participant 3’s comments in Chapter 5 highlight the complexities involved in managing protests and the challenges faced by both those organising protests and those in authority. Training for management, law enforcement, and public order officials is crucial for ensuring peaceful and effective responses to protests. It is also important to understand the role of criminals who may attempt to exploit the situation. Ensuring proper preparation, clear communication, and an empathetic, strategic approach to conflict resolution can help reduce the risk of escalation and ensure that protests remain focused on their core issues.

6.5 Recommendations for future studies

Based on the current findings, several recommendations are offered for future studies:

6.5.1 Comparative analysis across other regions

Future research could expand beyond the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas to include all nine provinces in South Africa. Cross cultural African or international studies can also be considered. A comparative study could explore whether the factors that escalate violence during protests differ depending on the location, socio-economic conditions, or political contexts.

6.5.2 Community perspectives on violence escalation

To gain a holistic understanding, future studies could explore the perceptions of community members, protesters, and civil society organisations regarding the escalation of violence. This could reveal potential discrepancies between POP officials' views and those of civilians involved in protests. Even a study comparing the views of the different political parties can bring new insights into the underlying causes of unrest, the effectiveness of response strategies, and the role of political ideologies in shaping public opinion on protests. Such research could provide a more nuanced perspective on how different stakeholders perceive the legitimacy of protests, the appropriateness of law enforcement actions, and the broader socio-political factors contributing to service delivery dissatisfaction. This could ultimately guide more effective policy decisions and conflict resolution strategies (Mottiar & Bond, 2011).

6.5.3 Impact of police training and protocols

Investigating the role of police training, tactics, and standard operating procedures in managing protests could provide insight into how different approaches either contribute to or mitigate the escalation of violence. This could include a focus on non-violent conflict resolution strategies, de-escalation techniques, and crowd psychology. Effective techniques from other countries could be adapted to the South African context to ensure a more peaceful handling of protests. Additionally, assessing the impact of training on police-community relations and how it influences the perceptions of protesters towards law enforcement could further inform best practices in protest management. By incorporating lessons from both local and international experiences, law enforcement agencies can develop a more nuanced approach to protest management that prioritises safety, human rights, and effective conflict resolution (SAHRC, 2017).

6.5.4 Role of social media and communication

Future studies could examine how the communication between police members and protest organisers, as well as the use of social media, influences the dynamics of protests. The role of social media in coordinating protests, shaping narratives, and influencing the actions of both protesters and police is a key area of interest (Mottiar & Bond, 2016).

6.5.5 Legal and political factors influencing violence

Research could focus on the legal and political environments that shape public order policing and protest management. This could include analysing government policies and protest laws, and how the political climate affects the behaviour of both law enforcement and protesters (Nkhwashu & Nene, 2019: 60-73).

6.5.6 Psychological impact on POP officials

Exploring the psychological impact of managing violent protests on POP officials who deal with protests at the coalface could provide a deeper understanding of the stress, decision-making processes, and behaviour of officers in high-pressure environments. This could lead to recommendations for mental health support and resilience training (Mushwana, Govender & Nel, 2019).

6.5.7 Longitudinal studies on protest outcomes

Longitudinal studies that track the outcomes of both violent and non-violent protests over time could be instrumental in determining the long-term effects of policing strategies. This could include examining recurrent protests, changes in public perception of police, and policy changes resulting from violent protests (Kynoch, 2024: 1023-1039).

6.5.8 Influence of protester demographics

Analysing how the demographics of protest participants (age, gender, socio-economic background, and political affiliations) impact the escalation of violence could provide valuable insights. Understanding how different groups interact with police and the factors that contribute to violence in diverse communities can inform more customised policing strategies (Claassen, 2014).

6.5.9 Cultural and historical context of protests

Future research could delve into the historical and cultural context of protests in South Africa, especially in relation to apartheid-era protest policing and its influence on modern-day strategies. This would provide a deeper contextual understanding of the tensions between communities and law enforcement. Research focusing on the voice of immigrants in informal settlements could provide valuable information to develop more inclusive and effective policing strategies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by these communities. By considering the historical legacy of oppression and current socio-economic dynamics, such research could help foster better

community-police relations and inform policies aimed at reducing violence during protests (Britannica, 2024).

6.5.10 Technological innovations in crowd control

Investigating the impact of emerging technologies, such as drones, surveillance systems, and body cams, on public order policing and protest management could be another crucial area of focus. These technologies offer significant potential for enhancing the ability of law enforcement agencies to monitor and respond to public disturbances in real time. Drones, for example, can provide aerial views of large protests, allowing for better crowd control and the identification of potential flashpoints. Surveillance cameras, coupled with facial recognition software, can help authorities track individuals involved in illegal activities. Similarly, body cameras worn by police officers can ensure accountability, documenting interactions with protesters and reducing the likelihood of excessive force. Non-lethal weapons, such as rubber bullets, tear gas, or water cannons, could also be considered as alternative methods of crowd control, as they provide a way to disperse crowds without causing fatal injuries. However, the use of such technologies and weapons requires careful ethical consideration (Watney, 2024: 358-363).

Understanding whether these technologies escalate or de-escalate violence is vital for shaping future policing strategies. While some studies suggest that surveillance and technology-enhanced policing can lead to more peaceful outcomes by increasing transparency and deterring unlawful behaviour, others argue that the presence of surveillance can provoke resistance or increase tensions. Non-lethal weapons, though intended to minimise harm, can sometimes be perceived as aggressive and may inadvertently escalate confrontations, leading to more violence. Examining the effectiveness of these tools in various protest contexts—such as political protests, labour strikes, or social justice demonstrations—will be essential for evaluating their broader implications on public order (Watney, 2024: 358-363).

These recommendations aim to stimulate future research, deepen the understanding of violence escalation during protests, and explore how emerging technologies, alongside traditional policing methods, can be integrated into protest management strategies. Incorporating diverse perspectives, methodologies, and contexts will provide a more comprehensive view of the complex dynamics at play. By expanding the scope of inquiry to include not only technological innovations but also the social, ethical, and psychological impacts of their use, future research could contribute to the development of more effective, transparent, and human-cantered approaches to public order policing (Watney, 2024: 358-363).

6.6 Conclusion

This study explored Public Order Policing (POP) officials' perceptions of protest violence in the urban centres of Gauteng, South Africa. The findings revealed that the root causes of protest violence are deeply embedded in socio-economic and political conditions. Widespread poverty, unemployment, and unequal service delivery were identified as the primary drivers of unrest, particularly in historically marginalised communities (Qithi & Mkhize, 2023; Duncan, 2016). Moreover, political dynamics often shape the nature and outcome of protests. POP officials noted that political opportunism and internal party factionalism frequently contribute to the escalation of violence, as protests are sometimes hijacked to serve political agendas (Alexander, 2010; Runciman, 2021).

POP officers highlighted several challenges related to protest management. These include inadequate training, outdated equipment, poor intelligence coordination, and a lack of dedicated resources. Many participants expressed concerns about the re-militarisation of SAPS and how this has led to increasingly aggressive tactics, which in turn fuel community resentment and violence (Faull, 2013; Bruce, 2015). The study also found that strained police-community relations play a critical role in the dynamics of protest violence. Communities often perceive the police not as protectors but as enforcers of state repression, a perception rooted in historical mistrust and contemporary experiences of police brutality (Piper & Africa, 2012; Madlingozi, 2017).

Operational challenges further complicate the policing of protests. POP units often lack actionable intelligence and face difficulties in distinguishing legitimate protesters from criminal elements or political disruptors. Participants shared frustrations regarding the infiltration of protests by external actors seeking to incite violence or destabilise communities, which undermines the core objectives of peaceful assembly (Masuku & Dlamini, 2021). This intelligence gap limits police capacity for early intervention and often results in reactive, rather than preventative, responses.

The research makes several recommendations for policy and practice. Firstly, addressing the root causes of protest violence must be a priority. This involves targeted interventions to reduce poverty, improve service delivery, and create employment, especially in urban informal settlements (Alexander et al., 2018; Abel, 2019). Transparent governance and consistent community engagement are essential to restoring public confidence in the state. Secondly, reforming the approach to protest policing is critical. POP units must shift from militarised, force-driven methods to de-escalation tactics grounded in human rights and proportionality (Geyer, 2021; Faull, 2013). Regular training in crowd psychology, negotiation, and non-lethal engagement should become standard practice.

Improving community-police relations is also essential. This requires meaningful partnerships, dialogue, and trust-building initiatives between police and residents, especially in high-risk areas (Newham, 2020; Paret, 2015). Community policing forums and pre-protest engagement can provide platforms for mutual understanding and reduce the likelihood of violence. Additionally, POP operational capacity must be strengthened. Units should be adequately resourced with modern, non-lethal equipment, real-time communication systems, and trained personnel to enable timely, coordinated responses. Finally, inter-agency intelligence sharing and collaboration with civil society actors should be institutionalised to identify protest flashpoints early and mitigate the influence of violent disruptors (Hunter & Houghton, 2016).

In summary, this study contributes critical insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of POP officials tasked with managing public protests in South Africa. By examining the intersection of structural inequality, political contestation, and police practice, the research offers a nuanced understanding of why protests often turn violent. Its findings suggest that sustainable solutions require an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach that prioritises social justice, police accountability, and inclusive development. If implemented, the study's recommendations have the potential to reshape protest policing into a more effective and humane practice-ultimately contributing to greater social stability and democratic resilience in South Africa's contested urban spaces.

The perceptions of POP officials in this study offer a crucial perspective on the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane municipal areas. While the immediate focus is often on policing practices, the root causes of protest violence are deeply entrenched in South Africa's socio-economic and political fabric. By addressing these broader systemic issues, improving community-police relations, and ensuring that law enforcement agencies are equipped to manage protests humanely and effectively, it is possible to create a more peaceful environment where protests can occur without escalating into violence. Sustainable peace in protest management requires collaboration between government, law enforcement, and civil society to build a society where grievances are addressed constructively, without the need for violent confrontation.

References

Abel, M., 2019, 'Long-run effects of forced resettlement: Evidence from apartheid South Africa', *The Journal of Economic History*, 79(4), pp. 915–953.

Abrams, B., Travaglino, G.A., Gardner, P.R. & Callan, B., 2022, 'The meaning of contention', *Contention*, 10(2), pp. 83–101. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3167/cont.2022.100205 [Accessed 19 January 2025].

Abrutyn, S., 2019, 'Toward a general theory of anomie: The social psychology of disintegration', *European Journal of Sociology*, 60(1), pp. 109–136. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975619000043.

ACCORD, 2021, *The July 2021 protests and socio-political unrest in South Africa*, viewed 29 December 2024, from https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-july-2021-protests-and-socio-political-unrest-in-south-africa/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

ACLED, n.d., *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project*, viewed 29 December 2024, from https://acleddata.com/.

ActionSA, 2023, *ActionSA proposes bold solutions for electoral reform prioritising accountability*, viewed 29 December 2024, from https://www.actionsa.org.za/actionsa-proposes-bold-solutions-for-electoral-reform-prioritising-accountability/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Adams, N., 2024, 'The impact of the GNU on governance in South Africa', *University of the Western Cape*, 15 August, viewed 29 October 2024, from https://www.uwc.ac.za/news-and-announcements/news/the-impact-of-the-gnu-on-governance-in-south-africa.

Adler, R., 2022, 'The role of trustworthiness in qualitative research', *Journal of Qualitative Research*, 45(6), pp. 599–612.

Adom, R.K. & Simatele, M.D., 2024, 'Overcoming systemic and institutional challenges in policy implementation in South Africa's water sector', *Sustainable Water Resources Management*, 10(2), Article 69. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40899-024-01040-3.

Africanews, 2022, 'South Africa: Police arrest 20 alleged instigators of July 2021 riots', viewed 16 May 2025, from https://www.africanews.com/2022/08/12/south-africa-police-arrest-20-alleged-instigators-of-july-2021-riots/.

Agnew, R., 2013, 'When criminal coping is more likely: An extension of general strain theory', *Deviant Behaviour*, 34(8), pp. 653–670. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2013.766529.

Ahmed, H., 2024, 'Assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research: Four key criteria', *Qualitative Research Methods Journal*, 12(1–2), pp. 1–12.

Akers, R.L. & Jennings, W.G., 2019, 'The empirical status of social learning theory of crime and deviance: The past, present, and future', in Krohn, M.D., Hendrix, N., Penly Hall, G. & Lizotte, A.J. (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, 2nd edn., Springer, Cham, pp. 113–129. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20779-3_6 [Accessed 29 December 2024].

Alexander, P., 2010, 'Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests: A preliminary analysis', *Review of African Political Economy*, 37(123), pp. 25–40.

Alexander, P., 2014, 'Media briefing on South Africa community protests', *Mail & Guardian*, 12 February, viewed 25 January 2024, from http://mg.co.za/article/2014-02-12.

Alexander, P., Runciman, C., Ngwane, T., Boikanyo, M., Kgothatso, M. & Van Staden, N., 2018, 'Frequency and turmoil: South Africa's community protests 2005–2017', *SA Crime Quarterly*, 63, pp. 27–42. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2018/v0n63a3057.

American Civil Liberties Union, 2015, *Free speech: The right to protest* [Pamphlet], viewed 5 September 2024, from http://www.aclutx.org/documents/righttoprotestpamphlet.pdf.

Amir, M., 2021, 'A critical analysis on functional perspective on deviance', *SSRN Electronic Journal* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3832519.

Amtaika, A., 2013, *Local Government in South Africa since 1994: Leadership, democracy, development and service delivery in a post-apartheid era*, Carolina Academic Press, Durham.

Anney, V., 2014, 'Ensuring the quality of qualitative research', *Qualitative Social Work*, 13(3), pp. 276–277.

Askvik, S., Jamil, I. & Dhakal, T.N., 2011, 'Citizens' trust in public and political institutions in Nepal', *International Political Science Review*, 32(4), pp. 417–437.

Awesu, T., MacDonald, A., Taverna-Turisan, T., Umraw, A. & Mukundi, G., 2024, 'South Africa's ANC loses its majority: Possibility of significant policy shifts on the horizon', *Edelman Global Advisory*, 25 June, viewed 29 October 2024, from https://www.edelmanglobaladvisory.com/south-africas-anc-loses-its-majority-possibility-significant-policy-shifts-horizon.

Bandura, A., 1983, *The psychology of behaviour modification*, Prentice-Hall, New York.

Barbieri, N., Clipper, S., Narvey, C., Rude, A., Craig, J. & Piquero, N., 2019, 'Assessing general strain theory and measures of victimization, 2002–2018', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 44, pp. 2–10.

Barlow, H.D. & Kauzlarich, D., 2010, *Explaining crime: A primer in criminological theory*, 7th edn., Matthew Bender & Company, New Providence, NJ.

Bartol, C.R. & Bartol, A.M., 2021, *Criminal Behaviour. A psychological approach: 2nd customised edition for KRM310(B) Psychocriminology*, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Baxter, P.E. & Jack, S.M., 2008, 'Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation', *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), pp. 544–559.

BDO South Africa, n.d., *Tip-off services*, viewed 29 December 2024, from https://www.bdo.co.za/en-za/services/advisory/forensics/tip-off-services.

Beck, U., 2009, *World risk society and manufactured uncertainties*, Firenze University Press, Frankfurt.

Bedasso, B. & Obikili, N., 2016, 'A dream deferred: The micro-foundations of direct political action in pre- and post-democratization South Africa', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 52(1), pp. 130–146.

Behar-Horenstein, L., 2018, 'Qualitative research methods', in Frey, B. (ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 1340–1345.

Bekker, M., 2021, 'Protest as an act of love', *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, 15(1), pp. 1–33.

Benit-Gbaffou, C., 2018, 'The micropolitics of urban transformation: Modes of engagement of street traders in inner-city Johannesburg', *Urban Forum*, 29(3), pp. 269–287. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-018-9334-2.

Bénit-Gbaffou, C., 2012, 'Citizenship and service delivery protests in South Africa: From exclusion to protest', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 30(2), pp. 205–227.

Bénit-Gbaffou, C., 2012, 'Party politics, the poor and the city: Reflections from the South African case', *International Development Planning Review*, 34(4), pp. 383–400.

Benjamin, A.J., Kepes, S. & Bushman, B.J., 2018, 'Effects of weapons on aggressive thoughts, angry feelings, hostile appraisals, and aggressive behaviour: A meta-analytic review of the weapons effect literature', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 22(4), pp. 347–377. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868317725419

Bergkamp, L., 2017, 'The concept of risk society as a model for risk regulation – its hidden and not so hidden ambitions, side effects, and risks', *Journal of Risk Research*, 20(10), pp. 1275–1291.

Bernard, H.R., Wutich, A. & Ryan, G.W., 2017, 'Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches. 2nd ed.', *Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE*

Bernburg, J.G., 2002, 'Anomie, social change and crime: A theoretical examination of institutional-anomie theory', *British Journal of Criminology*, 42(4), pp. 729–742. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/42.4.729

Beuer, J., 2024, 'South Africa acts decisively to tackle crime amid police brutality concerns', *The Africa Report, 24 July*, Viewed 16 January 2025, from https://www.theafricareport.com/365499/south-africa-acts-decisively-to-tackle-crime-amid-police-brutality-concerns/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Beukes, J., 2021, 'Why coalition agreements should be public', *Local Government Bulletin*, 16(3). Viewed 10 November 2024, from https://dullahomarinstitute.org.za/multilevel-govt/local-government-bulletin/archives/volume-16-issue-2-september-2021/why-coalition-agreements-should-be-public

Beukes, J., Chigwata, T. & De Visser, J., 2024, 'Unpacking the 2024 Government of National Unity in South Africa: Challenges, opportunities and lessons for stable coalition governance', *Bellville: Dullah Omar Institute*, Viewed 10 November 2024, from https://dullahomarinstitute.org.za/multilevel-govt/publications/doi-policy-brief-on-gnus.pdf

Bhuda, M.T. & Maditsi, M.E., 2023, 'Do traditional leaders still govern indigenous communities? Insights from riots and looting in South Africa during Covid-19', *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 22(2), pp. 1–15. Available at: https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-linga_v22_n2_a4

Bishopp, S.A., Piquero, N.L., Worrall, J.L. & Piquero, A.R., 2019, 'Negative affective responses to stress among urban police officers: A general strain theory approach', *Deviant Behaviour*, 40(6), pp. 635–654. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2018.1436568

Booysen, S., 2022. Protest as Parallel Policy-Making and Governance. In: S. Booysen, ed. , “We are Gauteng People”: Challenging the Politics of Xenophobia in Khutsong, South Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 203–215.

Bogdan, R., Biklen, S., Creswell, J., Lincoln, Y., Guba, E. & Lichtman, M., 2011, ‘Qualitative research approaches’, *In: Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Educational Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 1–4. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483349435

Bohler-Muller, N., Roberts, B.J., Struwig, J., Gordon, S.L., Radebe, T. & Alexander, P., 2017, ‘Minding the protest: Attitudes towards different forms of protest action in contemporary South Africa’, *South African Crime Quarterly*, (62), pp. 81–92.

Bond, P., 2000, *Cities of gold, townships of coal: Essays on South Africa’s new urban crisis*, Eritrea: Africa World Press.

Bongwe, S., 2019, ‘The Marikana Massacre: A decade later’, *Harvard Political Review*, viewed 29 December 2024, from https://harvardpolitics.com/marikana-massacre-10/

Booysen, S., 2009, ‘With the ballot and the brick: Continuous dual repertoires in the politics of attaining service delivery’, in McLennan, A. & Munslow, B. (eds.), *The politics of service delivery*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Botes, L., 2018, ‘South Africa’s landscape of social protests: A way forward for developmental local government?’, *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 10(4), pp. 214–252.

Botes, L., 2022, ‘Service delivery protests in South Africa: A case for community development?’, in *Politics, Power and Community Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 215–230.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006, ‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp. 77–101.

Brinkerhoff, D.W., Wetterberg, A. & Stephen, D., 2012, ‘Service delivery and legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected states’, *Public Management Review*, 14(2), pp. 273–293.

Britannica, 2024, ‘Opposition to apartheid’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/apartheid/Opposition-to-apartheid (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Broidy, L.M., 2001, 'A test of general strain theory', *Criminology*, 39(1), pp. 9–36. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2001.tb00915.x.

Bromley, M. & Sadeghi, S., 2017, 'Socio-economic factors and the identification of protest hotspots in South Africa: Implications for conflict prevention', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 61(4), pp. 423–439. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022002717724902 (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Brooks, H., Chikane, R. & Mottiar, S., 2022, 'Getting to the roots of contemporary protests in South Africa', *Johannesburg: Wits School of Governance*, Available at: https://www.wsg.ac.za/news/getting-roots-contemporary-protests-south-africa (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Brooks, T., 2021, *Punishment: A critical introduction*, New York, NY: Routledge. Available at: https://books.google.co.za/books?id=AKAIEAAAQBAJ (Accessed: 30 October 2024).

Brosché, J., 2015, *Causes of communal conflicts: Government bias, elites, and conditions for cooperation*, Stockholm: Expert Group for Aid Studies. Available at: https://eba.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015_06_webb_Tillganp.pdf (Accessed: 9 October 2022).

Brown, A. & Green, P., 2019, 'The impact of instigators on protest escalation', *Journal of Social Movements*, 21(3), pp. 45–68.

Brown, S.E., Esbensen, F.A. & Geis, G., 2010, *Criminology: Explaining crime and its context*, United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bruce, D., 2016, 'Public order transparency: Using freedom of information laws to analyse the policing of protest', *South African Crime Quarterly*, 58, pp. 13–22. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2016/i58a1508.

Burger, J., 2009, 'The reasons behind service delivery protests in South Africa', *Institute for Security Studies, 29 July*, Available at: https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-reasons-behind-service-delivery-protests-in-south-africa (Accessed: 14 January 2024).

Burger, J., 2012, 'To what extent has the South African Police Service become militarised?', *Institute for Security Studies*, Available at: https://issafrica.org/iss-today/to-what-extent-has-the-south-african-police-service-become-militarised.

Bushman, B.J., Kerwin, T., Whitlock, T. & Weisenberger, J.M., 2017, 'The weapons effect on wheels: Motorists drive more aggressively when there is a gun in the vehicle', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 73, pp. 82–85. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.06.007.

BusinessTech, 2023, 'Municipalities sound the alarm over water mafias', Available at: https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/787962/municipalities-sound-the-alarm-over-water-mafias/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

BusinessTech, 2024, 'Municipalities sound the alarm over water mafias', Available at: https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/787962/municipalities-sound-the-alarm-over-water-mafias/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Buthelezi, T.M., 2019, 'Service delivery protests in SA', *ProBono.Org, 19 December*, Available at: https://probono.org.za/service-delivery-protests-in-sa/ (Accessed: 18 August 2024).

Calhoun, C., Light, D. & Schneider, C., 2014, *Classics in the sociology of religion*, New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cambridge Assessment International Education, n.d., 'Cambridge Assessment International Education', Available at: https://cambridge-community.org.uk/professional-development/gswkey/index.html (Accessed: 21 May 2023).

Canham, H., 2018, 'Theorising community rage for decolonial action', *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 37(1), pp. 6–18. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0081246318787682 (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Carothers, T. & Youngs, R., 2015, *The complexities of global protests*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/10/08/complexities-of-global-protests-pub-61537 (Accessed: 31 August 2024).

Cele, B., 2022, '2022/23 Budget vote debate', *Parliament of South Africa, Cape Town, 24 May*, Available at: https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-bheki-cele-police-ipid-and-civilian-secretariat-police-service-dept-budget-vote-2 (Accessed: 20 October 2023).

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and Society Work and Development Institute, 2011, *The smoke that calls: Insurgent citizenship, collective violence and the struggle for a place in the new South Africa*, Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and Society Work and Development Institute.

Chen, H., Hailey, D., Wang, N. & Yu, P., 2014, 'A review of data quality assessment methods for public health information systems', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 11(5), pp. 5170–5207.

Chikulo, B.C., 2013. Developmental local governance and service delivery in South Africa: Progress, achievements and challenges. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 28(1), pp. 35–64.

Chiwarawara, K., 2024. The struggle for housing and basic services in South Africa: A case for service delivery protests. *Development Southern Africa* [online]. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02533952.2024.2352193 [Accessed 29 December 2024].

Choe, Y., Rhee, C., Sanders, G. & Yoo, C., 2014. The effect of deterrence policy in software piracy: Cross-cultural analysis between Korea and Vietnam. *Information Development*, 30(4), pp. 342.

Christensen, L., Jhanson, R.B. & Turner, L., 2014. *Research methods, design, and analysis*. 12th edn., Pearson Education, Hoboken, NJ.

Claassen, C., 2014. Who participates in communal violence? Survey evidence from South Africa. *South African Crime Quarterly*, 49. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168014534649 [Accessed 29 December 2024].

CNN, 2021. South Africa protests descend into chaos with looting and arson. *CNN*, 13 July. Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/13/africa/south-africa-violence-protests-intl/index.html [Accessed 2 January 2025].

Collins, A.M. & Menard, S., 2021. Anomie and adult crime. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 7(3), pp. 420–448. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40865-021-00169-5

Common Dreams, 2015. #FeesMustFall: Student uprising for justice sweeps South Africa. *Common Dreams* [online]. Available at: https://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/10/22/fees-must-fall-student-uprising-justice-sweeps-south-africa [Accessed 19 January 2025].

Corruption Watch, 2021. Encouraged whistle-blowing: Could it work for SA's public procurement? *Corruption Watch*. Available at: https://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/encouraged-whistle-blowing-could-it-work-for-sas-public-procurement [Accessed 29 December 2024].

Coser, L.A., 1977. *Masters of sociological thought: Ideas in historical and social context*. 2nd edn., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, NY.

Craig, J.M., Cardwell, S.M. & Piquero, A.R., 2017. The effects of criminal propensity and strain on later offending. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(13), pp. 1655–1681. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128716665334

Creswell, J.W., 2013. Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. SAGE Publications, Inc., New York, NY.

Creswell, J.W., 2012. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 3rd edn., SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Cullen, F.T., 2017. *Taking stock: The status of criminological theory*. Taylor and Francis, New York, NY.

Curran, D., Kekewich, M. & Foreman, T., 2019. Examining the use of consent forms to promote dissemination of research results to participants. *Research Ethics*, 15(1), pp. 1–28.

Davis, R., 2022. Why the NPA is misfiring on high-profile corruption cases. *Daily Maverick*, 19 March. Available at: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-03-19-why-the-npa-ismisfiring-on-high-profile-corruption-cases [Accessed 21 March 2022].

Dawson, M. & Gimbel, S., 2019. Understanding the crime crisis in South Africa: An examination of the causes and potential solutions. *Journal of South African Studies*, 45(3), pp. 443–463.

De Juan, A. & Pierskalla, J.H., 2015. Manpower to coerce and co-opt: State capacity and political violence in Southern Sudan 2006–2010. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 32(2), pp. 175–199.

De Juan, A. & Wegner, W., 2019. Social inequality, state-centered grievances, and protest: Evidence from South Africa. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63(1), pp. 31–58. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717723136

de la Fuente, J., Kauffman, D.F. & Boruchovitch, E., 2023. Editorial: Past, present and future contributions from the social cognitive theory (Albert Bandura). *Psychology Research and Behaviour Management*, 16, pp. 1–4. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S398438 [Accessed 19 January 2025].

De Visser, J. & Powell, D., 2012. *Service Delivery Protest Barometer 2007–2012*. Community Law Centre, Multi-level Government Initiative, Cape Town. Available at: http://mlgi.org.za/barometers/service-delivery-protest-barometer [Accessed 24 January 2024].

De Vydt, M. & Walgrave, S., 2023. Protest participation propensity cues and selective recruitment: Dyadic evidence on rational prospecting. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37061328

Death, C., 2016. Counter-conducts as a mode of resistance: Ways of 'not being like that' in South Africa. *Global Society*, 30(2), pp. 201–217.

Della Porta, D. & Diani, M., 2006. *Social movements: An introduction*. Blackwell, Malden, MA.

Della Porta, D., 2015. Target choices and intense times. *Mobilising Ideas*, 10 June. Available at: https://mobilisingideas.wordpress.com/2015/06/10/target-choices-in-intense-times [Accessed 9 October 2022].

Delve, L. & Limpaecher, A., 2022. Phenomenological research design. *Delve*. Available at: https://delvetool.com/blog/phenomenology [Accessed 22 May 2023].

Denny, D., 2005. *The nature of risk*. SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Denscombe, M., 2014. Surveys. In *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Social Research Projects*, Open University Press, England, pp. 22–25.

Dodson, K., 2016. Economic threat and protest behaviour in comparative perspective. *Sociological Perspectives*, 59(4), pp. 873–891.

Dumay, J. & Qu, S., 2011. The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8, pp. 238–264.

Duncan, J., 2016. *Protest nation: The right to protest in South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Duncan, J., 2016. Protest nation: The right to protest in South Africa. *University of KwaZulu-Natal Press*, Scottsville. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1385575 [Accessed 20 January 2025].

Duncan, J., 2020. South Africa's doctrinal decline on the right to protest: Notification requirements and the shift from fundamental right to national security threat. *Constitutional Court Review*, 10(1), pp. 227–249. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2989/CCR.2020.0009

Duncan, J., 2016. Factors that contribute to student protests at a South African university. *Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*, pp. 22–25. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/43461096/Factors_that_Contribute_to_Student_Protests_at_a_South_African_University [Accessed 16 May 2025].

Duncan, J. (2020) 'South Africa's doctrinal decline on the right to protest: Notification requirements and the shift from fundamental right to national security threat', *Constitutional Court Review*, 10(1), pp. 227–249. https: //doi.org/10.2989/CCR.2020.0009

Duncan, J. (2016) 'Factors that contribute to student protests at a South African university', Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, pp. 22–25. Available at: https: //www.academia.edu/43461096/Factors_that_Contribute_to_Student_Protests_at_a_South_African_University (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Durkheim, É., 1893. *The division of labor in society*. Free Press, New York, NY.

Durkheim, É., 1912. *The elementary forms of religious life*. Free Press, New York, NY.

Enaifoghe, A., Mtshali, L. & Durokifa, A., 2023. Socio-economic effect of violence and growing social unrest in South Africa: Lessons from July 2021 protests. *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 12(1), pp. 67–89.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024. Positivism. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/positivism/Logical-positivism-and-logical-empiricism [Accessed 4 November 2024].

Eriksson, K., Enquist, M. & Ghirlanda, S., 2007. Critical points in current theory of conformist social learning. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 5(1), pp. 67–87. https://doi.org/10.1556/JEP.2007.1009

Faizi, I. & Nayebi, H., 2023. Anomie theories of Durkheim and Merton: A comparative review. *Comparative Sociology*, 22(2), pp. 280–297.

Flick, U., 2014. *An introduction to qualitative research*. 5th edn., SAGE, London.

Francis, D. & Webster, E., 2019. Poverty and inequality in South Africa: Critical reflections. *Development Southern Africa*, 36(6), pp. 788–802. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2019.1666703

Freudenburg, W.R., 1988. Perceived risk, real risk: Social science and the art of probabilistic risk assessment. *Science*, 242(4875), pp. 44–49. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.3175635

Fryling, M.J., Johnston, C. & Hayes, L.J., 2011. Understanding observational learning: An interbehavioural approach. *The Analysis of Verbal Behaviour*, 27(1), pp. 191–203. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03393102

Gause, L., Moore, S.T. & Ostfeld, M.C., 2023. Anger, fear, and the racialization of news media coverage of protest activity. *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 8(3), pp. 446–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2023.27

George, T., 2021. Exploratory research: Definition, guide, & examples. *Scribbr*, 6 December. Available at: https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/exploratory-research [Accessed 21 May 2023].

Geyer, S., 2021. Interviews as data collection method. In: C.B. Fouché, H. Strydom & W.J.H. Roestenburg (eds.), *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 5th edn., Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria, pp. 33–45.

Giddens, A., Duneier, M., Appelbaum, R.P. & Carr, D., 2017. *Introduction to sociology*. 10th edn., W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY.

Given, L., 2012. Basic. In: *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 57–59.

Goebel, A., 2011. Our struggle is for the full loaf: Protests, social welfare and gendered citizenship in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37(2), pp. 369–388.

Gonzalez-Bailon, S., Borge-Holthoefer, J., Rivero, A. & Moreno, Y., 2011. The dynamics of protest recruitment through an online network. *arXiv preprint*, arXiv:1111.5595, pp. 4–7. Available at: https://arxiv.org/abs/1111.5595 [Accessed 16 May 2025].

Govender, I.J., 2016. Monitoring and evaluating service delivery as a wicked problem in South Africa. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 55(1–2), pp. 21–34.

Graham, M. & Low, S., 2019. Public service delivery and its impact on social unrest in South Africa. *Journal of Development Studies*, 55(4), pp. 634–650.

Grant, L., 2014. Research shows sharp increase in service delivery protests. *Mail & Guardian*, 12 February. Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2014-02-12-research-shows-sharp-increase-in-service-delivery-protests [Accessed 23 June 2015].

Greeff, M., Mostert, K., Kahl, C. & Jonker, C., 2021. The #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa: Exploring first-year students' experiences at a peri-urban university campus. *South African Journal*

of Higher Education, 35(4), pp. 15–18. Available at: https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/article/view/4219 [Accessed 16 May 2025].

Grill, G., 2021. Future protest made risky: Examining social media based civil unrest prediction research and products. *The Journal of Collaborative Computing and Work Practices*, 30, pp. 811–839.

Grönwall, J. & Danert, K., 2020. Regarding groundwater and drinking water access through a human rights lens: Self-supply as a norm. *Water*, 12(2), Article 419. https://doi.org/10.3390/w12020419

Guerra, J., 2012. An introduction to Clausewitzian strategic theory: General theory, strategy, and their relevance for today. *Military Strategy Magazine*, 2(3), pp. 30–34.

Guerrero, A., 2011. *Rebuilding trust in government via service delivery: The case of Medellin, Colombia*. World Bank, Washington, DC.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M. & Namey, E.E., 2012. Introduction to applied thematic analysis. In: *Applied Thematic Analysis*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 3–20. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483384436

Gwanyanya, M., 2017. Dialogue on public order policing in South Africa. *African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum*. Available at: http://www.r2p.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/dialogue-on-public-order-policing-in-south-africa-11-12-july-2017-johannesburg.pdf [Accessed 10 June 2023].

Habib, A., 2013. *South Africa's suspended revolution: Hopes and prospects*. Ohio University Press, Athens, OH. Available at: ProQuest Ebook Central [Accessed 19 January 2025].

Habib, A., 2020. Understanding violent protest in South Africa and the difficult choice facing leaders. *The Conversation*, 8 November. Available at: https://theconversation.com/understanding-violent-protest-in-south-africa-and-the-difficult-choice-facing-leaders-148751 [Accessed 3 March 2023].

Hanyane, B. & Mampane, J.N., 2023. Protests as a form of electioneering: A comparative study of the 2016 and 2021 local government elections protests in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 11(1), a729. https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v11i1.729

Harding, J., 2022. Durban riots: South Africa still bears the scars one year on. *BBC*, 10 July. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62093347 [Accessed 20 October 2023].

Hasell, K., 2023. Measuring inequality: What is the Gini coefficient? *Our World In Data*, 30 June. Available at: https://ourworldindata.org/what-is-the-gini-coefficient [Accessed 4 September 2024].

Hattingh, S., 2021. The elite and community protests in South Africa. *ZNet*. Available at: https://znetwork.org/znetarticle/the-elite-and-community-protests-in-south-africa-by-shawn-hattingh [Accessed 16 May 2025].

Hendricks, D. & Washinyira, N., 2023. Making demands on government: Theorizing determinants of backyard residents' collective action in Cape Town, South Africa. *African Studies Review*, 66(3), pp. 698–720. https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2023.10

Hennink, M., Hutter, I. & Bailey, A., 2011. *Qualitative research methods*. SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Hills, A., 2001. The inherent limits of military forces in policing peace operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 8(3), pp. 79–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310108413909

Hlongwane, P., 2023. Police's behaviour in response to handling of protestations in South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 12(10), pp. 200–208. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i10.3103

Höffler, K., Meyer, M. & Möller, V., 2022. Risk assessment: The key to more security? Factors, tools, and practices in dealing with extremist individuals. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 28(6), pp. 269–295.

Holloway, I. & Todres, L., 2003. The status of method: Flexibility, consistency and coherence. *Qualitative Research*, 3, pp. 345–357.

Horsburgh, J. & Ippolito, K., 2018. A skill to be worked at: Using social learning theory to explore the process of learning from role models in clinical settings. *BMC Medical Education*, 18(156). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-018-1251-x [Accessed 19 January 2025].

Hough, M., 2008. Violent protest at local government level in South Africa: Revolutionary potential? *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, 36(1), pp. 1–11.

Huesmann, L.R. & Taylor, L.D., 2006. The role of media violence in violent behaviour. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 27, pp. 393–415. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.26.021304.144640

Hunter, N. & Houghton, R., 2016. The struggle for basic services in South Africa's informal settlements: The case of sanitation. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(3), pp. 453–472.

Ige, K.D. & Nekhwevha, F.H., 2012. Poverty attribution in the developing world: A critical discussion on aspects of split consciousness among low income urban slum dwellers in Lagos. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(2), pp. 213–226.

Institute of Race Relations (IRR), 2013. Looming Gauteng water crisis: Municipalities must shape up. *Institute of Race Relations*. Available at: https://irr.org.za/media/looming-gauteng-water-crisis-municipalities-must-shape-up-2013-irr [Accessed 29 December 2024].

Intimidation Act, 72 of 1982. Section 1(1)(a) and (b). *Government Gazette*, No. 8030. Government Printer, Pretoria.

Iwu, C.H. & Iwu, C.G., 2015. A review of public order policing in South Africa: Reflections and considerable interventions. *Socioeconomica*, 4(8), pp. 541–552. https://doi.org/10.12803/SJSECO.48137

Jacquin, K., 2023. Violence behaviour. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/violence [Accessed 21 May 2023].

Janghorban, R., Roudsari, R.L. & Taghipour, A., 2014. Pilot study in qualitative research: The roles and values. *Journal of Hayat*, 19(4), pp. 1–5.

Javeline, D.L., 2009. *Protest and the politics of blame: The Russian response to unpaid wages*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI.

Jobo, Q.N., 2014. *Service delivery protests and development in Zandspruit Informal Settlement*. MA dissertation, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Gqeberha.

Joseph, B., 2018. Recruitment and retention of university student volunteers for South African community projects. *Academia.edu*, pp. 8–11. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/101000315/Recruitment_and_retention_of_university_student_volunteers_for_South_African_community_projects [Accessed 16 May 2025].

Kali, M., 2023. A comparative analysis of the causes of the protests in Southern Africa. *SN Social Sciences*, 3(2), Article 28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-023-00613-x

Kannan, A. & Gowri, P., 2015. The importance of pilot studies in research design. *International Journal of Research Methodology*, 23(4), pp. 207–218.

Karamoko, J., 2011. *Community protests in South Africa: Trends, analysis and explanations (Report 2)*. Community Law Centre, Bellville, pp. 31–32.

Khumalo, K., 2015. Developing the crime of public violence as a remedy to the violation of the rights of non-protesters during violent protests and strikes: A critical analysis of the South African jurisprudence. *OBITER*, pp. 578–599.

Kim, Y., 2011. The significance of pilot studies in research. *Journal of Qualitative Research*, 29(2), pp. 191–202.

Kirshner, J., 2011. 'We are Gauteng people': Challenging the politics of xenophobia in Khutsong, South Africa. *Antipode*, 44(4), pp. 1307–1328.

Klandermans, B., 1997. The social psychology of protest. *International Journal of Political Psychology*, 18(3), pp. 681–700.

Kramer, R.M., and Goldman, B., 2018. The role of emotion in the mobilisation of social movements. *Emotion*, 18(6), pp.750–757.

Krohn, M.D., Lizotte, A.J., and Hall, G.P., 2009. *Handbook on crime and deviance*. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0245-0

Kuo, K.-M., Talley, P.C., and Huang, C.-H., 2020. A meta-analysis of the deterrence theory in security-compliant and security-risk behaviours. *Computers & Security*, 96, Article 101928. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2020.101928

Kynoch, G., 2024. 'We get sucked into everybody's mess': Protests and Public Order Policing in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 49(5–6), pp.1023–1039. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2023.2334188

Lacourse, E., Nagin, D., Tremblay, R.E., Vitaro, F. and Claes, M., 2003. 'Predicting the development of male violence in adolescence', *Criminology*, 41(3), pp. 703–728.

Lancaster, L., 2018. 'Unpacking discontent: Where and why protest happens in South Africa', *South African Crime Quarterly*, 64, pp. 29–44. https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2018/i64a3031

Lancaster, L., 2016. 'At the heart of discontent: Measuring public violence in South Africa', *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 292, pp. 1–20.

Langa, M. and Kiguwa, P., 2016. 'Violence in protest: Real or imagined? Dynamics, narratives and consequences of university student protests in South Africa', in Reddy, V., Bohler-Muller, N., Houston, G. and Mafukidze, J. (eds.) *State of the Nation: South Africa 2016*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, pp. 85–108.

Lekoba, R. and Buthelezi, S., 2019. 'Reflecting critically on the researcher-participant encounter in focus groups: Racialized interactions, contestations and (re)presentation of South Africa's "protest culture"', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(1), pp. 30–34. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14780887.2019.1577519 (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Lewis, J.S., 2020. 'Signals, strongholds, and support: Political party protests in South Africa', *Political Studies Review*, 41(2), pp. 245–259. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720935029

Lewis-Beck, M.S., Bryman, A. and Futing Liao, T., 2004. *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 509–510. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589

Libera, M., 2024. '29 million people on grants in South Africa – but only 7.4 million taxpayers', *BusinessTech*. Available at: https://businesstech.co.za/news/finance/798152/29-million-people-on-grants-in-south-africa-but-only-7-4-million-taxpayers/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Lichtman, M., 2017. *Qualitative research for the social sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781544307756

Lilly, R., Cullen, T. and Ball, R., 2011. *Criminological theory: Context and consequences*. 5th ed. London: SAGE.

Lipsky, M., 2010. *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lodge, T. and Mottiar, S., 2016. 'Protest in South Africa: Motives and meanings', *Democratization*, 23(5), pp. 819–837.

Lolwana, P., 2016. *Mitigating service delivery protest through skills development and deployment: Research project commissioned by the Local Government SETA*. Researching Education and Labour Centre, School of Education, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

LRI Online, n.d. 'How employers can effectively respond to pickets and protests', *LRI Online*. Available at: https://news.lrionline.com/how-employers-can-effectively-respond-to-pickets-and-protests/ (Accessed: 2 January 2025).

Lune, H. and Burg, B., 2017. *Qualitative research methods for the social science*. Essex: Pearson Education.

Lupton, D., 2013. *Risk*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge, pp. 22–23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203070161

Madero-Hernandez, A., Lee, Y.-J., Wilcox, P. and Fisher, B.S., 2022. 'Following their lead: Police perceptions and their effects on crime prevention', *Justice Quarterly*, 39(2), pp. 327–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2020.1713392

Mafumo, T., 2024. 'Uncertainties with the Government of National Unity in South Africa', *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives (JPADA)*, 9(3), pp. 164–176. Available at: https://doi.org/10.55190/JPADA.2024.349

Mahaye, N., Dlomo, S. and Ajani, O., 2023. 'Impact of public protests on education system: A case of 2021 political unrest in South Africa', *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(2), pp. 348–357.

Mahlaka, R., 2025. SA's expanding labour force caught between hope and a crumbling job market. [online] *Daily Maverick*. Available at: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-05-18-sas-expanding-labour-force-caught-between-hope-and-a-crumbling-job-market/ (Accessed: 21 May 2025).

Malmqvist, E., Hellberg, K., Mollas, G., Rose, J. and Shevlin, M., 2019. 'Assessing participant recruitment and interview schedules in pilot studies: Lessons from a field study', *Qualitative Research Journal*, 19(1), pp. 1–12.

Maluleke, R., 2024. *Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), Q3: 2024*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Available at: https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Presentation%20QLFS%20Q3%202024.pdf (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

Mamokhere, J., 2021. 'Evaluating the impact of service delivery protests in relation to socio-economic development: A case of Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, South Africa', *African Journal of Development Studies*, pp. 79–96.

Managa, A., 2012. 'Unfulfilled promises: A reflection on local government performance and the critical issue of poor service delivery in South Africa', *Policy Brief No. 76*. Africa Institute of South Africa.

Manning, P.K., 2010. *Democratic policing in a changing world*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. Available at: http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3384542 (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Manyaka, R., 2018. 'Making sense of community protests in South Africa: Issues for consideration', *Journal of Public Administration*, 53(1), pp. 52–62.

Marais, H., 2011. *South Africa pushed to the limit: The political economy of change*. Cape Town: UCT Press, p. 2.

Maree, G. and Khanyile, S., 2024. 'Moving beyond basic service delivery for inclusive reliable infrastructure', *South African Journal of Science*, 120(11/12), Art. #18702. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/18702

Marks, M. and Tait, S., 2011. 'You strike a gathering, you strike a rock: Current debates in the policing of public order in South Africa', *SA Crime Quarterly*, 38, pp. 15–22.

Marks, M. and Tait, S., 2011. *Policing in South Africa: The SAPS' Public Order Policing Unit*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

Marks, M., 2017. *Transforming the robocops: Changing police in South Africa*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.

Maserumule, M.H., 2012. 'Discourse on the concept of a developmental state in South Africa: A deconstructive approach', *Journal of Public Administration*, 47(1), pp. 180–207.

Masikane, C.M., Hewitt, M.L. and Toendepi, J., 2020. 'Dynamics informing xenophobia and leadership response in South Africa', *Acta Commercii*, 20(1), pp. 1–14. Available at: https://actacommercii.co.za/index.php/acta/article/view/704/1364 (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Matebesi, S. and Botes, L., 2011. 'Khutsong cross-boundary protests: The triumph and failure of participatory governance?', *Politeia*, 30(1), pp. 51–69.

Matebesi, S., 2017. *Civil strife against local governance: Dynamics of community protests in contemporary South Africa*. 3rd ed. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.

Mathe, L. and Motsaathebe, G., 2022. 'Discursive communities, protest, xenophobia, and looting in South Africa: A social network analysis', *Communicatio*, 48(1), pp. 102–126. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02500167.2022.2083204 (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Mazerolle, P., Piquero, A.R. and Capowich, G.E., 2003. 'Examining the links between strain, situational and dispositional anger, and crime: Further specifying and testing general strain theory', *Youth & Society*, 35(2), pp. 131–157.

McKeever, M., 2024. 'Social stratification and inequality in South Africa', *Sociology Compass*, e3173. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13173

Meade, R., Shaw, M. and Banks, S., 2016. *Politics, power and community development*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.56687/9781447317388

Merriam, S.B. and Grenier, R.S., 2019. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Merten, M., 2018. 'Budget votes debate: MPs hurry to unblock government bottlenecks before parliamentary recess', *Daily Maverick*, 18 May.

Messner, S.F., Rosenfeld, R. and Hövermann, A., 2019. 'Institutional anomie theory: An evolving research program', in Krohn, M.D., Hendrix, N., Penly Hall, G. and Lizotte, A.J. (eds.) *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*. Cham: Springer, pp. 153–172. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20779-3_9

Meyer, R. and Swanepoel, D., 2021. 'Assessing crime intelligence in South Africa', *In Transformation Initiative*, 31 August. Available at: https://www.intransformation.org.za/2021/08/31/op-ed-assessing-crime-intelligence-in-south-africa/ (Accessed: 8 March 2023)

Mhlanga, O. and Mbohwa, C., 2017. 'A big data framework to improve government service delivery in South Africa', *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*, 2017, pp. 1–10. Available at: https://etd.cput.ac.za/handle/20.500.11838/2962 (Accessed: 29 December 2024)

Misago, J., 2015. 'Xenophobia and social unrest in South Africa: Understanding the connections', *African Affairs*, 114(455), pp. 33–53

Mkhwanazi, Z.M. and Khosa, D., 2021. 'An analysis of public order policing in the Gauteng Province, South Africa', *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 10, pp. 1320–1332

Mokhomole, D., Olutola, A. and Khosa, D., 2023. 'The extent in which the Tshwane Metro Police and South African Police Service complement each other during the service delivery protests and related crimes in Tshwane area', *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6(4), pp. 675–687

Mongale, C., 2022. 'Social discontent or criminality? Navigating the nexus between urban riots and criminal activities in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal Provinces, South Africa', *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 4, pp. 1–19

Moors, H. and Spapens, T., 2020. 'Intergenerational transmission and organised crime: A study of seven families in the south of the Netherlands', *Trends in Organised Crime*, 23(3), pp. 227–241. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-019-09363-w

Morudu, H., 2017. 'Service delivery protests in South African municipalities: An exploration using principal component regression and 2013 data', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3(1), pp. 1–15

Mothelesi, G., Marumo, P. and Sebolaaneng, M., 2022. 'Impact analysis of violent protests on South Africa's National Development Plan 2030', *Journal of Nation-building & Policy Studies*, 2022(1), pp. 41–56

Mottiar, S. and Bond, P., 2012. 'The politics of discontent and social protest in Durban', *Politikon*, 39(3), pp. 309–330. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2012.746183

Mottiar, S. and Bond, P., 2011. *Social Protest in South Africa*. Durban: Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Available at: https://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024)

Mouton, S., 2013. 'Lack of water service delivery angers all', *The Herald*, 17 September

Mugari, I., 2021. *An Introduction to Criminological Theory, Penology and Crime Prevention*. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers

Mushwana, R.V., Govender, I. and Nel, K., 2019. 'Stress and coping mechanisms of officers of the South African Police Service based in Tzaneen, Limpopo province, South Africa', *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. Available at: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6890548/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024)

Muthaphuli, P. and Du Preez, N., 2019. 'The deterrent value of punishment on crime prevention using judicial approaches', *Just Africa*, 2019(1), pp. 34–46

Mythen, G. and Walklate, S., 2006. *Beyond the Risk Society: Critical Reflections on Risk and Human Security*. Berkshire: Open University Press

National Governors Association, 2020. *Protests, Policing, and COVID-19*. Available at: https://www.nga.org/publications/protests-policing-covid-19/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024)

Ndasana, M., Vallabh, D. and Mxunyelwa, S., 2022. 'Understanding the service delivery protests in South Africa: A case study of Duncan Village', *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v10i1.644

Ndzendze, B. and Hlabisa, N., 2024. 'South Africa's new coalition government: Implications for social, economic, and foreign policy', *Afripoli*. Available at: https://afripoli.org/south-africas-new-coalition-government-implications-for-social-economic-and-foreign-policy?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 16 January 2025)

Netswara, F.G. and Phago, K.G., 2013. 'How popular protests influence public discourse and public accountability: Revisiting the theory of public spheres in South Africa', *Politeia*, 32(1), pp. 24–39

News24, 2022. 'Tembisa violence: Criminal elements taking advantage of genuine grievances – Ekurhuleni mayor', *News24*, 3 August. Available at: https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/tembisa-violence-criminal-elements-taking-advantage-of-genuine-grievances-ekurhuleni-mayor-20220803 (Accessed: 2 January 2025)

News24, 2015a. 'ANC welcomes suspension of Malamulele protest', *News24*, 17 February. Available at: https://www.news24.com/News24/ANC-welcomes-suspension-of-Malamulele-protest-20150217 (Accessed: 5 September 2024)

Ngcamu, B.S., 2019. 'Exploring service delivery protests in post-apartheid South African municipalities: A literature review', *TD: The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 15(1), pp. 1–9. https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v15i1.643

Ngubane, M., 2022. 'The impact of the Performance Management System in South African local government (municipalities)', *Journal of Public Administration*, 4(1), pp. 32–39. https://doi.org/10.22259/2642-8318.0401004

Ngwane, T., 2010. 'Civil society protests in South Africa: The need for a vision of alternatives', *ResearchGate*, 1(2), pp. 8–12

Ngwenya, N., Malherbe, N. and Seedat, M., 2022. 'Multimodality, cultural production, and the protest event: Considerations of space, politics, and affect in South Africa', *SAGE Journals*, 2(2), pp. 114–130

Nickerson, C., 2023. 'Interpretivism paradigm & research philosophy', *Simply Sociology*, 13 February. Available at: https://simplysociology.com/interpretivism-paradigm.html (Accessed: May 2023)

Nicolson, L., 2022. 'National dialogue and social cohesion in South Africa: Lessons for the post-apartheid state', *African Journal of Political Science*, 28(2), pp. 43–67

Nkhwashu, T. and Nene, B., 2019. 'The legal framework and public order policing in South Africa: A review of the Regulation of Gatherings Act and its enforcement', *African Journal of Public Administration and Management*, 30(1), pp. 60–73

Novaković, F., 2023. 'A contribution to the discussion of the theory of anomie', *International Annals of Criminology*, 61(1), pp. 66–81. https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2023.7

Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D. and Moules, N., 2017. 'Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), pp. 1–15

Nyar, A. and Wray, C., 2012. 'Understanding protest action: Some data collection challenges for South Africa', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 80(1), pp. 22–43

OECD, 2015. *Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for collecting and reporting data on research and experimental development*. Paris: OECD Publishing

Ollitrault, S., Sommier, I. and Hayes, G., 2017. *Breaking Laws: Violence and Civil Disobedience in Protest*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press

Oxford Bibliography, 2020. 'Riots'. Available at: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780190922481/obo-9780190922481-0006.xml?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 19 January 2025)

Papazoglou, K. and Tuttle, B., 2018. 'Fighting police trauma: Practical approaches to addressing psychological needs of officers', *SAGE Journals*, 8(3), pp. 1–11

Paret, M., 2015. 'Violence and democracy in South Africa's community protests', *Review of African Political Economy*, 42(123), pp. 107–123

Paret, M., 2020. 'The community strike: From precarity to militant organizing', *Sociology Compass*, 14(5), e12788. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715218810769

Pedersen, A.L. and Kristensen, P.L., 2013. 'Effect of survey mode on response patterns: Comparison of face-to-face and self-administered modes in health surveys', *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 13(1), pp. 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-83

Philipps, J., 2016. 'Crystallising contention: Social movements, protests and riots in African Pieterse, E. and Van Donk, M., 2013. 'Local government and poverty reduction', in Pillay, U., Hagg, G. and Nyamnjohn, F. (eds.) *State of the Nation South Africa (2012–2013)*. Cape Town: HSRC, pp. [insert page numbers if known].

Pillay, U., Hagg, G. and Nyamnjohn, F., 2013. *State of the Nation South Africa (2012–2013)*. Cape Town: HSRC.

Piquero, A. and Rorie, M., 2015. *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.

Piquero, A.R. and Pogarsky, G., 2002. 'Beyond Stafford and Warr's reconceptualization of deterrence: Personal and vicarious experiences, impulsivity, and offending behaviour', *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 39(2), pp. 153–186.

Public Affairs Research Institute, n.d. *Addressing systemic corruption: A state-building project*. Available at: https://pari.org.za/addressing-systemic-corruption-a-state-building-project/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Published in the Government Gazette, South Africa, 1982. *Intimidation Act 72 of 1982*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Published in the Government Gazette, South Africa, 1993. *Regulation of Gatherings Act 205 of 1993*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Published in the Government Gazette, South Africa, 1995. *South African Police Service Act 68 of 1995*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Published in the Government Gazette, South Africa, 1996. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Putnam, D., 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Qian, S., 2014. 'What is detection?', *Detection*, 2, pp. 7–9. http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/detection.2014.22002

Qithi, N.P. and Mkhize, N.I., 2023. 'The dynamics of unemployment, poverty, and inequality in South Africa: An exploratory review', *Journal of Public Administration*, 58(4), pp. 1020–1036. https://doi.org/10.53973/jopa.2023.58.4.a10

Rademacher, A., Zumbach, J. and Koglin, U., 2023. 'Parenting style and child aggressive behaviour from preschool to elementary school: The mediating effect of emotion dysregulation', *Early Childhood Education Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-023-01560-1

Radke, H.R.M., Kutlaca, M. and Becker, J.C., 2022. 'Applying the dynamic dual pathway model of approach coping to collective action among advantaged group allies and disadvantaged group members', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.875848

Ramulumo, M. and Gumbi, D., 2022. 'Students' perceptions of service delivery protests and their impact on socio-economic rights in South Africa', *African Journal of Governance & Development*, 11(1). Available at: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajgd/article/view/239480 (Accessed: 7 May 2025).

Raskolnikov, A., 2019. 'Deterrence theory: Key findings and challenges', *SSRN Electronic Journal* [Preprint]. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3460204

Republic of South Africa, 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, Section 17*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Reuters, 2024. 'South Africa's new government to prioritise inclusive economic growth: Ramaphosa', *Reuters*, 18 July. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africas-new-government-prioritise-inclusive-economic-growth-ramaphosa-2024-07-18/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

Reuters, 2024. 'Who leads the key portfolios in South Africa's new cabinet?', *Reuters*. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/who-leads-key-portfolios-south-africas-new-cabinet-2024-07-01/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Reuters, 2024. 'S. Africa's "construction mafias" are scaring away investors, minister says', *Reuters*. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safricas-construction-mafias-are-scaring-away-investors-minister-says-2024-08-02/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Right2Know Campaign, 2021. 'Stern action must be taken against unrest instigators – R2K', *defenceWeb*. Available at: https://www.defenceweb.co.za/governance/governance-governance/stern-action-must-be-taken-against-unrest-instigators-r2k/ (Accessed: 16 May 2025).

Ritzer, G., 2011. *Sociological Theory*. 9th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Robbins, B., Pfaff, S. and Matsueda, R., 2021. 'Emotion, efficacy, and protest intentions: Testing a multilevel dual pathway model of collective action', New York University Abu Dhabi.

Robinson, C., 2016. 'The social and economic impact of public services', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 26(2), pp. 261–275.

Roth, S. and Kahn, R., 2020. 'Understanding collective action: The role of emotions', *Social Movement Studies*, 19(2), pp. 123–142.

Rumjaun, A. and Narod, F., 2020. 'Social learning theory: Albert Bandura', in Akpan, B. and Kennedy, T.J. (eds.) *Science Education in Theory and Practice*. Cham: Springer Texts in Education, pp. 85–99. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9_7

Runciman, C., 2016. 'South Africa's local protests: Reinvigorating and challenging dominant explanations', in Brown, D. and Sriram, C.L. (eds.) *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-conflict Consensus-building*. London: Routledge, pp. 179–197.

Runciman, C., Maruping, B. and Dlamini, J., 2016. *The Right to Protest: A Handbook for Protesters and Police*. Johannesburg: Freedom of Expression Institute & Public Affairs Research Institute.

Runciman, W.G., 1990. *A Treatise on Social Theory*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ryan, G., 2018. 'Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory', *Nurse Researcher (2014)*, 25(4), pp. 14–20.

Saab, R., Tausch, N., Spears, R. and Cheung, W.Y., 2015. 'Acting in solidarity: Testing an extended dual pathway model of collective action by bystander group members', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 54, pp. 539–560.

Sadike, M., 2025. *Coalition crisis: DA challenges ANC's VAT hike in court, threatening GNU collapse*. Independent Online (IOL). Available at: https://iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/2025-04-03-coalition-crisis-da-challenges-ancs-vat-hike-in-court-threatening-gnu-collapse/

Sapa and M&G Staff Reporter, 2015. 'Soweto: Violence escalates between locals and foreigners', *Mail & Guardian*, 22 January. Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2015-01-22-two-dead-foreign-owned-shop-burnt-in-soweto/ (Accessed: 5 September 2024).

Sartorius, K. and Sartorius, B., 2016. 'Service delivery inequality in South African municipal areas: A new way to account for inter-jurisdictional differences', *Urban Studies*, 53(15), pp. 3336–3355.

Scheepers, S. and Schultz, C., 2019. 'Organisational learning in crime intelligence: A qualitative review', *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 16(2), pp. 1–9.

Schurink, W., Fouché, C.B. and De Vos, A.S., 2011. 'Qualitative data analysis and interpretation', in De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. and Delport, C.S.L. (eds.) *Research at Grass Roots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp. [insert page numbers if known].

Schwartz, K. and Mmamabolo, T., 2023. 'Police crowd management in South Africa: Efforts and challenges of de-escalation', in *Police Conflict Management, Volume I*. South Africa: Springer, pp. 401–430. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41096-3_16

Schwella, E., 2021. 'Preventing social unrest: The role of proactive government interventions', *Public Administration Review*, 61(2), pp. 141–157. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30878164 (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Sehlatswe, B., 2014. *Reflecting on Twenty Years of Democracy*. Pretoria: South Africa Institute of Race Relations.

Shadmanfaat, S.M.S., Kabiri, S., Solensten, B., Willits, D.W. and Cochran, J., 2022. 'A longitudinal study of fan aggression: A test of general strain theory', *Deviant Behaviour*, 43(5), pp. 543–555. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2021.1877095

Shai, K., 2017. 'Context, causes and realities of community protests in pre-2017 Maruleng: The Oaks village in retrospect', *Journal of Public Administration*, 52(2), pp. 357–366.

Shenton, A., 2004. 'Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research', *Education for Information*, 22, pp. 63–75.

Shi, J., Hao, Z., Saeri, A.K. and Cui, L., 2015. 'The dual-pathway model of collective action: Impacts of types of collective action and social identity', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 18(1), pp. 45–65.

Shongwe, B.R. and Meyer, D.F., 2023. 'Service delivery challenges within rural communities', *Administratio Publica*, 31(2), pp. 136–159. https://doi.org/10.61967/adminpub.2023.31.2.8

Sieh, E., 2012. 'Jean-Paul Brodeur: The policing web', *Critical Criminology*, 20(3), pp. 341–344.

Sikweyiya, Y. and Nkosi, S., 2017. 'Violent protests and gendered identities', *African Safety Promotion Journal*, 15(1), pp. 1–7.

Skelton, A. and Nsibirwa, M., 2017. '#SchoolsOnFire: Criminal justice responses to protests that impede the right to basic education', *SA Crime Quarterly*, (62), pp. 39–50.

Smith, D.W., 2018. 'Phenomenology', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Summer 2018 Edition*. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2019. *Xenophobic Violence in South Africa: Causes and Effects*. Available at: http://www.sahrc.org.za (Accessed: 26 November 2024).

South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2017. *The Impact of Police Actions during Protests: A Study on the Role of Law Enforcement in Public Protests in South Africa*. Available at: https://www.sahrc.org.za/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2023. 'Violent protests not protected by Constitution – experts', *SAHRC*, 12 March. Available at: https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news/item/3494-violent-protests-not-protected-by-constitution-experts (Accessed: 18 August 2024).

South African Human Rights Commission, 2024. *The National Investigative Hearing Report into the July 2021 Unrest in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal*. Johannesburg: SAHRC. Available at: https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/JULY%20UNREST%20REPORT%20FINAL_29%20JAN%202024.pdf (Accessed: 30 October 2024).

South African Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2009. 'The reasons behind service delivery protests in South Africa', *ISS Today*, 29 July. Available at: https://issafrica.org (Accessed: 17 January 2025).

South African Police Service (SAPS), 2012. *National Instruction: Public Order Police – Crowd Regulation and Management During Public Gatherings and Demonstrations*. Pretoria: SAPS.

South African Police Service Act 68 of 1995, 1995. *Government Gazette*, Vol. 367, No. 16731, 4 October. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Starman, A., 2013. 'The case study as a type of qualitative research', *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies*, 1(2013), pp. 28–46.

Statistics South Africa, 2023. 'Census 2022 population count results 10 October 2023' [Media release]. Available at: https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16716 (Accessed: 31 August 2024).

Statistics South Africa, 2025. *Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q1: 2025*. [online] Available at: https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Media%20Release%20QLFS%20Q1%202025.pdf (Accessed: 21 May 2025).

Stenfors, T., Kajamaa, A. and Bennett, D., 2020. 'Maintaining rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research', *Qualitative Health Research*, 30(4), pp. 597–605.

Stern, P. and Fineberg, H., 1996. *Understanding Risk: Informing Decisions in a Democratic Society*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Steyn, J. and Ngwenya, N., 2015. *South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Community Protest: Local Government perceptions*. Pretoria: SALGA.

Swart, L., Day, S. and Govender, R., 2020. 'Participation in (non)violent protests and associated psychosocial factors: sociodemographic status, civic engagement, and perceptions of government's performance', *South African Journal of Psychology*, 50(4), pp. 480–492.

Swatt, M.L., Gibson, C.L. and Piquero, N.L., 2007. 'Exploring the utility of general strain theory in explaining problematic alcohol consumption by police officers', *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35(6), pp. 596–611. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2007.09.005

Taylor, S.J., 2015. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*. Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Teherani, A., Martimianakis, T., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Wadhwa, A. and Varpio, L., 2015. 'Choosing a qualitative research approach', *National Library of Medicine*, 7(4), pp. 669–670.

Teijón-Alcalá, M. and Birkbeck, C., 2019. 'Victimization, crime propensity, and deviance: A multinational test of general strain theory', *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 35(4), pp. 410–430. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986219870941

Teymoori, A., Bastian, B. and Jetten, J., 2017. 'Towards a psychological analysis of anomie', *Political Psychology*, 38(6), pp. 1009–1023. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12377

Teymoori, A., Jetten, J., Bastian, B., Ariyanto, A., Autin, F., Ayub, N., Badea, C., Besta, T., … Wohl, M., 2016. 'Revisiting the measurement of anomie', *Plos One*, 11(7). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0158370

The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (No. 12 of 2004), 2004. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Thornberry, T.P. and Burch, J., 1997. 'The development of delinquency', *Crime and Justice*, 22, pp. 189–288.

Tilley, A. and Davis, J., 2019. 'Building a nation: National Identity and social cohesion in post-apartheid South Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 37(3), pp. 314–332.

Tilly, C. and Tarrow, S., 2007. *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tournadre, J., 2018. *A Turbulent South Africa: Post-apartheid Social Protest*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Triplett, R., 2015. 'Crime, social learning theory of crime', In: *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Tshabalala, S., 2015. 'Why black South Africans are attacking foreign Africans but not foreign whites', *Quartz*, 15 April. Available at: https://qz.com/384041/why-black-south-africans-are-only-attacking-foreign-africans-but-not-foreign-whites (Accessed: 30 May 2023).

Tsheola, J.P., 2014. 'Theorising a democratic developmental state: Issues of public service delivery planning and violent protests in South Africa', *Journal of Public Administration*, 47(1), pp. 161–179.

Twala, C., 2014. 'The causes and socio-political impact of service delivery protests in the South African citizenry: A real public discourse', *Journal of Social Sciences*, 39(2), pp. 159–167.

United Nations Development Programme, 2023. *South Africa National Human Development Report 2022*. Available at: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-07/sa-nhdr-2022_web_0.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

University of Phoenix, 2024. 'Understanding conceptual and theoretical frameworks in research'. Available at: https://www.phoenix.edu/research/news/2024/understanding-conceptual-and-theoretical-frameworks-in-research.html (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Valodia, I., 2023. 'South Africa can't crack the inequality curse. Why, and what can be done', *The Conversation*, 14 September. Available at: https://theconversation.com/south-africa-cant-crack-the-inequality-curse-why-and-what-can-be-done-213132 (Accessed: 29 October 2024).

Van der Toorn, J., Feinberg, M., Jost, J.T., Kay, A.C., Tyler, T.R., Willer, R. and Wilmuth, C., 2015. 'A sense of powerlessness fosters system justification: Implications for the legitimation of authority, hierarchy, and government', *Political Psychology*, 36, pp. 93–110.

Van der Westhuizen, M.M. and Bezuidenhout, C., 2020. 'Criminological theories (Chapter 5)', in Bezuidenhout, C. (ed.) *A Southern African Perspective on Fundamental Criminology*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Pearson.

Van Dyke, N., Sarah, A.S. and Taylor, V., 2004. 'The targets of social movements: Beyond a focus on the state', In: Myers, D.J. and Cress, D.M. (eds.) *Authority in Contention (Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change, vol. 25)*. Leeds: Emerald Group.

Van Zomeren, M., Leach, C.W. and Spears, R., 2012. 'Protesters as "passionate economists": A dynamic dual pathway model of approach coping with collective disadvantage', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(2), pp. 180–199. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311430835

Veenstra, L., Bushman, B.J. and Koole, S.L., 2018. 'The facts on the furious: A brief review of the psychology of trait anger', *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 19, pp. 98–103. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.03.014

Vhumbunu, C., 2022. 'The July 2021 protests and socio-political unrest in South Africa', *Accord*, 10 December. Available at: https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-july-2021-protests-and-socio-political-unrest-in-south-africa/ (Accessed: 20 February 2023).

Von Holdt, K., 2013. 'South Africa: The transition to violent democracy', *Review of African Political Economy*, 40(138), pp. 589–604.

Waddington, D. and Moran, M., 2020. 'Understanding Urban Riots', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Available at: https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1605 (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Wang, S., Giridhar, P., Wang, H., Kaplan, L., Pham, T., Yener, A. and Abdelzaher, T., 2017. 'StoryLine: Unsupervised geo-event demultiplexing in social spaces without location information', In: *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Internet-of-Things Design and Implementation*. Pittsburgh: ACM Press, pp. 83–93.

Ward, J.T. and Brown, C.N., 2015. 'Social learning theory and crime', In: Wright, J.D. (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*. 2nd ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.45066-X

Wasserman, H., Chuma, W. and Bosch, T., 2018. 'Print media coverage of service delivery protests in South Africa: A content analysis', *African Studies White Rose Research Online*, 77(1), pp. 1–16.

Watney, M.M., 2024. *Ethical and Legal Aspects Pertaining to Law Enforcement Use of Drones*. University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Whisson, M., 2012. 'Violent protests: Listen to message in fire and stones', *The Herald*, 4 October.

White, P., 2021. 'The extended present: An informational context for perception', *Acta Psychologica*, 22:1.

Williams, F.P. and McShane, M.D., 2018. *Criminology Theory*. 7th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson.

Wöcke, A., Grosse, R., Mthombeni, M. and Pfeffer, S., 2023. 'Social protest action, stakeholder management, and risk: Managing the impact of service delivery protests in South Africa', *Business and Society Review*, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1111/basr.12327

Wojciechowski, T.W., 2019. 'Victimization recency, development of anger, and violent offending in early adulthood: A developmental test of general strain theory', *Deviant Behaviour*, 40(7), pp. 866–881. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2018.1443766

World Bank, 2024. 'South Africa Overview'. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

Zencity, 2023. 'Everything You Want to Know About Sentiment Analysis'. Available at: https://zencity.io/the-good-the-bad-and-the-neutral-everything-you-want-to-know-about-sentiment-analysis/ (Accessed: 29 December 2024).

Zerbst, F., 2023. 'Protests in South Africa: What are the legalities?', *Just Money*, 2 March. Available at: https://www.justmoney.co.za/articles/protests-in-south-africa-what-are-the-legalities/ (Accessed: 21 May 2023).

Zhang, J., Liu, J., Wang, X. and Zou, A., 2018. 'Life stress, strain, and deviance across schools: Testing the contextual version of general strain theory in China', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(8), pp. 2447–2460. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X17720182

Zhao, L., Ye, J., Chen, F., Lu, C. and Ramakrishnan, N., 2016. 'Feature constrained multi-task learning models for spatiotemporal event forecasting', *IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering*, 29(5), pp. 1059–1072.

Zulu, L., 2017. 'Urban inequalities and the challenge of service delivery in South African informal settlements', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41(4), pp. 637–651.

Annexure A: Letter of Informed Consent

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Department of Social Work & Criminology

Thursday, 08 June 2023

SAPS Research Participant

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study. I was granted approval to undertake this research by Brigadier (Dr) G J Schwartz, Section Head: Specialised and Tactical Research. My name is Tiana Hiscox and I am currently doing research as part of fulfilment of a Master's Degree (Criminology) at the University of Pretoria, Department of Social Work and Criminology. The information provided in this informed consent form will help you decide whether to participate in the study.

1. **Title of the study**

Perceptions of South African Police Officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipal areas.

2. **Purpose of the study**

The study aims to gauge the perceptions of South African Police Service officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipalities. My focus is on the factors leading to the onset and/or the escalation of violence during protest actions and marches. In order to achieve the aforementioned, the following objectives will guide the research, namely:

- To gauge the perceptions of SAPS officials regarding violence escalation during protests.
- To determine the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in the City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipalities.
- To determine the likely combination of factors expected to result in the onset and/or escalation of violence during a protest.
- To contextualise protests in South Africa.
- To develop a typology of risk factors to facilitate better prediction of the utilisation of violence during protests.

Room 10-1, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 3320
Email cb@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za

3. **Procedures**

The researcher will be conducting semi-structured interviews with SAPS and POPS members who voluntarily agree to be interviewed. An interview guide will be used during the interviewing process. The interview will last approximately 35 to 40 minutes. With your permission the interview will be audio recorded for data analysis purposes. The interview procedures are attached for your perusal.

4. **Confidentiality**

All the information obtained in this study will be treated with confidentiality. Your comments during the interview are very important to the objectives of the study and could be included in the final research report. Comments made during the interview are intended for this study and will not be used for any purposes outside of this study. Therefore, confidentiality pertains to the manner in which the participant's information is used and the protection of his/her identity. Identifying information will only be forthcoming based on acknowledgement and signing of this consent letter. Should the participant request confidentiality the researcher will ensure that no identifying information is used in the research study or on any platform where the research findings are disseminated. Therefore, no names or identifying details will be revealed. The researcher will use a numerical value to refer to the participant (e.g. Respondent 1 postulates that…) except if you agree to be identified by name.

5. **Benefits**

The study is designed to gather information on the perceptions of South African Police Service officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests in City of Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipalities. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no compensation or reward for participating in the study. However, it is hoped that information gained from this study will help advance the body of knowledge on the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests, and as such aid in the development of measures that could prevent such escalations.

6. **Ethical clearance**

The research has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria.

7. Respondent's rights

Participation in this study is voluntary, which means that you have the right to decide to participate without any coercion. There will be no consequences if you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage, even if you had initially verbally agreed to participate. If you decide to withdraw from the study all information you have already provided will be destroyed. You may withdraw from the study at any time you choose. The participants will be briefed and made aware of exactly what is expected of them. The researcher will not deliberately put the respondents in harm's way. It is important to note however, that the stress and trauma that police members experience in the line of duty could negatively impact on the health and well-being of police officials (Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018: 1). As such, if the interview cause discomfort the researcher will end the interview and will ensure that the police official get assistance from a councillor (free of charge). The SAPS has their own internal counselling services that can be utilised by SAPS members at any time free of charge. The Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) is a section within the SAPS and employs professionals in four support professions including Psychological Service staff, Chaplains, Social Work Services and Occupational Health Practitioners. It presently employs 604 practitioners nationwide and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for all SAPS members. In addition, the researcher will have a psychologist (Dr Michelle Finestone) on standby should participants feel that they need additional support.

8. Data storage

The data will be stored for the purposes of archiving and future research. The audio recordings will be password protected and the hard copy of the data will be stored at the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria for a duration of 15 years. The data collected will be made available in the form of a thesis, articles in scientific journals and presentations at academic conferences.

9. Access to the researcher

Please contact the researcher or her supervisor as listed below if you wish to obtain more information about the study or the study procedures, withdraw from the study before it is finished or express concerns about the study.

Researcher
Tiana Hiscox
0609638923
tianaevert@gmail.com

Supervisor
Prof C Bezuidenhout
Department of Social Work and Criminology
University of Pretoria
cb@up.ac.za
0833104520

Thank you for your co-operation and time.

Participant signature	Date
Researcher signature	Date

Annexure B: Questionnaire

Interview schedule: Perception of POPS officials on why violence occurs during protests

1. **Opening**

An atmosphere that will accommodate the open and free flow of ideas between the interviewer and interviewee will be created by welcoming the interviewee and making them feel at ease. If the respondent is relaxed, the interview is likely to progress smoothly. The researcher will then proceed to inform the interviewee of the following:

- Objectives of the interview, such as why the interview is taking place, and why the participant is involved.
- The topics or points that will be discussed in the course of the interview. The aim is to make the interviewee feel secure and comfortable. The topics that will be covered will be shared broadly.
- The estimated duration of the interview will be shared.

2. **Body**

The “core discussion”, which consist of the “meat” of the interview schedule, in other words the topics and the questions that will be asked. The questions aim to fulfil the objective of the interview. The main questions as well as potential follow up questions will be asked (such as questions designed to probe or clarify the answers to the previously asked questions). Space will be assigned for the researcher to record and/or write down the responses or answers of the interviewee.

Questions:

1) **How many years have you been policing protest actions?**
2) **Why do protesters utilise violence during protest actions?**
3) **What is your opinion regarding peaceful protests that escalate into violent protests?**
4) **If you have to identify the most important factors that escalate violence during protest actions – what will they be? Please elaborate briefly on each factor.**
5) **Do you think so-called "third force" parties play a role in violent protest actions?**
6) **What factors do you think contribute to protests, i.e., inadequate service delivery, no or poor quality water etc.**
7) **What tactics do protesters use to achieve their goals, and what according to you is some of the backlash they receive?**
8) **Do you believe that violent or non-violent protests are more effective at achieving goals of the movement?**
9) **Should the South African government be more restrictive in terms of allowing citizens to protest?**
10) **Do you believe that SAPS officials should be present at protests in an effort to prevent them or to ensure that people are allowed to communicate their views in a safe manner?**
11) **What social issue is important to you in such a way that you would be willing to participate in a protest? Why is it an important issue?**
12) **Is there anything else you want to add in terms of reasons why protests turn violent?**

3. **Closing**

The last part of the interview, where the interview is about to be wrapped up. The closing is included in the interview schedule to ensure that the interview does not end abruptly, as it might be perceived as rude to the interviewee. The closing will cover the main points, in summary, that were talked about during the interview, followed by a brief discussion on the next steps that will be taken after the interview.

Annexure C: Ethics Approval

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

3 October 2023

Dear Miss TC Hiscox,

Project Title:	Perceptions of South African Police Officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Municipal areas
Researcher:	Miss TC Hiscox
Supervisor(s):	Prof C Bezuidenhout
Department:	Social Work and Criminology
Reference number:	15024548 (HUM041/0623 Line 1) (Amendment)
Degree:	Masters

Thank you for the application to amend the existing protocol that was previously approved by the Committee.

The revised / additional documents were reviewed and **approved** on 03 October 2023 along these guidelines, further data collection may therefore commence (where necessary).

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the amended proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 4853| Fax +27 (0)12 420 4501|Email pghumanities@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities

Annexure D: Permission to Conduct Research in SAPS

South African Police Service — Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiediens

Privaatsak Private Bag X94	Pretoria 0001	Faks No. Fax No.	(012) 432 7866

Your reference/U verwysing:

My reference/My verwysing: **3/34/2**

THE HEAD: RESEARCH
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE
PRETORIA
0001

Enquiries/Navrae: **Col (Dr) Smit**
W/O Thenga
Tel: **(012) 432 7866**
Email: **ThengaS@saps.gov.za**

T Hiscox
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA: MASTERS DEGREE: PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE OFFICIALS REGARDING THE FACTORS THAT ESCALATE VIOLENCE DURING PROTESTS IN THE EKURHULENI, JOHANNESBURG AND TSHWANE MUNICIPAL AREA: RESEARCHER: T HISCOX

The above subject matter refers.

1. You are hereby granted approval for your research study on the above-mentioned topic in terms of National Instruction 4 of 2022.

2. Further arrangements regarding the research study may be made with the following office:

   The Divisional Commissioner: Visible Policing and Operations:

   - **Contact Person:** Captain Baartman
   - **Contact Details**: 012 400 6096
   - **Email address:** BaartmanJ@saps.gov.za

3. Kindly adhere to paragraph 8 of our attached letter signed on **2024-06-25** with the same abovementioned reference number.

Brig (Dr)
SCHWARTZ **MAJOR GENERAL**
THE HEAD: RESEARCH
DR PR VUMA A.O.D.

Date: 2024-07-25

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS **SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE**

Privaatsak/Private Bag X 94

Reference:	3/34/2
Enquiries:	Col (Dr) Smit W/O Thenga
Telephone:	(012) 432 7866 082 778 8629
Email Address:	ThengaS@saps.gov.za

THE HEAD: RESEARCH
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE
PRETORIA
0001

Divisional Commissioner
VISIBLE POLICING AND OPERATIONS

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA: MASTERS DEGREE: PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE OFFICIALS REGARDING THE FACTORS THAT ESCALATE VIOLENCE DURING PROTESTS IN THE EKURHULENI, JOHANNESBURG AND TSHWANE MUNICIPAL AREA: RESEARCHER: T HISCOX

1. Regarding the abovementioned heading refers.

2. The researcher, T Hiscox, is conducting a study topic/titled: ***"Perceptions of South African Police Officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Municipal Area"*** and requests permission to conduct research in the South African Police Service (SAPS).

3. The research request was perused by the Component: Research according to the National Instruction 4 of 2022. Therefore, this office recommends that the research study be permitted, subject to the final comments and further arrangements by the office of the Divisional Commissioner: Visible Policing and Operations.

4. The aim of the study is ***"to gauge the perceptions of SAPS officials regarding the factors that contribute to the escalation of violence during protests".*** Furthermore, the researcher selected to conduct a qualitative research study to collect data by conducting interviews.

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA: MASTERS DEGREE: PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE OFFICIALS REGARDING THE FACTORS THAT ESCALATE VIOLENCE DURING PROTESTS IN THE EKURHULENI, JOHANNESBURG AND TSHWANE MUNICIPAL AREA: RESEARCHER: T HISCOX

5. The researcher, T Hiscox, intends to collect data by approaching fifteen (15) Public Order Policing members at the National Head office in line with the proposed topic/title.

6. This office hereby requests your support on the condition that your office agrees with our recommendations and confirms the proposed official research is viable. Additionally, your office has the authority to set terms and conditions for the researcher to comply with set standards to be followed during the research study process and not harm the SAPS' image.

7. Kindly find the relevant documents of the requested application topic/titled ***"Perceptions of South African Police Officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Municipal Area"*** for your consideration:

Annexure A: Application to conduct research;
Annexure B: Signed undertaking;
Annexure C: Research proposal; and
Annexure D: Research approval from the University of Pretoria.

8. The researcher will conduct the research at his/her own expense.

8.1 The researcher will conduct the research without disrupting the duties of the participating members of the Service. **In addition, the researcher must communicate and make prior arrangements with the respective commanders of the participating members of the study.**

8.2 The researcher, T Hiscox, should bear in mind that participation in the interviews must be voluntary.

8.3 Information will at all times be treated as strictly confidential.

8.4 The researcher, T Hiscox, will provide an electronic copy of the final report to the Service.

8.5 The researcher, T Hiscox, will ensure that the research report complies with all conditions for the approval of the research.

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA: MASTERS DEGREE: PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE OFFICIALS REGARDING THE FACTORS THAT ESCALATE VIOLENCE DURING PROTESTS IN THE EKURHULENI, JOHANNESBURG AND TSHWANE MUNICIPAL AREA: RESEARCHER: T HISCOX

9. Should your office be in agreement with this research request and to facilitate smooth coordination between your office and the researcher, the following information is kindly requested to be forwarded to our office within **18 days** after receipt of this letter.

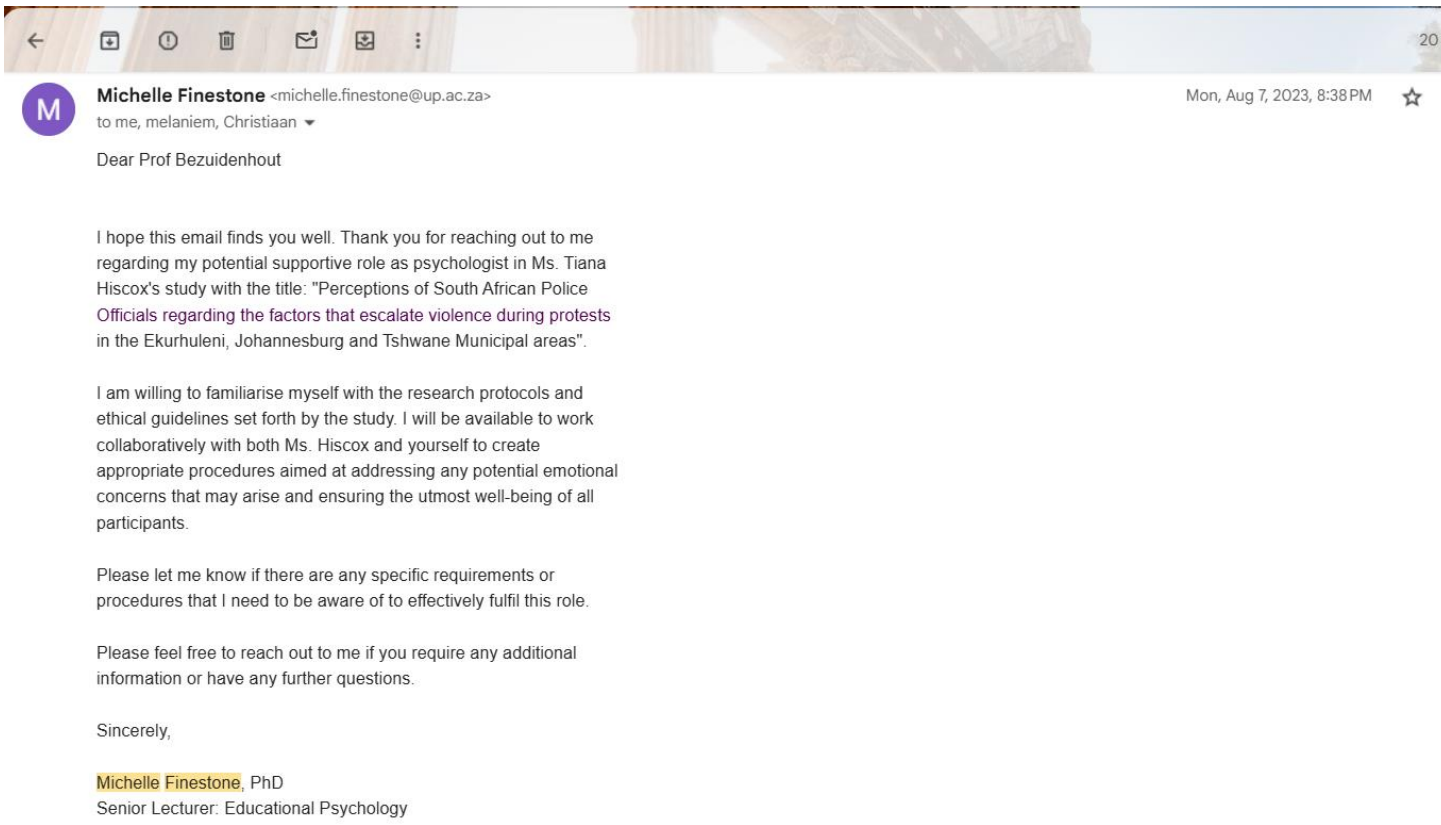
   - **Signed Certificate/Letter:** Confirm the proposed research request is viable;
   - **Contact person**: Rank, Initials and Surname; and
   - **Contact details**: Telephone number and email address.

10. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

MAJOR GENERAL
THE HEAD: RESEARCH
DR PR VUMA

Date: 2024/06/25

Annexure E: Email from Dr Finestone



Michelle Finestone <michelle.finestone@up.ac.za> Mon, Aug 7, 2023, 8:38 PM
to me, melaniem, Christiaan

Dear Prof Bezuidenhout

I hope this email finds you well. Thank you for reaching out to me regarding my potential supportive role as psychologist in Ms. Tiana Hiscox's study with the title: "Perceptions of South African Police Officials regarding the factors that escalate violence during protests in the Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Tshwane Municipal areas".

I am willing to familiarise myself with the research protocols and ethical guidelines set forth by the study. I will be available to work collaboratively with both Ms. Hiscox and yourself to create appropriate procedures aimed at addressing any potential emotional concerns that may arise and ensuring the utmost well-being of all participants.

Please let me know if there are any specific requirements or procedures that I need to be aware of to effectively fulfil this role.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you require any additional information or have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Michelle Finestone, PhD
Senior Lecturer: Educational Psychology