

**A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF
TRAFFIC POLICE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EMPIRICAL
INVESTIGATION**

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A MODEL TO IMPROVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICIALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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ABSTRACT

Enhancing the professionalism of traffic policing in South Africa is a difficult task, but it will increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of the profession. There is a need for strict traffic law enforcement to ensure road safety; nevertheless, contemporary South Africa faces persistent institutional shortcomings and the normalisation of deviant behaviour. The operational interface between the motoring public and Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) has been fundamentally damaged. Traffic-public interactions are generally challenging encounters defined by acute public apprehension or capiophobia (fear) rather than partnership-based cooperation for safety.

This thesis presents the proposed Public Satisfaction Model as a guide to restoring traffic policing and improving the professional image of TPOs. A convergent mixed-methods strategy was used, collecting quantitative survey data (491 valid responses) and qualitative one-to-one interviews (13 participants). The convergence of these datasets provided a robust criminological analysis of the contemporary traffic law enforcement situation. The analysis found a significant gap between statutory expectations and practical realities, with TPOs failing to meet the required standard. Systemic bribery, extortion and a socio-cultural normalisation of deviance gravely damage their professional image. Corrupt transactions cross demographic boundaries. The absence of procedural fairness, opportunistic policing for monetary gain and abuse of state resources erode public trust and even undermine the visual authority of the uniform. Public anxiety during nocturnal stops is further inflamed by the danger of imitative traffic police officers and secondary media narratives.

The study recommends that institutional credibility can be restored through the use of bilateral accountability instruments, including body-worn cameras, 24-hour visible policing, and mandatory rehabilitation for repeat offenders. Future research should examine the socio-economic determinants of public complicity in bribery and the internal occupational problems faced by TPOs.

ACRONYMS AND DESCRIPTIONS

ANPR	:	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
BRT	:	Broken Roads Theory
CJS	:	Criminal Justice System
DT	:	Deterrence Theory
EMPD	:	Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Police Department
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
LOC	:	Letter of Consent
LPG	:	Liquid Petroleum Gas
MPS	:	Municipal Police Service
MVAs	:	Motor vehicle accidents
NRTA	:	National Road Traffic Act (Act 93 of 1996)
NTP	:	National Traffic Officer
NYU	:	New York University
OCR	:	Optical Character Recognition
OECD	:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBC	:	Perceived Behavioural Control
PCCA	:	The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (Act 94 of 1992)
RDM	:	Rational Model of Decision Making
RTMC	:	Road Traffic Management Corporation
RTP	:	Road traffic policing
SAP	:	South African Police
SAPS	:	South African Police Service
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SUC	:	Statis Unmanned Camera
SUV	:	Small Utility Vehicle
TLE	:	Traffic Law Enforcement
TPA	:	Traffic Police Authority
TPB	:	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TPO	:	Traffic Police Officer
VIP	:	Very Important Person [Nationally Significant Individuals]
ZTP	:	Zero Tolerance

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2.1:	DETERRENCE COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK	23
TABLE 2.2:	CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAFFIC POLICE PROFESSIONALISM	37
TABLE 2.3:	NEGATIVE MEDIA FRAMING	41
TABLE 2.4:	TRAFFIC FINE INCOME PER PROVINCE.....	45
TABLE 2.5:	INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF CORRUPTION	57

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1:	FRAGMENTATION OF ROAD TRAFFIC POLICING	16
FIGURE 2.2:	PUBLIC OPINION PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS	27
FIGURE 2.3:	TPO STEREOTYPE FUNCTION PROCESS	31
FIGURE 2.4:	ANATOMY OF PUBLIC IMAGE	32
FIGURE 2.5:	THE PROFESSIONAL CYCLE OF THE TRAFFIC POLICE	39
FIGURE 2.6:	PROCESS-BASED REGULATION MODEL OF TYLER	53
FIGURE 2.7:	THEORETICAL MODEL OF TRAFFIC POLICE CORRUPTION	56
FIGURE 3.1:	THE INTEGRATED DRIVING TASK MODEL.....	69
FIGURE 3.2:	ADAPTED TRAFFIC LAW ENFORCEMENT COMPLIANCE MODEL.....	72
FIGURE 3.3:	DETERRENCE THEORY	74
FIGURE 3.4:	DETERRENCE, DECISION AND CHOICE RELATIONSHIP	77
FIGURE 3.5:	THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR.....	82
FIGURE 4.1:	MMA DATA GATHERING PROCESS	89
FIGURE 4.2:	QUANTITATIVE SURVEY RESEARCH PROCESS	91
FIGURE 5.1:	PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICER ROLE FULFILMENT BY CONSTRUCT THEME	113
FIGURE 5.2:	PUBLIC EXPERIENCE WITH TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS DURING INTERACTION	128
FIGURE 5.3:	THEMATIC RESPONSES ON PERCEIVED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE IMAGE OF TPOs IN SOUTH AFRICA	141
FIGURE 7.1:	PROPOSED PUBLIC SATISFACTION MODEL FOR SOUTH AFRICAN TRAFFIC POLICING	188

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF TRAFFIC POLICE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION	I
29 DECEMBER 2025.....	I
DECLARATION.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	II
ABSTRACT.....	III
ACRONYMS AND DESCRIPTIONS	IV
LIST OF TABLES	V
LIST OF FIGURES.....	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
CHAPTER ONE	1
GENERAL ORIENTATION	1
1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT	2
1.3. AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	2
1.3.1. <i>Aim of the study</i>	2
1.3.2. <i>Purpose of the study</i>	3
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	3
1.4.1. <i>Primary Research Question</i>	3
1.4.2. <i>Secondary Research Questions</i>	3
1.5. STUDY OBJECTIVES	4
1.5.1. <i>Primary Research Objective (PRO)</i>	4
1.5.2. <i>Secondary Research Objectives (SROs)</i>	4
1.6. ACADEMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	4
1.7. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONALISATIONS.....	5
1.7.1. <i>Accident</i>	5
1.7.2. <i>Assumption</i>	6
1.7.3. <i>Attitude</i>	6
1.7.4. <i>Corruption</i>	6
1.7.5. <i>Image</i>	7
1.7.5.1. <i>Experience</i>	8
1.7.6. <i>Motoring Public</i>	8
1.7.7. <i>Perception</i>	8
1.7.8. <i>Professionalism</i>	9

1.7.9.	<i>Professional Service Delivery</i>	9
1.7.10.	<i>Reliability</i>	9
1.7.11.	<i>Theory of Planned Behaviour</i>	10
1.7.12.	<i>Traffic Law Enforcement</i>	10
1.7.13.	<i>Traffic Police Behaviour</i>	10
1.7.14.	<i>Traffic Police Competence</i>	10
1.7.15.	<i>Traffic Police Image</i>	10
1.7.16.	<i>Traffic Police Officer</i>	10
1.7.17.	<i>Zero tolerance policing</i>	11
1.8.	ORGANISING THE THESIS: CHAPTER OUTLINE	11
1.8.1.	<i>Chapter One: General Orientation</i>	11
1.8.2.	<i>Chapter Two: Literature Review on the Operational and Legislative Aspects of Traffic Policing in South Africa</i>	11
1.8.3.	<i>Chapter Three: The Guiding Framework, Models and Criminological Theories to Improve Public Perceptions of the Professional Image of Traffic Police Officials</i>	12
1.8.4.	<i>Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology</i>	12
1.8.5.	<i>Chapter Five: Data Presentations, Analysis and Discussions of Quantitative Results</i>	12
1.8.6.	<i>Chapter Six: Data Presentations, Analysis, and Discussions of Qualitative Study Findings</i>	12
1.8.7.	<i>Chapter Seven: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations</i>	12
1.9.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	13
CHAPTER 2		14
IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICIALS		14
2.1.	INTRODUCTION	14
2.2.	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ROAD TRAFFIC POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	15
2.2.1.	<i>A Criminological Perspective on Road Traffic Policing</i>	15
2.2.2.	<i>The Operational Evolution of Local Traffic Policing</i>	16
2.2.3.	<i>Powers and Duties: A Legal Conundrum</i>	17
2.3.	ROAD SAFETY	17
2.3.1.	<i>Road User</i>	18
2.4.	CRIMINOLOGICAL IMPACT OF TRAFFIC POLICING ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.....	18
2.4.1.	<i>The devil is in the details - mala prohibita</i>	18
2.4.2.	<i>Institutional culture and the diminishing image of traffic policing (public perceptions)</i>	19
2.4.3.	<i>Psychological Concepts of Motivation in Traffic Policing</i>	20
2.4.4.	<i>Traffic Policing, Behaviour and Deterrence</i>	21
2.4.4.1.	<i>Deterrence</i>	22
2.4.4.2.	<i>Traffic Enforcement and the Effect on Behaviour</i>	24
2.5.	STATUS QUO: ROAD TRAFFIC POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA	25

2.5.1.	<i>A fragmented traffic police system.....</i>	25
2.5.2.	<i>Inception of the Road Traffic Management Corporation</i>	26
2.6.	THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT OF TRAFFIC POLICING.....	26
2.6.1.	<i>Perception</i>	28
2.6.2.	<i>Attitude</i>	29
2.6.3.	<i>Stereotype.....</i>	30
2.6.4.	<i>Profession.....</i>	33
2.6.5.	<i>Professional.....</i>	34
2.6.6.	<i>Professionalism.....</i>	35
2.6.7.	<i>Integrating the variables profession, professionalism and professional with the traffic police image</i>	38
2.7.	THE IMAGE OF THE TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS	40
2.7.1.	<i>The Media and its effect on the Image of traffic policing</i>	40
2.7.2.	<i>Traffic policing as an extension of government.....</i>	42
2.7.3.	<i>Traffic Policing: Assessing the decline in public trust</i>	44
2.7.4.	<i>Traffic policing – a general or professional image?.....</i>	48
2.7.5.	<i>Training</i>	50
2.8.	THE EFFECT OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND LEGITIMACY ON THE TRAFFIC POLICE IMAGE	51
2.8.1.	<i>Legitimacy.....</i>	51
2.8.2.	<i>Procedural Justice</i>	52
2.9.	TRAFFIC POLICE CORRUPTION: A PERSISTENT CHALLENGE	54
2.9.1.	<i>Explaining Corruption</i>	57
2.9.2.	<i>The Impact of Traffic Corruption</i>	60
2.10.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	61
CHAPTER 3.....		62
THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK, MODELS AND CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICIALS		62
3.1.	INTRODUCTION	62
3.2.	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND APPLICABLE TO A CHANGING TRAFFIC POLICING LANDSCAPE	67
3.3.	ROAD SAFETY FRAMEWORK FROM A CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	68
3.3.1.	<i>Road User.....</i>	68
3.3.2.	<i>Broken Roads.....</i>	70
3.4.	CRIMINOLOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS TRAFFIC POLICING	71
3.4.1.	<i>Traffic Law Enforcement.....</i>	71
3.4.2.	<i>Deterrence Theory</i>	73
3.4.3.	<i>Theoretical Approach: Traffic Law Enforcement and Behaviour</i>	75
3.4.3.1.	<i>Rational Model of Decision-making (RDM)</i>	75

3.4.3.2.	Rational Choice Theory (RCT)	76
3.5.	MULTI-COMPONENT MODEL OF ATTITUDE	78
3.6.	THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR: THEORETICAL APPLICABILITY TO STUDY	79
3.6.1.	<i>Attitude</i>	80
3.6.2.	<i>Subjective Norms</i>	80
3.6.3.	<i>Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)</i>	81
3.7.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	82
CHAPTER FOUR	84	
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	84	
4.1.	INTRODUCTION	84
4.2.	RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEWS.....	84
4.2.1.	<i>Postpositivist worldview</i>	85
4.2.2.	<i>Symbolic Interactionism</i>	85
4.2.3	<i>Interpretive Worldview</i>	86
4.3.	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	87
4.3.1.	<i>Evaluation Research</i>	87
4.3.2.	<i>Research Design</i>	87
4.4.	DATA-GATHERING PROCESS	88
4.4.1.	<i>Quantitative Survey Research</i>	89
4.4.1.1.	The Quantitative Data-Gathering Process: Study Population	90
4.4.1.2.	Unit of Analysis	90
4.4.1.3.	Sampling	90
4.4.1.4.	Sampling Technique.....	91
4.4.1.5.	Sample Size	92
4.4.1.6.	Data Collection.....	93
4.4.1.7.	Pilot Study.....	95
4.4.1.8.	Data Analysis and Interpretation	96
4.4.1.9.	Reliability: Quantitative Data-Collection Method	98
4.4.1.10.	Research Ethics	100
4.4.1.11.	Informed Consent	100
4.4.1.12.	Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality	100
4.5.	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	101
4.5.1.	<i>Qualitative Data Gathering Process</i>	101
4.5.1.1.	Unit of Analysis and Sample Demographics	101
4.5.1.2.	Sampling	101
4.5.1.3.	Data Collection Instrument and Process	102
4.5.1.4.	The Pilot Study.....	102
4.5.1.5.	Qualitative Data Analysis	103
4.5.1.6.	Trustworthiness and Reflexivity	103

4.5.1.7. Ethical Approach	104
4.6. PLAGIARISM	105
4.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	105
4.8. GEOGRAPHICAL (SPATIAL) DEMARCATION	106
4.9. CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	106
CHAPTER FIVE	108
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: QUANTITATIVE DATA.....	108
5.1. INTRODUCTION	108
5.2. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS.....	110
5.3. THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS' ROLE FULFILLMENT – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1	112
5.3.1. <i>Summary of Selected Descriptive Statistics for TPO Role Fulfilment</i>	112
5.3.2. <i>Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) – Objective 1 (Role Fulfilment)</i>	115
5.3.2.1. Critical Reflection on Item Adequacy – Professional Service Delivery	115
5.4. THE VARIABLES THAT AFFECT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2	116
5.4.1. <i>Descriptive Analysis: Variables Affecting the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers</i>	117
5.4.2. <i>Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Model Evaluation – Objective 2</i>	119
5.4.3. <i>Demographic Associations with Bribery Conduct (Chi-Square Analysis)</i>	121
5.4.3.1. The Geographical Distribution of Corruption	122
5.4.3.2. Gender Dimensions of Bribery	123
5.4.3.3. Systematic Normalisation of Bribery across Age Groups	123
5.4.4. <i>Qualitative Integration: The Rationale Behind Bribery (Open Questions)</i>	124
5.5. HOW THE PUBLIC EXPERIENCES THEIR INTERACTION WITH TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS –RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3	126
5.5.1. <i>Public Interaction Experiences with Traffic Police Officers</i>	127
5.5.2. <i>Exploratory factor analysis – Objective 3</i>	129
5.6. THE CRIMINOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE THAT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS MAY EXERT ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM –RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4	132
5.6.1. <i>Statements on How the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers May Influence the Criminal Justice System</i>	132
5.6.2. <i>Exploratory Factor Analysis – Objective 4</i>	136
5.6.2.1. Public Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.874$).....	137
5.6.2.2. Misconduct ($\alpha = 0.906$)	138
5.6.3. Chi-Square Test for Independence – Reporting of Serious Traffic Offences.....	138
5.6.4. <i>Chi-Square Test for Independence – Anarchy on Our Roads</i>	139
5.7. HOW TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	140
5.7.1. <i>Operational Legitimacy (Professionalism and Visibility)</i>	141

5.7.2.	<i>Systemic Integrity (Accountability, Ethics, and Bribery Mitigation)</i>	142
5.7.3.	<i>Structural Enablers (Training, Education, and Resources)</i>	142
5.8.	CHAPTER KEY FINDINGS (SUMMARY)	143
5.8.1.	<i>Demographic profile</i>	144
5.8.2.	<i>Objective 1 - The Public Perception of the Role Fulfilment of South African Traffic Police Officers</i>	144
5.8.3.	<i>Objective 2 – Variables That Affect the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers</i>	145
5.8.4.	<i>Objective 3 – How the Public Experiences Their Interaction with Traffic Police Officers</i>	145
5.8.5.	<i>Objective 4 – The Criminological Significance Of The Public Image Of Traffic Police Officers on the Criminal Justice System</i>	146
5.8.6.	<i>Open Question – How to Improve the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers in South Africa</i> .	146
5.9.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	146
CHAPTER SIX.....		148
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE STUDY FINDINGS.....		148
6.1.	INTRODUCTION	148
6.2.	QUALITATIVE DATA GATHERING	149
6.3.	ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE.....	151
6.3.1.	<i>Effective fulfilment of Traffic Police Officer Roles – Research Objective 1</i>	151
6.3.1.1.	Service Delivery and Assistance.....	152
6.3.1.2.	Emergency Equipment Misuse and Public Reactions.....	153
6.3.1.3.	Professionalism and the First Impressions	154
6.3.1.4.	Traffic Police Visibility	154
6.3.1.5.	The Efficacy of Traffic Law Enforcement	155
6.3.1.6.	Competency and Training Appraisals	156
6.3.1.7.	Analysis of Research Objective 1	157
6.3.2.	<i>Factors Affecting the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers – Objective 2</i>	157
6.3.2.1.	The Intersection of Traffic Stops and Bribery.....	157
6.3.2.2.	Public Perceptions of Professionalism and Ethics	160
6.3.2.3.	Legitimacy, Trust and Political Interference	161
6.3.2.4.	Ticket Quotas and the Administrative Burden	163
6.3.2.5.	Analysis of Research Objective 2	165
6.3.3.	<i>Interactive Process with Traffic Police Officers – Research Objective 3</i>	165
6.3.3.1.	Experiences of Routine Traffic Stops	166
6.3.3.2.	Vicarious and Direct Experiences of Abuse By Traffic Police Officers	168
6.3.3.3.	Professionalism, Power Dynamics and Reciprocity	168
6.3.3.4.	The Pervasiveness of Fear and Vulnerability	169
6.3.3.5.	Procedural Misconduct – Identification and Communication	170
6.3.3.6.	The Role of the Media and the Influence on Public Perception.....	171
6.3.4.	<i>The Impact of the Public Image on the Criminal Justice System – Research Objective 4</i>	171

6.3.4.1.	Inadequate road safety.....	172
6.3.4.2.	Misconduct	173
6.3.4.3.	Road Traffic Prosecution.....	174
6.3.4.4.	Offender Accountability	175
6.3.4.5.	Confidence in Traffic Police Officers.....	176
6.3.4.6.	Public Cooperation	176
6.3.4.7.	Offending Traffic Rules	177
6.3.5.	<i>Proposed Improvements</i>	177
6.3.5.1.	Officer Accountability and Institutional Oversight	178
6.3.5.2.	Training and Conflict Management	178
6.3.5.3.	Fostering Positive Media and Public Relations.....	179
6.3.5.4.	Professionalism and Physical Readiness of Traffic Police Officers	179
6.3.5.5.	Visible Traffic Law Enforcement.....	180
6.4.	CHAPTER KEY FINDINGS – SUMMARY.....	180
6.4.1.	<i>Effective Fulfilment of Traffic Police Officer Roles (Objective 1)</i>	180
6.4.2.	<i>Factors Affecting the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers (Objective 2)</i>	181
6.4.3.	<i>The Interactive Process with Traffic Police Officers (Objective 3)</i>	181
6.4.4.	<i>The Impact of the Public Image on the Criminal Justice System (Objective 4)</i>	182
6.4.5.	<i>Proposed Improvements – Open Question</i>	183
6.4.6.	<i>Summary of Shortcomings and Recommendations for Future Research</i>	183
6.5.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	185
	CHAPTER SEVEN.....	186
	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	186
7.1.	INTRODUCTION	186
7.2.	SUMMARY OF THE THESIS	187
7.3.	VALIDATION OF THE PROPOSED PUBLIC SATISFACTION MODEL (EXPERT PANEL REVIEW)	187
7.4.	THE PROPOSED PUBLIC SATISFACTION MODEL: A CONTESTABLE EVALUATIVE SOLUTION	189
7.4.1.	<i>Component Analysis and Theoretical Alignment (Vertical Architecture)</i>	191
7.4.2.	<i>Operationalising the Proposed Model for Traffic Police Managers</i>	192
7.5.	SYNTHESIS OF STUDY FINDINGS AND OBJECTIVES	193
7.5.1.	<i>Objective 1 - Role Fulfilment of Traffic Police Officers</i>	193
7.5.2.	<i>Objective 2: Variables Affecting the Public Image</i>	193
7.5.3.	<i>Objective 3: The Interactive Process</i>	194
7.5.4.	<i>Objective 4: Criminological Impact on the Criminal Justice System</i>	195
7.6.	THEORETICAL INTEGRATION	195
7.6.1.	<i>The Broken Roads Theory</i>	196
7.6.2.	<i>Theory of Planned Behaviour</i>	196
7.6.3.	<i>Institutional Theory and the Normalisation of Deviance</i>	197

7.6.4	<i>Principal-Agent Theory and Accountability Failure</i>	197
7.6.5	<i>Deterrence and Defiance Theory</i>	198
7.6.6	<i>Self-Control, Age, gender, and Systemic Corruption</i>	198
7.6.7	<i>Integrated Theoretical Interpretation</i>	199
7.7.	CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY AND CRIMINOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP	199
7.8.	FUTURE RESEARCH STUDIES	201
7.8.1.	<i>Empirical Studies on Public Complicity</i>	201
7.8.2.	<i>Evaluation of Bilateral Accountability Tools</i>	201
7.8.3.	<i>Internal Institutional Perspectives</i>	201
7.8.4.	<i>Refining Theoretical Constructs</i>	201
7.9.	RECOMMENDATIONS	201
7.9.1.	<i>Recommendation 1 - Bilateral Accountability Tools (Body-Worn Cameras)</i>	202
7.9.2.	<i>Recommendation 2 - Compulsory Rehabilitation for Habitual Offenders</i>	202
7.9.3.	<i>Recommendation 3 - Continuous Professional Development and Advanced Conflict Management</i>	202
7.9.4.	<i>Recommendation 4 - 24-Hour Dynamic Policing Models and Resource Allocation</i>	203
7.9.5.	<i>Recommendation 5 - Mandatory Physical Wellness Programmes</i>	203
7.9.6.	<i>Recommendation 6 - Fostering Positive Media and Community Relations.</i>	203
7.10.	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	203
7.10.1.	<i>Non-Probability Sampling Limitations</i>	204
7.10.2.	<i>Quantitative Sample Bias (Education and Transport Mode)</i>	204
7.10.3.	<i>Qualitative Gender Imbalance</i>	204
7.10.4.	<i>Measurement and Construct Validity</i>	205
7.10.5.	<i>Causal Inference</i>	205
7.10.6.	<i>Methodological Inconsistency and Social Desirability Bias</i>	205
7.10.7.	<i>Lack of Intercoder Reliability</i>	205
7.11.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	206
	LIST OF REFERENCES	207
	ANNEXURE A: CONFIRMATION OF EDITING.....	1
	ANNEXURE B: GOOGLE SCHOLAR – LIMITED SOURCES	2
	ANNEXURE C: QUESTIONNAIRE	3
	ANNEXURE D: QUESTIONNAIRE AS APPEARED ELECTRONICALLY	11
	ANNEXURE E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET.....	12
	ANNEXURE F: UNISA ETHICS APPROVAL.....	14
	ANNEXURE G: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE GUIDE	16
	ANNEXURE H: INFORMED CONSENT FORM AGREED UPON TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH	21
	ANNEXURE I: TURNITIN REPORT	25
	ANNEXURE J: QUOTED VERBATIM RESPONSES FOR OPEN QUESTION	26

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Negative public perceptions of traffic police officials in South Africa pose a significant criminological challenge, undermining effective traffic law enforcement and voluntary compliance (Solakoglu, 2016:1). The pervasive normalisation of corruption and systemic institutional failures have severely eroded the essential trust between the motoring public and traffic agencies (Kumssa, 2015). This chapter outlines the research context, highlighting the need to shift from an evaluative stance on an unknown framework to an exploratory investigation. Consequently, the study seeks to examine how empirical analysis of public perceptions can inform the development of a conceptual model to improve the professional image of these officers (Roets, 2015:247).

The beginning of this narrative sets the stage by orienting readers to the study's overall orientation. The chapter unfolds by first presenting the background and articulating the refined research problem, stripping away excessive academic definitions to focus on the core issues. Following this, the aim and purpose of the study are clearly distinguished to provide a clear direction. The narrative then transitions directly to listing the exploratory primary research questions, deliberately positioning the inquiry in the researcher's mind. Finally, the chapter outlines the study objectives and defines key concepts and their operationalisations.

This chapter provides the critical general orientation for the doctoral study, establishing a rigorous methodological foundation aligned with the examiners' directives. It eliminates tautological hypotheses and unnecessary theoretical fluff, replacing them with a streamlined, exploratory focus. Central to this chapter is the reformulated primary research question, which now correctly asks how analysis of public perception can inform the development of a conceptual model to improve the professional image of traffic police officials in South Africa (Green & Gates, 2014:81).

Ultimately, this chapter clearly delineates the study parameters, ensuring perfect alignment between the revised research topic and the primary study objectives.

Because English is the researcher's second language, Grammarly Pro Editor, version 1.5.81, an electronic editing programme designed to assist in correcting spelling, language errors, and sentence structure, was used. The electronic editing features of Microsoft Word 365, version 16.101, were also utilised alongside Grammarly. The thesis was sent for final editing to a professional editor (see Annexure A).

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main problem identified in this study is the pervasive negative public perception of the professional image of Traffic Police Officials (TPOs) in South Africa. This negative image is exacerbated by corruption, poor service delivery, and a breakdown of public trust, which fundamentally hinders voluntary compliance with the law and effective traffic law enforcement. The professional conduct of traffic officers is subject to numerous standards, including education, administrative oversight, policy manuals, and various codes (Thomas, 2011:16).

However, traffic officers face several challenges in their pursuit of professionalism, as the role of 'traffic officer' is not regarded as a profession by society, both globally and locally, largely because a clear professional pathway for traffic policing has not yet been established (Green & Gates, 2014:75). The fundamental issue is whether the lack of such acknowledgment prevents members of the traffic profession from acting professionally given that the primary motivation towards professionalisation is rooted in exemplary service delivery by well-trained TPOs who uphold professional integrity (Green & Gates, 2014:81).

1.3. AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.3.1. Aim of the study

This research study aims to propose a conceptual model to improve public perceptions of the professional image of traffic police officials in SA.

1.3.2. Purpose of the study

The study adopts an exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive research objective. The purpose of the study is to explore how the public perceives the professional image of TPOs based on their behavioural conduct within the criminal justice system. The researcher seeks to determine how the public views the image of TPOs in South Africa and to describe its effect on voluntary adherence to traffic law and road safety.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, the researcher seeks specific answers regarding the image of traffic police officials (TPOs) in SA as perceived by the public and develops specific questions to provide scientific answers in addressing the identified problem (see 1.2). The following subsections examine the feasibility of the study that focuses on the primary and secondary questions (Davis, 2018:14).

1.4.1. Primary Research Question

The primary research question for this study is:

"How can an empirical analysis of public perceptions inform the development of a conceptual model to improve the professional image of traffic police officials in South Africa?"

1.4.2. Secondary Research Questions

The secondary questions identified for this study are:

- What is the public perception of South African TPOs' role fulfilment?
- What variables affect the public image of TPOs?
- How does the motoring public experience their interaction with TPOs?
- What criminological significance does the impact of the public image of TPOs have on the criminal justice system?
- What recommendations can be made to traffic police administrators about possible intervention measures that may resolve negative factors impacting the public image of traffic officers?

The above-identified research questions aided the researcher in formulating the objectives (purpose) of this research study.

1.5. STUDY OBJECTIVES

1.5.1. Primary Research Objective (PRO)

To determine whether analysing public perceptions can assist in developing a conceptual model to improve the professional image of traffic police officers as functionaries of the criminal justice system in SA.

1.5.2. Secondary Research Objectives (SROs)

- Explore the public perception of South African TPOs' role fulfilment.
- Identify and describe the variables that affect the public image of traffic police officers.
- Determine how the motoring public experiences their interaction with traffic police officers.
- Explain the criminological significance that the public image of traffic police officers may have on the criminal justice system.
- Make recommendations to traffic police administrators on possible intervention measures to address negative factors affecting the public image of traffic officers.
- Offer a proposed conceptual model to the new body of knowledge to improve the professional image of traffic police officials.

The following section discusses the study's significance from both academic and traffic police perspectives.

1.6. ACADEMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The search for existing research and literature on the problem under review is an integral part of the research process, as it enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the identified issue (Fouché & Delport, 2012: 134). The review of existing literature aims to "unpack information" about the topic under investigation,

primarily to determine what has not yet been written about it and what “gaps exist in the current body of knowledge” (Kumar, 2019:59).

The researcher found that the literature on this topic is outdated and under-researched (Leavy, 2017:57). Most of the existing literature emphasises studies concerning the overall image of the police, initiatives to improve that image, and professionalism within the police force. However, from a South African perspective, research on traffic policing remains limited (Annexure B). Supporting traffic police administrators in promoting positive awareness of TPOs and enhancing road safety in South Africa relies on a solid research foundation that is currently lacking within RTP in South Africa (Blevins, 2013:1).

The assumption regarding the professional provision of services and the improvement of the image of the TPOs is based on recently obtained results and is supported by the conceptual model developed in the present study. The model includes key elements such as the professional delivery of services, the elimination of corruption, the building of trust, and effective traffic law enforcement, which together improve the image of the TPOs under consideration, thereby contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge and the broadening and deepening of understanding of the topic.

The following section presents an exposé of key concepts used in this study.

1.7. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONALISATIONS

Concepts are closely linked; therefore, conceptualisation refines and clarifies identified concepts to prevent misinterpretations and multiple meanings arising from different cultures, languages, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions (Babbie, 2017:147; Van Biljon, 2018:11).

1.7.1. Accident

From an academic perspective, the use of the term “accident” has long been debated, leading some professional communities to replace it with the term “crash” when

referring to motor vehicles. From a South African perspective, this study will use the term “motor vehicle accident” as the preferred terminology.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TDOT) defines a road traffic crash (RTC) as an unforeseen event that results in death, injury, or damage (Roets, 2015:72). Every road traffic crash (RTC) consists of three elements:

- People (including the driver)
- The road
- Vehicles as part of the external environment (Georgia Public Safety Training Centre [GPSTC] in Roets, 2015:72).

From a South African perspective, this study will use the term “*motor vehicle accident*” as the preferred terminology.

1.7.2. Assumption

An assumption is a belief that an individual accepts as the truth and is often regarded as fact. Therefore, an assumption can be seen as an act of faith, for example, the belief that not all TPOs provide adequate services in fulfilling their daily duties. No empirical evidence or scientific testing supports these acts or beliefs (Patidar, 2013:1).

1.7.3. Attitude

A simplified definition is “a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person (a traffic police officer), object, or issue” (Maio, Haddock & Verplanken, 2019:4). The researcher believes that attitude is an integral concept in this study, as it allows for an evaluation or opinion about a TPO and/or the institution.

1.7.4. Corruption

The concept of corruption is complex, multifaceted, and globally pervasive. In Nigeria, corruption is so common that people nickname it “Chuachua” (Iyanda, 2012:37). People take exception and complain if there is no “Chuachua” in the workplace, resulting in resignation if they find another job with an opportunity for Chuachua (Iyanda, 2012:37).

The South African Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities (PCCA) Act, Act 12 of 2004, defines corruption as:

Any person who, directly or indirectly –

- (a) Accepts or agrees or offers to accept any gratification from any other person, whether for the benefit of him/herself or for the benefit of another person; or
- (b) Gives or agrees or offers to give to any other person any gratification, whether for the benefit of that other person or for the benefit of another person, to act, personally or by influencing another person so to act, in a manner –
 - (i) that amounts to the –
 - (aa) illegal, dishonest, unauthorised, incomplete, or biased; or
 - (bb) misuse or selling of information or material acquired in the course of the exercise, carrying out or performance of any powers, duties or functions arising out of a constitutional, statutory, contractual or any other legal obligation;
 - (ii) that amounts to –
 - (aa) the abuse of a position of authority;
 - (bb) a breach of trust; or
 - (cc) the violation of a legal duty or a set of rules;
 - (iii) designed to achieve an unjustified result; or
 - (iv) that amounts to any other unauthorised or improper inducement to do or not to do anything, is guilty of the offence of corruption.

A thought-provoking description of corruption is that it is a disease that causes total pathology in an organisation and in society; it tends to affect society's social, economic, political, and moral aspects (Iyanda, 2012:40).

1.7.5. Image

In a simplistic sense, it is a mental picture of someone or something (Gilmour, Collins, Mackie, Cross, Holmes & Weber, 2002, sv 'image'). Academically, the variables that determine 'image' vary; psychological factors such as feelings, emotions, personal preferences, and experiences all become determinants and creators of image (Shin, Hall, Song, Lee & Lang, 2016:1).

For the researcher, the concept image from a traffic police context portrays a real-life picture in a motorist's mind of how he or she experiences contemporary traffic policing. Although psychological in nature, the public's experience of traffic policing creates a long-lasting image or picture of traffic policing, i.e., both the TPO and the organisation. This public image determines participation and the effectiveness of traffic policing.

Consequently, based on the concept image, the public image reflects the collective beliefs many individuals hold about the traffic organisation. The main difference is that the public image creates an accurate mental picture for motorists about how their experiences with the organisation influence traffic policing in South Africa. While it is psychological in nature, the public's overall experience of traffic policing shapes a lasting image of the organisation.

1.7.5.1. Experience

Experience is closely linked to the concept of image. The public's experience with TPOs encompasses interactions with them, including traffic stops, roadside assistance, traffic control, and the prosecution of traffic offenders (Miller, Davis, Henderson, Markovic & Ortiz, 2005:395-396).

1.7.6. Motoring Public

The motoring public consists of a diverse group of road users, including private vehicle owners, commercial drivers, and passengers who operate or travel in vehicles on public road infrastructure for personal, commercial, or recreational purposes (Rodriguez & Farragut, 2004:1; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2019:28).

1.7.7. Perception

Perception, shaped by past experiences, influences how individuals interpret situations and stimuli. When perceptions conflict, cognitive dissonance arises, prompting individuals to seek consistency and reduce discomfort (Schaffer et al. 2016: xiii).

The researcher conceptualises perception as an essential element of this study. How a motorist perceives an act by a TPO shapes the motorist's beliefs and opinions, which are often difficult to change. The situation encountered by the motorist in the external environment typically results in an unpleasant experience that reinforces a negative perception of the TPO and, consequently, a generalisation of the institution. The motorist relies on this belief to form a meaningful perception of the act or action within his or her internal environment (social platform).

1.7.8. Professionalism

Professionalism in traffic law enforcement encompasses adherence to high, socially accepted standards, including recruitment, continuous training, integrity, accountability, and respect for human rights (Schneider, 2009:4; Karimulah, 2024:1).

1.7.9. Professional Service Delivery

Professional service delivery involves providing and sustaining both explicit (reactive) and implicit (proactive) services within the prescribed legal framework. It requires maintaining professionalism and ethics while utilising all available resources effectively (Reynecke, 2001:20). This study defines professional service delivery as ensuring road safety by implementing effective traffic management, assisting road users, influencing driver attitudes through fair and consistent traffic law enforcement, and maintaining visibility through an ethical approach to promote road safety for all citizens using South Africa's road infrastructure.

1.7.10. Reliability

When someone is regarded as reliable in traffic law enforcement, they are capable and prepared to fulfil their duties in accordance with the law, their oath, official procedures, and company culture (Barko, Vagina & Lunov, 2020:23). The researcher believes that a TPO is reliable due to quick response times, fair and equitable enforcement of road traffic laws, precise recording of information, adherence to ethical standards, and the ability to earn and maintain the trust of the general public in ensuring their safety continuously.

1.7.11. Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is a cognitive theory proposing that an individual's behaviour, such as bribery, can be predicted by their intention to engage in that behaviour (Brookes, 2023:1).

1.7.12. Traffic Law Enforcement

Traffic law enforcement (TLE) is a broad concept with diverse interpretations, designed to ensure that all road users comply with prescribed traffic laws by apprehending and punishing those who commit road traffic violations (Tay, 2021:171). The researcher views TLE as the area of activity focused on controlling road user behaviour through preventive, persuasive, and punitive measures to ensure safe and efficient traffic movement.

1.7.13. Traffic Police Behaviour

Traffic police behaviour is understood as the pursuit of improved professionalism that began in the 1820s, emphasising public approval and effective service delivery as crucial components of procedural justice. (Tshoose & Rapatsa, 2022:1).

1.7.14. Traffic Police Competence

Traffic police competence extends beyond technical proficiency and emphasises attributes such as adaptability, motivation, social skills, and the ability to balance capability with humility (Lindberg & Rantatalo, 2015:562).

1.7.15. Traffic Police Image

The concept of traffic police image captures public perceptions, feelings, and evaluations of the traffic police in general, reflecting how the public responds to them in terms of confidence, satisfaction, trust, and respect (Gallagher, Maguire, Mastrofski & Reisig, 2001:1).

1.7.16. Traffic Police Officer

For this study, the concept of TPO also includes a traffic officer. Section 1 of the National Road Traffic Act [NRTA] of 1996 (Act 93 of 1996) defines a Traffic Police Officer (TPO) as a traffic officer appointed in terms of section 3A, and any member of

the Service and any member of a municipal police service, both as defined in section 1 of the South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act No. 68 of 1995). Additionally, Chapters V, IX, and X as well as Sections 74 and 78 of this Act include a peace officer.

1.7.17. Zero tolerance policing

Zero tolerance policing (ZTP) is a philosophy used by traffic police administrators to convey the message that certain behaviours will not be tolerated, punishing all offences severely (College of Policing, 2021:1).

1.8. ORGANISING THE THESIS: CHAPTER OUTLINE

For clarity and coherence, the researcher has divided the thesis into six chapters:

1.8.1. Chapter One: General Orientation

The opening chapter provides a brief overview of the study. It begins with an introduction and contextual background, followed by a summary of the research problem and the formulation of the research questions and objectives. The chapter further summarises the researcher's methodological approach and the study's academic significance. Key concepts central to the study are clarified to ensure conceptual precision. The chapter concludes with a structured summary that signposts the content and prepares the reader for the subsequent chapters.

1.8.2. Chapter Two: Literature Review on the Operational and Legislative Aspects of Traffic Policing in South Africa

Chapter Two presents a literature study on the operational and legislative aspects of traffic policing in South Africa, offering a criminological perspective. It addresses the societal impact of corruption, public perceptions, prosecution, deterrence, and concludes with a summary.

1.8.3. Chapter Three: The Guiding Framework, Models and Criminological Theories to Improve Public Perceptions of the Professional Image of Traffic Police Officials

This theoretical chapter discusses established models and theories relevant to this study. It explores models that emphasise key elements of road safety, attitudes, and theoretical discussions on corruption.

1.8.4. Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Four outlines the methodological approach followed in the study, discussing the identified mixed-methods approach (MMA), data-gathering processes, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

1.8.5. Chapter Five: Data Presentations, Analysis and Discussions of Quantitative Results

This chapter provides an analysis of the quantitative survey data, detailing sample characteristics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and Chi-square tests for independence.

1.8.6. Chapter Six: Data Presentations, Analysis, and Discussions of Qualitative Study Findings

Chapter Six details the qualitative approach, examining the raw interview data from the concurrent embedded design. It highlights themes surrounding traffic police officers in South Africa and feedback from participants regarding suggested improvements.

1.8.7. Chapter Seven: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter presents the findings derived from the data triangulated across Chapters 5 and 6, offers the proposed theoretical conceptual model, outlines specific recommendations, and suggests future research.

1.9. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter effectively established the study's overall orientation by contextualising the deteriorating professional image of traffic police officials within the South African criminal justice system. The core research problem was succinctly distilled, and the fundamental aims and purposes were clearly delineated to enhance methodological rigour. Most importantly, the primary research question was reformulated to reflect an exploratory approach rather than evaluating a non-existent framework. By purposefully removing superfluous academic definitions and structural errors, the chapter directly listed the research questions and objectives, ensuring the preliminary framework fully maps to the newly approved conceptual model thesis title.

The rigorous restructuring of this chapter has a profound effect on the overall trajectory of this doctoral research. By adopting an exploratory primary research question, the study is now correctly positioned to gather empirical data to build a conceptual model, rather than erroneously testing an unseen framework. This crucial conceptual shift ensures methodological coherence and meets the strict university examination criteria for research design. Furthermore, rectifying the core structural alignment and definitions solidifies the study's foundation, enabling a forensic evaluation of institutional failures and public perceptions rather than a mere descriptive exploration of traffic policing challenges in South Africa.

The next chapter provides a comprehensive literature review focused on improving public perceptions of the professional image of traffic police officials. It will critically analyse the historical evolution of modern traffic policing, systemic corruption, and the complex psychological concepts underpinning driver behaviour, identifying vital theoretical gaps necessary to conceptualise the proposed new public satisfaction model in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICIALS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically examines the scholarly literature on the professional image of Traffic Police Officials (TPOs) in South Africa, situating this within the profound systemic challenges of the criminal justice system. The review focuses on the underlying dynamics that foster negative public perceptions, often exacerbated by widespread corruption, inadequate service delivery, and the severe erosion of societal trust (Thomas, 2011:16; Kumssa, 2015). Public attitudes are complex; officers are often viewed favourably during roadside assistance but negatively during punitive traffic law enforcement interactions, which significantly shapes their overall legitimacy (Maxon, Hennigan & Sloane, 2002:1-2).

The structural layout of this chapter follows a thematic narrative designed to systematically unpack the complexities of traffic policing. It commences with a historical overview of road traffic policing in South Africa, tracing its evolution and the consequences of jurisdictional fragmentation across municipal and provincial structures (Rauch, Shaw & Louw, 2001:3). Following this, the chapter provides a comprehensive criminological perspective on road safety, focusing on the multifaceted role of road users and enforcement parameters (Bailey, 1996:34). The discussion then transitions to the criminological impact of traffic policing, explicitly highlighting the operational shift towards monetised, revenue-driven administrative systems.

In summary, this chapter synthesises the available literature to demonstrate that the efficacy of traffic policing is inextricably linked to public perceptions and institutional integrity. It shows how the normalisation of unethical practices, such as bribery and ticket quotas, fundamentally undermines the overarching mandate of road safety and promotes broader non-compliance (Savelli, 2020; Hernández Cervantes, 2024:124). Furthermore, the review illustrates that improving public satisfaction requires a paradigm shift from reactive, punitive enforcement to proactive, procedurally just community engagement. By identifying these critical systemic vulnerabilities, this

chapter lays the empirical groundwork for a proposed public satisfaction model (see Chapter 7.3).

2.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ROAD TRAFFIC POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The historical evolution of traffic policing in South Africa illustrates a gradual shift from a centralised entity to a highly fragmented municipal and provincial structure, a transition that has profoundly shaped its professional image. Initially, responsibilities resided with the South African Police (SAP), whose mandate focused predominantly on criminal enforcement rather than traffic laws, ultimately necessitating the delegation of traffic functions to municipalities (Rauch et al., 2001:3; Roets, 2003:3). This shift occurred alongside broader developments, including the SAP's roots in the Dutch Watch (Vilakazi, 2015:1–2), which created uneven foundations for subsequent standardisation.

Fragmentation was exacerbated when the South African Act of 1909 empowered provinces to manage road traffic control. This responsibility was not implemented immediately, leaving the SAP temporarily in charge (Van Heerden, Smit & Potgieter, 1983:65). The SAP's gradual withdrawal between 1931 and 1934, coupled with the establishment of municipal traffic departments (Shaw, 1996:30), firmly entrenched a localised system. This decentralisation fostered divergent institutional practices, leading to inconsistent training, procedures, and public expectations across jurisdictions. Ultimately, historical decentralisation created enduring disparities that continue to impede the standardisation and perceived legitimacy of traffic policing in South Africa.

2.2.1. A Criminological Perspective on Road Traffic Policing

According to the heads of the larger traffic departments, their officers are more visible than the South African Police Service (SAPS) and maintain more frequent direct contact with local communities, thereby playing an essential role in crime prevention (Rauch et al., 2001:5). Bailey (1996:34), in a seminal work, argues that traffic officers "are different from the rest" of traffic law enforcement institutions because their work

is confined to a particular location and to particular people - namely, those who operate motor vehicles - yet, in functional terms, traffic officers are "detectives as well as patrol officers." This dual operational capacity was particularly evident by the late 1980s, when most traffic departments actively participated in crime-prevention activities, thereby enabling the then South African Police (SAP) to redirect its resources towards the political protests that plagued the country at the time (Rauch et al., 2001:5).

2.2.2. The Operational Evolution of Local Traffic Policing

Since the 1980s, local government has become more involved in general crime prevention as a secondary function alongside its primary mandate of road safety. During the 1990s, larger metropolitan areas introduced municipal police services. Figure 2.1 illustrates the fragmented traffic police system.

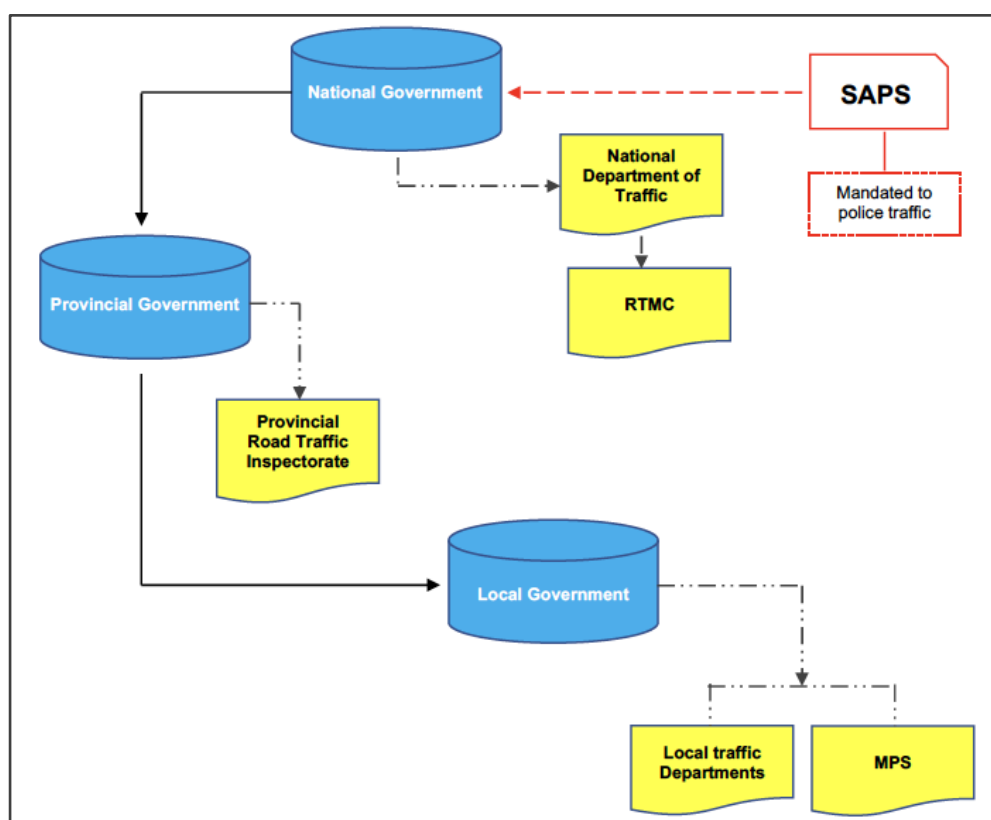


Figure 2:1 Fragmentation of road traffic policing

At a national level, the national government serves as the overarching custodian of traffic policing in South Africa. The Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) (see 2.7.2) is responsible for national road traffic management. The provincial

government assumes responsibility for traffic policing across provincial roads. At the local level, traffic policing responsibilities are assigned to municipal police and local traffic authorities. While the SAPS has delegated the traffic enforcement role to these local institutions, it still retains a mandate to enforce traffic laws.

2.2.3. Powers and Duties: A Legal Conundrum

South African traffic policing has shifted from a paramilitary approach to a peace-making philosophy centred on community engagement (Bush & Dodson, 2014; Meyer, Paul, & Grant, 2009). This shift requires critical thinking skills to build public trust. However, this structure has created jurisdictional confusion. The creation of municipal police departments has blurred operational lines, complicating the definition of enforcement powers (Duval, 2016). Although Municipal Police Officers (MPOs) are registered as TPOs under the SAPS Act 68 of 1995, they have an expanded range of functions without a proportionate increase in responsibility.

This overlapping jurisdiction undermines peace-making aims, causing internal hierarchical conflicts (Minnaar cited in Fourie, 2018) and external public confusion (Smith cited in Duval, 2016). Effective community engagement is hindered when institutional roles are unclear. The division of policing powers among national, provincial, and local levels conflicts with community-focused approaches, emphasising the urgent need for clear, unified traffic law enforcement to strengthen democracy. To rectify this systemic ambiguity and improve public perceptions (Meyer, Paul, & Grant, 2009), a thorough empirical analysis of the current legislative framework is required, moving beyond theoretical ideas to address the daily realities of a fragmented policing system.

2.3. ROAD SAFETY

Road safety comprises the safe and effective use of the road transport system, which depends on the continuous integration of road users, vehicles, traffic control devices, and the roadway environment (Smiley & Dewar, 2016:109). It encompasses external, social, and road safety issues, forming a comprehensive safety concept in which the public's awareness of road traffic safety, shaped by the actions of traffic policing

authorities, makes it clear that road traffic is not only a “sphere of self-interest and pleasure” but also a “sphere of social responsibility in which the road infrastructure user must act safely for the safety of all road traffic participants” (Kroj, 2000:6).

2.3.1. Road User

Road safety is a collective responsibility, though each user interprets conditions uniquely (Arjun, 2020:1). When road environments appear chaotic, public perception routinely shifts blame to TPOs' visibility and service delivery. High-visibility enforcement is therefore paramount to cultivating public confidence in the active enforcement of traffic laws (Gelinne, 2017:1-1; Du Preez, 2017:1).

The following section provides a criminological perspective of road traffic policing in South Africa.

2.4. CRIMINOLOGICAL IMPACT OF TRAFFIC POLICING ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

2.4.1. The devil is in the details - *mala prohibita*

The invention of the internal combustion engine transformed the global landscape of road-based transport and criminal justice systems. The demand for vehicle ownership introduced a new social dimension that regulated road traffic, placing an excessive burden on criminal courts to adjudicate traffic offences (Faraldo-Cabana, 2017:13).

The invention of the internal combustion engine necessitated the regulation of road traffic, placing excessive burdens on criminal courts (Faraldo-Cabana, 2017:13). Consequently, there was a shift towards the decriminalisation of traffic violations through monetised administrative systems (Faraldo-Cabana, 2017:10). This system allows the affluent to use financial resources to address wrongful acts (*mala prohibita*), fostering a sense of impunity and the belief that money can evade state repression or, at the very least, secure a settlement (Faraldo-Cabana, 2017:6-9; Roets, 2015:134). This dynamic epitomises a critical principal-agent problem within the criminal justice system. As explored further in Section 2.11, when the state (the principal) fails to effectively monitor its traffic officials (the agents), the resulting information asymmetry

enables officers to exploit their discretionary enforcement powers for personal or institutional financial gain, thereby severely diminishing the profession's public image.

Public opinion of TPOs has declined due to quota-driven 'targeted prosecution'. Supervisors frequently use the number of speeding tickets issued to assess officer promotability (Corbin, 1996:61; French, 2016:1). The reliance on 'targeted prosecution' and ticket quotas reflects a broader systemic misalignment. From the perspective of Institutional Theory (analysed in Section 2.11), these revenue-driven practices become entrenched as institutional norms, effectively overriding the formal mandate of road safety and fostering an environment in which ethical violations are rationalised. In the South African context, traffic law enforcement is heavily revenue-driven, effectively labelling these practices as ticket quotas used to finance municipal services (Maphumulo, 2012:1; McIntire & Keller, 2021:1). Emphasising revenue over road safety noticeably erodes public trust and limits discretionary traffic policing (Fielding, 2022:1; Kruger, 2019:1). Section 2.9.3 provides a detailed explanation of traffic ticket quotas and their effects.

2.4.2. Institutional culture and the diminishing image of traffic policing (public perceptions)

Maintaining the integrity of traffic police is a priority. Recent efforts to develop an accredited foundational programme through the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) aim to produce 21st-century, service-oriented TPOs (SAnews, 2015:1; Plaatjies, 2010:591). However, police officers often rationalise minor misconduct, such as accepting gifts or using official vehicles for personal matters, thereby setting a precedent for broader ethical violations (Khan, Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021:1950-1952). Traffic police misconduct encompasses the following actions as ethical violations:

- Misusing the traffic police institution or department, for instance, to generate revenue by using traffic law enforcement to extract funds from the public to supplement the budget of the relevant provincial or local government for non-traffic-related resources;

- An institutional culture of 'forced' service delivery and a lack of accountability, where TPOs are subjected to quota-driven enforcement that prioritises numbers over quality service, leading to misconduct and public distrust.
- The protection of colleagues that diverges into *actus reus* (guilty acts) and/or wrongful conduct (Klockars, 1984:534-535);
- Refusal, negligence, or obstruction of proper investigations;
- Recruitment and improper vetting of nepotistic personnel; and
- Biased and selective training of employees (Khan et al., 2021:1950)

Furthermore, the protection of colleagues engaged in wrongful conduct constitutes a pervasive code of silence. Drawing on the seminal literature of Klockars et al. on police integrity (detailed in Section 2.11), the willingness of officers to tolerate and conceal their peers' normative transgressions is a primary metric of institutional decay (Ivković, Maskály, Kule, Haberfield, 2022:4-5). This code of silence not only fosters a culture of impunity but also directly compromises procedural justice and the institution's public legitimacy.

To improve procedural justice and legitimacy, traffic policing must pivot from reactive traffic law enforcement to proactive strategies focused on crime prevention and traffic management (Woods, 2021:1488; Sidha, Asongo & Magutu, 2021:187-201; Tudor-Owen, 2019:480; Haskins, 2019:2).

Section (2.6.4) provides a detailed discussion of the psychological significance of traffic policing (law enforcement).

2.4.3. Psychological Concepts of Motivation in Traffic Policing

Traffic policing aims to correct unsafe driver behaviour and to promote road safety, and to understand this, it's important to analyse intrinsic motivation (IM) and extrinsic motivation (EM), which directly influence human behaviour (Cherry, 2020:1). A driver's perception constantly influences this behaviour during encounters with traffic police officers (TPOs) (Legault, 2016:1-2). Research by Miller, Davis, Henderson, Markovic, and Ortiz (2005) shows that traffic stops significantly affect public opinion. A driver's

perceptual choices are largely influenced by intrinsic factors, such as personality, as well as extrinsic factors, such as traffic law enforcement (Legault, 2016:2).

Drivers interpret interaction stimuli based on prior experiences (Niosi, 2021:1), influencing communication and reducing IM due to increased EM, such as threats of punishment (Legault, 2016:2). Their responses then depend on the TPO's perceived favourability, with perceptual fluency relying on situational attractiveness (Maio, Haddock & Verplanken, 2019:145) and internal causation (Legault, 2016:2). Despite continually making judgments with limited information (Kenyon & Sen, 2013:176), perceived service quality (IM) primarily determines the driver's situational satisfaction (EM). Ultimately, visual perception alone plays a crucial role in shaping the driver's overall attitude towards the TPO (Niosi, 2021:1).

The following section details the effects of behaviour and deterrence on traffic policing.

2.4.4. Traffic Policing, Behaviour and Deterrence

Globally, traffic policing relies on deterrence theory and traffic law enforcement to reduce road injuries and modify risky driver behaviour (Mäkinen et al., 2003:44; Tay, 2005:210; Sam, 2022:1-2; Pahazri, Rohani & Zakaria, 2024:1). Enforcement is complicated by drivers' distorted perceptions of safety (Faulks & Irwin, [sa]:13) and the illusion that they are naturally law-abiding, despite regularly breaking rules without malicious intent (Wells & Savigar, 2019:13). Consequently, academics debate the effectiveness of deterrence. While place-based approaches like hot-spot policing provide short-term visibility (Braga, Turchan, Papachristos & Hureau, 2019:290; Brantingham, 2025:1-3), person-based strategies targeting high-risk drivers tend to yield better proactive outcomes for traffic offences (Haskins, 2019:3). When these strategies are applied in South Africa, they reveal notable gaps in research on their implementation under severe operational constraints. Person-focused predictive traffic policing demands robust data and significant resources (Hung & Yen, 2020:165), yet local traffic authorities are critically under-resourced (Sesant, 2016:1). Conversely, place-based strategies rely on accurate CompStat data; however, existing local crash records, as shown by Roets (2015:177), are unreliable, with 78% inaccuracy.

Person-based strategies proactively target drivers but require accurate data and visible enforcement to support predictive traffic policing by forecasting crash risks based on traffic-offence patterns (Hung & Yen, 2020:165). Traffic administrators require a balanced approach between the two strategies to improve road safety within their areas of responsibility. Globally, traffic institutions have implemented several road safety strategies to minimise road trauma and social costs, relying on deterrence theory (see 4.3.2) and traffic policing efforts (Tay, 2005:210). The cornerstone of any traffic policing system is the “enforcement of rules in traffic” (Sam, 2022:1-2), which may change drivers’ behaviour (Pahazri, Rohani & Zakaria, 2024:1).

2.4.4.1. Deterrence

Deterrence is a concept in criminology and social psychology that seeks to prevent criminal traffic behaviour through the threat of legal sanctions. Deterrence involves various psychological and social processes, including the fear of social stigmatisation arising from punishment (Tay, 2005:210).

Traffic police officers (TPOs) accept deterrence as the mediating factor in traffic law enforcement (Mäkinen et al., 2003:28). Deterrence is vital for changing or adapting behaviour (Tay, 2005:213), and it depends on the perceived punishment and sanctions associated with the seriousness of the driver’s actions (Killias, Villettaz and Nunweiler-Hardegger, 2016:619). Punishment and sanctions directly affect drivers’ perceptions and decision-making (Goldenbeld et al., 1998:8). Simple deterrence falls within the ambit of deterrence. This concept concerns the effectiveness of a legal threat, which is “determined by the perceived certainty, severity, and swiftness” of punishment following a violation of the law (Sam, 2022:6).

Driving behaviour is affected by two processes: general deterrence and specific deterrence (Belin, 2021:86; Tay, 2004:210; Mäkinen et al., 2003:28).

- General deterrence refers to the indirect effect of drivers’ experience of punishment and punishment avoidance (Tay, 2004:210). General deterrence, therefore, refers to the consequences arising from the threat of lawful punishment and the public perception that there is a risk of punishment for violating a traffic rule (Belin, 2021: 86; Braga et al., 2019:301; Tomlinson, 2016:33).

- Specific deterrence is the deterrent effect arising from direct encounters with punishment and the avoidance of consequences (Tay, 2004:210; Belin, 2021:86; Tomlinson, 2016:33).

General deterrence applies to those who have not yet been sanctioned (Belin, 2021:21). In contrast, specific deterrence refers to drivers who have already received some form of sanction (Mäkinen, 2003:28). Table 2.1 reflects on the comparative deterrence framework derived from Sherman's deterrence/defiance theory (2011), the deterrent effect of certainty versus severity proposed by Nagin (2013), and how these relate to traffic law enforcement.

Table 2 1: Deterrence Comparative Framework

Description	Defiance/Deterrence Theory Sherman (2011:445-469)	Deterrence v Certainty (Nagin, 2013:199-254)	Link to Traffic Law enforcement
Essential Idea	• Sanctions are effective only if they are perceived as fair. • Unjust actions lead to resistance, which in turn raises the likelihood of offenses.	• Certainty of apprehension is more effective at deterring than severity. • Long sentences provide minimal deterrence.	• Visibility of traffic police must establish certainty and be procedurally fair to prevent criticism.
Method	• Legitimacy, social bonds, shame, and pride determine whether deterrence or defiance prevails.	• Rational calculation: a higher perceived risk of being caught reduces violations.	• Drivers follow rules when they see enforcement that is active, fair, and respectful.
Contribution to Deterrence	• Deterrence sometimes fails—when enforcement is unfair or stigmatising, it can lead to more offending.	• Deterrence works mainly through credible detection, not harsher penalties.	• Traffic enforcement requires both visible policing and fair interactions to strengthen deterrence.

Therefore, in traffic law enforcement, deterrence relies on a visible TPO presence (certainty), fair and respectful treatment (legitimacy), and proportionate sanctions that prevent defiance. These elements are essential to effective traffic safety deterrence.

Detailed information about traffic enforcement and its effect on road-user behaviour can be found in the following section.

2.4.4.2. Traffic Enforcement and the Effect on Behaviour

Traffic enforcement is necessary to analyse traffic patterns and enforce traffic laws, preventing traffic problems and vehicular accidents (French, 2016:1). The researcher views traffic police enforcement as a safety strategy that encourages voluntary compliance with traffic laws, reduces undesirable behaviour, increases the certainty of apprehension through visibility and resource use, and ensures a safer road environment that enhances citizens' liveability.

The researcher concurs with the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC, 1999:43) that the enforcement of traffic laws is generally low priority, which is problematic, especially from a South African perspective. The fact that taxis are often not prosecuted for traffic law violations has also led motorists to bend the rules. This falls within the ambit of the “turnstile” concept, where people who see others hopping turnstiles and evading train fares are more likely to follow suit (Bezuidenhout, 2011:34). The researcher also refers to a “sheep-syndrome”, where one motorist disregards a road traffic signal and drives against a red light, and other motorists follow suit. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on offenders to create an environment of law-abiding behaviour.

Traffic policing in Europe has a similarly low priority, leading to a diminished status for traffic police for various reasons (European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), 1999:43). One of the main issues may be the allocation of traffic police resources to societal problems (ETSC, 1999:43). A concern for TPAs is that not all TPOs are on the roads performing traffic police duties, as they are also assigned administrative tasks and non-traffic police functions, such as escorting very important persons (VIPs) (Sesant, 2016:1). The next section discusses the contemporary state of traffic policing

in South Africa (SA), with a more detailed focus on transport in SA, the inception of the RTMC, and its impact on traffic policing in the country.

2.5. STATUS QUO: ROAD TRAFFIC POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Effective Traffic Law Enforcement (TLE) must be supported by a competent traffic policing system to minimise road accidents (Hakkert & Gitelman, 2005:1).

2.5.1. A fragmented traffic police system

South African traffic policing is deeply fragmented, with five entities enforcing the same traffic laws. Seminal research by Van Heerden et al. (1983:65) highlighted poor inter-provincial and local coordination, while Thornhill (2021:46) confirms that inter-governmental alignment remains critical for effective service delivery. During informal interviews, senior traffic police managers emphasised that SAPS members are easily identifiable because of their distinctive uniforms. However, similar uniforms worn by different traffic entities lead the public to perceive them as belonging to the same institution. Furthermore, uniform similarities across institutions confuse the public and complicate administrative inquiries. Compared with integrated international models such as South Australia, Queensland, and Fredericksburg, local policing remains isolated. Consequently, a distinct gap exists in the literature on integrated operational models suitable for South Africa's unique local governance structures.

South Africa's voluminous road traffic laws severely complicate enforcement. In the early 1990s, during a visit from Mr Maurice Moore, the Former Deputy Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, previously noted that this sheer legislative volume prevents officers from keeping up with continuous amendments. Highlighting this complexity, Justice Project South Africa (JPSA) (2020:1) lists numerous overlapping frameworks, including the National Road Traffic Act (Act 93 of 1996), the National Land Transport Act (Act 5 of 2009), and the Cross Border Land Transport Act (Act 4 of 1998), alongside various provincial acts and municipal by-laws. Consequently, a distinct literature gap remains regarding public awareness of and compliance with these ongoing legislative changes.

The Essential Services Committee excludes provincial traffic police from essential services, prompting most provinces to cease operations after 20:00 and on weekends, with only local and municipal police designated (Brand, 2010:3; Labour Protect, 2020:1). Despite promises of 24-hour traffic policing (Moatshe, 2022:1), provincial officers remain undeclared, creating a 'service delivery bubble' that undermines policing effectiveness and reveals a lack of South African research on essential service classifications.

2.5.2. Inception of the Road Traffic Management Corporation

South African road traffic policing evolved with the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) formal establishment (RTMC Act 20 of 1999), which became operational in 2005 to coordinate planning, regulation, and enforcement across government spheres (RTMC, 2019:1). The National Traffic Police Unit, created in 2010, reinforced enforcement where provincial and local authorities lagged (PMG, 2014:1).

2.6. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT OF TRAFFIC POLICING

Traffic safety depends on a complex, integrated relationship among the driver's psychology, traffic conditions, the vehicle, the environment, and road infrastructure (Bucchi et al., 2012:973). Many people believe that driving is a natural process, overlooking the fact that it is one of the most complex cognitive and potentially hazardous daily tasks for motorists (Bucchi et al., 2012:974). Moreover, drivers are often poorly trained and have impaired driving skills, which directly affect the safety of both the driver and other road users (Ahmed, Jha & Maurya, 2020:280).

This challenging task requires a wide range of "cognitive skills, multisensory perception, and motor abilities" (Ahmed et al., 2020:281). All human behaviour occurs within a physical environmental context that directly affects behaviour (Hutchison, 2015:228). This is due to the socio-economic background, which defines a significantly altered natural environment characterised by complex traffic law enforcement (Szabolcs, Sallai, Szarvak, Tihanyi & Vince, 2020:36).

Adapted from Van Heerden, (1994:89-97), Figure 2.2 provides a comprehensive overview of the psychological process shaping public opinion in the context of traffic policing.

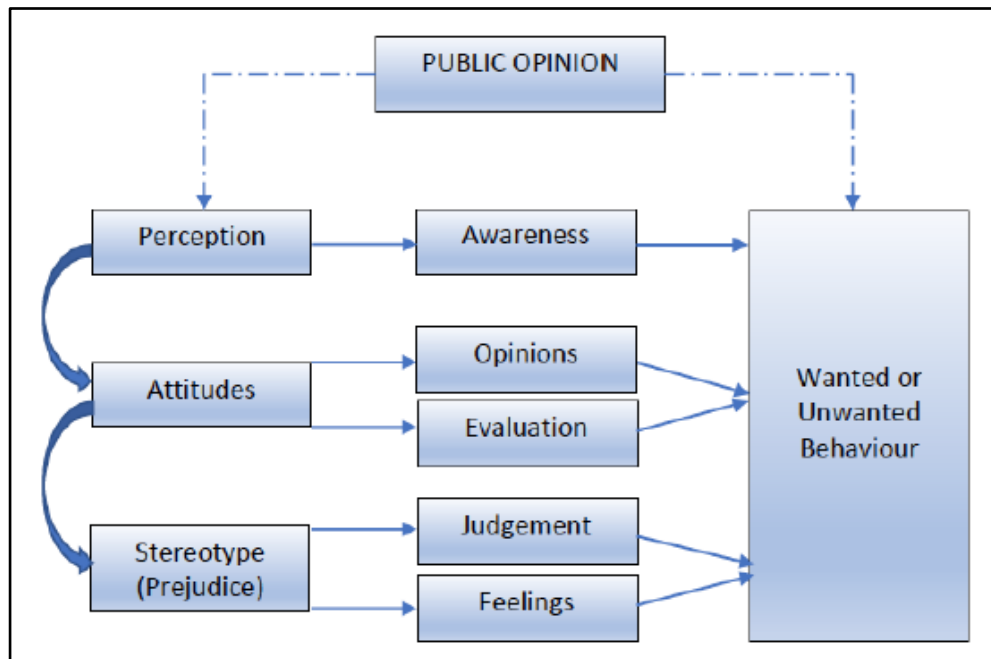


Figure 2.2: Public Opinion Psychological Process

The driver forms a perception of his behaviour (speeding or not speeding) and makes a preconceived judgement. This judgement is usually whether to adhere to the speed limit or not.

Rubinstein, Jussim, and Stevens (2018:54) studied how motorists form impressions of TPOs, whether consciously or subconsciously, and whether these are influenced by stereotypes, attitudes, or perceptions. Their findings confirmed that perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes shape these judgments. Attitudes (individual-specific latent attributes) and perceptions (alternative-specific latent attributes) are always present in a motorist's decision-making (Bahamonde-Birke, Kunert, Link & Ortuzar, 2017:476). They believe that motorists' decisions are shaped by two distinct latent constructs: attitudes, which are individual-specific and reflect enduring predispositions, and perceptions, which are alternative-specific and capture how environmental stimuli are interpreted. Their work shows that these constructs have different behavioural functions yet are frequently conflated by non-specialists despite embodying separate

value judgements. Based on the findings from Bahamonde-Birke et al. (2017:478), perceptions directly influence choice outcomes, while attitudes explain systematic taste variation

The following sections provide comprehensive information on the concepts of perception, attitude, and stereotype, as well as their influence on the image of TPOs.

2.6.1. Perception

Perception is how the motoring public converts sensory inputs into a coherent, unified view of their environment, which they perceive as reality and that typically guides their behaviour (Hale, 2019:4). This intricate cognitive process involves selecting specific stimuli to create a rational, meaningful picture of their surroundings (Bucchi et al., 2012:974). Importantly, the public's belief that resources should be prioritised to address violent crime rather than traffic police services (Sandberg, 1996:106) directly affects public road safety (Harvey, 2020:174). Consequently, traffic police administrators need to emphasise the importance of traffic police services, as enforcement plays a crucial role in traffic management - especially in an educational capacity, where drivers learn to adjust their behaviour for safer driving (Bucchi et al., 2012:976; Pistilli, Braga & Mollica, 2005:1; Sandberg, 1996:106).

Research into public perceptions of policing has been extensive (Bellman, 1935; Parrat, 1938; Decker, 1981; Jefferis et al., 1997, all cited in Brown & Benedict, 2002), showing that perception underpins public opinion and views (Brown & Benedict, 2002:543-544). Perception is closely linked to an individual's behaviour towards their environment, leading to actions based on those perceptions (Brown & Benedict, 2002:543-570). The initial impression a TPO makes strongly shapes a motorist's perception, which in turn affects the TPO's subsequent actions (Hale, 2019:13). A British study on public satisfaction with TPOs found that perceptions are formed during the first contact, with trustworthiness (demonstrating care), neutrality (fairness and impartiality), and standing (treated with respect and dignity) key factors in these perceptions (Awan, Brookes, Powell & Stanwell, 2017:174). In an ever-changing social setting, perceptions are neither completely accurate nor false; what matters

most is the initial perception of the TPO and how the motorist responds to it (Van Heerden, 1994:90).

Hale (2019:14) presents a compelling example in which a former inmate shot and killed a traffic officer during a routine stop. He explains his actions by contrasting the appearances of two officers encountered in different jurisdictions: the first looked authoritative, with neat clothing and polished boots, while the second appeared disorganised and inattentive. This case highlights how the way TPOs symbolise authority shapes public perceptions of their professional image. The public focuses not only on what TPOs do but also on how they perform their duties, especially given their role as public servants responsible for delivering quality service (Awan et al., 2017:174). Importantly, there is a gap in the literature from a South African perspective, as most research on perceptions of TPOs comes from countries such as Britain and the USA. South Africa's unique context—marked by high road fatalities, resource limitations, and historical community-police tensions—necessitates context-specific research to inform traffic policing policies and practices within the country.

2.6.2. Attitude

A brief historical perspective of attitude is necessary as Gordon Allport (1935 cited in Maio et al., 2019), in a seminal work, noted that "the concept of attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in social psychology" (Maio et al., 2019:5; Jackson, 2020:351). Significantly, attitude studies could be "quantifiably measured" (Maio et al., 2019:5), which is also the focus of the quantitative part of this study.

Maio (2019:4) identified the following two prominent definitions of the concept of attitude:

- Eagly and Chaiken in 1993 define it as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour".
- Petty and Cacioppo in 1981 explained it as "a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person [TPO], object, or issue".

These definitions confirm that an attitude involves decision-making, including likes or dislikes, friendliness, or unfriendliness towards a TPO. Public attitudes summarise feelings, thoughts, and behaviour toward a TPO (Maio et al., 2019:4).

Attitude refers to a specific interpretation of an individual's ability to evaluate any action in their environment, favourably or unfavourably (Jones, 2003:22). Although it is argued that an attitude refers to a verbal expression, attitude in a traffic policing context is dependent on experience and evaluation (Van Heerden, 1994:93). Unfortunately, the public tends to generalise attitudes; for example, after a public member has an unfavourable experience with a TPO, all TPOs are judged on this experience (Mohler, Campbell, Henderson & Renauer, 2022:55). Studies conducted in Slovenia from 2002 to 2004 suggested that personal experience with TPOs is the determining factor in how the public perceives TPOs (Areh, Dobovsek & Umek, 2007:637).

Some researchers believe that the concept of "evaluation" is an essential aspect of an attitude because the attitudes of the public are the "evaluative judgments that integrate and summarize ... cognitive/affective reactions" (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010:352; Maio et al., 2019: 30). This judgment process refers to the "fishbowl" syndrome because every action that a traffic officer performs in public is continuously under public scrutiny (Pavlak, 2017:3). To escape scrutiny and judgement, the traffic officer will rather forget about an offence in an endeavour to escape scrutiny and judgement (Pavlak, 2017:3). An attitude results from a prior experience with a TPO, which may have an enduring influence on the driver's thoughts, feelings, and actions (behaviour) and how they evaluate different situations involving TPOs. In many instances, attitudes towards TPOs are learned through negative feedback from other people (drivers) around them (Cherry, 2021:1) or, for the researcher, the continuous negative postings of TPOs on social media.

2.6.3. Stereotype

The stereotype, first linked to printing reproductions in 1798, was later adapted by Walter Lippmann in 1922 to depict how people form mental images of others, comparing these thoughts to a press producing "identical copies" (Jackson, 2020:10). Prejudice ties closely to stereotyping, often involving a sense of threat that divides "us"

and "them" (Jackson, 2020:10-11). It is a judgement based on negative feelings within an individual, such as a motorist's negative attitude towards others (McLeod, 2023:1). These feelings trigger stereotypic information, reinforcing biases (Mulvey, Hitti & Killen, 2017:599).

Figure 2.3, adapted from Bern (2001:11), graphically illustrates the stereotype function and its use against a TPO.

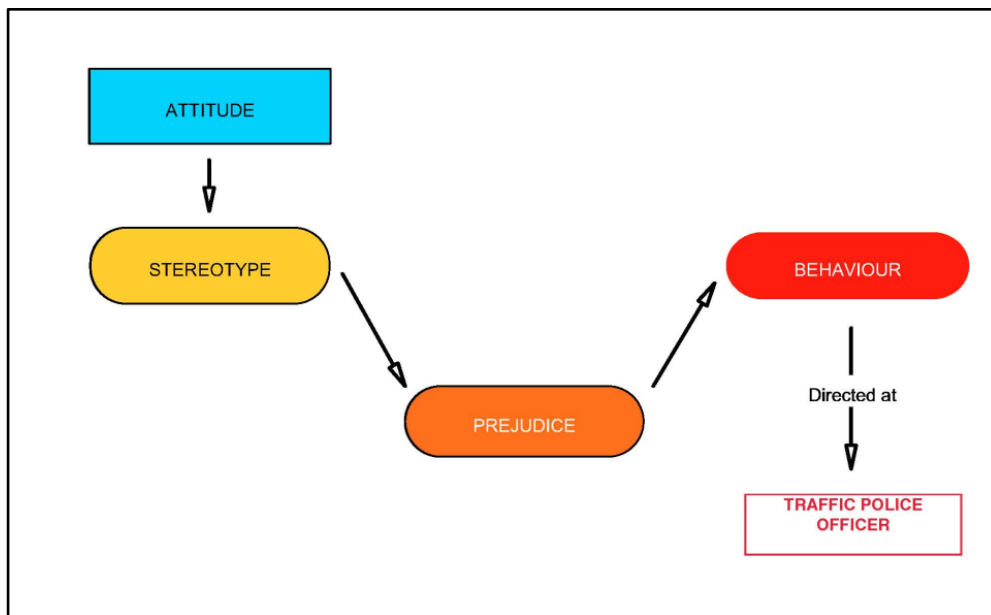


Figure 2.3: TPO Stereotype Function Process

As shown in Figure 2.3, a person forms a negative emotion toward a TPO due to past unfavourable actions, perceives themselves as knowledgeable, and stereotypes the TPO as unfriendly and verbally abusive. This emotional response fosters prejudiced thoughts, which then predict negative behaviour toward the TPO (Bern, 2001:7-10). From a traffic policing perspective, several researchers, including Devine (1989), Reilly (2016), Jussim et al. (2016), and North and Fiske (2013), as cited in Jackson (2020:10-12), agree that stereotypes are influenced by the public's perception of TPOs. These stereotypes often arise from attitudes (see Section 2.8.2) shaped by societal values, such as constitutional rights and democratic principles, that ensure freedom, safety, and privacy. The specific nature of a stereotype influences how these rights are protected and can become self-fulfilling through selective information

processing within traffic law enforcement (Bernasco & Schie, 2020:157). In summarising the discussions in Sections 2.8.1–2.8.3, Figure 2.4 illustrates the anatomy of the public image, emphasising this study's focus.

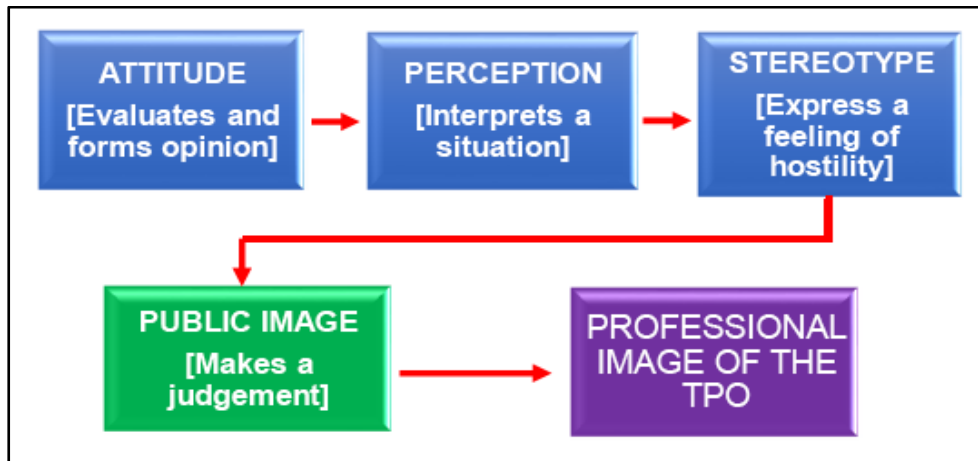


Figure 2.4: Anatomy of public image

As shown in Figure 2.4, a road user interprets a situation involving a TPO, forms a perception, assesses the action, and develops an opinion (attitude) that is expressed verbally. The individual then perceives a threat (stereotype) against the TPO without proper justification, leading to hostility and premature judgement (prejudice) of the officer's professional image. An unfounded negative opinion of a TPO that deepens with interaction contributes to negative behaviours between the public and TPOs (Bern, 2001:4-9). The National Road Traffic Law Enforcement Code emphasises the development of a professional fraternity of law enforcers who take pride in their work (RTMC, 2019:102) and requires professionalism from all traffic law enforcement institutions.

Despite the reviewed literature, a significant gap exists from a South African viewpoint. Most foundational studies on stereotyping are based on international contexts, with few empirical studies exploring how South Africa's socio-political history, especially apartheid policing, racial tensions, and public distrust of traffic law enforcement, affects current stereotypes of TPOs.

2.6.4. Profession

Traffic administrators use the term 'profession' unreservedly, although its meaning varies among administrators; some regard it as a professional institution, while others view it as a career in traffic policing. At its core, the term should denote "trust and expertise" in the role of a TPO (Bradford, 2026:1-3; Alonso, Esteban, Montoro & Useche, 2017:3-6). A traffic police profession is best defined as an occupation grounded in specialised knowledge applied in the service of others. Practitioners are bound by codes of ethics and by a commitment to competence, integrity, morality, altruism, and the advancement of the public good within their field (Tapper & Millet, 2015:5).

The road traffic profession must encompass more than a single duty. It requires disciplined members (TPOs) who adhere to high ethical standards and operational competence, apply unique knowledge and skills, and exercise these skills in the interest of the motoring public. In conjunction with this argument, researchers Carr-Saunders, Abbott, Cheetham, and Chivers (in Beaton, 2010:4) identified the following seven characteristics applicable to the 21st-century traffic police profession in no order:

- Education and specialised training
- Ethical code
- Job role autonomy
- Be community focused
- Positive influence in society
- Service delivery-oriented rather than profit-driven
- Maintain a professional status in the community

Although the mentioned characteristics do not follow a specific pattern, all characteristics must be present to relate to the concept of a profession. The RTP profession requires a professional body to be regarded as a profession. A professional body consists of individual members recognised as a community of expert practitioners that maintains an oversight role over the profession's knowledge, skills, training, conduct and practice with the intent to protect the public interest concerning services rendered and associated risk by the members of the body (South African

Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2018:6; Institute for Timber Construction South Africa (ITC-SA), 2016:1; Science Council, 2022:1).

The researcher believes that a profession is an occupation that requires a high degree of specialised knowledge and skills. Previous research found that some officers trained “just do not have what it takes to become that kind of excellent person” (Roets, 2015:223). At the core of this knowledge and these skills are the ethical guidelines that underpin acceptable service delivery to the public. When this knowledge and these skills are applied as merely routine work, without altruism or a commitment to serving the public good, the TPO becomes nothing more than a trained incompetent and falls within the category of an occupation, defined as the regular performance of duties solely to earn a living (Surbhi, 2018:1).

The RTP occupation does not have a registered professional body to protect the public's interest. RTP must be excluded from the professional mode because unions protect the interests of TPOs and are not registered professional bodies (Beaton, 2014:4).

2.6.5. Professional

One of this study's objectives is to describe a TPO's professional image from a public perspective (see 1.6). A professional TPO is governed by "codes of ethics, commitment to competence, altruism ... and accountability" to the motoring public they serve (Corn, 1994:591). Dempsey, Eskander and Dubljević (2023:593) concur and add integrity, honesty and compassion as critical values for building public trust and ensuring fairness in traffic law enforcement. The physical appearance (see 2.8.1 regarding the traffic officer who was shot and killed) of a TPO also affiliates with professionalism (Marais, 2019:1).

Tong and Bowling (2006 cited in Tong, 2017:112) and Bryant et al. (2013 cited in Tong, 2017:112) argued that traffic policing already exhibits the characteristics of a profession through the roles performed by TPOs; therefore, a TPO must establish a balance between operational knowledge, experience, practical interpersonal skills, and academic insights (Tong, 2017:172-173). While acting professionally and being

recognised as a profession (see 3.3.1) are related, they are distinct, and acting professionally does not automatically make it a profession, because critically, it does not meet the requirement of “hold in trust the best interest of society” (Beaton 2010:5), as set out in the definitional criteria for a profession in Section 2.8.3.

Any TPO is a member of a traffic organisation governed by a code of ethics and other criteria, such as Standing Orders, which the organisation identifies as professional standards. More importantly, they need to provide excellent and acceptable services at the level to which they are accountable to the public they serve. A TPO requires a sound balance between higher-order (cognitive) specialised knowledge and common sense obtained through active participation in the field. As Tong (2017:173) asserts, the operational line of work is a recommended feature that traffic police administrators regard as professional development. Unfortunately, one reason traffic police administrators are antagonistic toward continuous training is the concomitant logistical challenges of removing TPOs from their duties (Shults, 2020:1). The researcher believes that reputable higher education institutions should address higher-order cognitive skills such as negotiation, discretion, and management.

2.6.6. Professionalism

This study emphasises the dearth of reliable empirical research on the professional image of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs). While general police professionalism is widely explored, traffic policing struggles to attain this status because officers often focus on a superficial “looking good” version, failing to conceptualise the “real essence of professionalism” (Cordner, 2019:271). Road traffic policing contends with limited knowledge production and a weak commitment to certification (Cordner, 2019:271). Consequently, recruits obtain poor preparation, relying heavily on basic academies and an apprenticeship model typical of skilled trades rather than a defined profession (Roets, 2015:222). Evidence-based literature demonstrates that without formalised, evaluated in-service training and institutional incentives, initial instruction cannot produce durable professional practice or consistent standards (Lum, Koper & Wu, 2011:4; Lum, Koper & Willis, 2016:22; Mazerolle et al., 2013). Thus, practitioner outlets reporting routinised learning remain insufficient substitutes for peer-reviewed evaluations of training effectiveness.

To claim professional status, traffic police must first be regarded as a profession; yet several authors find traffic police behaviour inconsistent with established attributes of professionalism (Brown, 1980:7; Cordner, 2019:271). Contemporary theory stresses that professionalism is not binary but contextual, requiring occupations to be evaluated against measurable indicators—such as certified qualifications and public trust metrics—rather than outdated descriptive claims (Noordegraaf, 2015). Thus, assertions that traffic policing is categorically unprofessional should be tested against measurable indicators (training standards, certified qualifications, disciplinary records, and public trust metrics) rather than older descriptive claims.

Traffic policing still lacks a clear definition as a profession (see 2.8.3). While administrators invest in training, formal higher education is largely left to individual officers to pursue. Evidence-based policing and recent reform efforts demonstrate that formalised continuous professional development, combined with evaluation and institutional incentives, is key to maintaining professional standards. Without these components, apprenticeship models may merely reinforce local norms rather than create consistent, transferable professional standards. (Lum et al., 2016:4; Bacon, Heberton & McCann, 2023:1071).

Compounding these challenges, Wilensky and Hall's early 1960s work anticipated the inherent clash between occupational autonomy and rigid internal government bureaucracies. The traditional view of traffic professionalism as grounded in unique, experience-based skills (Bayley, 2016:167) is threatened by politically dictated appointments, which cannot guarantee professional recognition and often enable “unprofessional and unethical practices” (Dobie, 2019:1). Comparative studies confirm that politicised appointment systems correlate with heightened corruption and diminished public trust (Faull & Makanyeza, 2016). Consequently, public attitudes have shifted; motorists no longer accept police professionalism on blind faith (Bayley, 2016:168). While internal disciplinary bodies challenge traditional claims to self-knowledge, research indicates that, when combined with fair practices and training, transparent accountability mechanisms can effectively check and support professional legitimacy (Jackson et al., 2012:1052; Mazerolle et al., 2013).

Table 2.2 lists eight characteristics pertinent to traffic police professionalism, with concise descriptions linking them to traffic policing. The researcher added “consistency,” which was not in Meri’s original list. These characteristics should be operationalised for empirical testing—mapping each to measurable indicators such as certified qualifications for competence, documented disciplinary rates for ethics, and survey-based trust measures for accountability (Noordegraaf, 2015; Lum et al., 2011).

Table 2.2: Characteristics of traffic police professionalism

CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Appearance	Appearance should convey authority and command interest
Behaviour	Politeness and respect, regardless of the circumstances
Reliability	TPOs must be reliable because of operational duties performed individually
Competence	Demand for expert training so officers act as experts with the public
Ethics	The cornerstone of traffic policing
Maintain poise	Remain composed when facing demanding motorists
Accountability	Professionals are always accountable to the motoring public for their actions.
Consistency	Equality before the law and uniformity in operational execution

The study suggests that traffic enforcement falls short of being a true profession. It notes that traffic police tend to focus more on their image than on professional skills, receive inconsistent training—mainly through on-the-job learning—and encounter systemic obstacles to reform. These include politically motivated appointments and limited opportunities for career advancement. Changes in accountability mechanisms have altered public expectations and reduced the profession's authority. The research investigates how professionalism is practised, considering factors like training, certification, ethical standards, and accountability.

2.6.7. Integrating the variables profession, professionalism and professional with the traffic police image

Sections 2.8.3 to 2.8.5 discussed the variables profession, professionalism, and professional, which constitute the building blocks that lead to the professional image of RTP as an institution and as a function of society. The public image of the traffic police is often subjective because people have different intangible feelings about how they perform their duties. Without a thorough analysis of variables such as trust, competence, integrity, accountability, and service delivery, which largely characterise the traffic police image, challenges persist. These challenges have functional implications for traffic police administrators regarding the force's effectiveness.

The researcher's own experience, friends, the media, and television make it difficult to accurately determine what exactly constitutes the image of the TPO. Consequently, the public is negatively affected and starts to disrespect the role of TPOs in society, especially within the CJS. The image of the TPO is a valuable measure to improve broken relationships between the community and the traffic police (Gallagher, Maguire, Mastrofski & Reisig, 2001:5). In the following section, the researcher explores and describes the image of TPOs in more detail. Figure 2.5 illustrates these components and their interconnection to form the traffic police professional cycle.

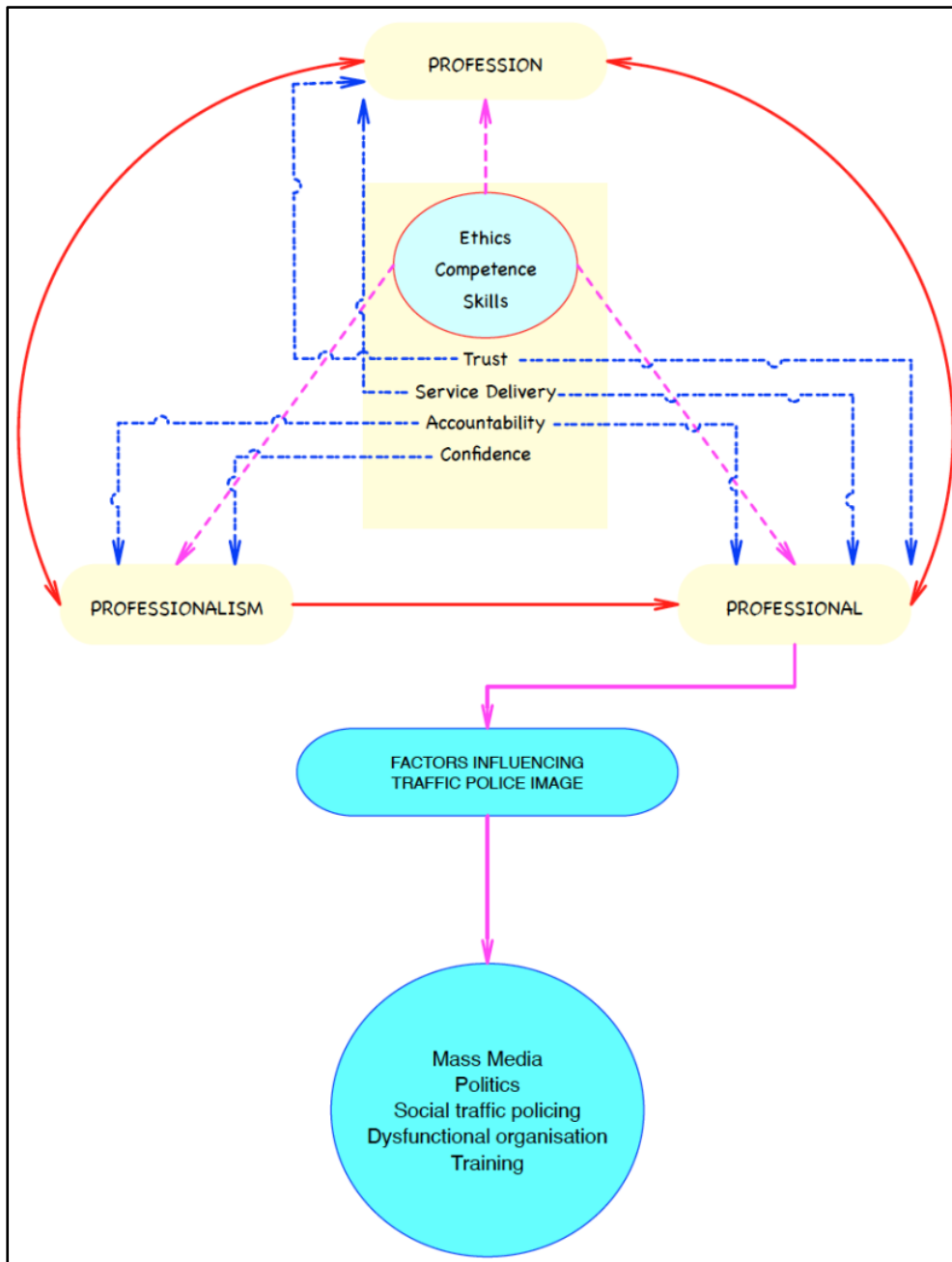


Figure 2.5: The professional cycle of the traffic police

Figure 2.5 illustrates the critical variables of the traffic police professional cycle: competence, ethics, and skills (CES). The absence or violation of any one of these variables undermines the cycle and, consequently, the TPO's image. Once competence, ethics, and skills (CES) are compromised, the remaining variables are likely to be affected, jeopardising the TPO's professional image. Inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of training and accountability further distort the image of RTP (Ullah, Hussain & Ullah, 2016:134). The traffic police, as a profession, are negatively

influenced by the social and news media focus on sensationalist content, and other important factors such as training, political influence and the effectiveness of the traffic as an organisation. The researcher believes that through the strategic use of the media, traffic police administrators can create engaging and informative content to educate the public about the role of traffic police in the criminal justice system (See 7.11). The lack of positive social media has been identified during the qualitative data-gathering phase (See 6.4.3.5).

2.7. THE IMAGE OF THE TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS

Traffic policing serves as the foundation of the primary traffic law enforcement agency across national, provincial, and local levels in SA. It is important to assess the public's perception of traffic police officers.

2.7.1. The Media and its effect on the Image of traffic policing

Research by Weitzer (2002) and Graziano et al. (2010) indicates that heavily publicised, controversial interactions between traffic police and the public erode confidence in the profession (Mohler et al., 2022:53). This issue is magnified by modern digital platforms. Mobile phones and dashcams allow individuals to capture raw footage of these encounters and share them widely. Scholars describe this dynamic as “sousveillance”—a role inversion where citizens watch the watchers, acting as amateur journalists (Mohler et al., 2022:53).

When evaluating mainstream media coverage of traffic police officers (TPOs), a critical analysis reveals a heavy selection bias toward negative reporting. Many individuals feel a profound sense of "discomfort" and fear toward TPOs, a reaction largely driven by these media narratives (Schultz, 2019:5). Rather than providing a balanced view of traffic law enforcement duties or highlighting positive interactions, journalists frequently select high-profile cases of misconduct because they generate higher audience engagement.

The following excerpts in Table 2.3 serve as illustrative examples of this negative media framing, demonstrating how the press disproportionately highlights corruption rather than representing the standard behaviour of the wider traffic policing workforce:

Table 2.3: Negative Media Framing

Source (Author, Year, Page)	Topic	Description
Francke, 2021:1	Fraud & corruption — traffic officers (Eastern Cape)	Two traffic officers made their first appearance at Mthatha Specialised Commercial Crime Court on charges of fraud and corruption.
Motau, 2018:1	Bribery — traffic officials (Limpopo/Polokwane)	Ten traffic officials arrested in Polokwane for allegedly taking bribes from motorists; total of 30 traffic officials arrested in Limpopo in recent months for soliciting/taking bribes.
Marupeng, 2021:1	Kidnapping — traffic officer (Ekurhuleni/Benoni)	A 29-year-old female traffic officer from Daveyton appeared at Benoni Magistrate's Court among three people charged with kidnapping a religious leader.
Mehta, 2021:1	Bribe-taking & criminal gang — senior traffic officer	A senior traffic officer arrested on suspicion of accepting bribes; accused of leading a criminal gang that issued permits to grain cargo transporters in exchange for bribes.

An examination of these articles indicates a predominantly negative valence. Media coverage predominantly emphasises reports of fraud, bribery, and severe criminal allegations. Negative narratives tend to receive extensive, syndicated coverage, while positive stories are typically confined to isolated, single-day reports (Greer & McLaughlin, 2010:1043). Given that the general motoring public has limited direct interaction with Transportation Public Officials (TPOs), their perceptions are mainly

shaped by these biased reports, which can distort public understanding of the profession. Such skewed coverage engenders unnecessary apprehension among motorists (Schultz, 2019:5). Ultimately, this phenomenon contributes to capiophobia—a condition characterised by drivers' anxiety and anticipation of arrest merely by encountering traffic law enforcement, irrespective of actual guilt (Mitchell, 2019:1).

Administrators must ensure that TPOs undergo comprehensive training conducted by scholars specialising in criminal justice, thereby enabling them to adeptly manage public interactions shaped by distorted media narratives (Preston, 2020:6A).

2.7.2. Traffic policing as an extension of government

Traffic policing in South Africa is a critical extension of government authority, reflecting the state's duty to uphold public order and ensure road safety (Blau, 1994:5). Public perceptions of traffic police are shaped by cognitive processes that interpret sensory input, thereby influencing societal views of traffic law enforcement (Eleonu & Winston, 2019:749). The design and role of traffic enforcement reflect the broader institutional nature of government, with public compliance closely tied to perceptions of procedural fairness (Tyler, 2009:34, 36). When public trust is damaged by misconceptions, unreliable accident data, or a lack of government outreach, the legitimacy and effectiveness of Road Traffic Policing (RTP) suffer, leading to persistently dangerous road conditions (Roets, 2015:235). Overcoming this systemic issue requires targeted, sustained efforts and strong political leadership to restore public confidence and improve road safety (AA, 2023:1; Mona, 2020:1).

The core basis of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), grounded in Cicero's idea that public safety is the highest legal priority, remains highly relevant here (Ullah et al., 2016:134). However, traffic policing can fulfil this obligation only where it maintains legitimacy; without the trust of the community, enforcement efforts may be in place but lack social effectiveness (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007:5). Traffic Police Administrators (TPAs) need to gain cooperation by demonstrating competence, fairness, and providing visible service, rather than depending solely on formal authority. This shift involves moving away from enforcement focused solely on punishment, towards a balanced approach that integrates legal control, community engagement, and

practical road safety results (Ullah et al., 2016:134–135; Bathelemy, Chaney, Maccio & Church, 2016:415).

While both traffic police and the South African Police Service (SAPS) serve the public, they are distinct entities with different mandates, cultures, and management approaches. Peel's principle that "the police are the public, and the public are the police" remains significant for community welfare, but law-enforcement roles in South Africa are often not clearly defined (Dissell, 2016:1; Duval, 2016:1). Effective traffic policing relies on public cooperation, fairness, and legitimacy (Osse & Dossett, 2011:7). Public perceptions of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) influence the image, trust, and accountability of RTP, especially during routine stops involving citations, inspections, and congestion (Nowacki & Spencer, 2019:1; Woods, 2021:1519–1520). Historically, SAPS has struggled to balance traffic enforcement and crime prevention, frequently prioritising crime over road safety (Rauch et al., 2001:3). This highlights the need for clearer separation of functions, allowing SAPS to concentrate on criminal law enforcement while specialised traffic institutions focus on traffic safety and crash prevention (Woods, 2021:1489, 1523; Roets, 2015:268).

International debates also question whether traffic policing qualifies as "real police work" (Woods, 2021:1525), with some arguing that police are unnecessary for ensuring compliance on the roads (Police1, 2020:1). This perspective is reflected in Berkeley's decision to remove state police from traffic enforcement roles (Woods, 2021:1476). Since a considerable portion of police resources is spent on non-criminal issues, establishing a clearer division of traffic-related duties for Traffic Policing Officers (TPOs) could enhance fairness, focus, and legitimacy of the institution (Woods, 2021:1479, 1489; Bliss, 2021:1; Vera Institute of Justice, 2021:1; O'Connor, 2021:1). Furthermore, Roets (2015:268) advocates for targeted research in South Africa to assist the South African Police Service (SAPS) in prioritizing crime prevention and investigations, while designating traffic safety and accident prevention to specialized traffic police units.

2.7.3. Traffic Policing: Assessing the decline in public trust

Traffic policing earned an unfavourable reputation because of its “incompetency, inefficiency, politicisation, institutionalised abuse of power and distorted public image” (Ullah et al., 2016:136). The misconduct of a single TPO reflects poorly on the institution (Schultz, 2019:8). Misconduct includes any action/s by TPOs regarded as unethical, unconstitutional, or criminal (Otu et al., 2022:112) and contrary to employment guidelines. To reinstate and maintain the required standard of service, TPOs must demonstrate a commitment to public service delivery and professional expertise (Schultz, 2019:8), as the public is seeking TPOs who are polite and respectful (2011:16).

A traffic police institution that fails to secure public trust cannot function effectively, for which society will hold them accountable (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007:5; Szabolcs et al., 2020:36). I personally observed a traffic police vehicle on patrol where the back support of the TPO in the passenger seat was fully reclined. The immediate perception was that the TPO was asleep, which tarnishes the image of the traffic police.

It is essential for TPAs that the individual judgements of TPOs justify public satisfaction, which is crucial in determining whether the institution embodies the required values and morals (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007:7). During personal communication, an operational TPO¹ (2021, personal communication, 11 November) stated that in an endeavour to “chase numbers” (performance targets), they change the prescribed speed limit sign for a specific road to a lower speed limit to trap unaware motorists purposely. Not only is this unethical, but it also obstructs the course of justice (Joubert, 2014:185).

The specific TPO further commented that supervisors neglect their supervisory functions, reflecting the absence of command and control. To clarify the issue of “ticket chasing or chasing numbers”, it is a global phenomenon known as traffic ticket quotas, which are not new for TPOs (Hinchliffe, 2019:1). Although there is no legal definition for traffic ticket quotas, a standard definition establishes a predetermined number of

¹ Due to the sensitive nature of the personal communication, the anonymity of the individual is protected.

traffic tickets that a TPO must issue within a specified period (The Florida Senate, 2015:2).

Nationally and globally, most traffic police institutions vehemently deny using traffic ticket quotas. I challenge this view and assert that there is an unspoken directive at road traffic institutions (RTIs) regarding traffic ticket quotas. Despite the TPAs' denial of quota systems, the motoring public believes that Road Traffic Institutions (RTIs) merely carry out enforcement actions to meet traffic ticket quotas, rather than to prioritise road safety (SafeMotorist, 2022:1). The focus has shifted from road safety through proper scientific enforcement to a means to generate revenue by all spheres of government (Lindeque, 2017:1).

Traffic law enforcement has shifted from ensuring road safety to an income-based system for municipalities. Traffic fines contribute the largest portion of municipalities' income in SA (Kahla, 2021:1; Chester, 2021:1; The Citizen, 2019:1). Table 2.4 provides a breakdown of traffic fine-generated income per province (Stats SA, 2021a:22).

Table 2.4: Traffic fine income per province

PROVINCE	INCOME
Gauteng	2,49 billion
Western Cape	2,1 billion
KwaZulu-Natal	363,2 million
Mpumalanga	333,9 million
Eastern Cape	317,1 million
Limpopo	117,8 million
North West	97,5 million
Northern Cape	96,7 million
Free state	49,4 million

Traffic quotas exist in road traffic institutions throughout the world, leading to massive traffic police corruption (Hinchliffe, 2019:1). At least 20 states in the United States of America (USA) impose ticket quotas, with more than 730 municipalities that rely on fines for their budgets (McIntire & Keller, 2021:1). In Florida, (USA), the use of traffic

ticket quotas is legally forbidden. Chapter 316, Section 640 (Enforcement) of the 2016 Florida Statutes under Subsection 23.1225, Sub-sub section (3) (Municipalities), prescribes in (3)(8)(b) that "a traffic enforcement agency may not establish a traffic citation quota"

Unfortunately, the same legal principle does not exist in SA. The NRTA of 1996 is silent on the issue of a quota system used by any Road Traffic Institution (RTI). The RTMC endeavoured to address this national problem through the National Road Traffic Law Enforcement Code (NRTLEC) published in Government Gazette 422330 dated 15 February 2019. The NRTLEC (2019:57) differentiates between quotas and targets, stating, "targets refer to outcomes and not enforcement outputs, i.e., the number of traffic prosecutions per issuing officer and must therefore not be equated to traffic ticket quotas."

Essentially, it renames the concept with the same end goal: targeted numbers in traffic law enforcement. The document further endeavours to justify the establishment of targets, stating that "the setting of [traffic] law enforcement targets by each [traffic] traffic law enforcement authority is critical to... establish and maintain law and order on the country's road network" (NRTLEC, 2019:57). It provides principles for the setting of targets, outlining the following two areas of concern (NRTLEC, 2019:57-58):

- (i) Targets must be reasonable – linking a definition or an apt description to quantifying traffic tickets is challenging.
- (ii) "Officers who perform exceptionally well may, in relation to their peers, be recognised and incentivised ..." This statement indirectly raises a critical issue. The immediate question is what quantity of tickets is required for incentivisation (motivation) and whether it is reasonable.

The chase for numbers falls within the neo-Durkheimian model, where individuals are more concerned with the moral deterioration of their communities than with their safety on the roads (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007:214). Although Emile Durkheim's original model was grounded in religion and moral structure, the neo-Durkheimian model emphasises the importance of social bonds within a community, based on pride and shame, as mechanisms for preventing embarrassment (Perry, 2002:265). The moral deterioration of communities is the "incubator of every dark and sinful impulse in the

human soul: dirty, disarray, riots, danger, diseases, crime and corruption” (Sekhaulelo, 2021:1) and in essence, represents a total breakdown of the principle of road traffic safety.

Once the signs of social breakdown are evident, the populace judges the traffic police as ineffective (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007:215). This can be attributed to their inability and inefficiency to instil road safety, harmony, and peacefulness in the communities. Traffic policing forms part of the CJS and law enforcement in the broader sense. Social decay contributes to the collapse and failure to “inculcate a high level of professionalism” in traffic policing services (Sekhaulelo, 2021:3). Contemporary traffic policing requires TPOs as active conductors in the construction and reconstruction of social order and disorder (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007:220)

"In SA, it is not only the traffic officers who are corrupt, but the department heads are also corrupt, making it difficult to fight corruption amongst officers"² (Concerned officer, personal communication, 29 September 2021). This statement is supported by Mokgonyana (2023:1), who states that many of these individuals are in “positions of power”, and because of the trauma experienced as a result of apartheid, they engage in “rent-seeking practices as ways of building reserve funds against economic uncertainties”, especially considering the poor economic state of SA. Corruption is described as the country’s oldest tradition (Friedman, 2020:1), and, given its secret nature, it is difficult to detect, especially when involving officers in senior positions (Locatelli, Mariani, Sainati & Greco, 2016:259). I conducted extensive research that reflected similar findings. There are numerous articles about TPOs arrested for corruption, but none about officers (traffic police) in senior positions.

In their report to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Gallagher, Maguire, Mastrofski and Reisig (2001:13) emphasise that public confidence in RTP is an essential part of the traffic police image, which has declined annually since 1996. To clarify, the IACP is the world’s largest and most influential professional association

² Due to the sensitive nature of the personal communication, the anonymity of the individual is protected.

for police leaders, with over 31 000 members in 160 countries, including representation from sub-Saharan Africa.

2.7.4. Traffic policing – a general or professional image?

Several research studies, such as those conducted by Reis (1967), White and Menke (1982), Mastrofski (1998), and Princeton Survey Research Associates (1997) have examined the general image of the TP (Gallagher et al., 2001:4). General, in this sense, refers to the overall image of the TP that includes a variety of aspects such as confidence, satisfaction, trust, respect, support, and performance of TPOs, without any significant reference to specific characteristics (Gallagher et al., 2001:4). Although limited in nature, they do provide TPAs with an overall orientation or general sense of the public perception of TP (Gallagher et al., 2001:4).

The researcher believes South African TPOs must be public-friendly, especially during routine traffic stops. They must provide the reason for the stop, which is the starting point of frustration and conflict for the motorist. The National Road Traffic Law Enforcement Code (NRTLEC) provides standing orders for traffic officers to ensure the proper conduct of TPOs. To substantiate the belief of the researcher about being provided with a valid reason for a routine or any other type of traffic stop, Chapter 3.3(a) prescribes that “Employees must politely give their name and other pertinent identifying information to traffic law violators or any other person who may legally request it” (NRTLEC, 2019:136). This clause is problematic because the NRTLEC is silent about:

- who precisely is an employee,
- who is “any other person”, and
- the requirement to provide the reason for being stopped.

A TPO in an unmarked car signalled a journalist on a busy highway to stop. A 14-minute confrontation ensued because the journalist wanted to know “why” the officer stopped him (Raymond, 2021:1). The damaging result of this encounter was a YouTube video where the journalist stated, “Trust is just not the first thing that springs to mind when I think of cops. I do find it fascinating, though, how my asking “why” was more of an issue than the fact that my trade plate was not displayed”. It is a legal and

organisational mandate for a TPO to inform the driver of the reason for being stopped, whether during a routine traffic stop or at a roadside checkpoint (roadblock). The concern for TPAs regarding how the public acquires their impressions is threefold:

- Direct contact—impressions are acquired through direct, personal contact with TPOs. These impressions arise during a traffic stop, a roadside checkpoint (roadblock), the relevant traffic office, road accidents, and when following up on complaints in person.
- Indirect contact – most South Africans rarely have direct contact with TPOs. Gallagher et al. (2001:22-25) observe that information about TPOs is drawn from other sources such as family, friends, social media, and the mass media, which convey an image of TPOs. This category includes observing marked traffic patrol vehicles stationary along several public roads with their emergency lights switched on. The seated officers inside the vehicles may create doubts about their effectiveness.
- Mass media – although covered in paragraph 2.11.1, it is essential to note how the public, whether mobile or not, forms impressions about traffic policing. In an article, Three killed in multi-vehicle collision on ‘death stretch’ of N1 (Cruywagen, 2025:1) about a road accident that involved serious and fatal injuries, TPOs form the background of the article, leaving the reader to form their own impressions. Such a message implicitly stresses the inability (incompetence) of TPOs to prevent road accidents (Gallagher et al., 2001:22-25).

There are several similar articles, such as:

- A previous South African cabinet minister, Collins Chabane, and two security staff were killed in a car accident. The article only mentions that a “lorry [heavy vehicle] driver is being investigated ...” and “... with private motorists forced to share the road with long lines of large mining lorries [heavy vehicles]” (BBC News, 2015:1);
- According to SABC News (2021:1), the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg was killed in a car accident. The article merely mentions that the circumstances of the accident are not clear. The crux of the article is about electrical problems in a township and not about a road accident that killed a prominent individual.
- According to Nkanjeni (2022:1), the Emalahleni mayor died in a fatal road accident. The current Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula, stated that “car

accidents on national roads were sad reminders to all to be more careful when driving” (Nkanjeni, 2022:1). These articles did not mention any stricter traffic law enforcement or any such action. Unfortunately, the researcher believes this opens the door for the perceived incompetence of TPOs to guarantee road safety to the public.

These messages are referred to as tabloid justice because the public's knowledge is derived from exposure to such media content. This process aligns with the “hypodermic needle” theory, which suggests that the motoring public passively absorbs media messages, resulting in long-term effects on the image of TPOs (Gallagher et al., 2001:29). Fox and Van Sickle conducted research in 2001 by asking respondents about certain tabloid cases from the 1990s, assessing their familiarity with these cases. The results showed that nearly all respondents obtained their knowledge from the news media, which decreased their confidence in the police (Gallagher et al., 2001:43). A thorough search of research articles on the media's impact on traffic police in South Africa yielded no results (see Section 7.11).

It is therefore argued that traffic police administrators must proactively prioritise the cultivation of institutional legitimacy. This requires a sustained, strategic effort to manage public perceptions, ensuring that motorists do not view enforcement encounters as arbitrary, procedurally unjust, or undemocratic. To operationalise this commitment to equitable policing and sustain public trust, continuous professional development is proposed as an essential institutional mechanism.

2.7.5. Training

Training forms the backbone of traffic policing; without adequately trained TPOs, the institution fails, to society's detriment (Roets, 2015:220). In *Khosa and Others v Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and Others* (21512/2020) (2020) ZAGPPHC 147, the presiding judge stated that officers “must receive appropriate training prior to such appointment.” While all TPOs receive basic training before deployment (Ramavhunga, 2018:10), the judgment failed to adequately define “appropriate”, leaving uncertainty about whether this includes basic or specialised skills training. This gap suggests the judge questioned the quality of training offered to TPOs.

Research confirms that in-service training is poor, with most TPOs feeling it interferes with their "additional bonuses," and little or no refresher training exists (Roets, 2015:223). Training's primary purpose is to enhance institutional image through skills and experience (Schultz, 2019:9; Eleonu & Winston, 2019:747), thereby requiring improved refresher courses (Roets, 2015:224). Management bears responsibility to continuously train TPOs in policies and procedures, ensuring professional functioning and public trust (PowerDms, 2020:1). Internationally, Ullah et al. (2019:39) characterise Pakistan's traffic police as "poorly trained and ill-equipped". Locally, TPOs receive limited specialist training, resulting in poor prosecutions due to "apathy and incompetence" - a classic example of trained incompetence (Roets, 2015:240).

Procedural justice and legitimacy, as well as their effect on the image of the traffic police is discussed in the following section.

2.8. THE EFFECT OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND LEGITIMACY ON THE TRAFFIC POLICE IMAGE

The concepts of procedural justice and legitimacy are fundamental to public satisfaction with traffic policing. Therefore, it is important to examine their operationalisation more closely.

2.8.1. Legitimacy

Tankebe (in Mohler et al., 2022:53) defines legitimacy as "a belief in the legality of the enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" with respect to the traffic police. The public believes that the traffic police must be allowed to exercise their legal authority to maintain social order, manage conflicts, and solve road safety issues in their communities (Tyler & Fischer, 2014:9). The authority of the RTP is exercised within the framework of legitimacy (Lowrey-Kinberg & Buker, 2017:382). The following three identifiers illustrate how legitimacy is manifested (Tyler & Fischer, 2014:9):

- the public must trust and have confidence in the traffic police.
- the public must voluntarily adhere to the law and accept the authority of TPOs.

- the belief that the actions of TPOs are morally justified and appropriate to the circumstances.

The above identifiers align with Van Biljon (2018:34), who wrote that the TP fraternity should be legitimate only if TPOs operate within the confines of the law and if the populace accepts the TP as a legitimate organisation.

2.8.2. Procedural Justice

Where legitimacy refers to law adherence by TPOs, procedural justice involves the fairness of decision-making processes and a just outcome (treatment) as subjectively interpreted by the public (Van Biljon, 2018:35). From a criminological perspective, the procedural justice approach from the Tylerian model argues that people form their perceptions of traffic police legitimacy based on judgments about the fairness of traffic police procedures and the respectful treatment of the motoring public (Murphy, 2021:21; Mohler et al., 2022:53). The following four cognitive factors illustrate how procedural justice contributes to achieve legitimacy.

- People want a voice; in other words, they want the opportunity to present arguments and evidence before the TPO makes decisions.
- TPOs must make decisions based on legal principles, not personal opinions and biases. Transparency and openness are requirements for making neutral decisions.
- TPOs must respect the rights of the people and treat them with respect, fairness and dignity. These are requirements to prevent adverse public reactions.
- TPOs must be trustworthy. Several research studies have shown that the public is more likely to perceive TPOs as legitimate, cooperate with the traffic police, and comply with the law if TPOs act procedurally (Tyler & Fischer, 2014:9-10; Mohler et al., 2022:53).

Section 2.9.2 describes a shift in traffic law enforcement, which, according to Prinsloo (2019:275), involves a transition from an “instrumental deterrence-based approach” to a focus on controlling traffic crimes. This shift places contemporary traffic policing in a position to encourage voluntary law adherence and improved driver behaviour to comply with institutional goals and objectives, which reflect legitimate traffic

enforcement organisations. Procedural justice is a prerequisite for traffic policing to be perceived as legitimate (Tyler, Goff & MacCoun, 2015:76).

In support of this statement, Prinsloo (2019:276) observed that citizens' views about the legitimacy of the police are rooted in procedural justice judgements and that legitimacy, in turn, predicts compliance with the law. Figure 2.6, adapted from Tyler, illustrates the incorporation and functioning of procedural justice and legitimacy from a public perspective (Tankebe, 2010:122).

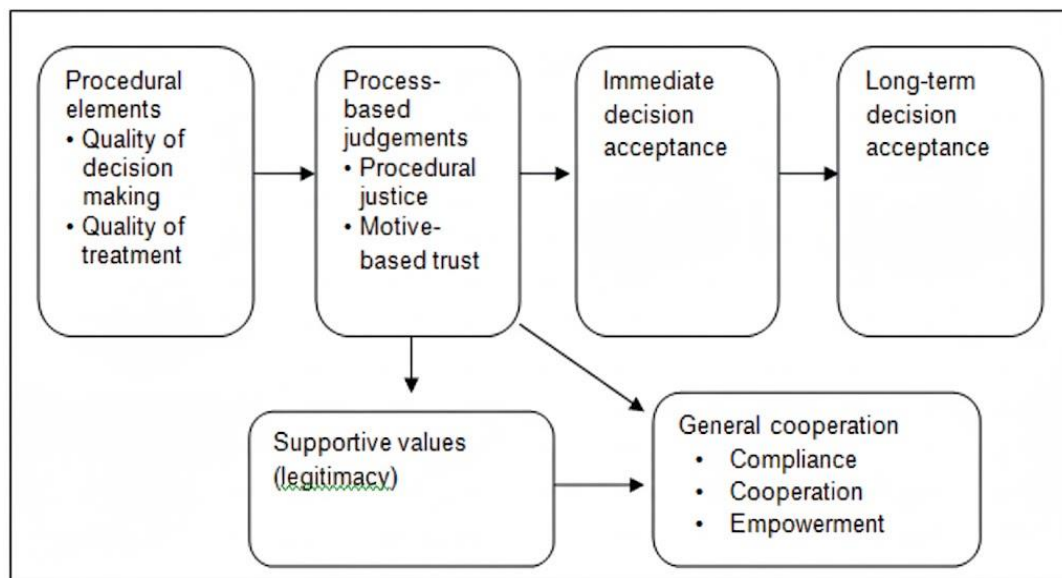


Figure 2.6: Process-Based Regulation Model of Tyler

Figure 2.6 shows that the focus is on public perceptions of the law (decision-making) and legal authorities (treatment), and on how these affect the acceptance of TPOs' decisions. General cooperation flows from legitimacy (trust and confidence) based on the quality of decision-making and the public's quality of treatment from TPOs.

Therefore, it is evident that legitimacy is heavily influenced by perceptions of procedural justice, traffic police performance, and public satisfaction achieved through effective and efficient service delivery by TPOs (Prinsloo, 2019:279). The discussion aligns with Section 2.10 and as shown in Figure 2.7, may directly impact the image of traffic policing.

The following section offers a detailed examination of the current and contemporary issue of traffic police corruption.

2.9. TRAFFIC POLICE CORRUPTION: A PERSISTENT CHALLENGE

To conceptualise traffic police corruption, it's essential to move beyond basic descriptions and explore core theories, contradictions, and gaps in the literature. The main academic frameworks are principal-agent and institutional theories. Principal-agent theory sees corruption as arising from information asymmetry and conflicting interests between the state (the principal) and officers (the agents), who misuse discretionary power for personal gain. Institutional theory views corruption as systemic, normalised within organisational structures and culture. Scholars such as Kutnjak Ivković, Klockars, Cajner-Mraović, and Dražen highlight the importance of organisational culture, norms, and the 'code of silence' in perpetuating unethical behaviour. However, a gap exists in empirical research connecting these theories to the specific realities of South African traffic policing.

There is a general public perception of corruption among local police, which extends beyond the broader South African Police Service (SAPS) and is particularly prevalent within traffic policing. Basdeo (2010:386) supports this view, noting that the SAPS was found to be the second most corrupt public sector organisation, after traffic officials. Corruption has become symptomatic and a social way of life, to the extent that Traffic Police (TP) corruption represents a substantial “erosion of the legal system” and a “have all possess all” mentality (Khan et al., 2021:1949; Ncube, 2017:1). This form of corruption is an international phenomenon (Basdeo, 2010:385; López-Valcárcel, Jiménez & Perdiguero, 2017:791), making the world a more dangerous place (TI, 2023:8).

Media outlets often frame corruption as an inevitable risk that diverts resources and threatens democracy, as Basdeo (2010: 385) notes. However, uncritically accepting these narratives is problematic because media biases favour sensationalist coverage, highlighting negative police misconduct—like headlines equating corruption with "World War 3" (Businesstech, 2020: 1). This underreports positive enforcement,

reforms, and ethical officers. Headlines mirror public discourse and reinforce the "greedy cop" stereotype, but they require rigorous bias analysis, as they do not provide empirical evidence of actual corruption.

South Africa is among nine countries monitored in the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) due to deep-rooted corruption. Its global score is 43/100, ranking 72nd out of 180 (TI, 2022a:1). The CPI highlights that avoiding accountability for power abuse hampers efforts to fight corruption (Transparency International, 2023:1). With widespread public office abuse for private gain, corruption risks becoming a "normal aspect of life" (Gumede, 2017:1). The former secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions describes SA as a "predator state" where the new tier of leaders believes it's their turn to benefit, enabled by weak traffic law enforcement (Gumede, 2017:1).

Ethical conduct and professionalism are the cornerstones of any traffic police. Public views often see TPOs as eager to seek money rather than issue fines, which can lead to unethical behaviour (McCarthy & Parent, 2015:70). TP corruption is hard to prevent due to its secretive nature and weak enforcement of policies and ethics (Onyango, 2022:313). TPOs' discretionary powers extend into informal practices like coded language and officer solidarity (Onyango, 2022:313), aligning with institutional police integrity theories by Kutnjak Ivković, Klockars, Cajner-Mraović & Dražen (2002:67-69).

Sam (2022:8) reported that TPOs are often ineffective in promoting road safety because "their motive is to collect monies" from the public. The typical quid pro quo corrupt transaction involves a bribe-taker and a bribe-giver (Kahn, Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021:1952). The theoretical model of traffic police corruption (adapted from Kahn, 2021:1952) identifies four main variables prevalent in developing countries such as SA. Corruption is a societal ill in which traffic officers solicit bribes at will, threatening those unwilling to pay that their lives would be made "very difficult" for refusing to cooperate, to the point that vehicles are confiscated based on "bogus" offences (Businesstech, 2020:1).

The typical quid pro quo (a favour exchanged for something) corrupt transaction involves a "bribe taker (police officer) and the bribe giver (public official, citizen and

company)" (Kahn, Ahmed & Ahmed, 2021:1952). Figure 2.7 presents a theoretical model of traffic police corruption, adapted from Kahn (2021:1952).

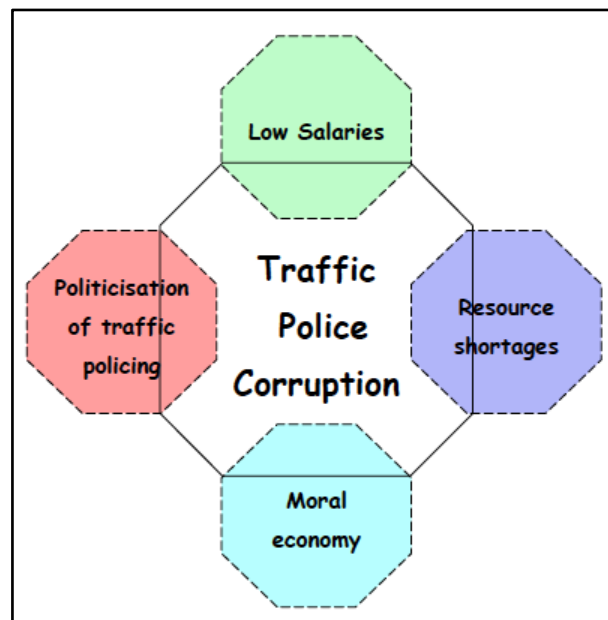


Figure 2.7: Theoretical Model of Traffic Police Corruption

The variables identified in Figure 2.7 are summarised to provide clarity from a traffic police perspective.

- Low salaries

Corrupt TPOs are often a direct consequence of insufficient pay, resulting in poor safety outcomes (Khan et al., 2021:1954; du Plessis et al., 2019:1

- Resource shortage

A lack of official vehicles and emergency equipment hinders TPOs, leaving them humiliated and impeding effective public service (Ramavhunga, 2018:79, Khan et al., 2021:1954).

- Moral economy

The ethical framework that morally justifies corruption, overlapping with cultural definitions of corruption that are "largely accepted as the way things are done" (Gumede, 2017:1; Khan et al., 2021:1955).

- The politicisation of traffic policing

Elites engage in the illicit appropriation of public resources, leading officers to deliberately neglect their responsibilities to the public in favour of fabricated offences for bribes (Gumede, 2017:1) (see Section 7.5.3.4).

According to Khan et al. (2021:1949), “The major outbreak of the world is corruption,” particularly in traffic policing. This corruption has societal causes and shifts the focus of traffic policing, which is essential for transforming the community (Khan et al., 2021:1949). Corruption causes “disastrously inefficient economic, social and political outcomes” (Gumede, 2017:1). It has become a socially entrenched phenomenon to such an extent that traffic police corruption represents a substantial “erosion of the legal system” and a “have-all possess-all” mentality (Khan et al., 2021:1949; Ncube, 2017:1; News24, 2012:1).

2.9.1. Explaining Corruption

Traffic police (TP) corruption is correctly identified as a dirty game in which all the role players (traffic police officers and the public) must abide by the game's unwritten rules (Onyango, 2022:313). As part of Onyango’s study, corruption is important because TP “corruption at traffic stops is an understudied phenomenon” in SA (Onyango, 2022:314) (see Section 7.5.1). Rather than merely defining the concept of ‘corruption’, the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 (PCCAA) regulates the bribery of public officials and criminalises corruption in South African jurisprudence (Bernstein & Shaw, 2016:1). Section 3 of the PCCAA sets out the general offence of corruption in detail, covering anyone who directly or indirectly accepts, agrees to accept, or offers to accept any gratification, amounting to an abuse of authority, a breach of trust, or a violation of a legal duty intended to achieve an unjustified result.

Table 2.5 presents legal interpretations of corruption from various countries, illustrating that it is a global rather than merely a regional phenomenon.

Table 2.5: International interpretation of corruption

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Description</i>
Switzerland Swiss Criminal Code, Articles 322ter to 322quater	Berni and Monnier (2016:1) stated that The Swiss Criminal Code distinguishes between active bribery, which can be committed by anyone who tries to corrupt a public official (Swiss Criminal Code, Article 322ter), and the acceptance of bribes, which can be committed only by said officials (Berni & Monnier, 2025:1).

Germany German Criminal Code, Sections 331 to 338	Bribery is committed by anyone who tries to corrupt a public official. German law distinguishes between: (i) giving/taking a bribe; and (ii) giving/taking a bribe as an incentive to perform an act violating one's official duties. Whereas the former "broader" form of bribery involves the discharge of a duty, the latter form of bribery requires the performance of an official act in violation of official duty (Lohner & Behr, 2016:1).
Japan Articles 197 and 198 of the Japanese Criminal Code.	The giving, offering, or promising to give a bribe, including anything that satisfies a person's desire, by a private individual to a public official in connection with the public official's duties constitutes the crime of bribery (Nishigaki & Muto, 2016:1).
Canada The Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46. Sections 119 through 125	Section 121 of the Criminal Code makes it an offence to: "(i) directly or indirectly give or offer to give to an official a loan, reward, advantage or benefit of any kind as consideration for cooperation, assistance, exercise of influence, or an act or omission in connection with the transaction of business or any matter of business relating to the government, or a claim against the government, or any benefit that the government is authorized to bestow" (Mackay, Douglas & Burkett, 2016:1).
Mexico the Mexican Federal Criminal Code, Article 222	Bribery in terms of the Federal Criminal Code includes "the public servant who, directly or indirectly, solicits or receives unduly for the public servant or another person, money, or any other gift, or accepts a promise, to do or refrain from doing any just or unjust act in relation to the public servant's functions; and Whoever spontaneously gives or offers money or any other gift to any of the persons described in the foregoing paragraph, to cause any public servant to do or refrain from doing any just or unjust act related to the public servant's function" (Vizcarra-Mendez & Adams, 2016:1).

A critical, comparative analysis of international interpretations of corruption is shown in Table 2.5. Section 2.4 highlights important theoretical debates and gaps in the current literature, especially when comparing global laws with the South African legal system. South Africa's PCCAA offers a detailed, dual-faceted conceptualisation that explicitly penalizes both offering and soliciting gratification. In contrast, international laws show contradictions in their legislative focus. For example, the Swiss and German criminal codes clearly differentiate between active bribery by private

individuals and passive acceptance by public officials, reflecting the principal-agent relationship. Conversely, the legal texts from Japan (Articles 197/198) and Canada (Section 121) seem more limited, mainly addressing the private person's act of offering a bribe while neglecting the direct solicitation of benefits by public officials. This inconsistency reveals a key gap in research: the lack of comparative empirical studies on how principal-agent theory applies across different legal focuses—whether on regulating the 'bribe giver' (the principal or public sector) or the "bribe taker" (the agent or police)—and how this affects police integrity in various socio-economic settings (Davies & Johnson, 2016:281).

Corruption's financial incentives can blind traffic police officers, undermining their moral authority and eroding public trust (Mphidi & Pheiffer, 2025:230). Traffic law enforcement institutions are especially vulnerable to corruption, which often appears as the purchase of power to bypass legal responsibilities (Pereira, 2011:1). Principal-agent theory demonstrates that corruption flourishes when traffic officers (agents) exploit information asymmetries, weak oversight, and discretionary power to pursue private interests at the public's expense [the principal] (Budhram & Geldenhuys, 2018:24-27; Joorst, 2025:50). Ineffective consequence management and politicised oversight bodies perpetuate impunity, while absent accountability mechanisms enable ongoing abuse of authority.

Institutional theory emphasises broader organisational contexts, showing that the normalisation of bribery persists due to deeply ingrained informal norms, weak enforcement of formal rules, and a widespread culture of impunity (Gordon & Pienaar, 2024:115; Sauerman, Faull, Newham, Meyer & Ivkovic, 2020:1). Informal organisational culture and peer dynamics override formal anti-corruption measures (Chilunjika & Haurovi, 2024:109-211). Additionally, a code of silence and inconsistent disciplinary actions discourage officers from reporting misconduct (Chilunjika & Haurovi, 2024:119; Sauerman et al., 2020:1). These issues highlight the importance of ethical leadership, enhanced protections for whistleblowers, and consistent disciplinary measures to promote integrity in traffic policing.

The following section describes the impact of corruption on TPOs' image and on the relationship between the public and TPOs.

2.9.2. The Impact of Traffic Corruption

Corruption reflects a widespread symptom of systemic state mismanagement (Dong, Dulleck & Torgler, 2012:609). In traffic policing, it manifests as the illegal use of authority for personal benefit, often through informal spaces and coded solidarity created by officers (Onyango, 2022:313; Pereira, 2011:3). For a corrupt act to occur, several conditions must align: a driver's desire to avoid penalties, the relevant legal context, and a traffic police officer's (TPO) misuse of discretionary powers (Pereira, 2011:3). Although corruption's harmful impact is globally recognised, particularly in South Africa (Zorell, 2020:1), most studies focus on systemic institutional issues with little attention to individual behaviours in traffic policing (Dong et al., 2012:610). Understanding how motorists initiate bribes—the micro-level dynamics—remains largely unexplored yet is crucial to comprehending the country's deep-rooted corruption networks.

Motorists' willingness to bribe is strongly shaped by social contagion, whereby unethical behaviour is normalised when it aligns with dominant societal norms (Dong et al., 2012:610; Zorell, 2020:10). This resonates with the "chameleon effect," suggesting individuals imitate corrupt acts to align with perceived group norms, thereby reducing personal blame (Explorable.com, 2010:1; Lee & Guven, 2013:296). Consequently, a driver's belief that corruption is widespread becomes self-fulfilling, with informal social norms replacing formal law enforcement (López-Valcárcel et al., 2017:800; Sam, 2022:6). In weak institutional frameworks, drivers rationalise bribery because they perceive a high likelihood of being solicited.

This contagion's operational reality is evident in the widespread failure to prosecute offenders, including the arrest of thirteen Tshwane Metro Police officers for soliciting bribes (Kumssa, 2015:4; Makhubu, 2020:1; Robinson & Seim, 2017:2). This environment fosters "reciprocal traffic officers" who tolerate violations in exchange for monetary gifts, thereby undermining public trust (Sam, 2022:7; Pereira, 2011:4; Upadhyay, 2003:194). Corrupt TPOs face an agathokakological paradox—pursuing material gain while perceiving themselves as morally upright—often resolving cognitive dissonance by dismissing corruption as a Western concept (Rissetto,

2018:7). Ultimately, this normalisation deepens systemic corruption, illustrating how a few bad apples contaminate the entire institutional barrel (Preston, 2020:5).

2.10. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter offers a comprehensive review of the pertinent literature concerning the evolution, institutional culture, and professional image of traffic policing in South Africa. It critically examines the historical fragmentation of traffic authorities and evaluates the resulting jurisdictional ambiguities that complicate traffic law enforcement efforts. The review carefully analyses the criminological impact of traffic policing, emphasising the adverse effects of corruption, revenue-driven enforcement, and the widespread code of silence within the institution. Furthermore, it investigates the psychological concepts influencing motorist behaviour, demonstrating how public perceptions are continually moulded by direct interactions with traffic law enforcement and broader systemic administrative deficiencies today.

The insights from this extensive literature review profoundly shape the trajectory of this study by establishing the critical theoretical and empirical parameters for evaluating traffic police professionalism. By identifying deep-seated mistrust and systemic corruption currently plaguing the criminal justice system, this chapter contextualises the urgent need for a transformative approach to public satisfaction. The synthesis of these scholarly perspectives confirms that addressing isolated behavioural incidents is insufficient; rather, structural reform and enhanced procedural justice are paramount. Consequently, this foundational knowledge directly informs the methodological design and the subsequent development of the proposed public perception model framework.

The subsequent chapter examines the theoretical framework supporting this study. It delineates established models and criminological theories, including the Integrated Driving Task Model, Deterrence Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. These frameworks will be employed to analyse driver decision-making, assess traffic law enforcement compliance, and contextualise the variables that ultimately influence the public perception of traffic police officers in the present day.

CHAPTER 3

THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK, MODELS AND CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICIALS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Building on the preceding literature review, the current section aims to delineate the theoretical boundaries within which the study will unfold. More precisely, it will specify the conceptual framework for exploring public attitudes towards traffic police officers in South Africa. It must be stressed that the topic under investigation is poorly covered in local studies on traffic enforcement-related attitudes. As such, it will be necessary to provide a critical overview of the theoretical models and criminological paradigms used to scrutinise citizens' attitudes towards traffic law enforcement in general and traffic police officers in particular. For the purpose of the study, each framework's historical context, criticisms, and theoretical foundations, as they relate to the issues at hand, will be presented in Table 3.1.

The discussion begins by situating contemporary traffic policing within its broader societal context and progressively advances towards the formulation of a criminologically informed road safety model. It critically examines the multifaceted dimensions of the road user through the application of the Integrated Driving Task Model. The analysis then considers the role of traffic law enforcement, employing the compliance model in conjunction with Deterrence Theory to interpret and regulate driver behaviour. Subsequently, the Rational Choice Theory and the Multi-Component Model of Attitude are introduced to deepen the theoretical grounding of the study. The section culminates with an elaboration on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, thereby providing a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding road safety dynamics.

In essence, the theoretical framework presented above is integral to this study. It provides a foundation for examining the key aspects of interaction between motorists

and law enforcers on South African roads. In other words, the theoretical framework helps identify factors that substantially influence people's compliance with traffic law enforcement. These include subjective norms, which encompass behavioural intentions, perceived control over behaviour, and attitudes, among others. Overall, the theoretical framework highlights the complexity of the relationship between citizens and law enforcers, demonstrating how citizens' perceptions of corruption and incompetence on the part of law enforcers affect their willingness to comply with existing laws. By combining different perspectives, the theoretical framework offers the researcher greater insight into the issue, enabling them to interpret the collected data more efficiently.

Table 3.1 serves as a theoretical roadmap for the reader. It outlines the study's conceptual boundaries and overarching arguments, then details the specific criminological theories applied.

Table 3 1: Theoretical Framework Summary

Theory	Historical Foundations	Criticisms	Lasting Value	Application to the Study
Deterrence Theory (DT)	One of the oldest formulations in criminological thought, established by the classical scholars Beccaria (1872), Bentham (1789) and Hobbes (1651), who set out the triad of severity, certainty and celerity of punishment (Abramovaite, Bandyopadhyay, Bhattacharya & Cowen, 2022:2).	Presupposes a consistently rational, free-willed actor, whereas perceived risk arises from an untidy blend of personal (specific) and vicarious (general) experiences (Tomlinson, 2016:34). Offenders succumb to confirmation bias and observation selection (Tomlinson, 2016:35). The theory cannot operate in isolation and must be read alongside defiance and reintegrative shaming (Piquero, Paternoster, Pogarsky & Loughran, 2011:338), while the relational dimension between sanctioning authority and driver remains underexplored in South African enforcement.	The careful calibration of punishment—neither so severe as to be deemed unjust nor so lenient as to forfeit its deterrent effect—and the principle that the interval between offence and sanction be kept short (celerity) endure as practical maxims (Piquero et al., 2011:338; Abramovaite et al., 2022:2).	Illuminates how the perceived likelihood and consequences of apprehension shape driver attitudes towards TPOs. The researcher holds that traffic law enforcement, deterrence and behaviour form an integrated system; removing any one component undermines the capacity of Traffic Police Authorities to influence driver conduct.

Compliance Model & Rational Choice Theory (RCT/RDM)	Goldenbeld's (2003:27) Compliance Model links legislation to behaviour through objective and subjective detection risk and deterrence, connecting to the Rational Model of Decision-making (Uzonwanne, 2016:2) and RCT, which holds that drivers are motivated by perceived psychological and social benefits (Becker, Cornish & Clarke, 2020:1; McCarthy & Chaudhary, 2014:2).	Real-world decision-making seldom conforms to the idealised rational process; drivers rely on habit, incomplete information, faulty memory or imitation (Liu, 2022:1-2; Adjei & Behrens, 2023:1-2; Uzonwanne, 2016:2). In confrontational encounters, decisions are driven by intuition and emotion, and limited cognitive capacity distorts the weighing of information.	Retains explanatory strength because it is probabilistic rather than deterministic, accounting for multiple driver decisions without presuming all are explicable, thereby offering genuine predictive power (McCarthy & Chaudhary, 2014:3-5).	Used to explain the driver–TPO relationship and the calculus of preferences enacted during a traffic stop. Building on Burger's (2011:112) work, the study adapts the cyclical relationship between deterrence, rational decision-making and rational choice to clarify why drivers comply or offend.
Broken Roads Theory (BRT)	Responds to the documented link between deteriorating road infrastructure—worsened by climate change—and elevated Road Traffic Accident risk (King, 2025:1; Paige-Green, Maharaj & Komba, 2010:28), anchored in a legal duty of care premised on the reasonable-man standard (Van der Merwe v	Punitive enforcement cannot be justified where the physical state of the roads is itself a hazard (IOL, 2011:1), and punitive approaches risk diminishing public trust in authorities (Weisburd & Lum, 2020:1).	Its non-punitive, zero-tolerance orientation towards road defects advocates a systemic, collaborative process of proactive crash prevention rather than reactive sanction.	Operationalised through the constitutional directive and institutional mandate of TPOs, positioning officers as agents who detect, report and follow up on structural hazards (Van Rooyen, 2020:39), thereby reframing the officer's role beyond punitive enforcement.

	MEC of Public Works, Roads and Transport, 2019:26-28).			
Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)	Posits that behaviour is governed by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, which jointly determine intention (Elliot, Armitage & Baughman, 2003:4; Ajzen, 2020:315; Bosnjak, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020:353). Extensively tested in traffic contexts, from speed-limit compliance (Finch, Kompfner, Lockwood & Maycook, 1994; Taylor, Lynam & Baruya, 2000; Meadows & Stradling, 2000) to corruptive behaviour (Cohen, Ding, Lesage & Stolowy, 2012; Fisher, 2015; Zulaikha, Hadiprajitno & Amal, 2019:168-170).	Its implicit reasoned-action assumption invites the same caution as rationalist models: intention and behaviour may diverge under strain, emotion or compromised control, and perceived behavioural control may be distorted by prior punishment or social pressure (Santre, 2020:236).	Its analytical precision disaggregates the formation of behaviour into discrete, measurable constructs, permitting nuanced insight into how attitudes, social expectations and perceived control coalesce into intention and action (Ajzen, 2020:315).	Applied to examine how driver behaviour shapes perceptions of TPO professionalism, operationalised through three hypotheses: attitudes influence the intention to commit traffic offences (TPB1); subjective norms—amplified where corruption has become a way of life (Khan et al., 2021:1949; Ncube, 2017:1)—influence intention, such as bribery or conflict (TPB2); and perceived behavioural control influences intentions to violate traffic laws (TPB3).

3.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND APPLICABLE TO A CHANGING TRAFFIC POLICING LANDSCAPE

Global road environments require evolving strategies to meet increasing motorisation. Traffic Police Authorities (TPAs) implement innovative plans, technologies, and methods to enhance safety during modernisation. As vehicle numbers and violations rise (Rakshita & Sudhamani, 2020:94), TPAs use virtual enforcement tools like unmanned cameras and ANPR systems. Scholars such as Clarke and Cornish (1985), Jiao (1988), Crank (2003), Douglas and Sharp (2005), Belur and Johnson (2018), and Harmati (2021) are crucial for providing traffic administrators with insights to improve practice, service, and community relations.

The visible presence of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) significantly shapes the South African public's perception, particularly because officers frequently extend beyond their core mandate to undertake supplementary roles, such as administrative tasks, VIP and funeral escorts, court duties, election management, and handling non-traffic complaints (Leichtman, 2008:59). This operational reality is corroborated by a Netwerk24 (2016:1) report, which indicates that the City of Cape Town receives thousands of unrelated complaints each month that require metropolitan police intervention. Consequently, TPO behaviour is closely scrutinised through public encounters and media coverage; actions perceived as fair cultivate legitimacy, whereas unfair conduct diminishes public support and harms the organisation's reputation (Bain, Robinson & Conser, 2014:267). Although effective performance can enhance public trust (Lee, 2011; Tankebe, 2013; Mazerolle, Antrobus, Bennett & Tyler, 2013), traffic police routinely face ongoing criticism (Chatterjee & Ryan, 2020:606). Empirical studies consistently link these negative perceptions to the nature of public-traffic police interactions, racial dynamics, media influence, and specific enforcement actions (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Schafer, Huebner & Bynum, 2003; Nix & Wolfe, 2017; Serpe & Nadal, 2017; Graziano & Gauthier, 2018).

To build trust and authority in traffic policing (TP), improving and maintaining its public image is crucial. Public opinion is shaped by media and personal interactions (Cobbina-Dungy, 2021:244–246; Faull & Rose, 2012:4). Political interference and

disrespect have led to public disapproval of TPOs, with people preferring the fire service over police, as the saying goes that 'when the fire department arrives, people cheer, but when the police arrive, people boo' (Boston Herald, 2020:1). In South Africa, traffic policing faces negativity due to perceptions of incompetence, inefficiency, political influence, and a damaged image, resulting in declining respect for TPOs (Martin, 2011:1; Ullah & Hussain, 2016:136; Fairburn, 2019:1).

3.3. ROAD SAFETY FRAMEWORK FROM A CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This section discusses essential elements of road safety. The road user and their environment form part of this discussion.

3.3.1. Road User

Road safety is the responsibility of every individual, as everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and motorcyclists, are road users who assess road conditions in their own unique way (Cociu, Deleu, Rîmis, Cebanu, Chereches, 2022:57; Safer Roads Humber, 2025:1). The safe operation of a vehicle on the road primarily depends on the driving task model (Smiley & Dewar, 2016:110), which is directly related to the road user's physical, mental, psychological, and environmental characteristics (Jansen, van der Horst & van den Brink, 2000:133). Figure 3.1 illustrates the Integrated Driving Task Model, which combines Smiley and Dewar's (2016:110) driving task model with road user characteristics. Explaining the characteristics identified in Figure 3.1 is relevant because they play an essential role in public perceptions of TPOs.

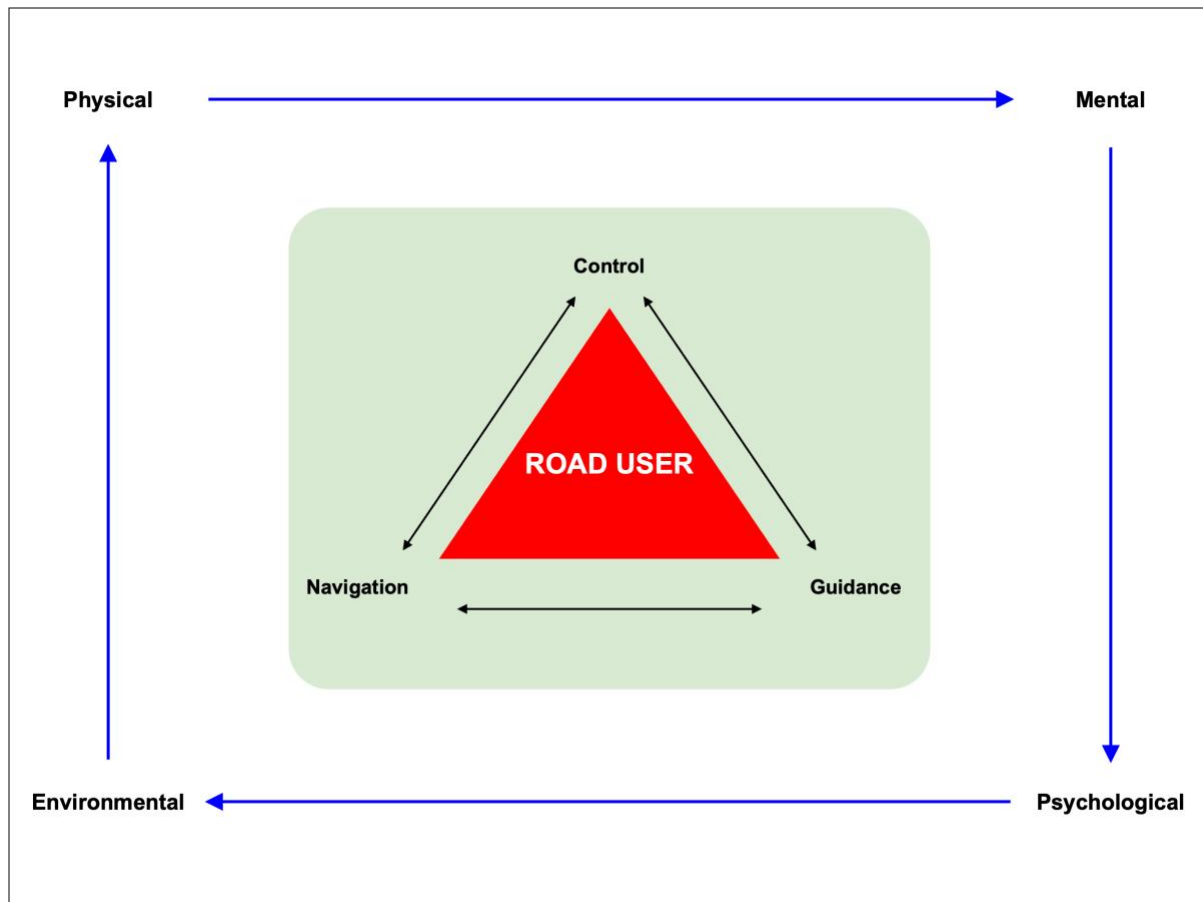


Figure 3.1: The Integrated Driving Task Model

The three significant sub-tasks recognised by Smiley and Dewar (2016:110) and illustrated in Figure 3.1 must be present when using the road infrastructure:

- (i) **Control** – the driver follows traffic rules, like staying within speed limits and correctly positioning the vehicle in the travel lane.
- (ii) **Guidance** – the driver interacts with other road users and vehicles by passing, overtaking, following, and observing all prescribed road traffic signs and signals.
- (iii) **Navigation** – when travelling to a destination, the road user uses the prescribed information and guide signs, (electronic) maps, and the environment through roadside landmarks.

Driving a motor vehicle requires a high level of cognitive-motor skills from the driver. In addition to the cognitive requirements, the driver is also subject to sensory factors such as hearing and visual behaviours, which may create conflicts between the TPO

and the driver; for example, a speeding driver stopped on a busy, noisy freeway in the late afternoon.

3.3.2. Broken Roads

The significant deterioration of road infrastructure, worsened by climate change, greatly increases the risk of Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) (King, 2025:1; Paige-Green, Maharaj & Komba, 2010:28). Since driving involves complex cognitive functions, further hindered by poor road surfaces, traffic safety strategies need to be fundamentally reevaluated. The Broken Road Theory (BRT) advocates for proactive crash prevention (see Figure 3.2). Unlike punitive approaches that might diminish public trust in authorities (Weisburd & Lum, 2020:1), the BRT adopts a non-punitive, zero-tolerance approach to road defects, encouraging a systemic, collaborative process in which Traffic Police Officers identify, report, and follow up on structural hazards to support timely engineering repairs.

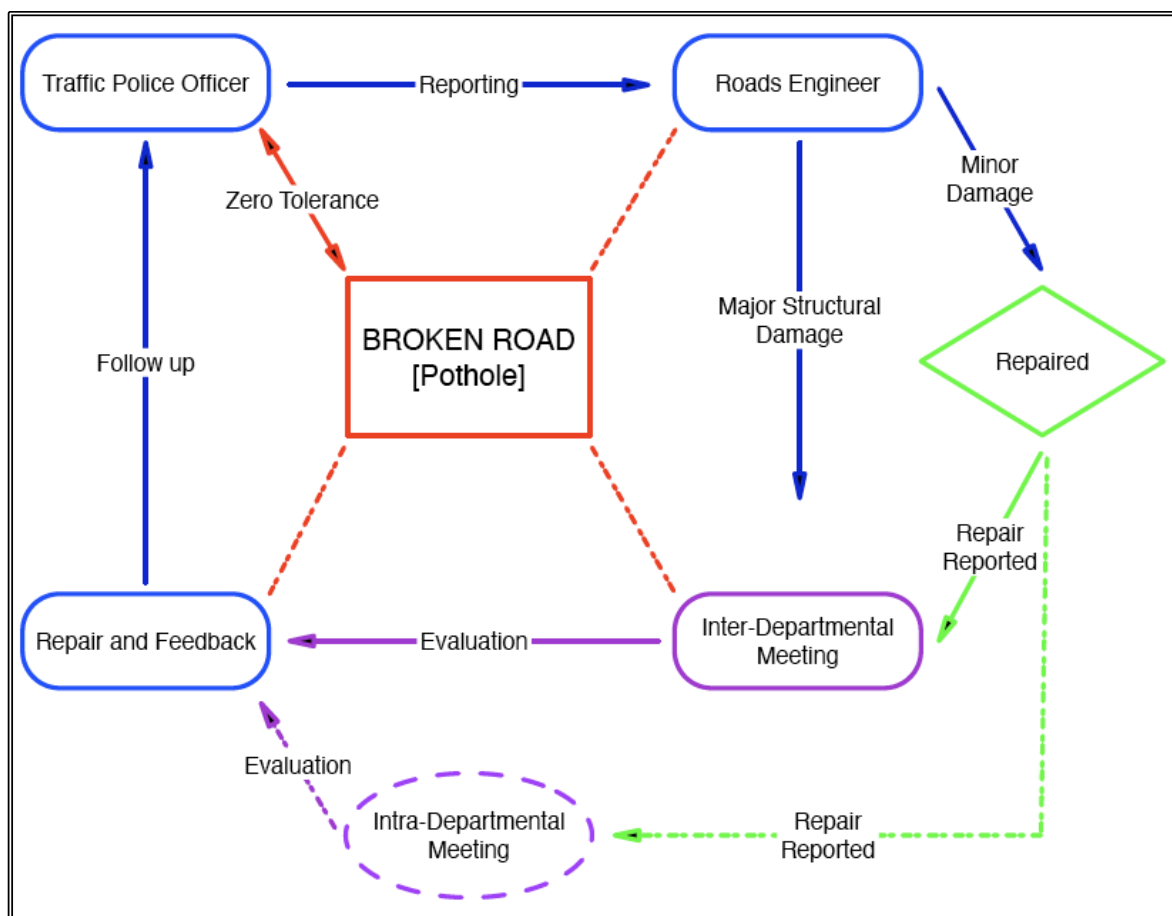


Figure 3.2: Broken Roads Theory

Operationalising this theory relies on the constitutional directive and the institutional mandate of TPOs to provide comprehensive services. This obligation requires each officer to detect and report network defects that may precipitate crashes (Van Rooyen, 2020:39). Strict enforcement of traffic laws cannot be justified without also addressing the physical state of the roads (IOL, 2011:1). This responsibility is supported by a legal duty of care; based on the reasonable man standard, authorities must take appropriate measures—such as regular inspection and maintenance—to prevent accidents (Van der Merwe v MEC of Public Works, Roads, and Transport, 2019:26–28). Therefore, fixing structural road defects is a legal requirement for the TPO's role in reducing risks and protecting public safety.

3.4. CRIMINOLOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS TRAFFIC POLICING

This section includes the concept of traffic law enforcement. An established but still relevant model is explained. An important component that functions in unison with traffic law enforcement is deterrence. This section discusses Deterrence Theory (DT) and its importance in this study.

3.4.1. Traffic Law Enforcement

Traffic law enforcement (TLE) is often seen as issuing tickets by TPOs, but it broadly applies legal sanctions to rule-breaking behaviour (Burger, 2011). Academically, it refers to traffic police enforcing current road laws in a jurisdiction (Tatum, 2024). Traffic Law Enforcement (TLE) seeks to enhance the chances of detection and punishment (Goldenbeld, Mesken & van Schagen, 2013:7). Creating a theoretical framework for TLE is fundamental to traffic enforcement strategies (Goldenbeld, 2003:12). The Compliance Model proposed by Goldenbeld (2003:27) illustrates the difficulties in achieving compliance and improving safety. This model serves as the basis, with additional details added for clarity (see Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3: Adapted Traffic Law Enforcement Compliance Model

Examining Figure 3.3, it is evident that legislation provides the framework for traffic police enforcement, which influences driver behaviour in three ways.

- (i) Traffic law enforcement involves observing, apprehending offenders, prosecution, and completing justice processes, creating an objective detection risk. This cause-and-effect framework influences drivers' perceptions of the likelihood of being caught and may contribute to negative attitudes towards TPOs following apprehension.
- (ii) The possibility of observation, apprehension, and prosecution creates a personal risk of detection among drivers, leading them to perceive a chance of being caught and fined. Supportive measures like media or word-of-mouth can influence this subjective risk.

- (iii) Deterrence, the final step in the model, is key to traffic enforcement as it influences driver behaviour. Awareness of legislation and correct behaviour is vital because many drivers “want to comply” not just to avoid fines but to contribute to road safety (Goldenbeld, 2003:27).

The adapted model clearly illustrates a direct link between legislation and compliance. However, achieving compliance is not straightforward, and various measures, such as prosecution, fines, punishment, and education, are necessary to influence driver behaviour. The following section provides a more detailed explanation of deterrence.

3.4.2. Deterrence Theory

As outlined in Section 2.6.4.1, deterrence has two interconnected forms, both assuming free will. In traffic policing, deterrence refers to the capacity of sanctions to threaten and prevent traffic offences by imposing punishment that is immediate and severe enough to outweigh perceived benefits, such as the personal satisfaction derived from offences like speeding (Piquero, Paternoster, Pogarsky & Loughran, 2011:336). Importantly, deterrence does not operate in isolation. Empirical evidence shows that the perceived risk to oneself arises from a mix of personal (specific) and vicarious (general) experiences (Tomlinson, 2016:34), which must be integrated with related criminological theories such as defiance and reintegrative shaming (Tomlinson, 2016:37; Piquero et al., 2011:338). Moreover, the effectiveness of sanctions depends on their content, how they are enforced, and the relationship between the sanctioning authority and the driver (Piquero et al., 2011:338). This relational aspect, particularly underexplored in South African traffic enforcement, represents a significant gap.

Avoiding punishment from a traffic perspective means that traffic crime goes undetected and unpunished. Once a driver experiences avoiding punishment, the likelihood of increased traffic rule offending is high because of the perception that there is a low likelihood of being caught (Tomlinson, 2016:35). Once the driver adopts this illogical pattern of thinking, Tomlinson (2016:35) identified two specific types of logical fallacies, namely:

- Confirmation bias

This type of bias emphasises the perception that offending drivers believe what they already believe, irrespective of evidence that contradicts their beliefs.

- Observation selection

Offending drivers will tend to focus on the subjective self-created favourable circumstances while ignoring the objective unfavourable ones, for example, “I have gotten away with many traffic crimes thus far, and the chances are I will never get caught”.

Deterrence theory (DT) includes three main elements: severity, certainty, and celerity. This foundational theory was widely studied and validated by pioneering scholars such as Beccaria (1872), Bentham (1789), and Hobbes (1651) (Abramovaite, Bandyopadhyay, Bhattacharya & Cowen, 2022:2). Figure 3.4 illustrates DT.

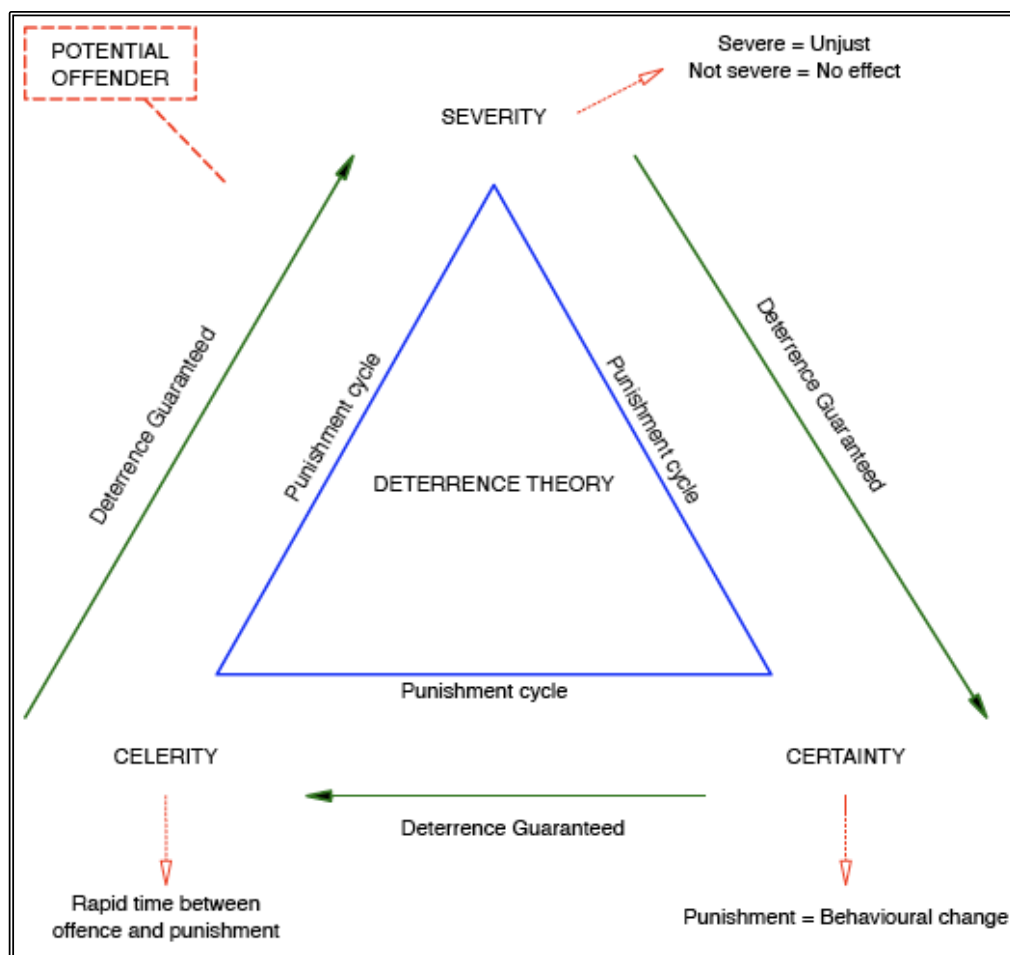


Figure 3.4: Deterrence Theory

From Figure 3.4, a potential offender (driver) will change his behaviour (deterred) by weighing potential gains against losses (Ambramoviate et al., 2022:2). The severity of the punishment is one of the key determinants. Punishment must be cautiously balanced between severe and less severe because if the punishment is too severe, it is believed to be unjust, whereas if it is not severe enough, punishment is adjudged to have no deterring effect (Piquero et al., 2011:338).

The certainty of punishment serves as another key factor in influencing driver behaviour and deterring non-offending actions (Tomlinson, 2016:37; Lee, 2017:2). The third element is celerity, meaning that penalties for traffic violations—such as seatbelt infractions, license issues, and more serious breaches like excessive speeding, red-light running, and reckless driving—must be administered quickly. The interval between the offence and the punishment should be short, avoiding lengthy delays (Ambramoviate et al., 2022:2; Piquero et al., 2011:338). The researcher asserts that TLE, deterrence, and behaviour are interconnected. They do not function independently but as parts of an integrated system. Eliminating any one of these components undermines the effectiveness of TPAs, which aim to instil fear to change driver behaviour. The next section explores decision-making and rational choice within traffic law enforcement.

3.4.3. Theoretical Approach: Traffic Law Enforcement and Behaviour

Traffic Law Enforcement (TLE) is necessary to analyse traffic patterns and enforce traffic laws for the prevention of traffic problems and vehicular crashes (French, 2016:1). It is more likely that the presence of TP will influence traffic-related crime, especially the deterrent effect of TLE (Burger, 2011:50). This relates closely to the Rational Model of Decision-Making (RDM).

3.4.3.1. Rational Model of Decision-making (RDM)

The RDM describes how drivers use facts and information, analyse them, and apply a process to make decisions, such as during a traffic stop (Uzonwanne, 2016:2). Choosing to obey traffic rules depends on weighing the benefits and drawbacks of behaviours (Varet, Granié, Carnis, Martinez, Pelé & Piermattéo, 2021:1-2). Often, decisions deviate from rational models, relying instead on habits, incomplete

information, or imitation (Liu, 2022:1-2; Adjei & Behrens, 2023:1-2; 2024; Sam, 2022:5). Decision-making involves habitual responses to situations, guided by preferences for available information to select the best action (Uzonwanne, 2016:2). The RDM involves thorough research and logical evaluation, yet drivers often rely on intuition rather than logic in confrontational situations with a TPO, using logical evaluation to process facts and select the best outcome (Uzonwanne, 2016:2).

3.4.3.2. Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) posits that drivers are motivated by perceived psychological and social benefits to break the law (Becker, Cornish & Clarke, 2020:1; McCarthy & Chaudhary, 2014:2). From a traffic police view, RCT sees driver actions as calculations of expected benefits versus costs (Becker et al., 2020:1). RCT mainly explains deviations where benefits of illegal acts outweigh the risk of being caught (Becker et al., 2020:1; Sam 2022:6). It relates to the driver-TPO relationship, including preferences and choices during traffic stops, and also links to DT regarding punishment speed and deterrence, as noted by McCarthy and Chaudhary (2014:1-2).

It includes various tactics called Rational Choice Approaches (RCAs). The following RCAs are identified in relation to this study:

- ➔ The driver can prioritise the preferences (service from TPOs - current experience) from most to least valued. While stable, these choices don't change during a decision and can be adjusted based on new information.
- ➔ The information influences the assessment of psychological benefits and costs, like opportunity or emotional factors. Often, the driver believes they have enough information to make a decision, but this is false. Decisions are made on incomplete info due to faulty memories and misjudgements.
- ➔ The drivers' preferences are often influenced by their attitudes towards the risk and uncertainty of the decision.
- ➔ Drivers' rational choices may differ in similar situations because of inconsistent rational actions based on a driver's processed information about the TPO.
- ➔ Drivers may behave irrationally due to sudden changes and strong emotions. This may be caused by limited cognitive skills, which affect their ability to gather

accurate information or to reflect on past decisions or on data that conflicts with their preferences.

- ➔ The RCA examines the alignment of drivers' preferences and choices. The RCT is probabilistic, explaining multiple driver decisions without assuming all are explainable, thus offering predictive power (Mccarthy & Chaudhary, 2014:3-5).

Figure 3.5 delineates the cyclical dynamics of crime deterrence and intervention, as articulated by Burger (2011:112), and has been adapted to elucidate the interplay between deterrence, rational decision-making processes, and rational choice theories within the context of traffic policing.

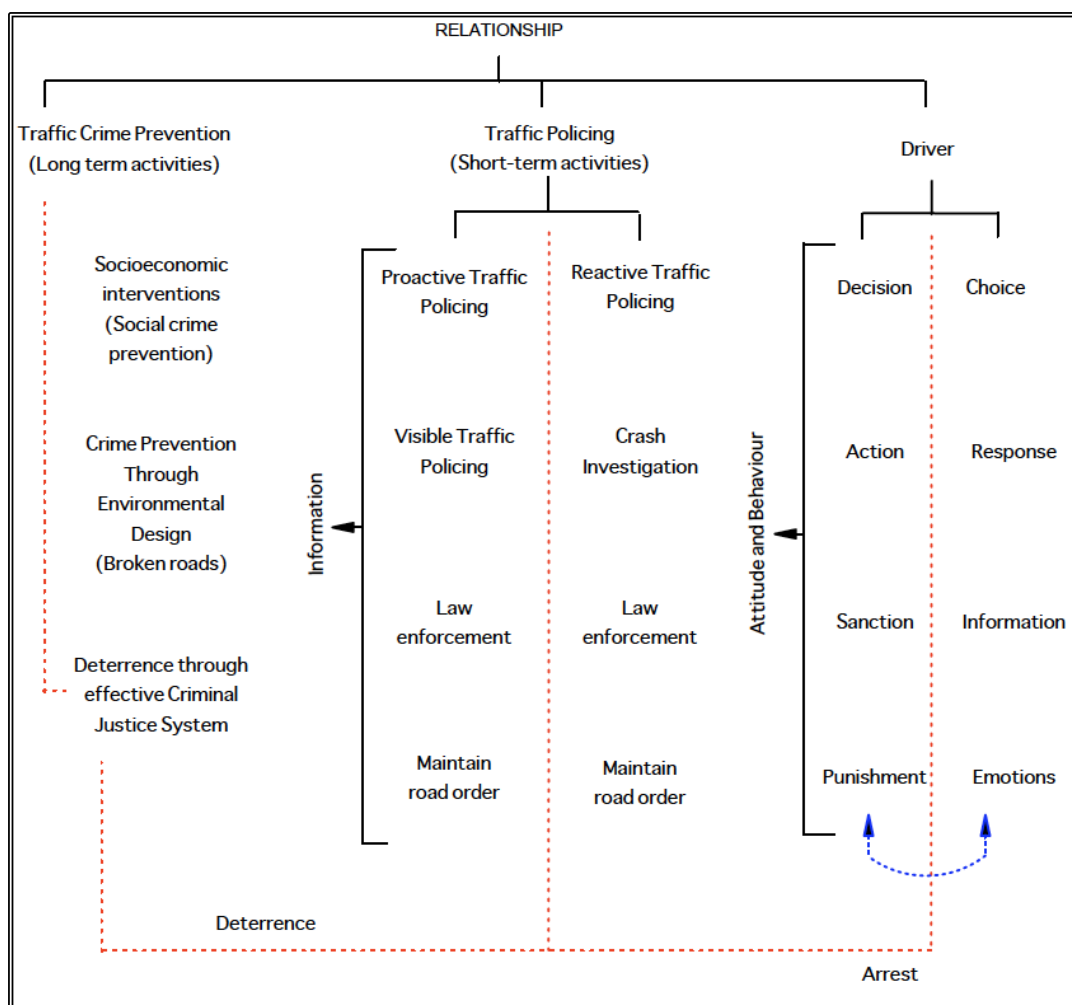


Figure 3.5: Deterrence, Decision and Choice Relationship

The relationship in Figure 3.5 relates to the driver's decision-making process and factors up to punishment. Traffic policing has two types: proactive, which prevents

crime and deterrents, and reactive, which occurs after a crime when interventions like Arrive Alive and education fail. Effective prevention needs all stakeholders, including the CJS, to work together. Musselwhite, Avineri, Fulcher, Goodwin and Susil (2010:16-20) reviewed 72 studies, including works by Dahlstedt (1994), Yagil (1998), Higginson (2005), Musselwhite and Haddad (2007), Waylen and McKenna (2008), and Emmerson (2008). They, along with Beaudry-Cyr (2015:4-5), argue that although criminological theories often prioritise punishment as a deterrent, RCTs emphasise prevention through punishment, which is considered the most effective deterrent in practice. The principles underlying punishment are swiftness, proportional severity, and certainty of enforcement.

The next section explains models and theories applicable to the concept of attitude.

3.5. MULTI-COMPONENT MODEL OF ATTITUDE

To identify how the public perceives traffic police officers, this study will employ the Multi-Component Model of Attitude. Attitude has been conceptualised in a number of ways in the academic literature, including the A-B-C model (Affect, Behaviour, Cognition), first introduced in the psychological literature in the mid-twentieth century. The model is based on the premise that attitude is a “general mental state that consists of a knowledge component (often called the cognitive aspect) and an evaluative component (often called the affective aspect) and a behavioural tendency component” (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018:300). According to the model, public views towards TPOs would encompass three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. In this regard, cognitive aspects would encompass the public’s attitudes and beliefs regarding the goals and roles of TPOs in maintaining road safety. Meanwhile, the affective aspects would signify the emotions one experiences and expresses when faced with TPOs, and the behavioural components would represent one’s conduct in a particular traffic-related context.

However, one limitation of the A-B-C model is its assumption of internal consistency among these three aspects, a claim that has been questioned by researchers. For instance, Maio, Haddock, and Verplanken (2018:45) argue that while an individual may hold positive cognitions about traffic laws, their affective reactions towards the

traffic police officer enforcing the law may be negative, and their behavioural reactions can be inconsistent. Despite this limitation, the three-component model of attitude remains essential to this research, as it allows analysis of how public attitudes, beliefs, and emotions contribute to the perceived image of traffic police officers and how these components interact with and override one another.

3.6. THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR: THEORETICAL APPLICABILITY TO STUDY

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was selected for this study to examine how behaviour influences public perceptions of the professional image of traffic police officers in South Africa. The TPB has been effectively researched and tested within a traffic police environment, encompassing variables such as road safety, the road user, the role fulfilment of TPOs, interactions with TPOs, the criminological impact of the traffic police image on the CJS, and other factors affecting the TPO's image.

Researchers Finch, Kompfner, Lockwood & Maycook (1994); Taylor, Lynam and Baruya (2000); Meadows and Stradling (2000); Broughton and Baughman (2002) and Verplanken, Aarts, van Knippenberg and Mooren (1998) used the TPB from a speed limit perspective (Elliot, Armitage & Baugman, 2003:3-6). From a corruption perspective, researchers Cohen, Ding, Lesage and Stolowy (2012); Fisher (2015); Zulaikha and Hadiprajitno (2016) and Kravtsova, Oshchepkov and Welzel (2017) used the TPB to research corruptive behaviour and attitude (Zulaikha, Hadiprajitno & Amal, 2019:168-170). The TPB consists of three main tenets, namely:

- Attitude towards the behaviour (evaluations about performing the behaviour) determines intention,
- Intention is determined by supportive subjective norms (social pressure to perform the behaviour), and
- Perceived behavioural control (perceptions about the ease of performing the behaviour) (Lambert, 2020; Bosnjak, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020:353; Ajzen, 2020:315).

The researcher characterises the TPB as the belief that bribing a traffic police officer (behaviour) may prevent prosecution (outcome) or is unlawful (experience) and is approved or disapproved by family (subjective norm) or was carried out by a family member or acquaintance (descriptive norm). A control factor, where the driver perceives he can bribe an officer (perceived behavioural control), influences the intention to engage in corruption.

3.6.1. Attitude

The driver's attitude is shaped by readily accessible behavioural beliefs that directly influence the perceived outcomes of the behaviour (Ajzen, 2020:315; Santre, 2021:235). Therefore, every motor vehicle driver holds a set of values (attitudes) that guide their engagement in actions leading to specific behaviours (Zulaikha et al., 2019:168).

According to the researcher, each motor vehicle driver has a positive or negative attitude (behavioural beliefs - feelings) towards the interaction after a traffic stop (attitude), which will result in a particular outcome or experience. This may include a sense of power over the traffic officer (behavioural beliefs), with the intention of engaging in dishonest or corrupt behaviour (outcome) or fostering a positive interaction (experience).

TPB1 – Attitudes influence the intention to commit traffic offences.

3.6.2. Subjective Norms

The subjective norms of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) refer to the various opinions or norms of the motor vehicle driver (Zulaikha et al., 2019:169). Santre (2021:235) concurs and refers to the social pressure that the driver experiences from others when s/he engages in certain positive or negative behaviour, such as bribery or conflict. These behavioural beliefs or expectations of the driver create the perception that others consider the behaviour acceptable, because corruption has become a symptomatic and social way of life in SA to the extent of a "have all possess all" mentality (Khan et al., 2021:1949; Ncube, 2017:1; News24, 2012:1).

TPB2 – Subjective norms influence the intention of the driver to perform a certain behaviour, such as bribery or conflict.

3.6.3. Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) influences a driver's perception of the ease of performing a behaviour (Zulaikha et al., 2019:169). When a driver perceives an action as easily attainable, they are more likely to intend to perform it, leading to behaviours such as corruption or traffic violations. These behaviours are affected by internal factors (feelings, information) and external factors (opportunities, social cooperation, laws) that directly impact PBC (Santre, 2020:236). Thus, PBC is shaped by the driver's cognitions, based on current or previous information, and by their belief that the behaviour can be easily achieved through available control factors. If the control factor is blocked and the driver's perceived ability is reduced, thereby lowering their belief in their ability to perform the behaviour, then the behaviour is likely not to occur because the level of strain negatively impacts the intention to perform it.

TPB3: Perceived behavioural control influences unacceptable behaviour intentions such as violating traffic laws.

In Figure 3.6, the researcher illustrates the theory of planned behaviour and makes use of corruption as an example of a behaviour. Any behaviour can be incorporated into the theory.

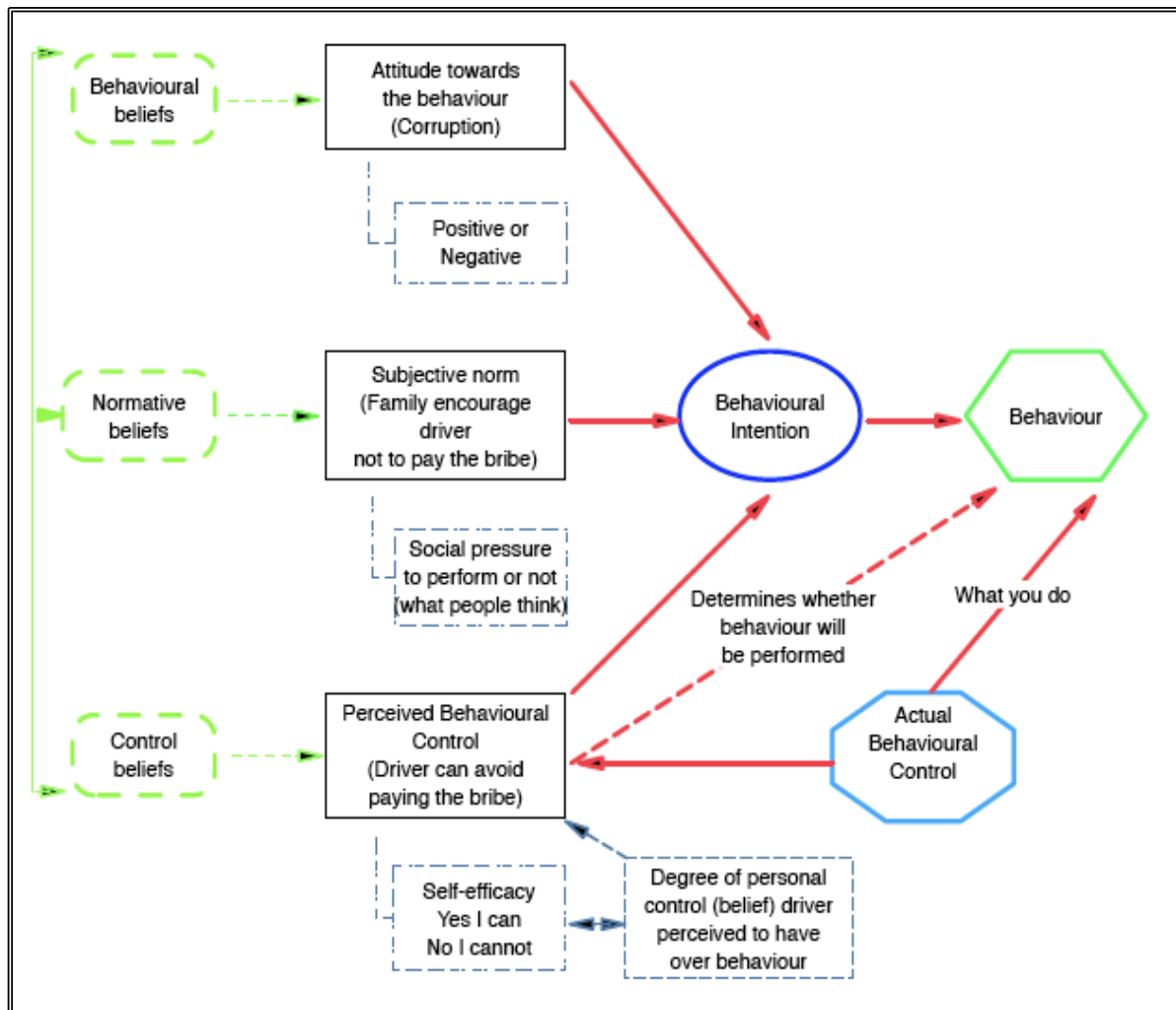


Figure 3.6: Theory of Planned Behaviour

The researcher notes that perceived behavioural control influences both drivers' intentions and actual behaviour. Drivers may believe they have opportunities to pay bribes or run red lights. However, this perception can be distorted by barriers such as past punishment or social pressures from peers, family, and traffic norms, all of which affect perceived control and consequent behaviour.

3.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This section combined criminological and psychological concepts to develop a theoretical basis for understanding traffic policing in South Africa. The analysis offered insight into the factors that influence road users' behaviour by evaluating the Integrated Driving Task Model. In addition, the Broken Roads Theory was applied to

traffic policing to demonstrate how infrastructure complicates the work of traffic law enforcement. By analysing Deterrence Theory, rational choice, and the Multi-Component Model of Attitude, the section highlighted the decision-making process drivers undergo when pulled over by police.

The choice of a conceptual framework is crucial when designing this study, as it guides the research towards understanding what influences individuals' perceptions of the professional's competence. The Theory of Planned Behaviour will allow the researcher to identify which factors affect the subjects and whether bribery, resistance to bribery, or agreement leads to the formation of positive or negative opinions. After selecting the framework, the study can begin to focus on the collection of relevant information about the observed phenomena, rather than speculating about the causes of these phenomena.

Transitioning from this background information, the next chapter will provide an in-depth overview of the research methods used in the project. It will highlight and explain the explanatory sequential Mixed Methods Approach, discuss the underlying philosophical assumptions, non-probability sampling techniques, and ethical considerations, and describe in detail the procedures for administering surveys and conducting semi-structured interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 provided a detailed theoretical framework and literature review, and this chapter outlines the methodological approach used to empirically investigate the research problem. A Mixed Methods Approach (MMA), specifically an explanatory sequential design, was selected to systematically explore, describe and explain the public's perception of the professional image of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in South Africa.

This chapter clearly presents the philosophical worldviews that inform the inquiry and then thoroughly explains the research design. It begins with an explanation of the quantitative phase, which includes the non-probability sampling strategy, survey administration and the protocols for statistical analysis. The qualitative phase is then described in terms of the semi-structured interview process used to theoretically contextualise the empirical survey data.

The chapter ends with a critical appraisal of the study's trustworthiness, measurement validity and reliability, strict adherence to institutional ethical standards, and transparent acknowledgement of the study's methodological limitations. It begins with a discussion of the worldviews identified for this study.

4.2. RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEWS

Although researchers use terminologies such as paradigms, epistemologies, ontologies, and research methodologies, the term "worldview" represents a fundamental set of beliefs that guides action and is most suitable because it offers a "general philosophical orientation" towards the world and the nature of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:5). Therefore, the views and assumptions (worldviews) about how the public perceives TPOs in SA guided the researcher on why the professionalism of the TPOs is regarded in a particular manner.

Considering the magnitude of the study, the researcher identified the following integrated worldviews applicable to this research study:

- Postpositivist worldview
- Symbolic interactionism
- Interpretive (phenomenological) worldview

4.2.1. Postpositivist worldview

A postpositivist paradigm focuses on providing a more "complex and comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon and its relations" through larger-scale studies with measurable evidence (Adam, 2014:6; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014:23). In recent times, quantitative research (QNR) has been guided by postpositivism (Leavy, 2017:91). This paradigm grants researchers greater freedom in seeking information (data) and allows for creativity when developing alternative strategies regarding the phenomenon under investigation (De Vos et al., 2012:7).

A postpositivist dimension enables the use of multiple measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:7), affording researchers increased freedom to develop measuring instruments through creative and innovative methodologies (De Vos et al., 2012:7). A postpositivist worldview further suggests that, because reality is open to different interpretations, the researcher employs statistical analysis (Chapter 5) to assist in analysing and verifying the findings of this study (Chapter 7).

4.2.2. Symbolic Interactionism

Simplistically, symbolic interaction refers to "action follows meaning", where the focus is on the "subjective understandings and perceptions" of and about people (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:62; Crossman, 2018:1), as individuals are influenced by events occurring in their environment (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018:27). This relates to the qualitative process of this study.

Symbolic interaction primarily refers to the language and symbols that individuals utilise to communicate with others (Carter & Fuller, 2015:1; du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018:28) and addresses the subjective meanings that people assign to other individuals, objects, events, and behaviours (Crossman, 2018:1). Subjective meanings are

prioritised because it is believed that people act based on their beliefs, rather than solely on what is objectively true. Consequently, society is viewed as socially constructed through human interpretation (Crossman, 2018:1).

The process by which individuals interpret each other's behaviour is subjective and leads to interpretations that create social bonds (Crossman, 2018:1; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:63). These interpretations relate to the "definition of the situation", aiding a researcher in gaining a better understanding of the social context that influences people's behaviour (actions taken) during interactions (Crossman, 2018:1). This understanding is essential to this study due to what individuals "believe to be true" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:63). Symbolic interactionism is a worldview that suggests the public assigns meanings to their daily interactions with TPOs and relates to this study because of previous experiences, which influence the perceived professional image of TPOs.

4.2.3 Interpretive Worldview

An interpretive approach also refers to phenomenology. Phenomenology seeks to *verstehen* (understand) participants' thoughts (Kraska & Neuman, 2012:54) regarding the topics under investigation (Leavy, 2017:129). Subjectivity is a vital element of phenomenology. This study primarily focuses on descriptive phenomenology, concentrating on understanding the "lifeworld" experiences of participants as they navigate everyday life and social action (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021a:292).

Phenomenology incorporates bracketing. Bracketing demands discipline from the researcher to step back from their everyday beliefs and opinions, approaching the interviews as a stranger (Denscombe, 2014:99). This stranger approach enables the researcher's naïveté to comprehend how the participants interpret the events they experience (Denscombe, 2014:99).

This approach is advantageous because it allows the researcher to "see things for what they are, uncluttered by assumptions that form part of everyday thinking" about the tested phenomena (Denscombe, 2014:99). This approach assisted the researcher to understand how the motoring public experiences TPOs and to explore the reasons

why TPOs are perceived in particular ways. In contrast, the preceding section focused on worldviews (better known as paradigms or approaches). The following section will explain the study's design and methodology.

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research presents a peculiar form of inquiry through evidence, which the researcher must interpret to understand the complexities of the problem under investigation (Ahmed, 2010:1). The research design is similar to constructing a structure. This process requires a plan or strategy of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (MMAs) to guide the researcher in examining the identified problem (Creswell, 2014:41; Leavy, 2017:9).

4.3.1. Evaluation Research

The term "evaluation" holds various meanings for different individuals. The concept of evaluation research refers to:

“...first and foremost, a process of applying scientific procedures to accumulate reliable and valid evidence regarding the manner and extent to which specific activities yield particular effects or outcomes” (Kumar, 2011:324).

Evaluation research is not merely a data collection method (such as survey research), nor is it simply a component of the research design (such as sampling) (Bachman & Schutt, 2017:315). For the researcher, this study concentrates on a specific social issue (the perceived public image of traffic police officers) that generated applied knowledge (solutions) from the findings (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017:45) to benefit both the traffic profession and society (Chapter 7). The following section elucidates the design of this study.

4.3.2. Research Design

A research design serves as the methodological blueprint that guides the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to address the central problem of the study (Babbie, 2016:4; Kumar, 2011:94). For this research, a mixed methods approach

(MMA) was selected, firmly rooted in a pragmatist philosophy. Pragmatism posits that combining quantitative and qualitative paradigms yields a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of complex social phenomena (Maarouf, 2019:2-3), in this instance, the public perception of the professional image of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in South Africa.

To achieve the study's objectives, an explanatory sequential design was employed. While earlier drafts conceptualised this as a concurrent embedded design, an explanatory sequential approach accurately reflects the phased methodology illustrated in the data collection flowchart (see Figure 4.1). In this design, quantitative data are collected and analysed in the first phase to establish overarching patterns, statistical relationships, and baseline trends regarding public perceptions (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:650; Leavy, 2017:164; Saunders et al., 2019:185).

Following this, the qualitative phase (semi-structured interviews) is purposefully designed to explain, elaborate on, and contextualise the quantitative statistical results. As Fouche and Strydom (2021:429) note, separating data collection into distinct phases allows researchers to draw more robust, well-validated conclusions by using qualitative narratives to provide explanatory depth to numerical data.

4.4. DATA-GATHERING PROCESS

Chapter 1 clarified that an MMA is the preferred choice for this study. The MMA data collection process (see Chapter 1.9 for the definition) includes gathering data through both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews) methods. Figure 4.1 illustrates the phases used to collect the data in the MMA.

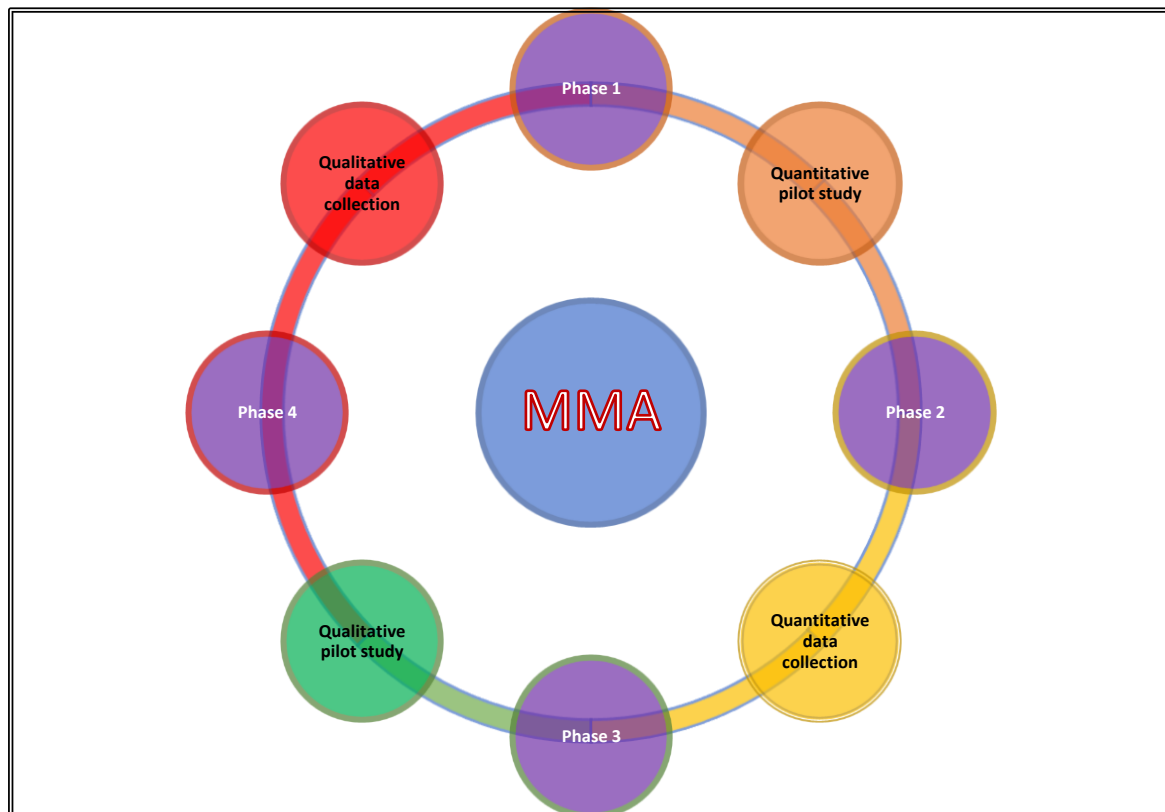


Figure 4.1: MMA data gathering process

Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 explain both MMA techniques.

4.4.1. Quantitative Survey Research

Survey research methods include any process or procedure used to collect data through a survey instrument that prompts individuals (respondents) or groups to respond to a series of predetermined questions and statements (Withrow, 2016:281). The use of the self-developed questionnaire in this study is classified as a non-experimental strategy that primarily involves numerically describing specific trends, attitudes, or opinions, which is directly relevant to this study (Creswell, 2014:169). The quantitative approach of this study was non-experimental because the researcher used a questionnaire to measure variables relevant to the respondents' real-world context. The quantitative survey design reflects a post-positivist assumption (Creswell, 2014:169) that aligns with the worldview specified for this study (see 4.2.1).

The study's quantitative approach was non-experimental, and a questionnaire (see Annexure C) was developed based on the literature and personal experience to gather

data. The primary reason for selecting the non-experimental design is that the study is survey-based and the researcher did not divide the participants into groups, which is supported by Maree (2016:36). The following section discusses aspects related to the data-gathering process. It covers the study population, sampling, data collection tools, the importance of a pilot study, data analysis and interpretation, and issues concerning validity and reliability.

4.4.1.1. The Quantitative Data-Gathering Process: Study Population

The individuals or elements that the researcher is interested in and wants to draw conclusions from regarding the study are known as the population (Kumar, 2019:292; Strydom, 2021: 230; Maxfield & Babbie, 2015:36). The population for this study is defined as the motoring public and their perceptions of the professional image of traffic police officers in South Africa (SA). In 2020, it was estimated that 23.381 million individuals (39.4%) used motorised transport in South Africa, out of a total population of 59.286 million (Stats SA, 2020:17). This report was released on 4 March 2021, and no recent statistical reports of this nature are currently available in SA.

4.4.1.2. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this study comprised individual members of the motoring public selected to provide information applicable to the study, which comprises the sampling elements (Neuman, 2011:244). The data indicated that 61.5% ($n=302$) of the sample consisted of female respondents, while 38.5% ($n=189$) were male. A total of 100% ($n=491$) of respondents used the quantitative approach.

4.4.1.3. Sampling

Researchers employ sampling to select a manageable number of people (respondents) for their studies, which is considered a representative selection (Strydom, 2021:227; Dawson, 2002:47). The researcher chose participants from the target population (as defined by the research objectives) to explore how the public perceives the image of TPOs in South Africa (Leary, 2014:123). Figure 4.3 presents an adapted quantitative survey research process from Bryman et al. (2014:35) utilised for this study.

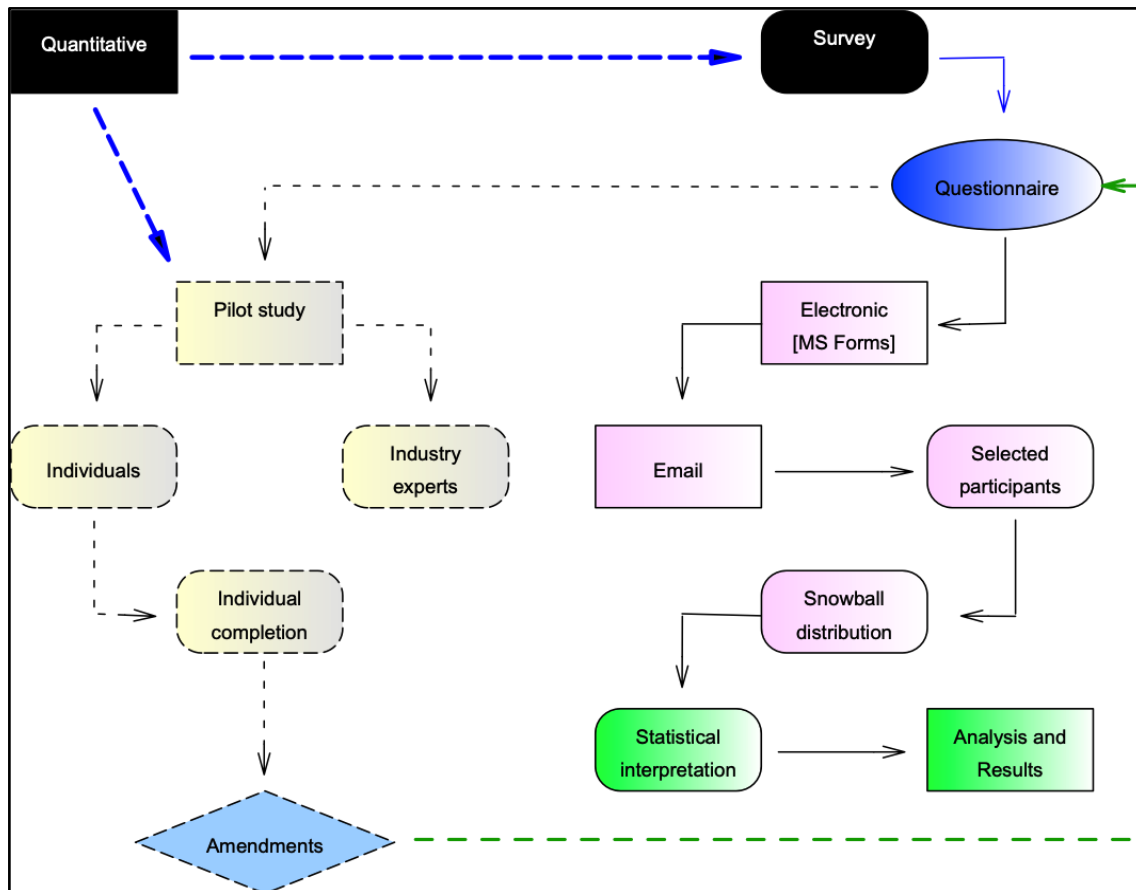


Figure 4.2: Quantitative survey research process

The process illustrated in Figure 4.2 is discussed in Sections 4.4.1.6 to 4.4.1.8 below.

4.4.1.4. Sampling Technique

To empirically address the research questions (Sections 1.5 and 1.6), it was necessary to select a sampling strategy that balanced the need for robust data with the practical constraints of nationwide research (Leavy, 2017:76; Saunders et al., 2019:292). Probability sampling, which relies on random selection from a defined sampling frame to ensure mathematical representativeness (Leary, 2001:116), was not feasible for this study. Despite national statistics on registered vehicles, South Africa lacks a unified, accessible, and centralised database of all active motor vehicle drivers, passengers, and public transport users. Without an exhaustive sampling frame, probability sampling is structurally impossible (Rubin & Babbie, 2011).

Consequently, the researcher utilised a non-probability sampling strategy, combining convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The process began with convenience

sampling, in which four initial respondents (seeds) from diverse demographic backgrounds were strategically selected to complete the survey and avoid initial bias (Laski, 2025:1). These seeds were then asked to distribute the asynchronous electronic questionnaire to their broader networks, thereby initiating the snowball sampling process. Snowball sampling is highly effective in contexts where sampling frames are absent, relying on social networks to reach segments of the target population that might otherwise remain inaccessible (Bryman, 2012).

Methodological limitations and reflexivity were identified by the researcher. It is critical to explicitly acknowledge the methodological limitations inherent in this non-probability design. Because the respondents were not randomly selected, the sample cannot be considered statistically "representative" of the South African motoring population, nor can the quantitative findings be strictly generalised to the broader national population. In non-probability sampling, the probability of any single element being included remains unknown (Maxfield & Babbie, 2015). Instead of claiming mathematical representativeness, the value of this non-probability sample lies in its ability to generate deep theoretical insights, explore relationship dynamics between variables, and provide a robust exploratory foundation (Neuman, 2014a; Saunders et al., 2019), which is subsequently unpacked in the qualitative phase of the sequential design.

4.4.1.5. Sample Size

In quantitative research using probability sampling, sample sizes are traditionally determined by mathematical formulae (Creswell, 2014:169) that calculate the margin of error and confidence levels (Leavy, 2017:77). However, because this study relies on a non-probability sampling framework, calculations based on simple random sampling - such as a 5% margin of error or a 95% confidence level - are statistically inapplicable and methodologically indefensible.

Instead of relying on probability formulas, the sample size for this study was determined by the need to obtain a sufficiently robust dataset (Leedy and Ormrod, 2016:184; Bryman, 2012:198) to conduct rigorous exploratory statistical analyses and to capture a wide range of public attitudes (Saunders et al., 2019:302). Data collection

continued over four weeks until the snowball referrals naturally depleted, and data saturation was reached within the accessible networks.

The final sample size for the quantitative phase was $n = 491$. While this sample size cannot be used to make generalised, predictive claims about the total South African population, a dataset of 491 respondents is highly adequate for non-probability survey research and multivariate analysis. For example, sample sizes exceeding 300 are considered excellent for conducting robust Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2019), which is a primary statistical technique utilised in Chapter 5.

Therefore, the sample provides sufficient statistical power to explore the identified variables, assess internal consistency, and draw meaningful, context-bound conclusions about the perceived professionalism of TPOs in South Africa.

4.4.1.6. Data Collection

Data collection refers to the survey questionnaire that the researcher used to gather empirical data. As part of the study's quantitative approach, respondents were requested to complete a pre-developed questionnaire that is discussed in the sections below.

(A) Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

The researcher opted for the questionnaire because it served as the instrument to generate data "comprehensively and in detail" (Denscombe, 2014:26). The questionnaire is based on the research questions identified in Section 1.5 and the literature chapter, Chapter 2. It is a valuable tool for assessing opinions and attitudes regarding the public's perception of traffic officers in South Africa, the subject of the investigation (Babbie, 2013:229 and Denscombe, 2014:12).

The self-administered questionnaire, which uses closed-ended questions, is the most suitable measure for this quantitative section. Additionally, the questionnaire includes a section for respondents' qualitative remarks, allowing for additional in-depth qualitative data. In designing the questionnaire, the researcher recognised that

respondents might become less inclined to spend time completing it, which remains "a significant concern" for the qualitative researcher (Babbie, 2013: 258).

A questionnaire has no fixed or absolute length (Neuman, 2011:338). The researcher believes that it should be as brief as possible. Consequently, the quality of the information required to address the identified problem must be maintained. The following subsections outline the features of the questionnaire that were employed.

(B) Electronic Questionnaire

The evolving database landscape necessitates that social science researchers remain aware of new developments in data collection and their overall impact on social science research (Abbott, Ade-Ibijola & Roestenburg, 2021:181). The internet has enabled communication across distances without a physical, wired connection; alongside this capability, new opportunities for data collection have emerged (Abbott et al., 2021:182). Everyday electronic devices, such as personal computers and smartphones, have facilitated once unimaginable connections. Users can remain online indefinitely, continuously communicating and transacting globally (Abbott et al., 2021:182).

Electronic survey research, also known as online research, internet research, and mail surveys, is a popular method that social researchers use (Babbie, 2013:259; Denscombe, 2010:14; Withrow, 2016:282). The researcher developed an asynchronous self-administered questionnaire using Microsoft Forms, part of the Microsoft 365 software package, version 16.90.2 (2024). The questionnaire is asynchronous because responses are not recorded in real-time, and respondents do not respond immediately (Bryman et al., 2014:37).

In developing the questionnaire, the researcher chose the Likert scale (see Chapter 1.10.11 for the definition) as a response format. Respondents are presented with a series of attitude dimensions, which consist of scaled questions or statements. Each dimension allows respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale system (Brace, 2004:86). This method measures unobservable constructs such as attitudes, opinions, or perceptions (Koo & Yang, 2025:18).

Responses to each statement or question are scored, and the total of these scores for each respondent yields an overall attitudinal score (Roestenburg, 2021:219; Stratton, 2018:118).

The Likert Scale was the preferred measurement method for this study because the statistical analysis included correlation analysis, and respondents were given categories that allowed for continuous choices from low to high (1 – 5). The Likert scale provides the researcher with a broader range of scores, enhancing the scope of statistical analysis. For this study, responses on the Likert scale ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not Certain, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree.

The four selected participants were sent a link³ (now inactive because the response date has expired) to the questionnaire via electronic mail (email) on the MS Forms platform (Annexure D). Responses were captured and recorded electronically and anonymously. Subsequently, the four chosen respondents forwarded the link to individuals they knew. This snowball sampling process continued for four weeks until saturation was achieved, and the researcher was satisfied that no further responses were forthcoming.

A professionally designed cover letter (see Annexure E) was initially emailed to each respondent before the questionnaire link was distributed. This letter informed them about the components of the intended study, the purpose of their participation, and adherence to ethical principles. Additionally, consent to participate in this study was included in the electronically designed questionnaire (see Annexure F). The following section elaborates on the purpose and significance of the pilot study.

4.4.1.7. Pilot Study

With all questionnaires designed, there is "the certainty of error", whether it arises from an ambiguous question or one that respondents cannot answer (Babbie, 2016:242). As a measure to prevent possible errors, the researcher used the pilot study to identify

³ (<https://forms.office.com/r/mKyamxa3Bz>)

any errors and assist in improving the reliability and validity of this study, as protection to pre-test (pilot) the questionnaire to contribute to the reliability and validity of the project (Babbie, 2016:242).

The pretesting of the quantitative measuring instrument, or the pilot study, must conform to all aspects of the data collection process on a small scale (Strydom, 2021:236). The number of people used to evaluate the preliminary questionnaire should be limited (Babbie, 2016:242; Johnson & Christensen, 2014:298). Therefore, the researcher requested a limited number (six to eight) of individuals who were "... not involved in its construction ..." (Dawson, 2002:95) to thoroughly read the questionnaire to identify and note any ambiguities, uncertainties, or other points of confusion.

All identified deficiencies were addressed, and the questionnaire was handed to "... the type of people ..." used in this quantitative survey (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:298) to determine if there were still uncertainties, questions, or confusions. Only once the researcher was satisfied with the quality of the amended questionnaire was it distributed via email to the selected respondents (see Section 4.5.2.4).

During the quantitative study, the asynchronous electronic questionnaire was distributed to a national sample of n=491 participants. English was the language used for the survey, participant information sheets, and informed consent. During the four-week data collection period, there were no complaints from participants about the text readability. In addition, the researcher did not receive any requests to provide the questionnaire in another official language. Thus, as the national survey was completed successfully, it can be concluded that the use of plain English was appropriate for the study, as participants understood the items and responded accordingly.

4.4.1.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is an essential component of the quantitative phase, systematically reorganising raw empirical data into a machine-readable format for rigorous statistical analysis. For this study, the primary quantitative data from the asynchronous electronic questionnaire were coded, cleaned, and analysed using the Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Williams, 2025:1), in consultation with a statistical expert from the University of South Africa (Unisa). The objective was to transform raw numerical data into meaningful theoretical findings on the public's perception of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs).

(A) Data Screening and Cleaning

Before conducting exploratory and correlational analyses, a comprehensive case screening was carried out to ensure the structural integrity and validity of the dataset. From the dataset of 491 cases, the following parameters were established:

- **Duplicate and Missing Cases:** No duplicate cases or missing values were detected in the dataset, indicating that respondents fully completed the questionnaire constructs.
- **Unengaged Responses:** Four cases showed exceptionally low variance (standard deviation < 0.3 across the scale items). This pattern indicates unengaged or automatic responding (e.g., a respondent selecting "Agree" for every question without reading the varying statements). To protect the validity of the construct measurements, these four unengaged cases were excluded from the scale-level interpretations.

(B) Methodological Treatment of the "Not Certain" (Neutral) Category

A critical methodological decision in the data analysis phase concerned how to treat the neutral midpoint on the 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Not Certain, 5 = Strongly Disagree). Excluding "Not certain" responses from statistical interpretation is methodologically indefensible, as it creates a forced-choice scenario that heavily biases the sample towards respondents with strong or extreme opinions. In this study, a "Not certain" response is recognised as a theoretically valid and crucial data point. It reflects the South African motoring public's genuine ambivalence, limited direct interaction, or nuanced uncertainty about the professional image of TPOs. Excluding these responses—which account for a significant proportion of the data variance across various items—would compromise the ecological validity of the findings.

Therefore, all "Not certain" responses were kept unchanged in the dataset and subsequent analyses. This guarantees that the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and

correlation matrices provide an accurate, unbiased reflection of the public's genuine range of attitudes (Pallant, 2016).

(C) Statistical Power and Sample Adequacy

Given that this study utilises a non-probability sampling framework (see Section 4.5.1.4), a formal *a priori* mathematical power analysis, which assumes simple random sampling, is statistically inapplicable. However, the statistical power to detect meaningful relationships in the dataset is assessed using established sample-size adequacy metrics for multivariate analysis. With an effective sample size of 487 (post-screening), the dataset vastly exceeds the widely accepted minimum threshold of 300 cases required for robust factor analysis and bivariate correlations (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2019).

This sample size offers adequate statistical power to accurately estimate correlation matrices, extract valid factors through Principal Axis Factoring, and confidently examine the theoretical relationships that define public perception of the South African traffic policing profession. The following section addresses the study's validity.

4.4.1.9. Reliability: Quantitative Data-Collection Method

This section explains the applicability and relevance of reliability in quantitative research.

4.4.1.9.1. Reliability

The internal consistency of the self-developed deductive survey questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient (Jain & Angural, 2017:285; Pietersen & Maree, 2016:239). The reliability statistics demonstrated robust internal consistency across all theoretical constructs, with all values comfortably exceeding the 0.7 threshold indicative of high reliability (Saunders et al., 2019:801).

The specific coefficients for the study's objectives were calculated as follows:

- Role fulfilment (Objective 1): $\alpha = 0.938$
- Variables affecting the public image of TPOs (Objective 2): $\alpha = 0.831$
- Interaction (Objective 3): $\alpha = 0.763$

- Impact of the public image on the CJS (Objective 4): $\alpha = 0.874$

Instead of using an existing survey questionnaire, the researcher developed a self-administered asynchronous questionnaire (see Annexure C) to address the research problem and objectives.

4.4.1.9.2. Measurement Validity

To ensure that the survey effectively reflected public perceptions of Traffic Police Officers' (TPOs) professional image in South Africa, validity was confirmed across three main aspects: face, content, and factorial validity (Neuman, 2014:216; Withrow, 2016:145).

- **Face and Content validity**

Prior to formal data collection, the questionnaire underwent rigorous peer review by subject-matter experts in the traffic policing sector and by non-participating individuals. This review confirmed that all items adequately and appropriately represented the theoretical constructs under investigation (Pietersen & Maree, 2016:240; Kumar, 2019:272).

- **Factorial validity**

To establish factorial validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the instrument's structural integrity and identify the dominant theoretical patterns among the measured variables (Babbie, 2013:484). The dataset's statistical adequacy for factor extraction was first verified using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (Watkins, 2020:16). Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), in conjunction with a Rotated Factor Matrix, was then applied to extract underlying constructs and clarify factor loadings across the data. Variables with correlations exceeding 0.60 were clustered to form coherent factors, which were then conceptually defined and labelled (e.g., abuse, role fulfilment, and fear) based on their theoretical alignment (Pallant, 2016:221).

Additionally, bivariate correlation analysis using the Pearson Product-Moment coefficient, integrated with pathway analysis, was conducted to empirically delineate the strength, direction, and structural interrelationships between the independent and dependent variables comprising the proposed model.

4.4.1.10. Research Ethics

The quantitative phase of this study was conducted in strict adherence to institutional and statutory ethical standards. Ethical clearance was formally granted by the University of South Africa (Unisa) College of Law Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) under Reference Number 1080 (Annexure F). The administration of the research instrument and subsequent data management were strictly guided by the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics, ensuring the integrity of the research process was maintained without compromising the rights of the human participants.

4.4.1.10.1. Mitigation of Harm to Participants

Since the self-administered survey was non-invasive and non-experimental, the potential for physical, psychological, or legal harm to respondents was considered minimal. However, proactive steps were taken following the Unisa Ethics Policy to guarantee no harm. Clear safeguards and disclaimers were included in the consent forms to reassure participants that their participation would not cause any negative personal, social, or professional consequences.

4.4.1.11. Informed Consent

In strict compliance with Part 2, Section 3 of Unisa's Policy on Research Ethics, voluntary informed consent was a mandatory prerequisite for data collection. The electronic survey instrument (see 4.5.1.7) incorporated a comprehensive Letter of Consent (LOC). This document explicitly outlined the study's primary objectives, affirmed the strictly voluntary nature of participation, and guaranteed the respondents' unencumbered right to decline participation or withdraw their responses at any stage without prejudice.

4.4.1.12. Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality

To safeguard participants' constitutional right to privacy and to comply with Part 2, Section 4 of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics, rigorous data protection measures were systematically implemented. The asynchronous electronic delivery of the questionnaire ensured respondent anonymity, preventing the association of specific recorded responses with individual participants' identities. Moreover, data confidentiality was rigorously upheld during the analytical phase; raw data and

empirical results were securely handled to ensure that critical information was accessible only to the researcher and entirely segregated from any identifying personal metrics.

In the following sections, the researcher discusses the qualitative data gathering process and relevant components thereof.

4.5. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

4.5.1. Qualitative Data Gathering Process

The qualitative phase of the explanatory sequential design was strategically implemented to elaborate on and contextualise the statistical findings from the quantitative phase. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to cross-correlate empirical trends and to gain a deeper phenomenological understanding of the public's perceptions of the role fulfilment, interaction dynamics, and overall professional image of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in South Africa.

4.5.1.1. Unit of Analysis and Sample Demographics

The qualitative unit of analysis comprised 13 pre-selected individuals from the motoring public who consented to participate. The final qualitative sample showed a pronounced gender imbalance, with 12 females (92.3%) and 1 male (7.7%). This bias arose naturally from the purposive sampling method, as female participants were significantly more willing to participate in in-depth interviews about their experiences with traffic policing. This imbalance restricts a comprehensive, gender-neutral depiction of the public, yet offers significant, contextually rich insights into the unique experiences, anxieties, and vulnerabilities of female motorists in their interactions with TPOs. This disparity is recognised as a methodological constraint of the study.

4.5.1.2. Sampling

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to deliberately select "information-rich" participants who could clarify the statistical phenomena identified in the survey data. Participants were excluded if they were under 18, non-motorists (pedestrians or cyclists), or worked in traffic law enforcement to avoid professional

bias. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, the point at which additional interviews yielded no new substantive themes or insights into the public perception of TPOs.

4.5.1.3. Data Collection Instrument and Process

Data were gathered through semi-structured, individual interviews conducted over a two-week period in September 2023. An independently developed interview schedule guide (Annexure G), derived from the quantitative survey constructs, was used to facilitate the conversations. The interviews averaged 30 to 35 minutes. While the quantitative questionnaire comprised more than 50 specific items, the qualitative interview schedule guide did not repeat these questions verbatim. Rather, it served as a comprehensive thematic framework focusing on core theoretical concepts (e.g., abuse of power, fear, bribery, and role fulfilment). The 35-minute duration was experimentally sufficient to thoroughly examine these broad themes, allowing participants to share their experiences freely rather than following a strict sequence of closed-ended questions.

4.5.1.4. The Pilot Study

A pilot study involving six participants was conducted prior to the primary qualitative data collection to assess the theoretical accuracy and structural coherence of the interview schedule guide. The pilot group comprised traffic professionals rather than members of the general motoring public. Although this ensured that the constructs were operationally and theoretically robust within a traffic law enforcement context, it did not sufficiently assess the general public's linguistic understanding or interpretation of the questions. The demographic misalignment during the pilot phase is recognised as a methodological constraint.

In the qualitative study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with thirteen pre-selected participants from the motoring public were conducted (see Appendix C). The qualitative nature of the study allowed me to identify and resolve emergent interpretive issues during data collection, and as a result, no participants left early. Each interview lasted between thirty (30) and thirty-five (35) minutes, and all participants engaged comfortably in English. None of the participants reported any difficulty understanding

the interview guide or requested an interpreter or a language other than English for the interview.

4.5.1.5. Qualitative Data Analysis

The transcribed interview data were loaded into ATLAS.ti (version 25.0.1) for thorough, computer-assisted qualitative analysis. The analysis employed a systematic thematic methodology, incorporating both deductive and inductive coding (Schurink et al., 2021b:402). The procedure commenced with deductive open coding, utilising pre-established themes derived from the study's theoretical framework and quantitative results (e.g., public trust, perceived corruption). Subsequently, axial coding was employed to delineate conceptual links and cross-cutting themes among these categories. Ultimately, selective coding was employed to synthesise these categories into a comprehensive explanatory narrative of the TPO public image.

The thematic analysis was conducted exclusively by the researcher. As a result, intercoder reliability data were not obtained. The absence of a secondary, impartial coder introduces the possibility of subjective interpretation bias, identified as a shortcoming of the qualitative study.

4.5.1.6. Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

The structural integrity of the qualitative findings was preserved by implementing fundamental trustworthiness criteria (Guba & Lincoln, in Kumar, 2019:276). Credibility was established through methodological triangulation, integrating survey data with interview narratives, and through member checking, in which thematic interpretations were validated with participants. Transferability is bolstered by comprehensive, detailed descriptions of the interview narratives, while dependability was maintained by the uniform implementation of the interview schedule guide (Kumar, 2019:220) for all participants.

Importantly, confirmability and the reduction of researcher bias were systematically addressed through phenomenological bracketing (Denscombe, 2014:300). Given the researcher's 36 years' experience as a senior Traffic Police Officer, the potential for prescriptive interviewing or authoritative bias was considerable. In response, the

researcher adopted a disciplined, reflexive approach, deliberately suspending professional biases and avoiding the "correction" of participants' accounts or defensive dialogue during interviews. This ensured that the facts precisely represented the unembellished lived experiences of the driving populace.

The structural integrity of the qualitative findings was maintained by applying core trustworthiness criteria (Guba & Lincoln, in Kumar, 2019:276). Credibility was achieved through methodological triangulation (combining survey data with interview narratives) and member checking, in which thematic interpretations were verified with participants. Transferability is supported by rich, thick descriptions of the interview narratives, while dependability was ensured by the consistent application of the interview schedule guide (Kumar, 2019:220) across all participants.

Crucially, confirmability and the mitigation of researcher bias were actively managed through phenomenological bracketing (Denscombe, 2014:300). Given the researcher's 36-year tenure as a senior Traffic Police Officer, the risk of prescriptive interviewing or authoritative bias was significant. To counter this, the researcher maintained a disciplined, reflexive stance, consciously setting aside professional preconceptions and refraining from "correcting" participants' narratives or engaging in defensive discourse during interviews. This ensured the data accurately reflected the unvarnished lived realities of the motoring public.

4.5.1.7. Ethical Approach

The qualitative phase was conducted in accordance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics, and ethical clearance was obtained from the College of Law Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC Reference: 1080). Participants gave voluntary informed consent by signing an Informed Consent Form (Annexure H) before data collection, after full disclosure of the study's objectives. During transcription and analysis, unique alphanumeric identifiers (e.g., P1, P2) were assigned to protect participant anonymity and data confidentiality, ensuring that no narrative could be linked to individual identities. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the non-invasive nature of the investigation guaranteed strict adherence to the principle of non-maleficence.

4.6. PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity was maintained throughout the conceptualisation and implementation of this study. All external literature, theoretical frameworks and secondary data sources were extensively referenced and cited in accordance with the prescribed institutional academic conventions. The final manuscript was run through the Turnitin similarity detection software to check for originality and to ensure compliance with Unisa's academic standards, and a report with an acceptably low similarity index was obtained (see Annexure I).

4.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several methodological and practical constraints contextualise the findings of this research:

- **Sampling and Generalisability**

The reliance on non-probability sampling techniques (convenience and snowball) precludes the dataset's mathematical representativeness. Consequently, the quantitative findings cannot be statistically generalised to the entire South African motoring population and instead serve as an exploratory foundation for understanding prevailing perceptions.

- **Qualitative Gender Imbalance**

The qualitative sample was predominantly female (92.3%). While this provides deep insights into female perspectives, it disproportionately skews qualitative narratives on fear and vulnerability, limiting the cross-gender applicability of the thematic findings.

- **Subjectivity in Thematic Coding**

A single researcher conducted the qualitative data analysis. The absence of an independent co-coder to establish intercoder reliability introduces a risk of subjective interpretive bias.

- **Pilot Study Demographics**

The pilot studies for both the quantitative and qualitative instruments relied on traffic professionals and peers rather than the target population (the general motoring public). This limited the pilots' ability to assess the public's linguistic comprehension of the instruments.

- Pilot Study Linguistics

Although the article notes the lack of non-English readability testing and the limited demographic profile of the pilot study, the collected results demonstrate that language was not an issue. There were no reported complaints or requests for translation in the quantitative and qualitative data sets, indicating that translated versions were not necessary, as the English versions appeared to be understandable.

- Supervisory and Administrative Disruptions

The study underwent three unexpected transitions in academic supervision due to retirements and resignations. These shifts necessitated significant paradigm changes, including a mid-course transition to a Mixed-Methods Approach (MMA), which required the repetitive, time-consuming process of obtaining new ethical clearances (RERC Reference 1080).

- Access Restrictions

Institutional constraints prevented direct access to metropolitan police officers for interviews, thereby limiting the qualitative inquiry to non-law-enforcement public perspectives.

4.8. GEOGRAPHICAL (SPATIAL) DEMARCATION

The empirical scope of this study was strictly limited to the sovereign geographical borders of South Africa. To preserve this spatial integrity, responses from participants residing outside the country (n=3) were systematically removed from the statistical dataset prior to analysis.

4.9. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter systematically described the explanatory sequential Mixed Methods Approach (MMA) employed in this study, firmly situating the research design within its guiding philosophical worldviews. The methodology was divided into separate but complementary phases to provide a robust approach to the core research objectives. The quantitative phase was conducted using a non-probability sampling strategy, specifically convenience and snowball sampling, to collect data via an asynchronous electronic survey.

The procedures for data collection, the maintenance of neutral-scale responses and the protocols for multivariate statistical analysis were described, along with the robust measures adopted to ensure factorial validity and internal reliability. The qualitative phase was then outlined, detailing how purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews were operationalised to unpack and contextualise the statistical findings. The procedures for computer-assisted thematic analysis were described, and the stringent criteria employed to preserve trustworthiness, researcher reflexivity and academic integrity were listed.

The chapter then addressed the study's ethical compliance, spatial demarcations, and inherent methodological limitations, particularly regarding sampling generalisability and qualitative gender imbalances. The detailed statistical analysis and the theoretical interpretation of the quantitative dataset are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: QUANTITATIVE DATA

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a critical analysis of the primary quantitative data collected to address the study's core problem. Specifically, this phase of the research was guided by the primary research question: *"How can an empirical analysis of public perceptions inform the development of a conceptual model to improve the professional image of traffic police officials in South Africa?"* Adopting an evaluative approach, this chapter systematically unpacks the lived experiences of the motoring public. The data, collected via a self-administered survey, provide an empirical foundation for measuring the profound complexities inherent in traffic policing, with a focus on role fulfilment and the variables that shape institutional trust (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019:182).

The chapter's structure aligns with the study's research objectives. To begin, the paper presents respondents' demographic statistics to understand the target audience better. Next, the public's perception of traffic police performance is analysed. Then, the discussion focuses on public views of factors that undermine the image of traffic police officers, using cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis. The issue of the public's interaction experiences is also considered. Finally, the impact of these issues on the criminal justice system is evaluated as a basis for concluding the research (Pallant, 2016:221).

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of responses from 491 valid participants. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are applied to the data. Responses expressing neutrality are included to ensure the accuracy of the results. In addition, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to identify factors such as professional service, public satisfaction, and public misconduct. The interpretation of the results is based on applying this chapter's statistical analysis to criminological theories. This approach is necessary to obtain reliable results that will

serve as the basis for future research. Table 5.1 summarises the pre-identified categories that align with the study objectives.

Table 5.1: Summary of quantitative categories analysed and interpreted

Objective		Pre-identified categories
		Demographic information and profile of respondents
1	5.3	Role fulfilment of traffic police officers
2	5.4	Variables that affect the public image of traffic police officers
3	5.5	Interaction with traffic police officers
4	5.6	Impact of the public image on the criminal justice system

The predetermined categories of the self-developed questionnaire (Table 5.1) were organised from general, neutral questions to more sensitive ones (Roestenburg, 2021:214). The sequence of questions is crucial to ensuring that respondents remain willing, interested, and attentive to the survey while avoiding any influence on their answers (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:310; Bryman, 2012:221; Leavy, 2017:103). While numerous books on quantitative research are available, this section primarily references Pallant (2016).

Before performing any factor analysis in Sections 5.3 – 5.6, the suitability of the data for such analysis was assessed. The inspection of the correlation matrix revealed several coefficients of .3 and above. Principal axis factoring was specified as the extraction procedure, with varimax specified as the rotation method.

In this chapter, to enhance understanding, all column totals reflecting the scores for "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" were combined and categorised as "Total Agree" for reporting purposes. Similarly, the scores for "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" were merged and classified as "Total Disagree" in the combined T2B (Top-Two Box). The T2B statistic, referred to as the combined Top-Two Box, is an abbreviation used in SPSS. It plays a vital role in data analysis by converting Likert scale responses into a single percentage, which aims to improve the quality and accuracy of data analysis processes (Hillmer, 2020:1).

5.2. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Section 5.2 describes the demographic profile of the 491 quantitative respondents who took part in the study. Gathering demographic information enabled the researcher to explore contextual associations between the independent and dependent variables (Saunders et al., 2019: 409, 512; Bachman & Schutt, 2017: 224). However, because a non-probability sampling strategy was used, the sample characteristics are presented only in descriptive form to provide context for the findings. No statistical claims or comparisons to the overall South African population are made, as population representativeness cannot be assumed with non-probability sampling. To maintain consistency across all demographic variables, the full sample of 491 respondents has been retained for all analyses. For clarity and conciseness, demographic data have been combined into one comprehensive summary (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Summary of quantitative categories analysed and interpreted

Demographic Category	Classification	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	302	61.5
	Male	189	38.5
Age Group	18–39 years	282	57.4
	40–60+ years	209	42.6
Ethnicity	African	320	65.2
	White	101	20.6
	Coloured	55	11.2
	Indian/Asian	13	2.6
	Other	2	0.4
Highest Academic Achievement	Vocational qualifications	169	34.4
	Undergraduate degree	142	28.9
	Senior Certificate	92	18.7
	Postgraduate degree	88	18.0
Primary Mode of Transport	Driver	365	74.3
	Passenger	63	12.8

	Public transport	62	12.6
	Motorcyclist	1	0.2
Residential Province	Gauteng	226	46.0
	Western Cape	62	12.6
	Northwest	36	7.3
	Limpopo	35	7.1
	KwaZulu-Natal	31	6.3
	Eastern Cape	29	5.9
	Mpumalanga	27	5.5
	Free State	23	4.7
	Northern Cape	19	3.9
	Outside South Africa	3	0.6

Table 5.2 presents aggregated data that clearly characterise respondents in the quantitative segment of the study. The sample is predominantly female (61.5%) and consists of a younger to middle-aged respondents, with 57.4% aged 18 to 39. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of respondents identified as African (65.2%), followed by White (20.6%) and Coloured (11.2%).

The cohort has a high level of formal education, with over 80% attaining a certificate equivalent to or beyond a Senior Certificate. Vocational qualifications (34.4%) are the largest educational group, followed by a substantial proportion with undergraduate (28.9%) and postgraduate (18.0%) degrees. Regarding road use, the primary variable in traffic enforcement shows that the majority of respondents are motor vehicle drivers (74.3%), while passengers and public transport users account for 12.8% and 12.6%, respectively. The data indicate a significant concentration of respondents in Gauteng (46.0%), as expected given its status as South Africa's economic centre. The Western Cape is the second-largest geographical grouping at 12.6%, while the remaining respondents are fairly evenly distributed across the other seven provinces.

This demographic distribution yields varied perspectives on public perceptions of traffic police officers, which are analysed in the following sections of Chapter 5. These

results, however, must be understood within the limitations of the sampled population, rather than the national population.

5.3. THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS' ROLE FULFILLMENT – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

Road traffic policing forms part of the CJS to improve road safety and reduce traffic crime (Ullah, Hussain, Alam & Akhunzada, 2016:134-135). Building on the methodological framework established in Chapter 4, this section presents, analyses, and discusses the primary quantitative survey results. It evaluates the first research question by assessing the extent to which the public perceives South African Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) to be effective. This research evaluates the first question by analysing how the public views the effectiveness of South African Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in reducing traffic crime and improving road safety (see chapter 1.9). It assesses this by analysing role fulfilment variables. Road traffic policing is a critical subset of the broader criminal justice system, and the professional role fulfilment of TPOs is essential to ensuring a safe road environment for all residents and visitors to South Africa.

5.3.1. Summary of Selected Descriptive Statistics for TPO Role Fulfilment

A targeted descriptive analysis was conducted to evaluate 14 statements and respondents' quantitative responses (n=491) regarding their experiences of TPO role fulfilment, using a 5-point Likert scale. Rather than detailing each variable in isolation, a synthesised review of the core descriptive statistics reveals a stark dichotomy between respondents' theoretical expectations of traffic policing and their perceived operational realities. A summary of selected descriptive statistics for TPO role fulfilment is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

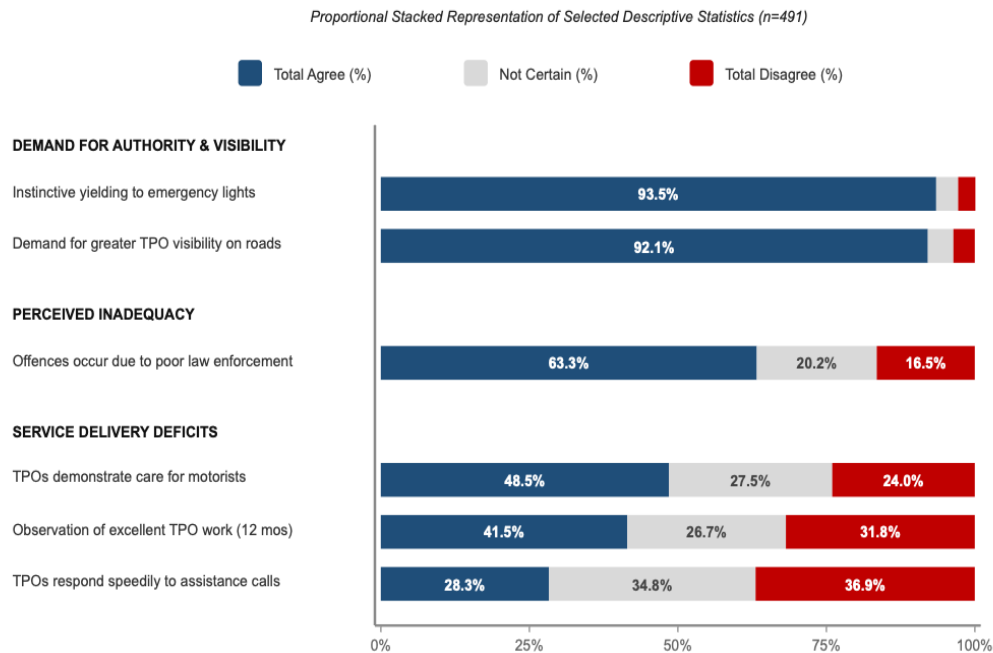


Figure 5.1: Public Perception of Traffic Police Officer Role Fulfilment by Construct Theme

Figure 5.1 presents the descriptive statistics. It illustrates the discrepancy between the public's expectations regarding road traffic policing and their perception of actual practices. By grouping variables into three themes, several conclusions can be drawn.

- **Demand for Authority and Visibility**

The data indicates that 93.5% of respondents instinctively give way to emergency blue lights and sirens, while 92.1% believe there should be increased TPO visibility on our roads. These high agreement rates highlight the public's acknowledgment of TPOs' authority and symbolic presence. Nonetheless, the 3.7% and 4.3% responses of "not certain" imply that a small but significant segment of the population might be unsure about these issues. This uncertainty could stem from limited personal interaction with TPOs or confusion about their operational protocols.

Future research could explore whether this uncertainty correlates with demographic variables such as age, geographic location, or driving experience.

- **Perceived Inadequacy in Traffic law enforcement**

Although 63.3% of respondents agree that inadequate traffic law enforcement is the cause of traffic violations, a significant proportion are unsure, as evidenced by 20.2% "not certain" responses. This uncertainty may stem from inconsistent enforcement practices or a lack of visible accountability mechanisms. Incorporating this figure into the research reveals a possible gap in public understanding or communication regarding TPO enforcement tactics.

Mitigating this deficiency may require public awareness initiatives or greater transparency in enforcement outcomes.

- **Service Delivery Deficits**

The statistics on service delivery indicate a more critical public perception, wherein:

- ❖ Only 41.5% reported exemplary TPO performance in the past 12 months, while 26.7% expressed uncertainty;
- ❖ Additionally, 28.3% agreed that TPOs respond promptly to requests for assistance, whilst 34.8% expressed uncertainty.

The high proportion of "not certain" responses for these variables suggests limited visibility of or direct experience with TPOs' service delivery. This may indicate that several respondents had minimal engagement with TPOs in situations requiring assistance, resulting in uncertainty about their efficacy. Alternatively, it may reflect a wider concern about public disengagement or scepticism regarding traffic law enforcement organisations.

These findings underscore the necessity for TPOs to improve their public engagement and visibility in service-oriented positions.

- **Summary of Results**

Incorporating responses classified as "not certain" in the analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of public perception. Although the majority of respondents recognise the theoretical significance of TPOs, the statistics reveal substantial scepticism concerning their practical efficacy. This uncertainty, as evidenced by the prevalence of neutral or indecisive responses, suggests that TPOs

could increase public trust by refining their communication, augmenting their visibility, and elevating the quality of their services.

The following section discusses the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) related to the primary Objective 1.

5.3.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) – Objective 1 (Role Fulfilment)

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying latent structure of the role fulfilment statements. This analysis used Principal Axis Factoring with a Varimax rotation (Bikos, 2024:1; Pallant, 2016:221). The summary of statistical appropriateness and item parameters is presented in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3: Exploratory Factor Analysis Item Parameters for Role Fulfilment Construct

Statistical Measure	Value / Outcome
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.953
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	χ^2 (78, n=491) = 3501.134, $p < 0.001$
Extracted Components	1 (Conceptualized as: <i>Professional Service Delivery</i>)
Retained Items	10 Items (Factor Loadings: 0.662 – 0.797)
Total Variance Explained	43.5%
Cronbach's Alpha	0.938

The data were highly suitable for factor analysis, as evidenced by a KMO of 0.953 and a highly significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$). Inspection of the scree plot and subsequent Monte Carlo parallel analysis supported retaining a single-component solution conceptualised as Professional Service Delivery, which demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.938$).

5.3.2.1. Critical Reflection on Item Adequacy – Professional Service Delivery

While the reliability coefficient is robust, it is imperative to critically evaluate the model's overall adequacy. As shown in Table 5.3, this single-factor model explains only 43.5% of the total variance. From this study's perspective, this relatively low proportion of

variance indicates a degree of model inadequacy. It demonstrates that the public perception of TPO role fulfilment is a highly complex, multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be fully captured by a unidimensional factor structure. The unexplained variance implies the presence of external, unmeasured variables, such as localised corruption experiences or specific departmental inefficiencies. The information gathered, specifically the negative feedback on service efficacy and responsiveness, indicates that the current level of role fulfilment by TPOs is below the level required by the public. To realise the improvement of the role fulfilment of TPOs identified by “Service Delivery Deficits,” the information gathered shows that management practices influencing the role fulfilment of TPOs need to be improved in accordance with the NRTLEC (National Road Traffic Law Enforcement Code) in South Africa.

To bridge the gap between statutory authority and frontline operational success, leadership needs to encourage and support the creation of a professional fraternity of road traffic law enforcers. According to the Road Traffic Management Corporation (2019:102), “this requires an organisational culture in which road traffic law enforcers take pride in their contribution to service delivery by exercising professionalism and courtesy in their work”.

To improve construct validity in future research, alternative factor structures must be considered and tested. This could be achieved by separating the construct into distinct dimensions of tangible operational efficiency, such as response times and interpersonal empathy, or by introducing mediating underlying variables to capture a broader spectrum of the policing experience.

5.4. THE VARIABLES THAT AFFECT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2

Building on the literature review and methodology outlined in the previous chapters, this chapter focuses on analysing the data collected for this study. Chapter 5 presents the data analysis and discussion section of the thesis. To address the knowledge-based research question posed by the thesis, this section examines which variables affect the public image of traffic police officers (TPOs) in South Africa. In line with the

theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, this section discusses the study's quantitative results by integrating findings from the qualitative survey questions. This integrated approach not only quantifies public perception but also gives a necessary voice to respondents' lived experiences, demonstrating how incompetence, lack of integrity, and systemic corruption severely compromise the professional image of TPOs in South Africa (Raymond, 2021:1; Roets, 2015:240; Basdeo, 2010:386).

The section below identifies and describes the variables that influence the public image of traffic police officers.

5.4.1. Descriptive Analysis: Variables Affecting the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers

To determine which new theoretical constructs should be developed, quantitative respondents were asked to evaluate 14 Likert-scale statements on the topic, derived from the literature. All responses, including the "Not Certain" responses, are presented below in this analysis. Retaining neutral responses is both theoretically defensible and methodologically necessary, as excluding them does not appear scientifically sound. A significant number of respondents (an average of 20.7% across items) expressed uncertainty about their stance on various aspects of TPO practice, reflecting their attitude towards it. Considering only "Agree" and "Disagree" responses would significantly bias the sample in favour of more extreme perspectives and ignore the complexity of the issue as perceived by the majority of respondents who work in South Africa.

Table 5.4 below provides a consolidated reflection of the fourteen analysed statements.

Table 5.4: Summary of Variables Affecting the Public Image of TPOs (*n*=491)

Variables	Mean (SD)	Not certain	Combined Top 2- Box	
			Total Disagree e	Total Agree

(i) When I see a traffic police officer, I see a person representing authority.	3.70 (1.033)	12.8%	15.7%	71.5%
(ii) The appearance of a traffic police officer demands respect.	3.71 (1.021)	14.9%	14.3%	70.9%
(iii) Politicians influence the legitimacy of traffic police institutions.	3.80 (1.033)	25.9%	9.8%	64.4%
(iv) Accepting a bribe is more severe than offering a bribe.	3.68 (1.281)	14.3%	21.8%	64.0%
(v) Traffic police officers issue fines to meet traffic ticket quotas.	3.63 (1.006)	31.8%	11.4%	56.8%
(vi) My first impression of a traffic police officer is a friendly custodian of the law.	3.26 (1.102)	20.8%	28.3%	50.9%
(vii) The service I received when visiting a traffic institution is professional.	3.18 (1.184)	20.0%	31.8%	48.3%
(viii) I believe that most traffic officers are unethical in their conduct.	3.28 (1.145)	26.3%	27.1%	46.6%
(ix) Traffic police officers use traffic stops to ask for bribes.	3.36 (1.162)	33.0%	22.0%	45.0%
(x) I have no trust in the legitimacy of the duties performed by traffic police officers.	2.93 (1.214)	22.0%	41.5%	36.5%
(xi) I have no trust in traffic police officers.	2.91 (1.218)	20.8%	44.2%	35.0%
(xii) Before driving, the notion of a bribe during a potential traffic stop already occupies my thoughts.	2.77 (1.337)	16.1%	49.7%	34.2%
(xiii) I have no respect for traffic police officers.	2.15 (1.064)	18.1%	69.9%	12.0%
(xiv) I see nothing wrong with paying a bribe, as it is considered acceptable in South Africa.	1.88 (1.092)	12.2%	77.2%	10.6%
Column Total Average Percentages		20.7%	33.2%	46.2%

According to Table 5.4, 46.2% of respondents agreed, 33.2% disagreed, and 20.7% were unsure about the statements. Although authority (71.5%) and appearance (70.9%) are associated with extremely high levels of agreement, respondents report that policing dimensions related to corruption and bribery significantly undermine the

traffic police's image. However, it is crucial to note the results for Item (xiv), where only 10.6% of quantitative sample respondents agreed with the statement, "I see nothing wrong with paying a bribe, as it is considered acceptable in South Africa," while 77.2% disagreed. At first glance, the results suggest that only a small minority of South African motorists are prone to bribery. Nevertheless, this conclusion contradicts the qualitative sample results, which will be presented and discussed in detail in Section 5.4.4. In fact, this apparent discrepancy might be partially explained by the social desirability response bias. Put simply, when responding to a quantitative survey, many people tend to provide answers that reflect a socially acceptable position and portray a favourable image of themselves (especially when morally undesirable responses are associated with potential negative consequences such as imprisonment or loss of income).

5.4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Model Evaluation – Objective 2

To investigate the underlying relationship between the ratings of the 14 statements and to identify any theoretical constructs, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.892 and a highly significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2(91) = 2762.974$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed the sampling adequacy and factorability of the data (Pallant, 2016:221). The principal axis factoring method identified three components with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 35.4%, 7.3%, and 3.3% of the variance, respectively. Upon reviewing the scree plot, the second component showed a distinct break. Using Cattell's scree test, it was decided to retain the two components for further investigation (Pallant, 2016:221). The Monte Carlo principal components analysis (PCA) for parallel analysis confirmed a two-component solution - Traffic Police Image ($\alpha=0.865$) and Bribery ($\alpha=0.794$), which explains 20.0% and 17.9% of the total variance. The rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Rotated factor matrix: The Influence of the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers on the Criminal Justice System

Item Construct	Factor 1: Traffic Police Image	Factor 2: Bribery	Mean (SD)	Total (Cronbach's `alpha`)

(i) Impression as a friendly custodian of the law	0.783		3.26 (1.102)	Factor 1 Cronbach Alpha = 0.865
(ii) TPO represents authority	0.706		3.70 (1.048)	
(iii) Appearance demands respect	0.675		3.71 (1.021)	
(iv) No respect for TPOs	-0.523		3.85 (1.064)	
(v) No trust in the legitimacy of duties	-0.513		3.07 (1.214)	
(vi) No trust in TPOs	0.663		2.91 (1.218)	
(vii) Unethical conduct of TPOs		0.602	3.28 (1.145)	Factor 2 Cronbach Alpha = 0.794
(viii) Issue fines for quotas		0.558	3.63 (1.006)	
(ix) Use traffic stops to ask for bribes		0.543	3.36 (1.162)	

While the Cronbach's alpha scores for the two constructs are satisfactory at 0.865 and 0.794, respectively, it is noteworthy that the current EFA model only explains 37.9% of variance (20.0% for Factor 1 and 17.9% for Factor 2). The low percentage of explained variance indicates that the model exhibits a degree of inadequacy. This verifies that the theoretical construct of the public image of TPOs in South Africa adequately represents the complexity of the relationships among the variables of interest and captures the phenomenon under investigation. The construct of public image in traffic policing is multifaceted and cannot be captured by the set of linear variables in this section with sufficient accuracy. The negative factor loadings for items (iv: -0.523) and (v: -0.513) indicate a negative direction, which will necessitate strict reverse-scoring procedures in future analyses to prevent suppression of total variance.

Future research upon the results of the current analysis should explore different EFA models to identify the best-fitting structural relationships. Moreover, to ensure sufficient variance is captured, future studies should consider using Confirmatory

Factor Analysis (CFA) to identify additional latent variables that drive the public image in traffic policing. This will enhance the cumulative variance explained and the structural validity of the theoretical model.

5.4.3. Demographic Associations with Bribery Conduct (Chi-Square Analysis)

Chi-Square tests of independence were conducted to assess the relationships between demographic variables and exposure to bribery. It is noteworthy that this study utilised a non-probability sampling technique. Consequently, any comparisons with population demographics are inherently limited. The demographic associations and Chi-Square statistics discussed below provide valuable insights into the dynamics of this specific sample, but they cannot be used to generalise to the broader South African population.

This section provides a conceptual integration of the factors affecting bribery practices in South African traffic policing. The data were analysed using cross-tabulation with chi-square tests of independence and evaluated spatial geography, gender dynamics and age against various bribery constructs. Initially, a standard significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered. However, to rigorously control the family-wise error rate and the elevated risk of Type I errors associated with conducting 24 multiple comparisons across the dataset, a strict Bonferroni correction was applied. Consequently, the revised threshold for statistical significance was set at $p < 0.002$ ($0.05/24$ tests). Furthermore, a methodological limitation regarding the chi-square assumptions must be noted. Certain larger cross-tabulations (specifically those involving 'Residential Province' and 'Grouped Age') contained expected cell frequencies below the required threshold of 5. While Fisher's Exact Test was generated for 2x2 tables (such as Gender), it was not computed for the larger matrices during the primary SPSS analysis phase. As the original raw dataset was inaccessible for retrospective Exact Test computations, the standard Pearson Chi-Square values are retained and reported. However, it is submitted that the application of the highly conservative Bonferroni threshold ($p < 0.002$) acts as a robust safeguard, significantly mitigating the risk of false positives that the small cell counts might otherwise produce.

Table 5.6 presents the results of the chi-square test, which summarises the data in a streamlined and concise manner, thereby providing an overview of the variables that influence corrupt interactions and those that are statistically unrelated.

Table 5.6: Synthesised Chi-Square Tests for Independence Pertaining to Public Bribery Behaviours

Dependent Variable (Bribery Construct)	Independent Variable (Demographic Predictor)	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Primary Empirical Deduction
Known individuals who paid a requested bribe	Residential Province	39.83	8	0.001*	Exposure to systemic bribery is highly concentrated in the Free State (60.9%), Gauteng (55.3%), and Limpopo (51.4%), remaining statistically significant under strict Bonferroni correction.
Requested bribe paid to a TPO	Gender	6.20	1	0.013	While descriptive data shows males succumb more, this association is no longer statistically significant under the Bonferroni threshold (' $p < 0.002$ ').
Requested bribe paid to a TPO	Residential Province	15.88	8	0.044	Descriptive compliance peaks in Limpopo and Gauteng, but lacks statistical significance under the corrected threshold.
Bribe offered to avoid prosecution	Residential Province	17.09	8	0.029	Proactive bribery demonstrates spatial disparity descriptively, but the association is not statistically significant (' $p > 0.002$ ').
Preference to pay a bribe to avoid future prosecution	Gender	7.53	1	0.006	The initial variance between males and females is rendered statistically insignificant under the Bonferroni correction.
All Investigated Bribery Constructs	Age Group (18–39 yrs vs. 40–60+ yrs)	-	-	> 0.05	Age plays no statistically significant determining role in a motorist's exposure to, or participation in, bribery.
<i>* Significant at the strict Bonferroni-corrected $p < 0.002$ level.</i>					

5.4.3.1. The Geographical Distribution of Corruption

The results established a highly significant association ($p=0.001$) between a respondent's place of residence and secondary exposure to bribery (knowing individuals who paid a requested bribe). Even under the strict Bonferroni correction, the empirical data support the theoretical claim that exposure to corruption is geographically heterogeneous (Lynch, 2018:1). The statistical link between place and bribery exposure indicates that the high-density economic hubs of Gauteng, Limpopo, and the Free State are spatial hotspots that routinely compromise the boundaries of the criminal justice system. While personal compliance with and initiation of bribery

mirrored these geographical hotspots, these variables lost statistical significance when subjected to the strict $p < 0.002$ threshold.

This regional discrepancy indicates the presence of entrenched, localised institutional subcultures within provincial traffic departments. Devolved governance structures and regional operational contexts create micro-climates of enforcement integrity. Thus, a motorist's geographical location is a principal factor shaping the operating culture they will experience, thereby determining the public's tolerance for both state-sanctioned shakedown (extortion) and proactive bribery.

5.4.3.2. Gender Dimensions of Bribery

Initial descriptive observations indicated that male drivers in South Africa might be more prone to transactional corruption than their female counterparts, with males showing higher raw percentages for paying requested bribes (13.8% vs 6.6%) and a greater preference for proactively offering bribes in the future (19.0% vs 9.9%). However, when subjected to the rigorous Bonferroni-corrected significance threshold of $p < 0.002$, the chi-square analysis reveals that gender does not, in fact, significantly influence either the payment of requested bribes ($p = 0.013$) or the preference for proactively offering bribes ($p = 0.006$). By controlling for multiple comparisons, the data demonstrate that susceptibility to bribery in traffic policing is not strictly bound to gender disparities or risk-taking propensities, but rather indicative of a broader, systemic normalisation of corruption across the entire motoring public.

5.4.3.3. Systematic Normalisation of Bribery across Age Groups

Although spatial location and gender are substantial predictors, the chi-square analysis indicates that age groups (18-39 years vs. 40-60+ years) do not predict bribery practices across any dimension at $p < 0.05$. This finding is highly theoretically compelling. According to Hirschi and Gottfredson (1994:554-556), their seminal conventional age-crime curve asserts a stable developmental pattern characterised by an increase in criminal behaviour throughout adolescence and a consistent decrease into early adulthood. Contemporary Western literature extensively examines the structural complexities and historical fluctuations of this relationship, including the potential shift in the peak age of offending from a predominantly adolescent focus to

a more symmetrical distribution in modern society (Tuttle, 2024:638). However, the empirical data from this study indicates a significantly more systemic crisis. In transactional traffic corruption (bribery), the traditional age-crime curve seems to have disintegrated.

Traditional criminal behaviour tends to decline with age and the assumption of conventional social roles; yet the results strongly indicate that age offers no protective deterrent against corruption in South African traffic enforcement. Statistical analysis shows that younger and older generations are equally susceptible to engaging in illicit transactions. This universality indicates that bribery transcends individual developmental stages and functions as a firmly established descriptive social norm.

Theoretical models indicate that in environments typified by substantial political corruption, inherent aversions to bribery and inequality are notably diminished, overshadowed by systemic structural influences. As a result, bribery is prevalent in South Africa due to cultural normalisation, with individuals viewing it as a judicial mercy and an institutional compromise (Houqe, Zahir-ul-Hassan, Idrus & van Zijl 2020:135). Regardless of age, bribery is commonly perceived as a pragmatic and accepted means of bypassing administrative impediments or evading the financial consequences of legal penalties. Ultimately, when unlawful transactions become the standard practice for all motorists, it signifies a profound failure of the institutional legitimacy and deterrent efficacy of the broader criminal justice system. Therefore, it has become customary for individuals to offer or accept bribes to circumvent the financial and logistical stipulations of formal South African law.

5.4.4. Qualitative Integration: The Rationale Behind Bribery (Open Questions)

To enhance discussion of the quantitative findings, an additional content analysis of the open-ended questions on the primary motivations for bribery was deemed appropriate. The discussions identified four prevalent themes that elucidate negative perceptions of the TPO, following the categorisation of the most frequent responses.

Table 5.7 presents themes identified from the qualitative analysis, along with quantitative summaries of their representation in the sample and verbatim quotes

supporting them. These themes offer insight into why individuals might engage in bribery.

Table 5.7: Thematic synthesis of the rationale behind bribery in South African traffic policing

Qualitative Theme	Quantitative Context	Verbatim Participant Evidence	Critical Synthesis
1. Avoidance of Prosecution and Financial Impact	65.5% (known persons) 37.2% (personally paid)	<i>"The cost of the fine was very high"</i> <i>"Paying a bribe is cheaper than the fine"</i>	The evasion of formal prosecution is inextricably linked to the severe financial implications of legitimate traffic fines. In the current South African economic climate, the "cheaper" bribe serves as a mechanism for financial survival, undermining the deterrent effect of official punitive measures
2. Systemic Inefficiency and Convenience	16.3% (personally paid) 58.3% (offered to avoid prosecution).	<i>"Everything is slow and it might take days or weeks to sort out... I think the system is actually made to be slow to convince us that a bribe is the way to go"</i> <i>"Going to government institutions is very annoying"</i>	The administrative burden and perceived incompetence of the state criminal justice process make the immediate, albeit illegal, transaction highly convenient. The public rationalises bribery as a time-saving mechanism to bypass systemic institutional failure
3. TPO Abuse of Authority, Intimidation, and Fear	25.9% (TPO abuse) 39.6% (fear of future prosecution)	<i>"Because I was afraid, and he told me he will lock me up"</i> <i>"He was threatening to detain me if I didn't pay a bribe"</i>	This highlights the active weaponisation of the TPO uniform. Compliance is frequently coerced through explicit threats of unlawful detention and victimisation. This systemic abuse of power replaces institutional trust with fear, stripping the profession of its ethical legitimacy
4. The Normalisation of Societal Corruption	20.8% (considered to avoid future prosecution)	<i>"That's how we operate in South Africa"</i> <i>"It's acceptable in South Africa"</i>	This points to a profound moral decay within the socio-political landscape. Bribery is no longer viewed solely as a deviant act but is increasingly rationalised as an accepted socio-cultural norm and standard operating procedure on South African roads

Table 5.7 indicates that the normalisation of bribery is not only a transactional (economic) issue but also a complex socio-political phenomenon. Although the TPO uniform is expected to instil authoritative respect, the public's lived experiences, marked by systemic inefficiencies, financial hardship, and direct intimidation, undermine this professional image of TPOs in South Africa. Crucially, a forensic methodological analysis of these qualitative results suggests that they contradict the preceding quantitative findings. In particular, while Theme 4 reveals that, in respondents' views, bribery is fully integrated into South Africa's societal fabric ("That's how we operate in South Africa"), Table 5.4 (Item xiv) shows that only 10.6% of the quantitative sample considered paying a bribe acceptable. As requested by the examiners, I must note this methodological inconsistency as a limitation of the study.

This discrepancy can be explained by the psychological mechanism of social desirability bias, compounded by the structural framing of the research instruments. In the quantitative survey, respondents were required to self-report on a highly personal, morally loaded statement ("*I see nothing wrong with paying a bribe...*"). In quantitative formats, human subjects routinely filter their responses to align with formal legal or ethical standards, effectively masking their illicit behaviours to maintain a favourable self-concept. Conversely, the open-ended qualitative prompts allowed participants to project the phenomenon of bribery onto the broader socio-political landscape. In the qualitative phase, participants were no longer defending their personal morality; rather, they were reporting on perceived societal norms.

Therefore, this contradiction actually highlights the data, not undermining it, since although respondents emphatically denied personally accepting bribes when asked outright, they nevertheless saw nothing wrong with it as a practice in general when asked to describe the traffic policing environment, thereby acknowledging the normalisation in South African society.

5.5. HOW THE PUBLIC EXPERIENCES THEIR INTERACTION WITH TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS –RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3

The findings in this section address the third research objective: evaluating how the public experiences interactions with traffic police officers (TPOs). Every traffic stop, whether prompted by a violation or a routine safety check, initiates an interaction that directly affects human behaviour, with the road user's initial impression playing a decisive role in how the encounter unfolds. Literature suggests that public behaviour during these stops is heavily influenced by preconceptions formed through prior information and media narratives; thus, when motorists hold preconceived opinions or are guided by erroneous justifications originating from external sources such as mainstream media and social networks, the interaction is often tainted from the outset, resulting in volatile confrontations and heightened emotional tension (Bern 2001:4-9; Legault, 2016:1-2; Mazerolle et al., 2013:34; Piquero, 2019:579; Schultz, 2019:5). Therefore, it is essential to explore these dynamics in the South African context and determine the role of secondary information in shaping police-public interactions.

5.5.1. Public Interaction Experiences with Traffic Police Officers

Respondents evaluated 11 statements about their interactions with TPOs on a five-point Likert scale. In line with rigorous analytical standards, statements were grouped into Positive Service Indicators and Negative Experiences & Perceptions to aggregate public sentiment. To address the complexities of public perception and ensure comprehensive statistical transparency, responses classified as 'not certain' have been retained and included in the descriptive analysis. These responses capture a crucial dimension of the data: the proportion of the population experiencing ambiguity, indecision, or a lack of memorable reinforcement in their interactions with TPOs.

Figure 5.2 consolidates these findings, detailing the descriptive statistics and revised construct averages.

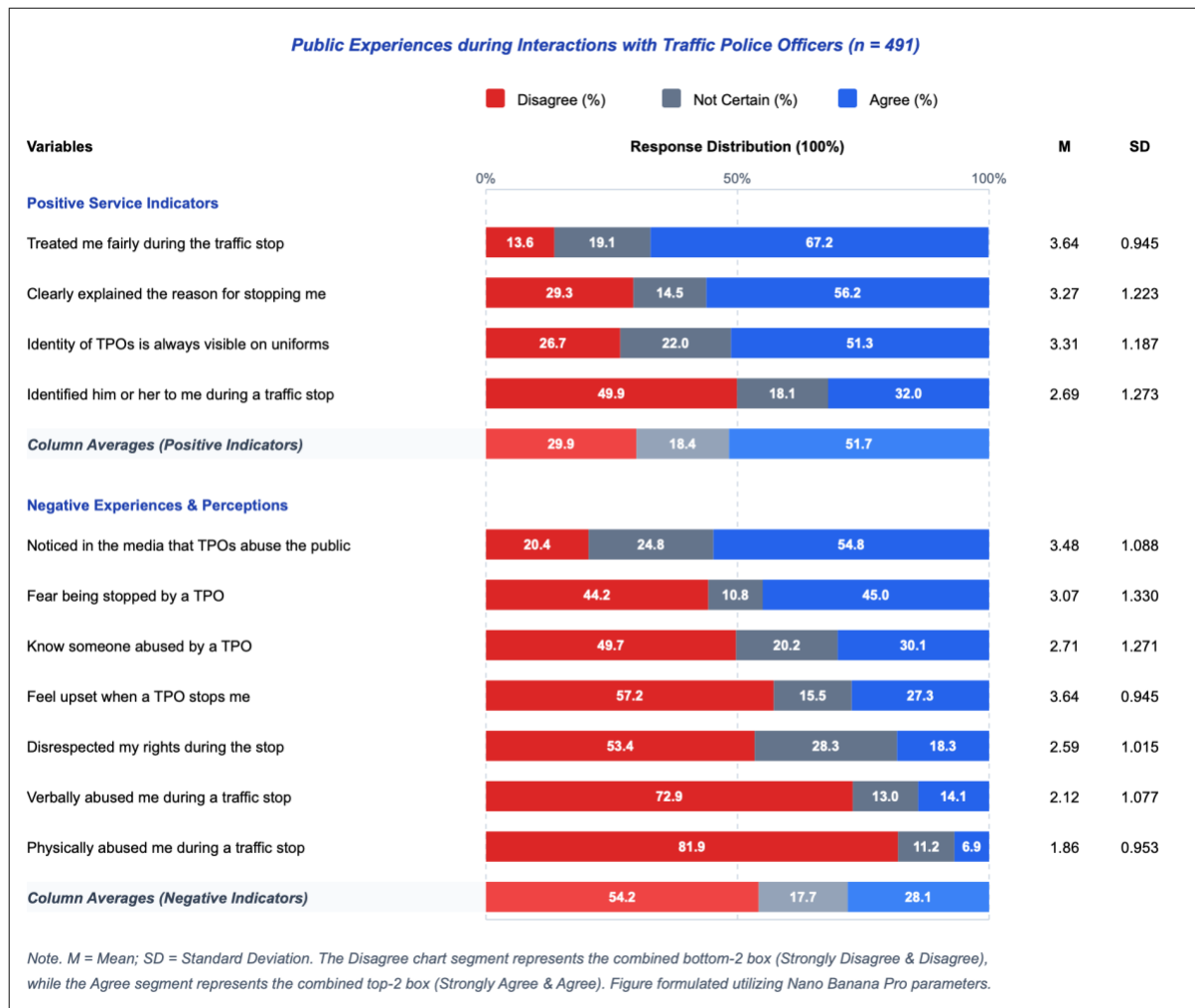


Figure 5.2: Public Experience with Traffic Police Officers during Interaction

As shown in Figure 5.2, the foundational elements of professional service delivery yield moderate satisfaction, with an overall agreement average of 51.7% across positive indicators. A significant majority of respondents (67.2%) agreed they were treated fairly, and 56.2% affirmed that TPOs clearly explained the reason for the stop, indicating a baseline of operational courtesy. However, the inclusion of the 'Not Certain' category reveals underlying ambiguity; 19.1% and 14.5% of respondents, respectively, were unsure about these positive service elements, suggesting inconsistency in TPO service delivery that leaves a notable portion of road users without a definitive positive impression. Structural non-compliance with statutory identification mandates remains a critical defect. While 51.3% perceived TPO identities as visible on uniforms, 22.0% remained uncertain, and nearly half of the sample (49.9%) reported that officers actively failed to identify themselves during the

stop (with a further 18.1% uncertain). This systemic operational failure and resultant public ambiguity violate Section 3A(7) of the National Road Traffic Act (NRTA) of 1996, which mandates the prominent display of official, legible name tags, thereby eroding accountability and institutional trust.

Furthermore, the data reveal high levels of latent public apprehension, with an average of 28.1% agreement and a notable 17.7% uncertainty across all negative indicators. Nearly half of respondents (45.0%) experience fear (capiophobia) when stopped by a TPO, with only 10.8% uncertain about this emotional threat. This apprehension is situated within a broader socio-criminological context heavily influenced by external narratives; 54.8% of respondents agreed (and a further 24.8% were uncertain) that media portrayals of police abuse actively shape their anxieties. This context is exacerbated by systemic corruption, with an estimated 870,000 South Africans being solicited for bribes by TPOs in 2024 alone (Bruce, 2024:1).

Consequently, traffic stops are often perceived not as legitimate safety interventions but as threatening encounters or nuisances that upset motorists (27.3% agreement; 15.5% uncertain) and impede travel (Maxon et al., 2002:1; Nowacki & Spencer, 2019:1). Despite these pervasive institutional fears, direct personal experiences of severe misconduct are statistically low. Overwhelming majorities definitively denied experiencing physical abuse (81.9%) or verbal abuse (72.9%). However, a significant 28.3% of respondents were uncertain whether their rights were disrespected during a stop, compared with 53.4% who explicitly denied it. This high rate of uncertainty regarding civil rights, alongside ambiguities recorded for verbal (13.0%) and physical (11.2%) abuse, indicates that a segment of the population hesitates to definitively clear TPOs of misconduct. This dichotomy suggests that while interpersonal encounters at the individual level are generally non-abusive, the institutional image of TPOs remains heavily compromised by indirect narratives, a lack of procedural transparency, and persistent public uncertainty.

5.5.2. Exploratory factor analysis – Objective 3

To empirically determine the principal theoretical constructs underlying public engagement with traffic police officers (TPOs), an exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

using principal axis factoring was conducted. Subsequent stages of the analysis addressed factor extraction and evaluation. The dataset fulfilled the preliminary requirements for factorability, as evidenced by the results of a Monte Carlo parallel analysis. A detailed overview of the statistical validity of the derived constructs is presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Summary of the Statistical Appropriateness for Public Interactions (n=491)

Statistical Measure	Value / Outcome
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.799
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2(55, n=491) = 1785.289, p < 0.001$
Extracted Components	3 (Conceptualised as: Abuse, Role fulfilment, and Fear)
Retained Items	9 Items (Factor Loadings: 0.574 – 0.848)
Total Variance Explained	51.2%
Cronbach's Alpha	0.763 (Abuse); 0.783 (Role fulfilment); 0.739 (Fear)

Table 5.9 presents the item parameters, factor loadings, and descriptive statistics for the nine retained items associated with the three main constructs.

Table 5.9: Extracted Item Parameters and Construct Descriptives (n=491)

Constructs and Retained Items	Factor Loading	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Abuse		2.19	0.837	0.763
Verbally abused me during a traffic stop	0.848	2.12	1.015	
Physically abused me during a traffic stop	0.685	1.86	0.953	
Disrespected my rights during the stop	0.610	2.59	1.015	
Factor 2: Role fulfilment		3.23	0.906	0.783
Identified him or her to me during a traffic stop	0.733	2.69	1.273	
Clearly explained the reason for stopping me	0.715	3.27	1.223	
Identity of TPOs is always visible on uniforms	0.698	3.31	1.187	
Treated me fairly during the traffic stop	0.574	3.64	0.945	

Factor 3: Fear		2.84	1.118	0.739
Feel upset when a traffic police officer stops me	0.765	2.61	1.175	
Fear being stopped by a traffic police officer	0.697	3.07	1.330	
Note. Statistical Appropriateness Measures: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.799; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity $\chi^2(55) = 1785.289$, $p < 0.001$. Cumulative Variance Explained = 51.2%.				

From Table 5.9, the three extracted components theoretically contextualise the public's interactive experience elaborated on as follows:

- **Factor 1: Abuse ($\alpha = 0.763$)**

This construct encompasses physical and verbal misconduct, as well as disrespect for civil rights during traffic stops. Although descriptive data indicate that the majority of respondents (69.4%) do not directly experience abuse, a persistent 13.1% remain unconvinced of their safety, reflecting enduring public scepticism ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.837$). From a public health and criminological perspective, any prevalence of TPO abuse, classified as unbecoming behaviour, critically damages police-public relations and erodes institutional confidence (DeVylder, Fedina & Link, 2020:1704; Hadebe & Gopal, 2024:1; Khan et al., 2021:1950).

- **Factor 2: Role fulfilment ($\alpha = 0.783$)**

This factor aligns with TPOs' statutory obligations to communicate clearly, act fairly, and display proper identification, as mandated by Section 3A(6-7) of the NRTA. Effective role fulfilment is the bedrock of safe traffic operations; without it, policing interventions become illegitimate and redundant (Aeron-Thomas, 2003:1; Civil Service Success, 2020:1; Fielding, 2022:1). Item statistics ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.906$) reveal a fracture in public perception: while 56.7% believe TPOs adequately fulfil their roles, 29.9% lack confidence in the officers' operational legitimacy.

- **Factor 3: Fear ($\alpha = 0.739$)**

Capturing the emotional discomfort and perceived threat associated with TPOs, this construct relies heavily on both internal controls (past experiences) and external controls (media portrayals) (Legault, 2016:2; Maxon et al., 2002:1; Schultz, 2019:5).

The confidence-level data ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.118$) show that while half the population (50.7%) navigate traffic stops without distress, a significant 36.2% exhibit high levels of apprehension. This entrenched fear fuels public resentment and serves as a primary barrier to cooperative traffic law enforcement.

5.6. THE CRIMINOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE THAT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS MAY EXERT ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM –RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4

The results presented in this section relate to the fourth objective: to account for the criminological importance of the public image of traffic police officers (TPOs) for the broader criminal justice system (CJS). From a criminological perspective, road traffic policing is the enforcement arm of the government's CJS, with its primary goal of deterring unsafe driver behaviour (Mäkinen et al., 2003:44; Perry, 2020:149; Ullah, Hussain, Alam & Akhunzada, 2016:134-135).

Traffic policing is largely shaped by everyday interactions with the public, usually through traffic stops (Bailey, 1996:34; Wu & Lum, 2019:229). The CJS is often perceived by the public through the lens of administrative enforcement powers, encompassing the authority to arrest, detain, and use force (Faraldo-Cabana, 2017:10; Tankebe, 2010:299; Wu & Lum, 2019:230). Therefore, assessing the influence of TPOs' public image on the CJS is important for understanding TPOs' systemic legitimacy.

5.6.1. Statements on How the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers May Influence the Criminal Justice System

Respondents rated 13 statements to assess the extent to which the public image of TPOs affects the CJS. More than half the sample (53.3%; $n=262$) expressed scepticism about the positive influence of TPOs on the CJS, perceiving current traffic law enforcement as largely ineffective. In contrast, 23.8% ($n=117$) held a positive view. Notably, a large number of participants (23.2%; $n=112$) answered “not certain”, indicating general ambivalence or confusion about the systemic impact of TPOs. This high level of uncertainty suggests that the institutional role of TPOs (for nearly a

quarter of the motoring public) remains undefined and disconnected from the broader CJS framework.

The 13 statements given to respondents were categorised into two conceptual domains to enable a structured empirical assessment, as shown in Table 5.10. Panel A includes statements where agreement indicates a positive view, covering public support, active deterrence, and confidence in the CJS framework. Panel B includes statements where agreement indicates a negative view, focusing on perceived institutional illegitimacy, misconduct, and system-level failures of deterrence. This division enables a deeper analysis of how the popular image of traffic police officers both supports and undermines the broader criminal justice system.

Table 5.10: Descriptive Statistics on the Perceived Influence of the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers on the Criminal Justice System (n=491)

Statements	Mean	SD	Total Disagree (%)	Not Certain (%)	Total Agree (%)
PANEL A:					
Statements reflecting a POSITIVE view of the CJS					
(i) Compulsory rehabilitation measures such as revoking driver's licenses or training programmes against habitual traffic offenders must be introduced.	3.89	1.200	10.6	14.3	75.2
(ii) When I see a traffic police officer, I am cautious not to offend because of the risk of being apprehended.	3.78	0.994	13.2	14.5	72.3
(v) I will assist the traffic police by giving evidence in court.	3.76	0.945	9.2	25.1	65.8
(vii) I have confidence in the capabilities of traffic police officers as protectors of law and order.	2.99	1.234	38.5	19.6	42.0
(viii) I support how traffic police officers act in public.	2.99	1.168	35.4	26.3	38.3
(x) I feel safe using our public roads.	2.67	1.222	49.1	21.4	29.5
(xi) Road safety has improved over the past twelve months.	2.62	1.142	46.0	29.9	24.0

(xii) I believe people will judge me when I receive a traffic fine.	2.49	1.133	60.5	16.1	23.4
Average Column Totals (Panel A)	3.15	-	32.8	20.9	46.3
PANEL B:					
Statements reflecting a NEGATIVE view of the CJS					
(iii) I believe traffic police officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoing for fear of retaliation.	3.86	1.063	10.4	20.4	69.2
(iv) I believe traffic police officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoing for fear of institutional judgement.	3.83	1.092	12.4	18.9	68.6
(vi) Traffic police institutions lack legitimacy because their traffic officers operate outside the boundaries of the law.	3.44	1.091	18.9	33.0	48.1
(ix) Traffic police officers refrain from prosecuting traffic offenders to avoid facing public scrutiny/criticism.	3.09	0.994	26.3	38.5	35.2
(xiii) The probability of punishment for a traffic violation does not prevent me from offending.	2.44	1.106	57.4	24.0	18.5
Average Column Totals (Panel B)	3.33	-	25.1	27.0	47.9
*Note: Item (xii) is grouped within the positive construct because agreement indicates that societal stigma and moral condemnation regarding traffic offences still exist, which serves as a positive mechanism for deterrence and CJS legitimacy. Conversely, disagreement implies the normalisation of traffic offending.					

Table 5.10 shows that, cumulatively, over half of the sample (53.3%; n=262) were sceptical of the positive influence of TPOs on the CJS and considered current traffic law enforcement largely ineffective. Conversely, 23.8% (n=117) were positive. Importantly, “not certain” was selected by a large number of respondents (23.2%; n=112), indicating a high degree of ambiguity or lack of clarity regarding the systemic impact of TPOs. The degree of uncertainty is such that, for almost a quarter of the motoring public, the institutional role of TPOs remains ambiguous and is not well connected to the wider CJS framework.

Despite general scepticism, respondents strongly agreed on the need for specific interventions and defensive driving behaviour. A strong majority (75.2%; n=369; mean = 3.89) agreed that compulsory rehabilitation measures, such as revoking licences or mandatory training for habitual offenders, should be introduced, while 14.3% were uncertain. Furthermore, 72.3% (n=355; mean = 3.78) indicated that they exercised deliberate caution to avoid apprehension when observing a visible TPO.

However, this situational caution does not translate into systemic deterrence. Only 18.5% (n=91) believed that the probability of punishment deterred them from violating, whereas 57.4% disagreed (mean = 2.44) and 24.0% were uncertain, highlighting a significant deficiency in the deterrent effectiveness of traffic law enforcement. Furthermore, 60.5% (n=297) rejected the notion that they would face societal criticism for receiving a traffic citation, indicating the normalisation of traffic violations and the ineffectiveness of enforcement in eliciting moral judgement.

Systemic internal challenges in traffic policing came to the fore. A large proportion believed TPOs did not report colleagues' misconduct because of fear of retaliation (69.2%; n=340; mean = 3.86) or institutional judgement (68.6%; n=337; mean = 3.83). Some 20% of respondents were "not sure" about these internal dynamics, reflecting the public's lack of insight into internal police culture. These results point to a serious lack of protection for whistleblowers and institutional transparency. Public-facing actions: 48.1% (n=236) believed TPOs were operating outside the boundaries of the law, which compromised the institution's legitimacy, while a third (33.0%) were unsure.

There were overwhelmingly negative perceptions of road safety more broadly. Almost half of respondents considered themselves unsafe when using public roads (49.1%; n=241; mean = 2.67) and believed that road safety had not improved in the last twelve months (46.0%; n=226; mean = 2.62), with high levels of uncertainty recorded for both metrics (21.4% and 29.9%, respectively). The findings support the literature indicating that poor traffic enforcement significantly reduces public perceptions of the overall image and legitimacy of the CJS (Fielding, 2022:1).

5.6.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis – Objective 4

To empirically reduce the variables related to the criminological influence of traffic police officers (TPOs) on the criminal justice system (CJS), an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring was conducted. Parallel analysis suggested a two-factor solution, with 36.5% of the total variance explained, and the data were found to be highly suitable for factor extraction.

Table 5.11 outlines the statistical appropriateness of the data matrix for factor extraction.

Table 5.11: Statistical Appropriateness for Factor Extraction

Parameter	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.766
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2)	2150.734 (df = 78; p < 0.001)
Extraction Method	Principal Axis Factoring
Variance Explained (Factor 1: Public Satisfaction)	22.0%
Variance Explained (Factor 2: Misconduct)	14.5%
Cumulative Variance Explained	36.5%

Table 5.12 summarises the extracted item parameters (factor loadings) and the composite descriptives for the two retained theoretical constructs: Public Satisfaction and Misconduct.

Table 5.12: Extracted Item Parameters and Construct Descriptives (n=491)

Construct and Associated Items	Factor Loading	Construct Mean (SD)	95% Confidence Interval	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean Inter-Item Correlation
Factor 1: Public Satisfaction					
(viii) I support how traffic police officers act in public	0.865	2.82 (1.015)	– 2.91*	0.874	0.635
(vii) I have confidence in the capabilities of	0.854				

traffic police officers as protectors of law and order					
(xi) Road safety has improved over the past twelve months	0.718				
(x) I feel safe using our public roads	0.685				
Factor 2: Misconduct					
(iv) I believe traffic police officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoing for fear of institutional judgement	0.968	3.84 (1.030)	*– 3.93	0.906	0.828
(iii) I believe traffic police officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoing for fear of retaliation	0.805				
*Note: Factor loadings < 0.30 were suppressed. The mean inter-item correlations for both constructs exceed the 0.30 threshold, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients demonstrate robust internal consistency reliability well above the 0.60 minimum norm					

As shown in Table 5.12, the measurement model yielded two distinct, highly reliable constructs, namely public satisfaction and misconduct.

5.6.2.1. Public Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.874$)

The principal determinant is the public's cognitive and experiential assessment of traffic police officers' (TPOs) actions within the broader context of road safety in South Africa. The construct yielded a mean score of 2.82 (SD = 1.015), with a narrow 95% confidence interval of 2.91, indicating a statistically significant population-level consensus of moderate unhappiness with TPOs' public-facing efforts and protective efficacy. Notably, only 33.5% of respondents expressed unequivocal satisfaction in

this domain, indicating a substantial deficiency in institutional confidence essential to the perceived legitimacy of the criminal justice system. The upper limit of the confidence interval, remaining beneath the neutral midpoint of 3.0 on the Likert scale, empirically validates the existing scepticism among the driving public, rectifying any misconceptions of total negativity and confirming a persistently critical public sentiment towards TPOs in the South African context.

5.6.2.2. Misconduct ($\alpha = 0.906$)

The second factor assesses the perceived prevalence of institutional protectionism and unethical cohesion among Traffic Policing Officers (TPOs). Results indicate a high composite mean for this phenomenon (3.84, SD = 1.030), and a very high mean inter-item correlation (0.828), reflecting strong public belief in it. A vast majority of respondents (68.9%) believe that fear of retaliation and institutional judgement perpetuates a culture of silence in traffic law enforcement. The corrected positive interval of -3.93, comfortably near the upper boundary of the “Agree” spectrum, provides further evidence of the strength and unanimity of this public feeling. Crucially, the narrow confidence interval implies that this is not a diffuse or marginal perspective but a very tight societal consensus. Empirical evidence shows that this acute public awareness of internal misconduct in traffic policing erodes external support and undermines the systemic authority and legitimacy of the wider criminal justice system in South Africa.

5.6.3. Chi-Square Test for Independence – Reporting of Serious Traffic Offences

To empirically evaluate public willingness to collaborate with traffic law enforcement, a chi-square test of independence was used to examine associations between the independent variables (socio-demographic profiles (ethnicity, gender, age, education), geographic distribution (residential province), and road-user typologies (mode of transport)) and the statement, *"I will report serious traffic offences to the traffic police without fear or prejudice"*. The inferential analysis, summarised in Table 5.13, revealed statistically significant associations across three variables.

Table 5.13: Chi-square Test Results Determining the Willingness to Report Serious Traffic Offences (n=491)

Independent Variable	Category Type	χ^2 Value	*p-value	Highest Propensity to Report	Lowest Propensity to Report
Ethnicity	Socio-demographic	17.31	0.001	African respondents (82.2%)	White respondents (62.4%)
Mode of Transport	Road-user typology	8.64	0.013	Public transport users (90.3%)	Motor vehicle drivers (74.0%)
Residential Province	Geographic	16.74	0.033	North West (91.7%); Eastern Cape (89.7%)	Limpopo (65.7%); Gauteng (72.1%)
*Note: Statistical significance is established at $p < 0.05$.					

Empirical data point to a clear difference in public reporting cultures, shaped by socio-demographic, geographic and transport-related factors. The much higher reporting rates among African respondents (82.2%) and public transport users (90.3%) suggest greater reliance on formal criminal justice structures among cohorts that are usually more vulnerable to the physical consequences of systemic road safety failures. Conversely, the low willingness to report among motor vehicle drivers (74.0%) and White respondents (62.4%) suggests deep-rooted public scepticism about the effectiveness of the traffic police. This reluctance to report is probably compounded by past negative experiences or a general public fear of corruption within traffic enforcement institutions. Moreover, the geographical differences point to the very uneven nature of institutional trust across the country. The densely populated economic centres, such as Gauteng, exhibit considerably lower intended compliance (72.1%) than predominantly rural provinces, such as North West (91.7%).

5.6.4. Chi-Square Test for Independence – Anarchy on Our Roads

A subsequent chi-square analysis assessed whether socio-demographic variables influenced the overarching perception of systemic road lawlessness, measured by the assertion, *"I believe there is anarchy on our roads"*.

Unlike the parameters for reporting offences, the analysis found no statistically significant associations with any demographic variable - including gender, age, ethnicity, education, mode of transport, or residential province ($p > 0.05$). Rather than a statistical deficiency, this null finding is criminologically profound. An overwhelming majority of the aggregate sample (83.1%; $n=408$) affirmed the presence of anarchy on South African roads. Because this sentiment transcends demographic and geographic boundaries, it empirically establishes a unified societal consensus: the public perceives a systemic collapse of authoritative control by traffic law enforcement.

This universal perception of lawlessness fundamentally delegitimises the public image of traffic police officers and undermines the overarching deterrent capability of the criminal justice system. Ultimately, the data affirm the literature indicating that traffic policing is rendered ineffective and redundant without sustained public support and institutional legitimacy (Civil Service Success, 2020:1; Fielding, 2022:1).

5.7. HOW TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The final component of the questionnaire utilised qualitative insights from respondents concerning strategies to enhance the public perception of Traffic Police Operations (TPOs) in South Africa, thereby elevating this study from a primarily descriptive framework to a rigorous forensic analysis of traffic policing practices. Of the sampled population ($n=491$), 450 respondents (91.7%) contributed substantive, actionable perspectives.

To move beyond merely describing the problems and to provide a forensic evaluation of the issues inherent in the traffic law enforcement sector, the study conducted a content analysis of the responses. Rather than merely reporting on the problems, the analysis sought to uncover the relevant issues and shed light on shortcomings in the functional traffic law enforcement environment that led to the negative impressions reported by respondents. The empirical data identified eight themes, each highlighting the problematic areas in the current state of traffic law enforcement. The themes

identified through the content analysis reflect the researchers' understanding of the issues, based on the participants' responses.

Figure 5.3 presents the identified themes and provides more in-depth insight into the issues stemming from the lack of consensus between traffic law enforcement and the motoring public. In fact, the analysis proved that the issues raised by the participants cannot be ignored, and significant changes need to be implemented in the traffic law enforcement sector.

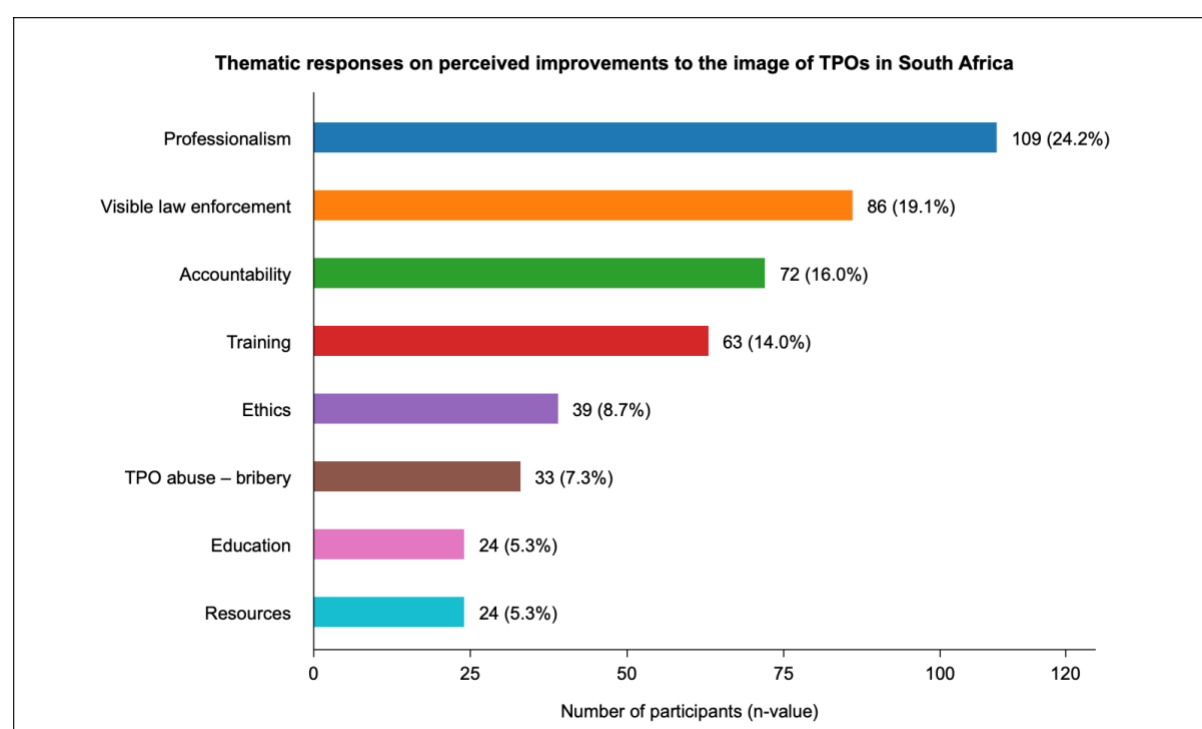


Figure 5.3: Thematic responses on perceived improvements to the image of TPOs in South Africa

As shown in Figure 5.3, the identified themes are categorised into three institutional requirements for policy reforms within traffic policing institutions.

5.7.1. Operational Legitimacy (Professionalism and Visibility)

Professionalism (24.2%) and visible traffic law enforcement (19.1%) are the most important prerequisites of institutional trust for the public. The data shows that the public directly links the physical fitness of a TPO, the neatness of their uniform, and their behavioural conduct with the legitimacy of the criminal justice system.

Respondents also said that passive or covert enforcement, such as hiding to catch drivers, does not change driver behaviour. Instead, it takes ongoing and proactive visibility to create a culture of road safety and discourage transgressions.

5.7.2. Systemic Integrity (Accountability, Ethics, and Bribery Mitigation)

Accountability (16.0%), ethics (8.7%) and the mitigation of TPO abuse and bribery (7.3%) are interrelated themes that reveal a serious crisis of integrity in South African traffic policing. The public perceives a culture of impunity and institutional greed that undermines procedural justice. Rehabilitating that trust requires consequence management that cannot be compromised. Respondents explicitly identified the need for strong oversight mechanisms, including the introduction of body-worn cameras, rigorous supervisory inspections and the immediate dismissal of corrupt officials, to dismantle the sector's existing corrupt culture.

5.7.3. Structural Enablers (Training, Education, and Resources)

In light of these operational and ethical deficiencies, the public called for structural capacity-building through improved training (14.0%), sustained public education (5.3%), and adequate resource provision (5.3%). TPOs must undergo continuous professional development in soft skills, ethical practices, and legislative changes to shift the paradigm of policing from punitive and revenue-driven to a professional guardian model of service delivery. At the same time, adequate human and physical resources are crucial to maintaining a 24-hour visible presence on the roads, as provincial traffic departments are currently burdened by severe capacity fragmentation.

Table 5.14 presents a selection of verbatim quotes that capture the key institutional deficits identified within each theme, supporting the analysis and ensuring that the empirical voice of the public is embedded within the proposed interventions.

Table 5.14: Verbatim public responses substantiating thematic requirements for institutional reform

Theme	Substantiating Verbatim Quote
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Professionalism	<i>"The majority of traffic officers don't appear and present as both mentally and physically agile people... They should also present as neat and fit individuals, since we have plenty of obese officers."</i>
Visible law enforcement	<i>"Traffic officials should be more visible and act against the transgressions that are observed. Law enforcement is an ongoing task and should be done constantly and consistently... hiding does not improve the behaviour of drivers."</i>
Accountability	<i>"There should be more supervision and consequences. More accountability. Sitting in your ass with the blue lights and eating KFC does not constitute working... Unfortunately, bodycams may be the only solution to keep people accountable."</i>
Training	<i>"To improve the public image of traffic police officers, more thorough skills development training... I truly believe that we need to invest in the development of soft skills in our traffic officers."</i>
Ethics	<i>"My view is that they ought to be 'a set apart' group of citizens who model the excellence, and responsible kind of behaviour they expect from citizens."</i>
TPO abuse – bribery	<i>"The public image of traffic officers is mostly distorted due to the fact that they accept bribes from motorists... They need to stop making roadblock[s] to ask for bribes and intimidate the public."</i>
Education	<i>"Traffic police officers can improve their public image by providing education and training to the public about their roles and responsibilities... A comprehensive drive to inform public of latest legislation and their rights."</i>
Resources	<i>"Traffic Officers be given resources to do their job properly and they must work 24/7 on our SA Roads... Buy more vehicles and make sure that they do not use public transport wearing uniforms."</i>

Ultimately, superficial modifications are insufficient to enhance the professional image of TPOs. The forensic analysis of empirical data highlights the necessity for thorough reform to address these interconnected operational and ethical shortcomings, ensuring that public satisfaction and voluntary compliance with the law are effectively restored.

5.8. CHAPTER KEY FINDINGS (SUMMARY)

This section presents the main quantitative findings from the data analysis and addresses the study's main research question: How can the professional image of

Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in South Africa be improved through a proposed model? It is important to note, when considering this issue, the methodological aspects of the quantitative analysis. The study used a non-probability sampling method; therefore, the findings provide important empirical and contextual information about the sampled respondents (n=491) but are not generalisable to making statistically valid statements or to setting a standard margin of error for the general South African population. In addition, for the purposes of a full forensic analysis, all 'Not Certain' responses were deliberately included to avoid sample bias and to properly reflect the ambivalence, ambiguity, and lack of clear positive reinforcement evident in the motoring public's experiences.

5.8.1. Demographic profile

- The sample is predominantly female (61.5%) compared with male respondents (38.5%)
- African respondents constitute the majority at 65.2%, followed by White respondents at 20.6%
- A significant proportion of respondents hold formal qualifications, with female respondents (49.5%) more likely to hold formal qualifications than male respondents (31.8%)
- The primary mode of transport for the majority of respondents (74.3%) is driving a motor vehicle

5.8.2. Objective 1 - The Public Perception of the Role Fulfilment of South African Traffic Police Officers

- While the public, in theory, acknowledges the statutory authority of TPOs and demands high-visibility policing, there is a significant empirical discrepancy between this and the perceived operational realities.
- There is significant public uncertainty about the effectiveness of TPO services, indicating systemic operational failures, low response rates, and limited positive public engagement.
- The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of role fulfilment (conceptualised as Professional Service Delivery) explained 43.5% of the variance. This relatively low proportion of explained variance indicates substantial model complexity, reflecting

that the public perception of service delivery is a multidimensional phenomenon, strongly influenced by unmeasured external variables and localised institutional failures.

5.8.3. Objective 2 – Variables That Affect the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers

- The TPO uniform commands a high degree of respect and symbolises authority (71.5% agreement), yet systemic transactional corruption and unethical conduct severely undermine their professional image.
- Geographical location (residential province) and gender are statistically significant predictors of the likelihood of a respondent engaging in or complying with bribery.
- Importantly, age is not a predictive factor in bribery practices; the collapse of the traditional age-crime curve suggests that transactional corruption is a normalised systemic crisis across generations in South Africa.
- The EFA model for this objective explained 37.9% of total variance across two factors (Traffic Police Image and Bribery), supporting the view that the multidimensional construct of public image cannot be explained by linear variables alone.

5.8.4. Objective 3 – How the Public Experiences Their Interaction with Traffic Police Officers

- The normal response serves as the baseline for procedural courtesy during traffic stops. However, institutional ambiguity is high due to systematic non-compliance with statutory identification requirements (e.g., active failure to wear visible name tags).
- Traffic stops carry a high latent level of public apprehension. The secondary media narrative of police abuse exacerbates this institutional fear.
- The EFA found three components (Abuse, Role fulfilment and Fear) that accounted for 51.2% of the variance. The data point to a dichotomy. While direct personal experience of physical or verbal abuse is statistically low, pervasive institutional fear and resentment remain a primary barrier to cooperative traffic law enforcement.

5.8.5. Objective 4 – The Criminological Significance Of The Public Image Of Traffic Police Officers on the Criminal Justice System.

- More than half (53.3%) of the respondents are highly sceptical of the positive influence TPOs have on the broader Criminal Justice System (CJS), pointing to the widespread ineffectiveness of comprehensive deterrence.
- There is a profound and collective societal consensus (83.1%) that “anarchy” prevails on South African roads. This perception transcends all socio-demographic boundaries, empirically establishing a systemic collapse of authoritative control that fundamentally delegitimises the CJS.
- There is a perceived culture of internal protectiveness, with significant majorities (over 68%) believing that TPOs do not report colleagues’ misconduct due to fear of institutional retaliation and judgement.
- The EFA for this objective explained 36.5% of the variance and identified “Public Satisfaction” and “Misconduct” as the major overarching constructs affecting institutional trust

5.8.6. Open Question – How to Improve the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers in South Africa

- The qualitative responses to the survey’s open question were content-analysed, and operational legitimacy (professionalism and visible traffic law enforcement) and systemic integrity (accountability and ethics) were identified as absolute institutional requirements for structural reform.
- Respondents reiterated that superficial changes are not enough. Structural enablers are also needed in the traffic policing sector, such as rigorous, uncompromised consequence management (such as body-worn cameras) and continuous professional development to dismantle the current socio-political culture of impunity.

5.9. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter qualitatively examined interview data from semi-structured interviews with thirteen participants, exploring public perceptions of traffic police officers in South Africa. The chapter used a convergent embedded design to complement the statistical

results from quantitative data by focusing on participants' responses. The responses were analysed using thematic analysis to extract themes related to the roles performed by traffic police officers, bribery, corruption, and justice. The chapter provides a deeper understanding of the context in which thirteen participants interact with traffic police officers, thereby explaining the prevalence of bribery and corruption in the traffic policing system.

The qualitative results presented in this chapter play a decisive role in the research details. By demonstrating the public's perception of bribery and mistrust of equipment use in emergencies, the findings indicate that corruption significantly affects organisations' work. In this sense, the data directly relate to the previously presented quantitative results, highlighting the relationship between drivers' attitudes and the police's reputation. For this reason, the qualitative results have a significant impact on determining the necessary changes to the conceptual model to improve the image of the police.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, will build upon the objective quantitative basis established here. It will present the collected data, analyses, and qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews. The next chapter will expand upon the results presented here to provide additional context for the numerical phenomena discovered in this study, thereby better informing the proposed conceptual satisfaction model's formation.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE STUDY FINDINGS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The present chapter concludes the doctoral thesis by assessing public perceptions of the professional image of traffic police officers in the South African criminal justice system. By identifying the breach in the dam between the motoring public and traffic law enforcement institutions caused by institutional failure, corruption, and socio-cultural acceptance of deviance, the chapter contributes to bridging the conceptual gap in understanding the do's and don'ts on the road. By linking the empirical findings to relevant criminological theories, this chapter offers a comprehensive view of the road traffic problem in South Africa. In this way, the chapter serves as a concluding discussion on the need for organisational and policy changes in traffic policing as a whole.

The chapter follows a logical sequence, beginning with a summary of the previous chapters. The author then presents the proposed Public Satisfaction Model, an innovative approach to restoring the broken system and re-establishing traffic policing in South Africa. After introducing the model, the chapter summarises the study's main findings in relation to the research objectives and questions. The findings are reported using both qualitative and quantitative data, without offering any tentative hypotheses. Towards the end, the author discusses theoretical implications, the study's limitations, and recommendations for further research to conclude the dissertation.

This chapter aims to translate the information presented in the thesis into evidence-based recommendations. The recommendations below have been developed through an integrated assessment of the theoretical and practical aspects of traffic police regulation. In particular, this part of the thesis interprets research data on traffic police through a critical lens, presenting alternative approaches to regulating road traffic. On the one hand, this approach allows the authors to highlight the key challenges of this activity. On the other hand, the recommendations presented help identify ways to

transform existing practices in a scientific and legitimate direction. This study's final section provides guidance for traffic police practice and legislation, targeting the removal of popular concerns and abuses of authority. In particular, the recommendations below can help eliminate issues such as extortion and corruption. More importantly, the study provides suggestions that would improve the prestige of the traffic police in South Africa.

6.2. QUALITATIVE DATA GATHERING

The qualitative data were gathered through thirteen semi-structured, one-on-one interviews (twelve female, one male) conducted in English, with no participant objecting. It is critical to acknowledge the extreme gender imbalance within this sample (92.3% female). This asymmetry constitutes a significant methodological limitation, as it inherently skews the subsequent findings - particularly those related to the pervasive fear of nighttime stops, vulnerability to abuse, and experiences of systemic bribery - towards a distinctly female perspective. Consequently, male perspectives are largely absent from this qualitative phase, necessitating caution when interpreting these specific interactive themes as universally representative of the broader public's lived experiences. Four members of the motoring public were recruited via convenience sampling and, through snowball sampling, asked to identify additional willing participants. It should be noted that the participants were conveniently selected from among ordinary citizens who commute daily between routes or locations. Information about their places of employment, places of residence, or those of the targeted units (e.g., specific organisations) was not collected, as it was not required for the research questions. This was because the study aimed to capture the raw experience of the average road user and, by extension, eliminate any bias introduced by professional commuters, such as police. Informed consent and anonymity were assured throughout (see 5.7; Annexure H).

Interviews were recorded on electronic devices, transcribed verbatim, and imported into Atlas.ti version 25 for thematic analysis. In accordance with Chapter 4 (see 4.5.1.5), the coding process was both deductive and inductive. Thematic coding began with the researcher's prior knowledge of the topic, drawn from the literature review,

the conceptual framework, and their professional practice. As the transcripts were iteratively broken down into parts, new sub-themes emerged and were added to the initial set of themes (see Table 6.1). The process concluded when saturation was reached, meaning that no further sub-themes or theoretical concepts emerged during coding. At this point, it can be concluded that the interactive experiences of the motoring public sample have been exhausted.

Table 6.1: Summary of Qualitative Themes, Sub-Themes and Grounding (Participant Response Counts)

Primary theme (objective)	Sub-theme	Grounding (no. of participant responses)
Effective fulfilment of officer roles (Objective 1)	Service delivery	106
	Visibility	57
	Professionalism	31
	Traffic law enforcement	24
	Training	22
Interactive process with officers (Objective 3)	Traffic stops	50
	Abuse by officers	44
	Professionalism	38
	Fear	36
	Misconduct	28
	The role of the media	26
Public image and the criminal justice system (Objective 4)	Inadequate road safety	50
	Misconduct	34
	Road traffic prosecution	30
	Offender accountability	28
	Confidence in officers	20
	Public cooperation	18
	Offending traffic rules	8
Factors affecting the public image of officers (Objective 2)	Traffic stops – bribery	144
	Professionalism	57
	Legitimacy	29

	Traffic stops	18
Proposed improvements	Officer accountability	10
	Training	5
	Positive media	2
	Professionalism	2
	Visible traffic law enforcement	2
Note: Objectives 1 to 4 correspond to the study's four research objectives (see 1.6): role fulfilment (Objective 1), factors affecting the public image (Objective 2), the interactional experience (Objective 3) and the criminological significance for the criminal justice system (Objective 4). Given the small purposive sample ($n=13$), grounding is reported as participant response counts rather than as generalisable proportions.		

The single most striking feature of Table 6.1 is that bribery at traffic stops (144 responses) is the most saturated code in the entire dataset, more heavily grounded than any positive dimension of role fulfilment. This asymmetry frames the analysis that follows in the public imagination; the professional image of traffic police officers is organised around corruption rather than service. The discussion that follows has been consolidated into integrated thematic discussions only.

6.3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

The ATLAS.ti sentiment analysis across both primary themes revealed a predominantly negative emotional tone. This section delves beyond the initial finding to explore the underlying patterns, tensions, and minority perspectives that contribute to this negativity.

6.3.1. Effective fulfilment of Traffic Police Officer Roles – Research Objective 1

Effective fulfilment of Traffic Police Officer Roles – Research Objective 1. Mobilisation is an integral facet of modern society (Dudley, 2014:2). Within the broader criminal justice system, road traffic policing is fundamentally tasked with improving road safety and reducing traffic-related offences (Ullah, Hussain, Alam & Akhunzada, 2016:134). To address Research Objective 1, this section explores the qualitative research

question: How does the South African motoring public perceive and experience the fulfilment of traffic police officers' roles?

Role fulfilment encompasses key elements that maintain a safe and professional traffic environment. In the analytical phase, five related themes emerged: service delivery, use of emergency equipment, professionalism, visibility and traffic law enforcement, and training skills. Rather than a single public perception, the data show a complex and sometimes contradictory lived experience in which institutional mandates often conflict with the practical realities on South African roads.

6.3.1.1. Service Delivery and Assistance

A critical measure of role fulfilment is the quality-of-service delivery and the institutional duty of care owed to the public (Schultz, 2019:8). To explore this construct, the analysis was guided by three research questions: *"How would you describe the delivery of services by traffic police officers to the public?"*; *"How would you describe the assistance provided by traffic police officers to the public?"*; and *"Have you observed any good work performed by traffic police officers during the last twelve months?"*

The analysis revealed considerable variation in participants' experiences, emphasising the subjective nature of procedural justice. Some participants reported highly professional interactions, providing a notable counterbalance to the predominantly negative overall view. Participant 12 - RF 7 stated, *"In all honesty, in my personal experience... I've only had pleasant professional encounters."* This was supported by Participant 12 - RF 34, who appreciated empathetic policing when an officer chose to issue a warning for an expired licence rather than a fine, which *"strengthened [their] faith in this country."*

Additionally, proactive measures against reckless driving, such as penalising taxi drivers who *"block the traffic so that they can go first"* (Participant 5 - RF 30), received widespread praise. Despite some positive deviations, the dominant narrative emphasises poor service and indifference. Many believe officers neglect their duty of care, particularly towards stranded motorists. Participant 13 - RF 14 noted that officers

"drive past a motorist when they're stuck along the road," leaving vulnerable individuals reliant on private towing. This reveals a systemic misunderstanding within South African traffic policing, which prioritises punitive enforcement over comprehensive public safety and community support (Sandberg, 1996:106; Modipa, 2023:560).

6.3.1.2. Emergency Equipment Misuse and Public Reactions

The activation of blue lights and sirens is a highly visible exercise of state authority intended strictly for critical emergencies. To understand how the public interprets and reacts to this authority, participants were asked: *"How would you describe traffic police officers' use of blue lights and sirens?"* and *"What is your immediate reaction when you see blue lights and hear a siren?"*

The qualitative synthesis reveals profound public cynicism about the use of emergency equipment. Nine participants perceived misuse of this equipment, while four did not. The use of blue lights and sirens is intended for critical emergency response. However, participants largely viewed this equipment as an abuse of state power for personal convenience, rather than for legitimate emergencies. Participant 8 - RF 17 articulated this cynicism: *"You will see that blue light and then you think there is an emergency, [but] when you get there, they are just rushing to do personal things"*. Participant 13 - RF 21 expressed deep frustration, noting that officers activate sirens simply to bypass traffic congestion.

This perceived abuse of power elicits a spectrum of emotional and behavioural responses among the motoring public, ranging from cooperative compliance to rebellious detachment. While some participants indicated they "panic" and *"quickly make way"* (Participant 4 - RF 24), others expressed outright defiance. Participant 1 - RF 22 admitted, *"I get pissed. Yeah, that's my reaction,"* while Participant 13 - RF 29 simply stated, *"I don't care"* because the legitimacy of the emergency is perpetually in doubt. From a criminological perspective, when the symbols of state authority (blue lights) are routinely decoupled from their legitimate purpose (emergencies), the public's inherent respect for the law is diminished.

6.3.1.3. Professionalism and the First Impressions

The visual presentation and immediate physical conduct of a traffic police officer are primary drivers of public trust. To evaluate the psychological impact of these initial encounters, the research asked: *"What is your first impression when seeing a traffic police officer in uniform?"*

Six participants formed a favourable first impression, while seven formed an unfavourable one. The visual presentation and immediate conduct of a traffic police officer are the primary drivers of public perceptions of professionalism. Psychological first impressions form rapidly and are heavily influenced by appearance and body language (Ronin, 2015:1). The data highlight a distinct dichotomy between the visual authority of the uniform and the physical bearing of the officers wearing it.

A minority of participants acknowledged the uniform's authoritative impact, with Participant 11 - RF 45 stating, *"They do stand out, and the uniform does make them look professional."* However, this visual legitimacy is often undermined by poor physical condition and unkempt appearance. Participant 7 - RF 41 noted that some officers *"appear really unprofessional... shirts hanging out or the uniform not being correct"*, while Participant 5 - RF 39 questioned their physical ability to enforce the law, asking, *"If a criminal is running, how do they chase the criminal?"*

More than their appearance, seeing a traffic police officer often triggers driving anxiety rather than a sense of safety. Participants repeatedly described their immediate feelings as either *"panic"* (Participant 5 - RF 39) or *"stress"* (Participant 2 - RF 36), fearing unwarranted harassment or extortion. Participant 13 - RF 47 stated that the first thought upon seeing an officer is simply *"corruption."* If the public views traffic officers as predators rather than protectors, the organisation's reputation suffers greatly, directly harming its effectiveness in the criminal justice system (Bain, Robinson & Conser, 2014:267).

6.3.1.4. Traffic Police Visibility

In criminological theory, the visible presence of traffic law enforcement is a primary deterrent to aberrant behaviour (Zaal, 1994:6; Gelau, Gitelman & Pfeiffer, 2001:7). To

assess the perceived adequacy of this deterrence, participants were asked: *“In your opinion, are traffic police officers visible enough on our roads?”*

The qualitative analysis indicates that traffic police visibility in South Africa is perceived as both inadequate and deployed opportunistically. While isolated positive instances were noted, such as Participant 12 - RF 55, who reported adequate visibility in Johannesburg, the general consensus is that police presence on South African roads is severely inadequate. Participants also expressed frustration at the lack of traffic control during major infrastructure issues, such as load-shedding (Participant 4 - RF 50 and Participant 7 - RF 52).

Critically, the synthesis uncovered a disturbing pattern in officers' visibility. The data suggests that deployment is perceived as opportunistic and predatory rather than strategically aligned with road safety. Participant 8 - RF 53 noted that officers are mainly visible around *“month end on the 25th,”* indicating a focus on financial extortion for personal gain rather than on deterring traffic crimes. Participant 13 - RF 56 summarised this public sentiment sharply: *“When we see a traffic officer, we just think, oh, they are broken now. So, they want our money. Now they're visible.”* This suggests a significant failure of the deterrence approach; instead of preventing traffic violations, inconsistent traffic law enforcement has fostered a culture of impunity in which offenders believe they can *“get away with crime because they never were punished... they get themselves out of that by paying the traffic officers”* (Participant 8 - RF 61).

6.3.1.5. The Efficacy of Traffic Law Enforcement

The fundamental goal of traffic policing is to regulate behaviour and deter offences. To explore the perceived failure of this regulatory function, the research asked: *“Why, in your opinion, are there so many traffic offences?”*

Participants consistently linked the high rate of traffic offences to a systemic breakdown in traffic law enforcement. However, the data suggested different possible reasons. Some participants, such as Participant 1 - RF 57 and Participant 7 - RF 60, blamed it on insufficient resources and personnel. Conversely, a more serious issue was identified: the total neutralisation of traffic law enforcement through bribery.

Participants argued that offenders flout the law because offences are monetised rather than prosecuted. Participant 8 - RF 61 explained that drivers *"get themselves out of that by paying the traffic officers... they never were punished."* Participant 13 - RF 63 provided a compelling account of systemic extortion, describing an incident in which a lawful truck was impounded simply because the driver refused to pay a bribe, only to be released when higher-ranking connections were invoked, accompanied by the ominous promise, *"we'll see each other on the road."* This illustrates how police discretion is weaponised for extortion. When bribery is seen as an unavoidable cost of road use, the deterrent value of traffic law enforcement becomes negligible (Henning, 2016:1).

6.3.1.6. Competency and Training Appraisals

Adequate training forms the operational backbone of effective traffic policing (Roets, 2015:220). To determine how public confidence is affected by perceived officer capability, the analysis incorporated the question: *"Do you think traffic police officers are sufficiently trained to guarantee your safety on the road?"*

A few participants, such as Participant 3 - RF 66 and Participant 12 - RF 72, expressed confidence in officers' training, citing polite, isolated encounters. However, the main findings reveal widespread, systemic inconsistencies in operational skills across the country. Participant 1 - RF 64 highlighted significant geographical differences, noting the lack of officers during crises in Randfontein compared with proactive traffic management in Mogale City, describing it as, *"It's like they are trained from different places."*

Furthermore, poor operational conduct, such as officers blatantly *"disobeying the road traffic rules"* without an apparent emergency (Participant 11 - RF 71), leads the public to conclude that training is either inadequate or routinely ignored in practice. Ultimately, as Participant 13 - RF 73 argued, the immediate association with corruption undermines trust in their professional capacity. This aligns with academic findings that both basic and in-service training for South African traffic police officers remains insufficient to meet modern policing demands (Roets, 2015:247).

6.3.1.7. Analysis of Research Objective 1

Research Objective 1 explored how the South African driving public perceives the role of traffic police officers. Qualitative results show a strongly negative overall view, though some minority accounts highlight instances of professional and compassionate policing. Public trust is significantly weakened by poor service, police visibility motivated by financial gain rather than safety, and frequent misuse of emergency gear. While the uniform's authority is acknowledged, perceived incompetence and systemic corruption reduce operational legitimacy. These issues collectively weaken deterrence, normalise traffic violations, and erode trust in South African traffic policing.

6.3.2. Factors Affecting the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers – Objective 2

Traffic police officers have historically earned a poor reputation in South Africa, attributed to perceived incompetence, ineffectiveness, and a systemic lack of integrity (Basdeo, 2010:386; Raymond, 2021:1; Roets, 2015:240). The existence of unwritten directives, such as ticket quotas (The Florida Senate, 2015:2), and a generalised public perception of corruption severely undermine the ethical conduct and professionalism expected of traffic law enforcement (McCarthy & Parent, 2015:70). In line with the study's qualitative research question, this section addresses the second research objective: to identify and critically describe the factors that affect the public image of traffic police officers.

To enhance the synthesis of the qualitative data, verbatim quotes have been integrated directly into the thematic narrative rather than presented in isolated tables. Participant identifiers have been standardised (e.g., Participant 1 [P1], Participant 2 [P2]) to ensure academic consistency. Furthermore, this analysis moves beyond mere summarisation by exploring underlying patterns, contradictions, and negative cases to deepen the interpretive value of the findings.

6.3.2.1. The Intersection of Traffic Stops and Bribery

Routine traffic stops represent a critical intersection where state authority meets the motoring public. To explore the prevalence and nature of corruption within this interactive space, participants were asked a series of targeted questions: *“Do you think*

traffic police officers use traffic stops to ask for bribes?"; "Have a traffic officer ever demanded a bribe from you?"; "Would you say that bribery in the traffic profession has become acceptable in South Africa?"; and "A traffic police officer accepting a bribe is more severe than a driver offering it?"

The qualitative data indicate that bribery in South African traffic policing is not a single instance; it is embedded in a systemic practice, often described as a "dirty game" governed by unwritten rules (Onyango, 2022:313). Participants distinguished sharply between visible, well-managed roadblocks, designed to prevent extortion through supervision, and isolated, randomised stops perceived as predatory. Participant 5 - RF 78 encapsulated this environment, observing that officers tend to avoid formal roadblocks, instead waiting covertly *"parked under the tree, and they will just wait there for you... and then that's where the cold drink [bribe] stays."*

The solicitation of bribes is seen as opportunistic and heavily shaped by socio-economic timing. Participant 4 - RF 77 mentioned *the "dry week"* before payday, noting that officers often *"stop every car... because they are broke and want to meet their own needs"*. Extortion methods range from subtle pressure to intense psychological threats. Participant 9 - RF 87 vividly remembered being coerced into paying a bribe, with clear threats of jail: *"Because I was told it's Friday afternoon. You're gonna go to jail... Do you know there's around 20 to 30 people in jail... and that you will never be the same person when you get out on Monday."*

Nonetheless, examining different experiences offers important nuance. Participant 12 - RF 80 reported never having been asked for a bribe, demonstrating that corrupt behaviour is not universal. This example shows that corruption varies significantly depending on circumstances such as location, officer judgement, and vehicle profiling.

When examining moral responsibility in bribery, differing views reveal societal contradictions. While many believe that an officer accepting a bribe breaches trust more seriously because they are responsible for enforcing the law (Participant 2 - RF 103), others argue that offering the bribe is equally culpable. Participant 1 - RF 102 stated, *"offering the bribe makes that person doing it [equally guilty]"*. From a

sociological perspective, Participant 12 - RF 109 explained that cooperative bribery results from the "normalisation of deviation" in a fundamentally unethical society. Citizens often pre-emptively offer bribes, expecting corruption, which creates a self-perpetuating cycle that sustains the environment they criticise (Dong, Dulleck & Torgler, 2012:610). As a result, bribery has become an accepted social norm, with Participant 13 - RF 101 stating, "*we think there's something wrong with the traffic officer if he doesn't want a bribe.*"

However, in keeping with the convergent mixed-methods design of this study, it is crucial to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the qualitative and quantitative results and to respond to the research question: "*How many South Africans view bribery as a normal social practice*"? According to the qualitative findings, all participants reported paying a bribe as an integral element of social interactions, whereas only 10.6% of quantitative respondents (n=491) agreed with the item: "*I see nothing wrong with paying a bribe.*" There are several tentative explanations for this considerable divergence, grounded in the very nature of the methodology employed.

First and foremost, it is essential to acknowledge that the quantitative survey was subject to social desirability bias, since participants would have been reluctant to admit their involvement in corrupt practices or to endorse a socially disapproved behaviour directly on a Likert scale. By contrast, qualitative participants openly admitted to bribing, believing this behaviour to be normative in their everyday interactions. In addition, there is an inherent difference between assessing personal attitudes towards bribery and measuring social norms surrounding this behaviour. In other words, when qualitative respondents were asked to speak in depth about bribery in their interactions with traffic law enforcement officers and road safety officials, they tended to report this behaviour as a given or a status quo, whereas the quantitative survey asked respondents to indicate their agreement with a particular item.

Finally, the context in which the qualitative interviews were conducted also played a significant role: participants openly admitted to bribing because they viewed it as the only practical way to navigate South African roads without incurring prohibitively high fines. As such, it is possible to posit that both sides of the story are accurate in isolation

but fail to align simply because the corruption was normalised by South Africans who viewed it as an inevitable part of their interactions with traffic law enforcement officers.

6.3.2.2. Public Perceptions of Professionalism and Ethics

Professionalism in traffic policing is intrinsically linked to ethics and morality, which serve as the foundational criteria for assessing institutional integrity (Pereira, 2011:4). This section explores the motoring public's perceptions of the level of respect afforded to traffic police officers and of their ethical conduct, highlighting a complex interplay between personal experiences and societal narratives. To assess the motoring public's perceptions of these constructs, the research asked: *"Describe your level of respect for traffic police officers"* and *"Would you say that most traffic police officers are unethical?"*

The qualitative data highlight a significant lack of respect for traffic police officers in South Africa. While a few participants expressed a conditional, "medium" level of respect, meaning they would acknowledge an officer's authority during a stop (Participant 4 - RF 117), the dominant sentiment points to a significant institutional deficit. This lack of respect is often explained by comparing it with other criminal justice sectors. Both Participant 3 - RF 116 and Participant 12 - RF 121 noted they have *"more respect for a SAPS official than a traffic officer."*

Importantly, this decline in respect extends beyond personal empirical interactions and is significantly influenced by secondary narratives. The data show that societal perceptions and media portrayals negatively affect the overall image of traffic police officers. For instance, Participant 6 - RF 118 mentioned that their respect is influenced by the media, stating that *"because of the media, you get more than negative side of it, and you don't hear about the positive side"*. Similarly, Participant 13 - RF 122 expressed a "zero" level of respect, based not only on personal encounters but also on *"what I've heard from family"*. This illustrates that individual traffic police officers are burdened by a severely damaged institutional reputation before an interaction even begins.

On ethical conduct, there is a strong consensus that institutional corruption prevails. Participant 4 - RF 125 noted that officers often initiate stops with hostility, saying, *"First of all, they come with attitude... they don't like you immediately."* Participant 7 - RF 127 reported that ethical violations are widespread, estimating that *"80% are unethical"* based on encounters in which officials feel intimidated by administrative documentation and the traffic stop is used to extort money [see 6.4.2.4. (B)].

Nevertheless, minority views challenge the generalisation that all institutions are corrupt. Participant 2 - RF 124 offered a moderated perspective, suggesting that while officers may *"push the boundaries,"* they are not entirely unethical. Similarly, Participant 1 - RF 123 argued that severe misconduct is confined to a *"small number"* of officers. While these differing views demonstrate the public's capacity to separate individual conduct from systemic failure, the prevailing discourse remains overshadowed by the highly visible transgressions of the majority, which continuously undermine public cooperation.

6.3.2.3. Legitimacy, Trust and Political Interference

Public perceptions of traffic police officers significantly impact the institution's legitimacy. This legitimacy depends largely on public consent, and a loss of trust can lead to civilian defiance, which affects the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system (Woods, 2021:1519). To critically unpack this dynamic, participants were asked: *"When you see a traffic police officer, do you see a person representing authority?"*; *"How will you describe your trust in traffic police officers?"*; *"Do you trust the legitimacy of the duties that traffic police officers perform?"*; and *"Do you think that politicians influence the legitimacy of traffic police institutions?"*

(A) Symbolic Authority vs. Individual Conduct

Addressing the question, *"When you see a traffic police officer, do you see a person representing authority,"* participants contrasted the uniform's inherent authority with the actual behaviour of individual officers.

The qualitative data reveal a stark cognitive divide between the institution of traffic policing and the individuals who carry out its duties. The majority of participants

(69.2%) acknowledged that the traffic police officers' uniform inherently projects authority and represents the law. For instance, Participant 8 - RF 133 noted, *"At first when you see them you can see the law,"* while Participant 11 - RF 136 added that *"the uniform stand for something"* despite observing inconsistencies in officers' professional appearance.

A close examination of differing opinions reveals that this depiction of authority can be easily undermined by unethical conduct. A minority of participants argued that genuine authority cannot coexist with corruption. Participant 13 - RF 137 expressed this view, saying, *"No, I don't see anyone representing authority. Because if someone is authoritative, they won't be able to be bought basically. They need to follow the law and that's not what's happening."* This perspective underscores that, although the public respects the ideal of the rule of law, individual misconduct by traffic police officers actively weakens their legitimate authority, reducing them to just *"a person that applied for the job"* (Participant 7 - RF 132).

(B) The Deficit of Trust and the Law

This section explores public confidence and the distinction between the law and its enforcers, answering the research questions: *"How will you describe your trust in traffic police officers?"* and *"Do you trust the legitimacy of the duties that traffic police officers perform?"*

This erosion of authority is mirrored by a profound trust deficit. Over 60% of participants expressed an outright lack of trust in traffic police officers, characterising the interactive process as inherently adversarial. Participant 4 - RF 141 bluntly stated, *"I genuinely do not trust them,"* while Participant 2 - RF 139 perceived the relationship as *"them against us"*.

Among minority views, those who still maintain some trust, the analysis shows that trust is highly conditional and fragmented. Participant 1 - RF 138 stated, *"I think I trust the ones that I know,"* indicating that trust in the institution is no longer automatic and must be earned personally. Furthermore, Participant 10 - RF 150 drew a clear distinction between the law and its enforcers, saying: *"No, I don't trust what they*

perform, but I trust what they are supposed to perform, so I trust in the law, but yeah they don't act on the law." This suggests that the public's loss of faith is primarily directed at personnel and their failure to carry out their responsibilities, rather than at the need for traffic law enforcement itself.

(C) The Corrosive Impact of Political Interference

Addressing the research question, *"Do you think that politicians influence the legitimacy of traffic police institutions?"*, this segment examines perceptions of a top-down culture of corruption and its damage to institutional credibility.

The legitimacy of traffic policing is further undermined by the pervasive perception of political interference. Participants perceived a top-down culture of corruption. Participant 7 - RF 155 exemplified this systemic decay, arguing that *"the government is... full of bribery, and it filters into everything. Municipalities, police officers, traffic officers..."*

The belief that traffic police officers are influenced by political motives rather than functioning as autonomous professionals further undermines their authority. Participants observed that officers are often reduced to serving as personal escorts for politicians, sometimes leading them to break the very traffic laws they are supposed to enforce. Participant 3 - RF 152 expressed this frustration, saying, *"when they need to be escorted... jump over robots... traffic officers need to just listen to them."* Participant 1 - RF 151 echoed this sentiment, suggesting that politicians deliberately ensure the traffic officer is "in my pocket" to serve their interests. As a result, political interference significantly damages the public's view of traffic policing as an independent, credible, and professional component of the South African criminal justice system.

6.3.2.4. Ticket Quotas and the Administrative Burden

This section assesses the public's awareness of and experience with unwritten directives that prioritise revenue generation over road safety, guided by the overarching research question: *"Do you believe that traffic police officers work according to ticket quotas?"*

While traffic law enforcement is theoretically designed to deter unsafe road behaviour (Zaal, 1994:6), the institutional reality of traffic policing is often complicated by unwritten directives, such as ticket quotas, which prioritise revenue generation over genuine road safety (The Florida Senate, 2015:2). Qualitative data reveal that the motoring public experiences the secondary effects of these quotas acutely. Participants firmly believe that officers are driven by numeric targets. Participant 1 - RF 158 noted, *"I think they have a target of tickets they need to do,"* a sentiment corroborated by Participant 5 - RF 160.

(A) The Weaponisation of Traffic Tickets

A profound underlying pattern in the data shows that formal traffic tickets often serve as tools for adversarial bargaining. Participants reported that officers leverage the financial impact of official fines to pressure motorists into paying bribes. Participant 11 - RF 88 specifically described this coercive situation, saying they felt forced to pay a bribe because they were *"scared of the ticket and the amount that I would have had to pay if I didn't pay the bribe."* As a result, the public seems to view the justice system through a cost-benefit lens, where breaking the law is economically justified. Participant 13 - RF 89 justified bribery by saying, *"it's cheaper than paying a ticket,"* while Participant 2 - RF 90 explained they paid a bribe simply *"not to get that written ticket... and to make it faster, just to get away."*

(B) Administrative Apathy and Contradictions

The data reveals a core contradiction in traffic policing: while there may be a demand for ticket quotas, officers often show little concern for properly fulfilling these mandates. Qualitative evidence indicates that the motivation to issue tickets is mainly to gain personal financial benefits, known as a *"cold drink"* (see 6.3.2.1), rather than to enforce traffic laws, as officers tend to avoid the bureaucratic process of legal prosecution. Participant 7 - RF 127 vividly highlighted this contradiction by describing an incident in which an officer asked for a bribe because completing the official citation was considered *"too much paperwork,"* leading the participant to conclude that *"they actually just wanted a bribe"* rather than enforcing the law.

(C) Divergent Views: The Legitimate Application of the Law

Despite widespread cynicism, divergent cases show that the public does not fundamentally oppose traffic enforcement when it is applied legitimately. Participant 5 – RF30 appreciated enforcement targeting genuinely reckless behaviour, noting instances in which officers issued tickets to taxi drivers who would *"swerve and try to block the traffic... because they think they own the streets."* This indicates that public hostility is not directed at the law itself, but at the opportunistic, quota-driven, and extortionate implementation of it. Until the issuance of traffic tickets is decoupled from revenue generation and police corruption, public trust cannot be restored.

6.3.2.5. Analysis of Research Objective 2

Research Objective 2 examines the key factors shaping public perceptions of South African traffic police officers. A qualitative synthesis indicates that systemic corruption, particularly the normalisation of bribery during traffic stops (Onyango, 2022), severely undermines this image. While uniforms project authority, public trust is eroded by unethical behaviour, poor professionalism and negative media portrayals. Furthermore, political interference and the weaponisation of ticket quotas undermine institutional legitimacy, leading motorists to increasingly view traffic enforcement as adversarial rather than as a legitimate road safety guardian (Woods, 2021).

6.3.3. Interactive Process with Traffic Police Officers – Research Objective 3

Traffic safety depends on the complex interplay between drivers, vehicles, infrastructure, and the environment (Bucchi, Sangiorgi & Vignali, 2012:973). At the nexus of this relationship is the traffic police officer. During traffic stops, the interaction between officers and road users significantly impacts behaviour. Since a traffic officer's role is closely tied to enforcement actions that may involve financial penalties, these encounters can often become confrontational.

This section focuses on the third research objective: assessing how the motoring public perceives interactions with traffic police officers. Qualitative analysis of participant interviews identified key themes such as routine traffic stops, professionalism, fear, misconduct, and media influence. Overall, the data suggest that public perception of these interactions is mostly negative.

6.3.3.1. Experiences of Routine Traffic Stops

To evaluate the public's interactions with traffic police officers, it is necessary to examine the frequency, nature, and psychological impact of routine traffic stops. Participants were asked "*When was the last time that a traffic police officer stopped you?*"; and "*Do you get upset when being stopped by a traffic police officer?*"

(A) Infrequency of Interaction and The Dynamics of Traffic Stops

When asked to reflect on their most recent encounter with a traffic police officer, participants reported an average of 11.3 months since their last stop. This low frequency corroborates earlier findings in this study regarding the poor visibility of traffic law enforcement on South African roads. When traffic stops did occur, they were predominantly carried out by male officers.

A surface analysis suggests a sense of professionalism, as most participants describe the officers as friendly. However, a more in-depth interpretive analysis shows that this friendliness is often met with scepticism or perceived as conditional. For example, Participant 4 – RF162 – mentioned the idea of reciprocal determinism in these encounters, saying, "*He was very polite. I think it was because of how I also responded to him.*" This supports Nix and Wolfe's (2017:90-91) argument that perceived fairness and legitimacy during interactions greatly boost public satisfaction with traffic law enforcement.

In contrast, minority cases highlight a very different truth, revealing a hidden unpredictability in how officers behave. Participant 3 – RF163 recalled a very confrontational situation where an officer "*demanded money*" and "*gave him attitude*" after the bribe was rejected, then looked "*for all the wrong things that he can get.*" Likewise, Participant 10 – RF164 described the approaching officer as "*very arrogant,*" entering the encounter with a clear need to exert control. These contradictory accounts show that, while some officers stay polite, instances of hostility and corruption continue to create public distrust, weakening the perceived legitimacy of traffic law enforcement.

(B) Psychological Impact and Perceptions of Unwarranted Stops

The psychological impact of traffic stops is strongly shaped by public perceptions of fairness and the perceived necessity of the stop. Participants' emotional responses to being pulled over were divided. A slight majority reported they do not get upset, viewing the stops as a necessary function of the criminal justice system. Demonstrating a pragmatic understanding of traffic law enforcement, Participant 5 – RF165 stated, *"No, because they are just doing their jobs. That's what they're supposed to be doing,"* while Participant 8 – RF166 conceded, *"There might be something wrong with my car that I'm not aware of."* This acceptance aligns with the quantitative findings (Section 5.5.1), in which 57.2% of respondents deemed traffic stops necessary for road safety.

A strong thematic contradiction appeared among the remaining participants, who voiced significant frustration and suspicion about the real motives behind traffic stops. They see stops not as safety measures but as unnecessary nuisances or pretexts for extortion. Participant 9 – RF167 expressed this feeling, saying, *"...you are doing everything right and then they still stop you anyway, and then you feel like is this really necessary?"*

Analysing the negative, divergent cases uncovers a significant loss of trust in institutions. Several participants believe traffic stops are used as tools for financial gain or to meet administrative demands. Participant 13 – RF168 clearly voiced this suspicion: *"They would literally look for something that's wrong... They are literally looking for the smallest thing just to get money out of you."* Additionally, Participant 1 – RF169 pointed out the systemic problem of enforcement quotas, feeling targeted not due to safety violations but because officers *"want to reach a certain number of tickets."*

Ultimately, the data suggests that while the average motorist recognises the need for randomised traffic stops for road safety, the pervasive perception of ulterior motives—specifically bribery and quota-chasing—severely undermines the interactive process. To mitigate this hostility, the evidence points to a critical need for targeted educational

campaigns to transparently inform the South African public about the roles, responsibilities, and standard operating procedures of traffic police officers.

6.3.3.2. Vicarious and Direct Experiences of Abuse By Traffic Police Officers

The interactive process between traffic police officers and the public is profoundly shaped by experiences of abuse. To understand the prevalence and multidimensional impact of such encounters, participants were asked: *"Have you ever been abused by a traffic police officer—verbally or physically?"* and *"Do you know anyone a traffic police officer abused?"*

Although none of the thirteen participants reported experiencing personal physical or verbal abuse during traffic stops, a prominent theme of vicarious trauma emerged. Several recounted severe abuse cases involving people they knew. Participant 4 – RF170 described a traumatic incident: *"My cousin was attacked by them. They raped her. She was driving at night [when] they stopped her."* Others recalled witnessing physical altercations, such as Participant 8 -RF171, who saw a traffic police officer escalate a traffic violation into violence with a taxi driver.

Misconduct includes any behaviour by traffic police officers that is considered unethical, unconstitutional, or criminal (Otu et al., 2022:112). Although the qualitative data indicate that direct, personal abuse is not always common, the significant effect of vicarious abuse cannot be overlooked. Hearing about or witnessing serious unprofessional conduct fosters underlying mistrust among the public, harming both the workplace environment and relations between the police and the community (Khan et al., 2021:1950; Hadebe & Gopal, 2024:1).

6.3.3.3. Professionalism, Power Dynamics and Reciprocity

The idea of professionalism during traffic stops elicits divergent views, heavily influenced by perceived power relationships and mutual behaviour. To explore these intricate interactions, this section's analysis centred on the question: *"Do you believe traffic police officers show respect to people?"*

Many participants agreed that traffic police officers misuse their authority. Participant 8 – RF172 mentioned that traffic police officers *“are using their uniform to abuse drivers... because they have power,”* while Participant 10 – RF173 linked this behaviour to a *“seniority thing,”* where officers believe they have the *“upper hand”*. Furthermore, intersectional dynamics, such as gender, were raised by Participant 3 – RF174, who noted that female officers tend to *“judge”* female drivers more often.

A close examination of divergent views shows that respect is often seen as a reciprocal relationship rather than a unilateral construct. Some participants outright rejected the idea of systemic disrespect. Participant 12 (RF175) said, *“I’ve never been disrespected,”* while Participant 1 (RF176) explained reciprocal determinism: *“I think traffic officers treat you the way you treat them... I didn’t retaliate. I agreed and I apologised.”* Similarly, Participant 4 (RF177) highlighted that a driver’s response *“can make a conversation very fruitful or it can go sour.”* This difference is important: although systemic power imbalances exist, procedural justice during traffic stops depends heavily on the initial attitude of both the citizen and the officer. When traffic police officers follow constitutional guidelines of respect, they help prevent negative public reactions (Tyler & Fischer, 2014:9-10).

6.3.3.4. The Pervasiveness of Fear and Vulnerability

Traffic stops inherently induce anxiety, but the South African socio-criminological context amplifies this into acute fear. To determine the extent and situational context of this anxiety, participants were asked: *“Do you fear being stopped by a traffic police officer?”*

The analysis revealed a clear temporal dichotomy regarding fear during traffic stops. During the day, opinions widely varied. A few participants felt no fear during daylight stops, reasoning that following the law ensures safety. *“No, because... I don’t necessarily do something wrong,”* said Participant 10 (RF178). However, most participants felt a default anxiety regardless of their legal behaviour, capturing the national sentiment: *“Living in South Africa... one is almost trained to be scared wherever you go”* (Participant 12 – RF179).

At night, there was a near-universal consensus. The concern over nighttime traffic stops is less about the police and more about the risk of criminal opportunists. Participants repeatedly mentioned fears of "bogus" police impersonators. Participant 7 (RF180) asked, *"Are they even real traffic officers?"*, while Participant 11 (RF181) described the intense fear it causes: *"Especially at night I won't stop... they might shoot at me, but I'm definitely not stopping."* Traffic authorities face a complex challenge because proactive traffic law enforcement is often viewed by the public not as protection, but as a significant threat (Nowacki & Spencer, 2019:1).

6.3.3.5. Procedural Misconduct – Identification and Communication

Procedural justice requires transparency, yet systemic procedural misconduct can fundamentally alter the public-police interaction. To assess adherence to standard operating procedures during a stop, participants were asked two specific questions: *"When stopped by a traffic police officer, does s/he identify himself or herself?"* and *"When stopped by a traffic police officer, was the reason for the stop explained?"*

- **Self-identification**

The National Road Traffic Act, 93 of 1996, requires traffic police officers to clearly display official name tags. Despite this, most participants reported that traffic police officers often do not identify themselves. Participant 1 – RF182 stressed this point strongly, saying *"Never, ever ever,"* while Participant 3 – RF183 observed that officers *"don't even wear it."* Interestingly, Participant 12 – RF184 provided a negative example, saying, *"I was a bit rattled, so I can't remember."* This underscores an important psychological aspect: the stress of being stopped may reduce a driver's ability to recall details, a factor that must be considered alongside any deliberate non-compliance by traffic police officers.

- **Reason for the stop**

Explaining the reason for a traffic stop is essential for fair policing (NRTLEC, 2019:136). Participants' experiences varied: some valued clear communication, like Participant 3 (RF185) who said, *"He explained the reason why he's going to give a ticket,"* while others encountered abrupt, authoritative requests. Participant 2 (RF186) remarked, *"No, they just immediately demand where's your driver's license."* Clear and

impartial explanations of the reason for a stop are vital for public understanding and cooperation (Awan et al., 2017:174). When traffic police officers do not provide reasons, it fosters the perception of arbitrary traffic law enforcement.

6.3.3.6. The Role of the Media and the Influence on Public Perception

The media is a significant external influence on the interactive process, often preconditioning public perception before a traffic stop even occurs. To gauge this secondary influence, the research asked: "*Do you think that articles in the media affect your opinion about the image of traffic police officers?*"

Several participants recognised that viral content influences their anxiety. Participant 4 – RF187 mentioned that the *media "actually have proof. They will show a video of traffic officers abusing an individual*, which damages the policing image and creates fear that "*one day it might happen to you.*" Both mainstream media and social networks often emphasise police misconduct, shaping public perception (Schultz, 2019:5).

However, some participants with a critical stance toward media expressed contrasting views. Participant 6 – RF188 demonstrated critical media literacy, stating, "*You never hear of the positive stuff that gets done by them.*" Likewise, Participant 10 – RF189 dismissed media influence altogether, saying, "*I can see what is happening for myself. I don't need social media to influence me.*" This difference illustrates that, although social media often heightens fears of police corruption and abuse, motorists who possess higher critical literacy skills or have positive personal experiences tend to rely on their own direct interactions rather than sensationalised online stories.

6.3.4. The Impact of the Public Image on the Criminal Justice System – Research Objective 4

Traffic policing represents the administrative and functional arm of the government mandated to ensure road safety. Through the exercise of traffic law enforcement powers such as arrest, detention, and the use of force, this functional arm directly influences the professional public image of Traffic Police Officers (Ullah, Hussain, Alam & Akhunzada, 2016:134-135).

The primary goal of the traffic police is to deter offending behaviour and create a safe road environment. However, an initial qualitative analysis of the coded data revealed that the emotional undertones of the participants' responses were predominantly negative. This section addresses Research Objective 4 by synthesising the qualitative findings to explain the criminological significance of the public image of traffic police officers for the Criminal Justice System.

6.3.4.1. Inadequate road safety

This section explores the qualitative research question: *“Do you believe road safety has improved over the past twelve months?”* The goal is to understand how road users experience safety and what factors influence these perceptions.

The data indicate strong agreement among participants that road safety has worsened. Most blame this decline on a severe lack of visible policing and the unchecked behaviour of public transport operators. Participant 1 (RF241) expressed this frustration, noting, *“we tend to do as we please on the roads, because there's no visible traffic officers... we end up driving like Taxis”*. This attitude points to a clear breakdown in the social task of safe road use (Kroj, 2000:6; Smiley & Dewar, 2016:109).

However, considering divergent views offers a different perspective. Not everyone blames human behaviour alone. Pointing to municipal failures, Participant 3 (RF242) argued that *“the road signs are not enough... the robot was broken... it takes like months or weeks for it to be fixed”*. This negative case is important because it shows that feelings of insecurity are also deeply tied to crumbling physical infrastructure, not just rule-breaking.

(A) Unsafe When Using a Public Road In South Africa

This sub-topic addresses the specific question: *“When using a public road, do you feel safe?”* The responses reveal a high level of vulnerability among South African drivers. Fear of violent crime physically paralyzes road users, especially after dark. Participant 1 - RF247 explained that they do not feel safe at night because criminals *“put like spikes on the road”* to ambush motorists. This fear is made worse because traffic

police generally do not operate a 24-hour service, leaving citizens feeling unprotected by the state (Moatshe, 2022:1; SAnews, 2021:1). Different opinions indicate that driving during the day is seen as slightly better, though Participant 7 - RF250 noted they still do not feel safe and remain hyper-alert because *“you can get hijacked”*.

(B) Chaos on SA Roads – Myth or Fact?

This sub-topic deals with the question: “Do you think there is chaos on our roads?”

Participants had complex reactions to the idea of “chaos”. Most agreed that anarchy is a reality, pointing to road rage, unroadworthy cars, and potholes (Participant 4 - RF254; Participant 7 - RF156). Yet a few minority perspectives reframed the issue. Participant 9 - RF257 argued, *“Our roads are not chaos... I think that we, the road users, causes the chaos”*. Another differing view came from Participant 1 - RF253, who felt the chaos is simply a symptom of broken trust, stating that people have *“lost our faith on the people that are supposed to be either protecting or looking after us”*. Engaging with these minority views moves the analysis beyond basic complaints about traffic police, revealing a deeper societal breakdown in adherence to rules.

6.3.4.2. Misconduct

This section looks at the research question: “Traffic officers refrain from reporting their colleagues’ wrongdoings. What is your opinion?”

The interview data show a unanimous belief that traffic police officers cover up for their peers. The main driver of this silence is a deep-seated fear of retaliation. Officers are terrified of being isolated. Participant 7 - RF261 expressed fear of *“branding you as something... if you're a snitch,”* while Participant 12 - RF264 cited *“the fear of being a cast out”*. Further, the public views the policing environment as structurally corrupt. Participant 8 - RF262 called it a *“syndicate,”* arguing that honest officers *“will never last there, they will end up joining the hundreds that that is corrupt”*. This supports Marshall (2021:1), who warns about environments where corrupt groups hold power, making whistleblowing highly dangerous (Holgersson, 2019:24).

(A) Ultra Vires Traffic Police Actions

This sub-topic unpacks the probing question: “Do you think that traffic police officers operate outside the boundaries of the law (ultra vires)?”

Opinions on whether officers operate outside the law were sharply divided. Just over half of the group recalled personal experiences of bribery. Participant 13 - RF271 noted how easy it is to bypass the law: *“If I get a ticket, I take it to someone they scrap it. Give them a hundred rand and then go about your day”*. On the other hand, a significant minority described a very different reality. Participant 12 - RF270 stated they had experienced *“Nothing that I’ve come across in my personal capacity,”* and Participant 7 - RF267 mentioned dealing with traffic officers who were *“actually legit [and] professional”*. This contradiction is revealing. It suggests that while corruption is a known systemic issue, it is likely concentrated in specific areas, allowing some motorists to avoid it entirely.

6.3.4.3. Road Traffic Prosecution

This section evaluates the question: *“When you see a traffic police officer, do you drive more cautiously?”*

Standard deterrence theory assumes that the threat of punishment compels people to comply with the law (Mäkinen et al., 2003:28). The findings partially support this, with many admitting they slow down simply due to the *“fear of being stopped”* (Participant 4 - RF274) or the *“fear of being fined”* (Participant 11 - RF277). However, the divergent cases highlight the limits of this theory. Participant 6 - RF275 stated that enforcement presence does not change their behaviour because they inherently drive cautiously anyway. Another unusual take came from Participant 12 - RF278, who admitted that their speed is dictated more by the music they listen to than by traffic police presence.

(A) Fear of Prosecution

This sub-topic addresses the question: *“Consider the possibility of prosecution (traffic fine) for a violation – will it prevent you from committing a traffic offence?”*

The data reveals a major flaw in the justice system: traffic fines no longer deter a large portion of the public. While Participant 2 - RF279 genuinely fears ending up in jail,

others actively use corrupt networks to evade punishment. Demonstrating a total collapse in accountability, Participant 13 - RF284 said, *"we all know a traffic officer... You give them the ticket and they just scrap it"*.

(B) Judged for Receiving a Traffic Fine

This sub-topic poses the question: *"Do you think others will judge you if you receive a traffic fine?"*

The analysis shows that the social stigma attached to receiving a fine has completely vanished. The vast majority of participants feel no shame, with Participant 10 - RF288 describing it as *"a regular thing in South Africa"*. Traffic law enforcement has effectively been trivialised, seen as something to *"just laugh and forget about"* (Participant 13 - RF291). Because society no longer condemns bad driving, traditional fines have lost their punitive weight.

6.3.4.4. Offender Accountability

This section answers the question: *"Should compulsory rehabilitation measures such as revoking driver's licenses or training programs against habitual offenders be introduced?"*

Given the rising accident rates (Bezuidenhout, 2011:33), there is strong public support for harsh penalties. Most participants want habitual offenders to face serious consequences, with Participant 4 (RF294) insisting that they *"must go through the whole process... again to get their licences back"*.

However, minority views offer critical administrative reality checks. Participant 1 - RF292 felt that revoking licences was *"a bit harsh"* and preferred retraining. More importantly, Participant 7 - RF295 questioned whether the government could handle this, warning, *"I don't think we've got the admin capacity to actually monitor it and administer it"*. This negative case is vital because it exposes the gap between a good policy idea and the actual capabilities of South African public administration.

6.3.4.5. Confidence in Traffic Police Officers

This section looks at the question: *“How would you describe your confidence in the abilities of traffic police officers as protectors of law and order on our roads?”*

Institutional legitimacy is non-negotiable for effective traffic policing (Osse & Dossett, 2011:7). Unfortunately, the primary narrative from the interviews is a profound lack of trust. Participants expressed *“Zero confidence”* (Participant 4 - RF299). Worse, the public sees the traffic police as part of the problem. Participant 7 - RF300 argued that officers are *“bigger trespassers than most civilians,”* while Participant 1 - RF297 felt the traffic police have lost their passion and purpose.

Despite this bleak picture, a few participants had positive things to say based on isolated incidents. Participant 3 - RF298 praised officers for their quick response to incidents, and Participant 9 - RF302 expressed high confidence due to the professional conduct of two specific officers in Randfontein. Analysing these divergent views is useful. It shows that while trust in the overall institution is broken, trust in individual officers can still be built at a community level.

6.3.4.6. Public Cooperation

This section explores civic duty via the question: *“Will you assist in reporting serious traffic offences or testify in court?”*

The data presents a clash between civic responsibility and personal safety. Most people say they want to help. Participant 6 - RF311 actually stopped to report a reckless truck driver, and Participant 12 - RF314 views testifying as a *“duty as a citizen of South Africa”*.

However, some negative cases reveal why actual cooperation is rare. People are simply too scared. Participant 5 - RF310 will only assist if guaranteed anonymity, fearing the offender's family might *“come after you”*. Others are highly cynical about the justice process. Participant 1 - RF306 doubts the authorities *“would ever do anything about it”*, and Participant 9 - RF313 called the system a *“money-making racket”*. The most striking refusal came from Participant 13 - RF315, who stated, *“I’m*

not going to support them with anything because they don't support us with anything". This shows that public cooperation has to be earned through proper state support, rather than simply expected.

6.3.4.7. Offending Traffic Rules

The final section addresses the question: *"Do you commit a traffic offence from time to time?"*

The findings reveal how normalised traffic offences have become. Reflecting global trends towards decriminalising minor road behaviour (Faraldo-Cabana, 2017:10; AA, 2023:1), most participants casually admitted to breaking the law daily. Speeding and ignoring stop signs were the most common offences (Participant 7 - RF317; Participant 10 - RF320).

What stands out is how drivers justify their actions. Major violations are often downplayed in their minds. For example, Participant 6 - RF316 described overtaking on a solid line or running a red light as *"minor offences"*. Furthermore, people often break the law in the name of self-preservation. Participant 9 - RF319 admitted they do not stop completely at stop streets in *"certain areas where I am unsafe"*. This highlights a dangerous trend in which South African drivers actively decide which laws to follow based on personal convenience and fear of street crime, ultimately adding to the chaos on the roads.

6.3.5. Proposed Improvements

This section shifts from tabulated data summaries to offer a synthesised interpretation of participant narratives in response to the qualitative research question, *"What, in your opinion, is necessary to enhance the public image of Traffic Police Officers?"* The analysis synthesises information from multiple participant groups to explore the underlying paradoxes and implications of traffic law enforcement in South Africa, moving beyond superficial agreement.

6.3.5.1. Officer Accountability and Institutional Oversight

Public trust depends heavily on the visible application of discipline. Several respondents expressed frustration with weak front-line supervision and the misuse of state resources. Participant 4 - RF325 questioned the sight of officers running personal errands in uniform: *“They’re shopping during working hours ... The car that’s supposed to be on the road, checking if the traffic is flowing, it’s there parked at the mall”*. Addressing this lack of operational integrity, Participant 7 - RF327 argued for *“severe consequences for traffic officers that are unethical ... to try and get rid of them”*.

However, a valuable divergent view emerged about the purpose of oversight mechanisms. While most participants saw accountability strictly as a tool to punish corruption, Participant 3 - RF324 framed it as a necessary protection for traffic police officers themselves. Supporting the introduction of body cameras, this participant noted that *“traffic officers get really abused by the drivers ... It will be nice to see what really happens when a car’s pulled over”*. This minority perspective is highly significant because it demonstrates civilians’ awareness that traffic police officers are vulnerable to public hostility. It suggests that accountability tools should operate bilaterally, protecting the public from traffic police misconduct while simultaneously shielding traffic police officers from unfounded abuse.

6.3.5.2. Training and Conflict Management

When discussing training deficits, participants rarely cited a lack of knowledge of traffic law. Instead, the underlying pattern pointed to a severe shortfall in interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills. Routine traffic stops in South Africa often carry significant socio-political and historical weight. Participant 1 (RF329) captured this tension directly: *“I think training, conflict management because whether we want to admit it or not, some people when they get stopped, they assume it’s about race”*.

This observation indicates that general appeals for *“more training”* (Participant 6 - RF331) or *“proper training”* (Participant 8 - RF332) should not be interpreted merely as requests for basic legal workshops. Rather, these responses highlight an urgent demand for an advanced curriculum focused on socio-cultural sensitivity and de-escalation tactics. Traffic administrators must equip officers with the psychological

tools needed to safely navigate and de-escalate racially charged or hostile civilian encounters.

6.3.5.3. Fostering Positive Media and Public Relations

The institutional image of local traffic departments suffers under the weight of constant negative media reporting. Participants felt this could be mitigated if departments actively managed their public relations rather than relying on reactive damage control. Participant 7 - RF333 suggested that administrators “*publish the good stories of them, like positive publicity instead of all the negative publicity*”.

Expanding on this concept, Participant 12 - RF334 proposed creating platforms for reciprocal community engagement, advising departments to start “*blowing up all the amazing stories that do actually happen*” while also “*giving the public the opportunity to publicly say thank you for positive experiences*”. This suggests that the public is not inherently antagonistic towards traffic law enforcement; there is a latent willingness to acknowledge and reward professional behaviour if traffic administrators actively foster positive communication channels.

6.3.5.4. Professionalism and Physical Readiness of Traffic Police Officers

During the discussion of the primary theme of professionalism, participants drew a direct and somewhat unexpected correlation among a traffic police officer's physical fitness, psychological temperament, and overall service delivery. Participant 4 - RF335 provided a blunt assessment of an obvious operational gap: “*They gain weight. They are grumpy, it's hot, they don't want to do the job ... when you are in this profession, you need to have this weight for you to be able to ... chase people*”.

Although recruits must pass rigorous physical and mental fitness tests before appointment, this finding suggests a widespread failure to uphold these basic standards after appointment. The participant's observation that physical discomfort makes officers “grumpy” shows that poor physical readiness actively undermines interactions with civilians. To professionalise the service and, by extension, improve its public image, administrators must implement mandatory, ongoing wellness and gymnasium programmes to ensure officers remain fit for active duty.

6.3.5.5. Visible Traffic Law Enforcement

The qualitative data reveals significant spatial and temporal gaps in traffic policing, which ultimately undermine the criminological principles of certainty and deterrence. Participants were highly critical of the lack of after-hours enforcement. Participant 1 - RF337 stated: *“There’s no visibility because I’ve really never seen a traffic officer at night on the other side on where I live ever beyond nine o’clock”*.

Alongside this temporal blind spot, participants noted the inconsistent application of the law. Participant 10 - RF338 stressed the need *“to apply the act to every single person that does not adhere to the law. And not selectively”*. Heavy reliance on predictable, daytime static roadblocks has also led to new driver evasion tactics. Motorists increasingly use enclosed security estates and residential areas as “rat-runs” to bypass primary routes where traffic stops are normally conducted. To counter these avoidance strategies and ensure equitable enforcement, departments must transition to dynamic, unpredictable 24-hour policing models that target all road users equally.

6.4. CHAPTER KEY FINDINGS – SUMMARY

This section synthesises the key qualitative findings derived from participants’ lived experiences, mapping them directly to the study’s four research objectives, criminological theories, and proposed improvements. Rather than merely summarising verbatim responses, this synthesis interprets underlying patterns, institutional contradictions, and divergent minority views to provide a comprehensive evaluation of South African traffic law enforcement.

6.4.1. Effective Fulfilment of Traffic Police Officer Roles (Objective 1)

- **Systemic Operational Failures:**

The coalescence reveals a fundamental breakdown in public perceptions of service delivery. A dominant pattern shows that officers frequently misuse emergency equipment, such as blue lights and sirens, for personal convenience to bypass traffic rather than for legitimate emergencies.

- **Opportunistic Visibility:**

The deployment of visible traffic policing is widely perceived as an opportunistic exercise aimed at financial extortion rather than a strategic effort to enhance road safety. This opportunistic approach effectively neutralises the criminological deterrent effect of visible traffic policing.

- **Contradictory Views on Professionalism:**

While a minority of participants reported isolated pleasant encounters and acknowledged the inherent authoritative weight of the traffic police uniform, these negative cases are heavily overshadowed by prevailing perceptions of traffic police officers as unkempt, physically unfit, and operationally incompetent.

6.4.2. Factors Affecting the Public Image of Traffic Police Officers (Objective 2)

- **The Normalisation of Bribery:**

Systemic bribery during routine traffic stops emerged as the most significant factor in degrading the professional image of traffic police officers, completely overshadowing any positive aspects of their service.

- **Administrative Contradictions:**

Formal traffic fines and unwritten ticket quotas are frequently weaponised by traffic police officers to coerce motorists into paying bribes. This turns legitimate traffic law enforcement into an adversarial bargaining process.

- **Public Complicity and Divergent Views:**

An analysis of divergent views reveals that the public is often complicit in this corruption. Motorists frequently offer bribes in advance, viewing them as a faster, cheaper alternative to formal prosecution. This sustains a societal "normalisation of deviation" in which bribery becomes an accepted norm.

- **Erosion of Legitimacy:**

Institutional legitimacy is further compromised by a widespread lack of public respect, sensationalised media portrayals, and perceived political interference, where traffic police officers are reduced to acting as personal escorts for politicians.

6.4.3. The Interactive Process with Traffic Police Officers (Objective 3)

- **Procedural Misconduct**

Interactions are characterised by a critical lack of procedural justice. Traffic police officers routinely fail to identify themselves by name or to transparently explain the reasons for initiating a traffic stop, fostering an adversarial dynamic from the outset of the encounter.

- **Fear and Vulnerability**

The interactive process induces profound fear and anxiety. This vulnerability is particularly acute during nighttime stops, given the severe threat posed by opportunistic criminals and bogus traffic police impersonators, leaving the public feeling entirely unprotected by the state.

- **Vicarious Trauma**

Hearing about or witnessing severe traffic police abuse strongly predisposes motorists to distrust traffic police officers before any interaction occurs, deeply damaging community relations.

- **Divergent Views on Reciprocity**

Negative cases highlighted that a minority of participants experienced polite, reciprocal respect during traffic stops. These instances demonstrate that procedural justice often depends on reciprocal determinism, in which the mutual attitudes and initial conduct of both the citizen and the traffic police officer determine the success of the interaction.

6.4.4. The Impact of the Public Image on the Criminal Justice System (Objective 4)

- **Failure of Deterrence Theory**

Traditional criminological deterrence theory assumes that the threat of punishment compels compliance. However, qualitative findings indicate that this theory is failing on South African roads because formal fines are easily evaded through corrupt traffic police officers, and the social stigma of receiving a traffic fine has completely vanished.

- **Normalisation of Offences**

The trivialisation of traffic law enforcement has led to the normalisation of traffic offences. Drivers actively decide which laws to follow based on personal convenience and their fear of street crime.

- **Refusal of Public Cooperation**

The overarching institutional failure is the public's cynical refusal to cooperate with the broader Criminal Justice System, including reporting reckless drivers or testifying in court. This refusal stems from a deep-seated fear of retaliation, collegial cover-ups by traffic police officers, and a complete lack of faith in state protection.

- **Divergent Views on Road Chaos**

While most participants blame traffic police failure for road chaos, divergent views correctly point out that poor driver behaviour and crumbling municipal infrastructure (such as broken traffic lights and potholes) are equally responsible for feelings of unsafety.

6.4.5. Proposed Improvements – Open Question

- **Advanced Training**

There is an urgent need for an advanced curriculum focused on socio-cultural sensitivity, conflict management, and de-escalation tactics, rather than simply reiterating basic traffic laws.

- **Bilateral Accountability**

Participants advocated for bilateral accountability mechanisms, such as the implementation of body-worn cameras. Crucially, divergent views noted that this would not only protect citizens from extortion but also shield traffic police officers from unfounded civilian hostility.

- **Dynamic Policing Models**

Traffic departments must move from predictable, static daytime roadblocks to dynamic, 24-hour visible policing models to counter public evasion tactics and address nighttime vulnerabilities.

- **Officer Wellness and Public Relations**

Mandatory, ongoing physical wellness programmes are required to improve traffic police officer readiness and demeanour. Additionally, departments must actively champion positive public relations campaigns to restore institutional credibility and highlight professional conduct.

6.4.6. Summary of Shortcomings and Recommendations for Future Research

- **Methodological Shortcomings**

There are two additional significant methodological limitations to note.

- Firstly, there was an imbalance in gender representation among the participants. Specifically, there were twelve female drivers and only one male. Such a strong deviation towards female participants (92.3%) means that the conclusions drawn from the study might not be applicable to drivers of the opposite gender.
- Secondly, the coding and thematic analysis described in Chapter 4 were conducted exclusively by the researcher conducting this study. It would have been best practice to involve a second researcher to establish intercoder reliability. However, allocating funds for this type of qualitative research was not an option due to the researcher's financial constraints. In other words, the fact that a single person conducted the coding and thematic analysis inevitably introduces biases stemming from personal perceptions. Nevertheless, such biases could be minimised by the extensive knowledge of the topic the researcher has acquired during their degree, as well as by the application of bracketing (see 4.5.1.7).

- **Recommendation 1 (Empirical Studies on Public Complicity):**

Future criminological research should investigate the psychological and socio-economic drivers of the "normalisation of deviation" among South African road users, specifically examining why citizens actively sustain the bribery networks they publicly criticise.

- **Recommendation 2 (Evaluation of Accountability Tools)**

Further studies are required to assess the practical implementation, cost-effectiveness, and legal implications of introducing bilateral accountability mechanisms (such as body-worn cameras) in the specific context of South African traffic law enforcement.

- **Recommendation 3 (Internal Institutional Perspectives)**

Future research should focus on the internal operational culture of Traffic Police Officers. Capturing the traffic police officers' lived experiences, occupational stressors, and institutional challenges will provide a balanced, dual-perspective understanding of the interactive process on public roads.

6.5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter moved beyond a basic summary of verbatim quotes to offer a deeply interpreted synthesis of how the South African public experiences traffic law enforcement. Addressing structural concerns, the analysis shifted from isolated tables to an active exploration of underlying patterns and institutional contradictions. Crucially, examining divergent minority views demonstrated that public complicity, reciprocal attitudes, and crumbling municipal infrastructure heavily shape this complex dynamic. Unpacking these negative cases provided a richer, more balanced evaluation of the core elements influencing the professional policing image.

Ultimately, this qualitative synthesis reveals that a severe public trust deficit paralyses the broader criminal justice system. The evidence shows that the deterrent value of traffic policing is frequently neutralised by systemic extortion, unwritten administrative mandates, and genuine civilian fear. To address these institutional failures, the chapter explored practical solutions from participants, emphasising the urgent need for advanced de-escalation training and bilateral accountability tools. These integrated findings, together with the proposed systemic improvements, provide a solid, evidence-based foundation for the final research conclusions and recommendations presented in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the PhD thesis by assessing the public perceptions of the professional image of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in the South African criminal justice system. The paper explores the existing breach in the vital relationship between the motoring public and traffic law enforcement authorities, generated by systemic institutional failings, widespread corruption, and the normalisation of deviant conduct. Here, the complex processes are dissected to provide a rigorous criminological framework for the empirical data, thus providing a holistic understanding of the crisis on South African roads and a crucial intellectual basis for deliberate institutional and policy reform in traffic policing.

The present chapter is structured sequentially, beginning with a descriptive synopsis of the preceding chapters (Section 7.2). It then moves to an expert panel evaluation of the proposed solution (Section 7.3), before formally presenting the proposed Public Satisfaction Model – a contestable evaluative solution conceptualised to guide the rehabilitation of traffic policing in South Africa (Section 7.4). The chapter then presents the main empirical findings in relation to the study's aims and objectives, integrates both quantitative and qualitative data without hypothesis testing (Section 7.5), and brings them together into a wider theoretical integration (Section 7.6). The chapter then discusses the study's contribution to criminological scholarship (Section 7.7), suggests areas for future research (Section 7.8) and offers specific policy recommendations (Section 7.9). It continues with a frank assessment of the study's methodological constraints (Section 7.10) before providing a conclusive synthesis (Section 7.11).

The chapter is a logical conclusion of the dissertation research, as it translates the descriptive data into meaningful policy recommendations. It is a critical evaluation of the current realities of traffic policing which connects theoretical gaps in the literature with empirical realities. The synthesis calls for immediate reform, disentangling

academic analysis from routine administrative reports and incorporating it into scientific criminological evaluation. This is a strategic, evidence-based approach to provide guidance to traffic police authorities and to the wider legal system to restore the professionalism of South African traffic officers.

7.2. SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

This thesis systematically examined the public perception of TPOs in South Africa. Chapter 1 orients the study, outlining the volatile environment of traffic law enforcement and articulating the central research problem. Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive and critical review of the relevant literature, examining historical contexts, professional ethics, procedural justice, and the systemic nature of corruption in South African traffic policing. Chapter 3 delineates the theoretical framework, anchoring the research in established criminological and behavioural theories to comprehend public compliance and traffic police legitimacy.

Chapter 4 outlines the mixed-methods convergent research design and justifies the data collection methods and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 presents a quantitative forensic analysis of 491 respondents, revealing high levels of institutional mistrust and systemic bribery. Chapter 6 examines the qualitative lived experiences of 13 participants, corroborating the quantitative findings and highlighting deep-rooted fears and the socio-cultural normalisation of corruption on public roads.

7.3. VALIDATION OF THE PROPOSED PUBLIC SATISFACTION MODEL (EXPERT PANEL REVIEW)

To ensure the scientific validity and practical relevance of the proposed Public Satisfaction Model, it underwent peer-review evaluation by other researchers. Initially, 11 experts were invited to participate in this stage of the evaluation. To ensure that the concept would pass both theoretical and practical tests, 4 industry experts were included for peer-review evaluation. Eventually, 6 professionals agreed to participate in the review of the proposed model. Of the 6 reviewers, 5 are academic specialists, and 1 is an industry expert.

All of the suggestions and recommendations from the reviewers were taken into consideration. The reviewers' comments have resulted in an improved final proposed public satisfaction model. Some of the recommendations, which included reorganising the concluding paragraphs, reclassifying the concept under revised categories, or adding repetitive chapter conclusions, were declined in favour of maintaining the thesis's logical structure and academic coherence.

Table 7.1 below presents the professional justification of the selected participating experts, along with specific recommendations and brief justifications for adopting or declining the suggested changes. Concise academic justifications are provided where specific advice was not followed in relation to the study's core objectives.

Table 7 1: Expert Panel Composition and Validation

Expert Participant	Professional Profile	Key Recommendations	Implementation & Motivation
Participant 1	Senior Researcher & doctoral supervisor (private higher institution).	• No structural amendments proposed. • Recommends practical adoption by traffic authorities.	Adhered to. Core design retained; model finalised for practical implementation.
Participant 2	Senior Researcher & doctoral supervisor (public university).	• Cross-reference Zones 1–3 to empirical findings. • Add introductory paragraph to Section 7.4.1. • Reorder concluding sections (7.6–7.9). • Replace the term "comprehensive".	Partially adhered to. *Implemented:* Zones cross-referenced, introduction added, and terminology refined. *Not implemented:* Structural reordering was excluded to maintain alignment with institutional guidelines and preserve logical progression.
Participant 3	Senior Researcher & doctoral supervisor (private higher institution).	• Endorsed current iteration. • Advised against further revisions.	Adhered to. Foundational structure retained as endorsed.

Participant 4	Dean of Research & head of doctoral programme (private institution).	• Clarify real-time adaptation mechanisms. • Reclassify construct as a 'theoretical framework' instead of a 'model'.	Partially adhered to. *Implemented:* Dynamic bi-directional arrows and evaluation loops added. *Not implemented:* Term 'model' retained. It is explicitly framed as a "proposed, untested model," distinguishing it from purely abstract frameworks.
Participant 5	Senior Researcher & doctoral supervisor (private higher institution).	• Map zones to established theories. • Contextualise "Nano Banana" framework. • Detail implementation mechanics and metrics. • Acknowledge need for future empirical validation.	Fully adhered to. Theories strictly mapped to zones. Implementation metrics added. "Nano Banana" contextualised as a visual logic rendering tool. Future validation formally acknowledged.
Participant 6	Industry Expert; senior private sector researcher & doctoral examiner (former public university research manager).	• Provide comprehensive summary of preceding chapters. • Integrate focus group insights. • Provide clear visual representation.	Partially adhered to. *Implemented:* Visual SVG rendered and focus group insights integrated into baseline inputs. *Not implemented:* Chapter summaries excluded to prevent structural repetition (Section 7.2) and protect the thesis's doctoral standard

7.4.THE PROPOSED PUBLIC SATISFACTION MODEL: A CONTESTABLE EVALUATIVE SOLUTION

In terms of the requirements of an operationalised framework, the current section will present a proposed, albeit untested, conceptual model derived from the research results. The proposed model below (Figure 7.1) aims to capture the interrelationships between the key input variables, which in turn determine the observed output variables. In doing so, it explicitly incorporates the requisite continuous negative-

factors loop, thus providing the tested solution for the rehabilitation of South Africa's traffic policing system, as described in the research.

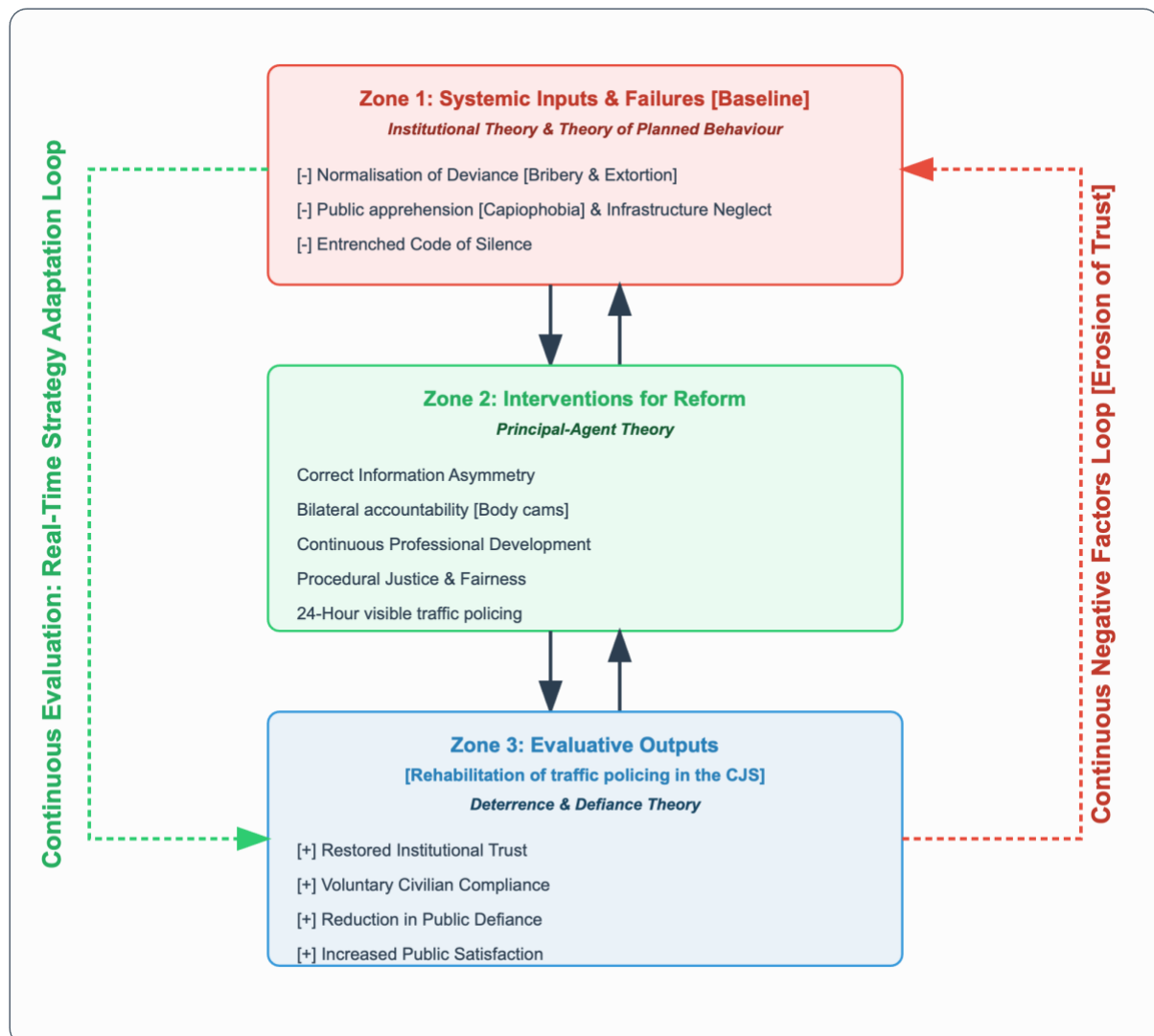


Figure 7. 1: Proposed Public Satisfaction Model for South African Traffic Policing

This proposed model was constructed using a state-of-the-art transformer architecture designed for high-fidelity text-to-image synthesis, prioritising the iterative refinement of specific variables through natural language feedback. This specific proposed model was selected because it offers a unique balance of creative flexibility and technical precision; unlike rigid generative tools, the architecture provides the compositional intelligence needed to handle multiple subjects and specific demographic constraints within a single frame. This ensured that the visual outputs remained academically

relevant to the study's parameters while maintaining the necessary expressive quality for user engagement

7.4.1. Component Analysis and Theoretical Alignment (Vertical Architecture)

To meet the requirement of clarity, the proposed model is divided into a vertical hierarchy of three zones. The double-headed arrows indicate that each zone is interconnected and interdependent. The components identified in each zone are explained below as they appear in the figure, together with their corresponding quantitative and theoretical inputs:

- **Zone 1: Systemic Inputs & Failures [Baseline]**

This zone depicts the system's inputs and problems occurring in the lower levels of the traffic police organisation. Institutional Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour underpin this layer, explaining how the socio-criminal system legitimises bribery and extortion through its code of silence, thereby establishing the "normalisation of deviance". This layer also incorporates public input on capiophobia and the impact of infrastructure failure on the accessibility of road traffic services. As established by the quantitative analysis of the 491 respondents, there is a significant deficit in the current level of services provided by the TPO. Specifically, only 41.5% of the respondents report experiencing exemplary performance by the TPOs in the past 12 months.

- **Zone 2: Interventions for Reform**

This zone is the intervention layer that employs a mix of strategies to reform the TPO. It is underpinned by the Principal-Agent Theory, which recognises information asymmetry as a key contributor to unethical practices by TPOs against the public. To address this issue, this layer calls for correcting information asymmetry by introducing bilateral accountability mechanisms, such as body-worn cameras, continuous officer training, and a 24-hour visible presence of the TPOs, in line with the standards set by the National Road Traffic Law Enforcement Code (NRTLEC). These interventions aim to foster a culture of professional pride within the TPO.

- **Zone 3: Evaluative Outputs [Rehabilitation of traffic policing in the CJS]**

The final zone comprises assessment and evaluation criteria likely to yield desirable outcomes. It appeals to Sherman's Deterrence & Defiance Theory, which is premised on the idea that the surest way to reduce crime is to deter people from committing it. Following the interventions articulated in Zone 2, this layer focuses on restoring trust in the TPO and promoting voluntary compliance with traffic regulations to reduce public cynicism and increase transparency within traffic police authorities.

7.4.2 Operationalising the Proposed Model for Traffic Police Managers

For Traffic Police managers to operationalise this vertical proposed model, requiring transformation from an aspirational model into a reality-testing system, they need to pay particular attention to the loops containing information flows according to the proposed model's structure:

- **Bi-directional flow (between zones 1, 2, and 3)**

While the proposed model's arrows indicate the information flows between the loop's zones, the manager needs to realise that outcomes in Zone 1 require response interventions in Zone 2. However, failures in organisational interventions exacerbate baseline conditions. Therefore, Zone 3's evaluations must inform Zone 2's responses.

- **Continuous negative factors loop [Erosion of Trust]**

The manager must be especially wary of the upwards loop on the right side of the diagram, signifying Trust Erosion. In other words, if Zone 3's outcomes indicate aggravated causes in Zone 1 (e.g. increased non-coordination by the motoring public), this loops back to worsen Zone 2's performance. The manager must be aware that failed enforcement leads to population normalisation of deviance and loss of trust.

- **Continuous evaluation: Real-Time strategy adaptation loop**

Finally, the traffic police manager must use the downward loop on the left to adapt strategies in real time. In other words, Zone 1's baseline factors must enter Zone 3's continuous evaluation loop to allow responsive adjustments to changing social/economic factors. This satisfies the proposed model's need for a dynamic operation.

7.5. SYNTHESIS OF STUDY FINDINGS AND OBJECTIVES

7.5.1. Objective 1 - Role Fulfilment of Traffic Police Officers

The public's expectations regarding statutory traffic policing significantly diverge from the actual operational realities. Quantitative data revealed substantial deficiencies in service delivery, with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) explaining only 43.5% of the variance, indicating a highly complex and multidimensional failure in professional service provision. Qualitative narratives corroborated that visible policing is predominantly viewed as an opportunistic activity focused on financial extortion rather than on enhancing road safety, and is further exacerbated by the frequent misuse of emergency equipment for personal convenience.

7.5.2. Objective 2: Variables Affecting the Public Image

Systemic bribery constitutes the principal factor undermining the professional reputation of TPOs. Bribery is not an isolated phenomenon; rather, it represents a transactional norm predominantly prevalent in economic hubs such as Gauteng, Limpopo, and the Free State. Both quantitative and qualitative research findings illustrate the "normalisation of deviation," whereby motorists proactively engage in bribery as a practical means to circumvent administrative inefficiencies within government authorities. Furthermore, traffic citations issued by officials are frequently exploited by TPOs to coerce motorists into bribery, thereby substituting institutional legitimacy for adversarial negotiations.

Within the realm of South African traffic law enforcement, empirical data fundamentally challenge the traditional age-crime curve posited by Hirschi and Gottfredson. Chi-square analyses indicated no statistically significant variation across age cohorts (18–39 years versus 40–60+ years) regarding exposure to or engagement in bribery. As a result, transactional corruption on South African roads should not be regarded as a developmental phase but rather as a deeply rooted, systemic socio-cultural norm that transcends generational boundaries. Additionally, the normalisation of deviance is further complicated by statistically significant gender disparities. The data demonstrate that male motorists are considerably more likely than their female counterparts to

prefer proactive bribery as a means to evade prosecution (19.0% versus 9.9%). This indicates that male drivers are more likely to perceive transactional corruption as an expedient means of circumventing the formal mechanisms of the criminal justice system (CJS).

Public cooperation with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) demonstrates significant spatial and demographic disparities. African respondents (82.2%) and users of public transportation (90.3%) have shown a markedly higher willingness to depend on formal mechanisms to report serious traffic violations. Conversely, White respondents (62.4%) and private motor vehicle drivers exhibit deep-seated scepticism towards institutional structures. Notwithstanding these differing reporting cultures, there exists a widespread societal consensus—83.1% across all demographic groups—that 'anarchy' prevails on South African roads, thereby empirically substantiating the systemic failure of authoritative oversight and control.

7.5.3. Objective 3: The Interactive Process

Interactions between the motoring public and TPOs are characterised by a significant deficiency in procedural justice. TPOs frequently breach statutory obligations by failing to display identification or provide explanations during traffic stops. This situation fosters heightened public vulnerability and apprehension (capiophobia), which is further exacerbated during nighttime owing to the threat posed by counterfeit traffic police impersonators and the absence of 24-hour visible policing.

While systemic fear (capiophobia) influences the overall institutional perception, the interactive process reveals a notable dichotomy. Personal experiences of severe physical (81.9% denied) and verbal abuse (72.9% denied) are statistically infrequent, with a substantial majority of respondents (67.2%) affirming that they were treated fairly during routine traffic stops. Consequently, the deeply rooted public apprehension is not solely based on personal encounters; it is significantly exacerbated by secondary media narratives (54.8%), which actively influence the interactive process and shape public anxiety before a traffic stop begins.

The qualitative findings revealed an alarming operational pattern: TPOs' visibility is often perceived as opportunistic and predatory. Extortionate practices are closely tied to the socio-economic calendar, with significant peaks during the "dry week" preceding payday and at month-end. This indicates that visible policing is frequently driven by the personal financial interests of the officers seeking a "cold drink" (bribe), rather than by strategic, intelligence-led initiatives aimed at enhancing road safety.

7.5.4. Objective 4: Criminological Impact on the Criminal Justice System

The study presents empirical evidence indicating that the traditional criminological deterrence theory has been unsuccessful on South African roads. Because formal prosecution can be circumvented through corrupt transactions, the social stigma associated with traffic violations has diminished. This trivialisation of traffic law enforcement promotes civilian defiance and a cynical reluctance to cooperate with the Criminal Justice System (CJS), thereby rendering the institution largely ineffective in the public's perception.

7.6. THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

The results of this study cannot be explained by a single theory; instead, an eclectic approach to analysis from different theoretical perspectives should be taken. Several factors influence the negative perception of TPOs among the public. Institutional breakdown, traffic police corruption, ineffective deterrence, public fear, the state's apathy towards the problem, infrastructure issues, and societal desensitisation to deviance are the reasons it might have happened. Thus, in this section, the theories used for this study will be discussed in detail, and how they apply to the research results found in this paper will be explained.

In turn, the theoretical background presented in this section helps link the proposed public satisfaction model. This proposed model's three vertical zones can be correlated with the theories presented to identify the central issues causing dissatisfaction among TPOs and road users in South Africa. Institutional theory, the theory of planned behaviour, and the broken roads theory can help explain the first zone, which deals with inputs and failures. The second zone, which focuses on the

reforms to be implemented, can be explained through principal-agent and accountability theories. Finally, the last zone deals with outputs and the changes necessary to rehabilitate traffic policing as a whole, which can be explained by Deterrence and Defiance Theory and the need to reform criminal justice system policy. Thus, according to these theories, it can be suggested that as long as TPOs continue to serve as a corrupt and ineffective instrument of punishment, their presence will be a disincentive to driving safely and following the rules.

7.6.1. The Broken Roads Theory

Broken Roads Theory explains how the condition of road infrastructure affects the popularity of traffic law enforcement. In the South African context, potholes, poor road surfaces, a lack of road markings, inadequate road lighting, and other issues significantly undermine drivers' confidence in the authorities' ability to enforce traffic laws effectively. If road conditions are unsafe, people are more likely to believe that traffic law enforcement's primary mission is to generate revenue.

The proposed public satisfaction model's Zone 1 shows that dissatisfaction with road infrastructure is part of the system's baseline conditions. As such, TPOs must recognise their role as safety managers and report any road defects that could cause accidents to the relevant authorities. To enhance public confidence in their ability to manage traffic efficiently, TPOs should focus on enforcing traffic regulations, providing services, and cooperating with other authorities.

7.6.2. Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour clarifies the motivation behind road users' willingness to resort to bribery. According to this theory, there are three key predictors of this behaviour: a positive attitude towards bribery as a convenient measure, subjective norms that accept paying a "cold drink" as a common practice, and perceived behavioural control, meaning road users' perception that they can freely pay off traffic fines without being caught and prosecuted.

Therefore, this proposed model is essential to this study because it helps explain why the population is willing to tolerate corruption and how easily bribery can be integrated

into daily life, regardless of the severity of the punishment. In other words, the research has confirmed that the corruption of TPOs is not just a result of their behaviour, but also of the influence of road users and their subjective experience.

7.6.3. Institutional Theory and the Normalisation of Deviance

Institutional Theory explains how deviant behaviours are reinforced within traffic policing due to inadequate control and supervision, the politicisation of traffic law enforcement, lack of accountability, and mismanagement of consequences. The results suggest that the public perceives corruption as a general phenomenon that shapes TPOs' professional image in society.

Normalisation of deviance manifests as bribery, selective traffic enforcement, failure to identify oneself, irresponsible use of special equipment, and other corrupt practices that undermine the TPOs' credibility as a traffic law enforcement agency. As a result, public satisfaction with traffic police performance decreases, leading to negative attitudes such as mistrust, social cynicism, and unwillingness to cooperate. This corresponds to Zone 1 of the proposed Public Satisfaction Model, which identifies the causes of mistrust and dissatisfaction in traffic policing.

7.6.4 Principal-Agent Theory and Accountability Failure

Why is it important to understand the principal-agent theory? In some cases, TPOs represent the state and its citizens in a particular territory. However, if there is no effective control and supervision by the TPOs, they may misuse their powers for personal gain. There is also information asymmetry between TPOs and drivers, which makes interactions between TPOs and citizens a potential source of abuse of power, including bribery, threats, discriminatory enforcement of the law, and other abuses.

It is necessary to correct the shortcomings associated with the application of the principal-agent theory by implementing the solutions presented in Zone 2 of the proposed Public Satisfaction Model. The bilateral accountability of TPOs, using body cameras, identification cards, supervision, and complaint forms, is designed to address these weaknesses while protecting citizens. At the same time, these

measures are intended to prevent abuse among officers and to protect them from unsubstantiated complaints.

7.6.5 Deterrence and Defiance Theory

The traditional deterrence theory holds that offences are deterred when punishment is certain, swift, and severe. Contrary to this theory, the findings reported that traffic violations were less likely to be punished when bribery occurred, instead of being prosecuted. Therefore, it can be concluded that bribery undermines the law's punitive and moral power.

Sherman's Deterrence and Defiance Theory could be more applicable in this case. According to Sherman's theory, traffic police practices perceived as unfair, predatory, capricious, and corrupt lead to increased crime. The report's findings reflect this theory by showing that public cynicism influenced attitudes towards traffic law enforcement. This observation supports Zone 3 of the proposed Public Satisfaction Model. This proposed model indicates that repairing trust, procedural justice, and voluntary compliance are key factors in rehabilitating traffic policing.

7.6.6 Self-Control, Age, gender, and Systemic Corruption

The findings suggest that there are more than individual issues with South Africa's road traffic system. The fact that both younger and older drivers could be exposed to or involved in bribery suggests that, beyond any specific age group, there is a generalised societal norm of corruption.

The data also highlight gender differences in attitudes towards bribery as a means of evading prosecution, with male drivers more inclined to adopt this option than their female counterparts. This does not, however, suggest that age, gender or morality are the key drivers of corruption in this environment, as the phenomenon is embedded within a complex set of causes, including poor institutional governance, social cynicism, enforcement discretion and the ability to circumvent criminal justice system requirements.

7.6.7 Integrated Theoretical Interpretation

Taken together, these theories show that the public image of TPOs is shaped by structural, institutional, behavioural, and procedural factors. Specifically, Broken Roads Theory explains the devaluation process triggered by inadequate infrastructure; the Theory of Planned Behaviour illuminates TPOs' acceptance of bribery; Institutional Theory rationalizes the institutional normalization of deviance; Principal-Agent Theory emphasizes the agency-specific need for enhanced accountability; and Deterrence and Defiance Theory addresses the reactive nature of corruption.

Overall, this collective understanding of the phenomenon suggests that resolving it within the context of traffic policing requires more than punitive measures alone. In other words, rehabilitating the image of TPOs requires ethical leadership, responsive infrastructure, procedural justice, professional training, technological accountability, and ongoing evaluation. Hence, the next section will discuss the practical implications of the research, beginning with an analysis of the theoretical interconnections between the findings and the suggested course of action, including body-worn cameras, professional development, dynamic 24-hour visibility, community outreach, and consequences management.

7.7.CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY AND CRIMINOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP

The primary contribution of this doctoral thesis resides in its presentation of significant empirical evidence revealing the notable "rift in the partnership" between the South African motoring public and TPOs. By advancing from a basic descriptive analysis of traffic policing to a comprehensive forensic assessment of state enforcement mechanisms, this study surpasses conventional administrative reports by delivering a contestable evaluative framework. The research makes a substantial contribution to South African criminological scholarship by critically examining the systemic institutional deficiencies, political interference, and administrative neglect that currently undermine this sector, thereby establishing a robust academic foundation that can prompt comprehensive legislative reform.

Empirically, the study makes significant contributions by synthesising complex mixed-methods data to map the specific variables that determine public trust. A critical quantitative contribution is the structural identification of a strong negative relationship between systemic bribery and the professional image of TPOs, juxtaposed against a strong positive relationship between professional service delivery and public satisfaction. Furthermore, the qualitative strand yielded a vital, nuanced contribution not captured in the quantitative survey: the acute vulnerability of the public, demonstrating that a vast majority of qualitative participants (92.3%) experience profound fear (capiophobia) during nighttime traffic stops due to the threat of bogus traffic police impersonators, criminal opportunists, and a complete absence of 24-hour visible policing.

Theoretically, the thesis advances contemporary criminological discourse by demonstrating the empirical failure of traditional deterrence theory within the South African road traffic environment. The findings provide an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural "normalisation of deviation," revealing that motorists proactively engage in bribery as a convenient, rationalised means to circumvent the severe administrative inefficiencies of the broader criminal justice system. The study provides critical evidence indicating that official traffic tickets and unwritten administrative quotas are routinely weaponised by TPOs as adversarial bargaining tools for extortion. This practice has effectively neutralised the punitive weight of formal law enforcement, wholly eroding the social stigma associated with traffic violations and fostering a cynical public refusal to cooperate with the justice system.

In practical terms, this research provides the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) and broader legislative frameworks with actionable, high-impact policy imperatives to stabilise the sector. By exposing the precise mechanisms of procedural misconduct—such as officers deliberately failing to identify themselves, misusing emergency equipment for personal convenience, and opportunistically deploying visible policing for financial gain—the study pinpoints targeted areas for institutional intervention. The findings strongly support the urgent implementation of bilateral accountability tools, specifically body-worn cameras, designed to protect civilians from state extortion and shield officers from unfounded public hostility. Ultimately, this

thesis offers a strategic, evidence-based academic compass for the rehabilitation of institutional legitimacy and procedural justice within South African traffic law enforcement.

7.8. FUTURE RESEARCH STUDIES

Based on the identified theoretical and empirical gaps, the following areas require future scientific research:

7.8.1. Empirical Studies on Public Complicity

Criminological research must explore the socio-economic and psychological factors that motivate public engagement in bribery, particularly analysing why South African citizens actively uphold the corrupt networks they publicly condemn.

7.8.2. Evaluation of Bilateral Accountability Tools

Future studies should evaluate the practical implementation, legal considerations, and cost-effectiveness of introducing bilateral accountability mechanisms, such as body-worn cameras, to safeguard both civilians from extortion and officers from unwarranted hostility.

7.8.3. Internal Institutional Perspectives

To offer a comprehensive assessment of the interactive environment, future research should examine the internal occupational stressors, lived experiences, and systemic challenges encountered by TPOs themselves.

7.8.4. Refining Theoretical Constructs

Given the minimal variance explained in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) models of public image and role fulfilment, it is recommended that future research employ Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to identify and validate alternative, multidimensional latent constructs that influence traffic policing dynamics.

7.9. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.9.1. Recommendation 1 - Bilateral Accountability Tools (Body-Worn Cameras)

To address the severe crisis of integrity and the normalisation of systemic bribery, it is recommended that the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), provincial and local traffic authorities implement uncompromising consequence management through bilateral accountability mechanisms. Specifically, the mandatory deployment of body-worn cameras is required. This intervention must be structurally bilateral: it serves not only to protect the motoring public from unethical extortion and intimidation but also to shield TPOs from unfounded public hostility, verbal abuse, and false accusations during volatile traffic stops.

7.9.2. Recommendation 2 - Compulsory Rehabilitation for Habitual Offenders

The empirical data confirms that the current punitive, revenue-driven model of traffic police enforcement fails to serve as a systemic deterrent. Given the overwhelming public consensus (75.2%), it is recommended that the CJS introduce compulsory rehabilitation measures for habitual traffic offenders. Moving away from reliance on financial penalties, these measures must include mandatory driver retraining programmes and the strict, systematic revocation of driving licences to ensure genuine behavioural change.

7.9.3. Recommendation 3 - Continuous Professional Development and Advanced Conflict Management

To rehabilitate the professional guardian model of service delivery, traffic police authorities in South Africa must develop and implement rigorous Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes as a structural enabler. Qualitative data indicate that this curriculum must move beyond standard operational enforcement and place strong emphasis on soft skills, ethical conduct, socio-cultural sensitivity, and psychological de-escalation. This will equip TPOs to navigate hostile civilian encounters professionally and safely and actively mitigate the high levels of latent public apprehension (capiophobia) recorded during routine traffic stops.

7.9.4. Recommendation 4 - 24-Hour Dynamic Policing Models and Resource Allocation

To reduce public fear of nighttime driving and "bogus" TPO impersonators, traffic authorities should shift from predictable daytime roadblocks to dynamic, 24-hour visible policing. This requires providing sufficient structural support—such as more human resources and vehicles—to ensure a legitimate presence on the roads around the clock. Additionally, passive enforcement methods like "hiding to catch drivers" should be replaced with proactive, consistent visibility, which the public considers crucial to fostering a safer road environment.

7.9.5. Recommendation 5 - Mandatory Physical Wellness Programmes

Operational legitimacy is intrinsically linked to the physical presentation and agility of traffic law enforcement officers. Qualitative feedback from the motoring public has underscored considerable concerns regarding the physical fitness and neatness of TPOs, which directly compromise their authority and the overall image of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Consequently, traffic police managers are advised to institute mandatory, continuous physical wellness and gymnasium programmes to ensure that officers maintain the necessary operational readiness and project a professional, commanding presence to the motoring public.

7.9.6. Recommendation 6 - Fostering Positive Media and Community Relations.

Recognising that public anxiety and institutional fear are substantially intensified by secondary media narratives of TPO abuse, with 54.8% of the populace acknowledging this influence, traffic departments are required to diligently manage their public relations. It is advised that Traffic Police Authorities proactively disseminate positive enforcement outcomes, initiate comprehensive public education initiatives regarding legislative rights and responsibilities, and establish formal platforms for mutual community engagement. Such proactive communication strategies are vital for dismantling prevailing cynicism and bridging the growing divide between the state and the South African motoring public.

7.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

To contextualise the validity of this research, several critical methodological limitations must be addressed.

7.10.1. Non-Probability Sampling Limitations

The empirical investigation predominantly employed non-probability sampling methods, specifically convenience and snowball sampling, due to the structural infeasibility of constructing a comprehensive national sampling frame that encompasses all active road users. Consequently, any statistical assertions regarding the margin of error and the representativeness of the population are rendered inapplicable. It is imperative to explicitly reaffirm that, owing to the unknown probability of inclusion for any individual element, the quantitative findings cannot be statistically generalised to the entire South African motoring population.

7.10.2. Quantitative Sample Bias (Education and Transport Mode)

In addition to the non-probability constraints, the demographic skew of the quantitative sample must be explicitly detailed to properly contextualise the data. The dataset reflects a disproportionately highly educated cohort, with over 80% of respondents holding a certificate equivalent to or beyond a Senior Certificate. Furthermore, 74.3% of respondents were private motor vehicle drivers, whereas public transport users accounted for only 12.6% of the sample. It must be explicitly stated that this educational and transport profile restricts the broader generalisability of the quantitative findings. The lived experiences, daily interactions, and institutional vulnerabilities of less-educated citizens, or those entirely reliant on the minibus taxi industry, may differ significantly from those of the surveyed cohort.

7.10.3. Qualitative Gender Imbalance

A significant gender disparity must be acknowledged within the qualitative sample, which consisted of 92.3% female and only 7.7% male participants. While this purposively selected sample offers phenomenologically rich insights into female perspectives within the traffic policing context, it inherently introduces bias in the qualitative narratives concerning systemic fear, vulnerability, and vicarious trauma. This considerable imbalance limits the generalisability of these thematic findings

across genders and constrains the study's ability to draw universal conclusions about public perceptions of the interactive process.

7.10.4. Measurement and Construct Validity

The exclusion of "Not certain" responses during initial analytical stages risked introducing bias towards extreme viewpoints; nonetheless, neutral responses were preserved in the final descriptive analysis to uphold methodological integrity. Furthermore, the EFA models exhibited low explained variance (ranging from 36.5% to 51.2%), suggesting that external variables not measured in the study influence public perception.

7.10.5. Causal Inference

The cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to establish definitive causal relationships between variables, indicating that the findings should be regarded as strong associations rather than conclusive evidence of causation.

7.10.6. Methodological Inconsistency and Social Desirability Bias

A major limitation of the study is the conflict between quantitative and qualitative findings on tolerance for corruption, which may stem from social desirability bias. According to the quantitative data, only 10.6% of respondents view bribery as tolerable. However, qualitative findings suggest that for many people, engaging in corrupt practices is tolerated or even a cultural norm. This limitation highlights the issue of social desirability bias in research and the need to move beyond it.

7.10.7. Lack of Inter-coder Reliability

A critical limitation of this study that should be emphasised is the lack of inter-coder reliability, as the qualitative coding and analysis were conducted by a single researcher due to budget constraints. Usually, this verification step is considered an integral part of the coding process, serving to check whether coders' work consistently and objectively conforms to the predefined criteria, but it was omitted. Therefore, this study's limitations include potential biases and subjectivity due to a single researcher, which could have affected the results.

7.11. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This doctoral study conducted a comprehensive mixed-methods investigation into public perceptions of the professional image of South African TPOs. Using a convergent design, it analysed quantitative survey data from 491 respondents alongside qualitative, lived-experience narratives from 13 participants. The study critically examined the relationship between statutory road traffic law enforcement and the everyday realities faced by the motoring public. It identified significant deficiencies in procedural justice and systemic corruption, and the resulting decline in institutional legitimacy, shifting the academic focus from mere descriptive analysis to a meticulous criminological evaluation of the traffic policing authorities in South Africa.

The empirical findings challenge conventional criminological deterrence theories in South Africa. They show that systemic bribery and the normalisation of deviant behaviour socio-culturally have effectively weakened formal traffic law enforcement. The study highlights that public fear and institutional mistrust significantly impair the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Consequently, it becomes necessary to reconsider existing traffic policing strategies and make relevant policy changes. By exposing how TPOs misuse their authority and the tactics they use to target innocent drivers, this study can provide traffic police leadership with the much-needed insight to improve the current state of affairs in traffic law enforcement.

In conclusion, this thesis offers a significant empirical contribution to South African criminology by filling a crucial gap in traffic policing research. Despite the challenges posed by the prevalent culture of extortion and administrative apathy, these issues can be addressed structurally. Rebuilding public trust depends on strong institutional leadership, the adoption of forensic accountability measures, and a firm dedication to procedural justice. As South Africa advances its democracy, professionalising traffic law enforcement remains vital. Overall, this research provides a strategic academic roadmap, presenting a systematic scientific approach towards creating a safer, fairer, and properly governed road traffic system.

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ANNEXURE A: Confirmation of Editing

Marianne's Language Services — marscar@gmail.com

Cape Town
29 Dec. 2025

To whom it may concern,

This letter confirms that the manuscript detailed below was edited for proper English language grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style by a qualified and highly experienced native English-speaking editor:

Manuscript title: **A MODEL TO IMPROVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE
PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICIALS IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

Author: **Andre Roets**

Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editing process. The editor makes no claim as to the accuracy of the research content or objectives of the author. The document above, as edited, is grammatically correct and ready for publication; however, the author has the ability to accept or reject the editor's suggestions and changes after the editing process is complete, and prior to submission to any journal or examining body.



Marianne Kapp
+27 824 813 300

ANNEXURE B: GOOGLE Scholar – Limited Sources

Articles

Any time
Since 2026
Since 2025
Since 2022
Custom range...

Sort by relevance
Sort by date

Any type

My

Your search - "A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF TRAFFIC POLICE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION" - did not match any articles.

Suggestions:
Make sure all words are spelled correctly.
Try different keywords.
Try more general keywords.
Try fewer keywords.
[Try your query on the entire web](#)

ANNEXURE C: QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Unisa Research Number: # 1080

STADIO Research number: 2022-IRP 008

As part of my PhD research thesis at the University of South Africa (Unisa), I am conducting a research survey to develop a model to improve *public perceptions of the professional image of traffic police officers in South Africa*.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Because you completed the questionnaire anonymously, I guarantee your confidentiality and anonymity. It should take approximately 45 minutes or so to complete.

Use the rating scales below and answer each statement accurately. When unsure how to answer a specific question, mark that question Not certain (3).

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

As a selected participant, I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information sheet and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I understand that my participation is anonymous and that my personal details are not required during any stage of my participation.
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.
- I agree to the completion of a questionnaire.

**PLEASE TICK THE FOLLOWING CHECKBOX PROVIDED TO CONFIRM YOUR
CONSENT TO BE A VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANT IN THIS RESEARCH.**

☐

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please mark the most relevant answer with an X in the checkbox provided.

A1 Gender?

- (1) ☐ Male
 ☐ Female

A2 Age?

- (2) ☐ 18-19
 ☐ 20-29
 ☐ 30-39
 ☐ 40-49
 ☐ 50-59
 ☐ 60+

A3 Describe your ethnicity.

- (3) ☐ African
 ☐ Coloured
 ☐ Indian
 ☐ White
 ☐ Asian
 ☐ Other

A4 Highest tertiary education. (TEDUC)

- (4) ☐ Senior Certificate
 ☐ Higher Certificate
 ☐ National Diploma
 ☐ Bachelor's Degree
 ☐ Honours Degree
 ☐ Master's Degree
 ☐ Doctorate Degree

A5 Mode of transport? (MTRPT)

- (5) ☐ Driver [Motor vehicle]
 ☐ Passenger [Motor vehicle]
 ☐ Motorcyclist
 ☐ Passenger [Minibus taxi]
 ☐ Public transport [Bus]

A6 In which province are you residing? (RPROV)

- (6) ☐ Gauteng
 ☐ Free State
 ☐ Limpopo
 ☐ Mpumalanga
 ☐ North West
 ☐ KwaZulu-Natal
 ☐ Eastern Cape
 ☐ Northern Cape
 ☐ Western Cape

B. ROLE FULFILMENT OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS [RFTPO]

Mobilisation through the development of motor cars is an integral part of the lives of every person. Road traffic policing forms part of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to improve road safety and reduce traffic crimes. To determine whether traffic police officers fulfil their roles effectively in reducing traffic crime and improving road safety, please respond to the following statements.

Scale: Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Not certain (3); Disagree (2); Strongly disagree (1)

- B1 Traffic police officers resolve complaints in my area effectively.
- B2 Traffic police officers are professional when delivering services.
- B3 Traffic police officers care for the safety of the driving public.
- B4 Traffic police officers are knowledgeable about road traffic legislation.
- B5 Traffic police officers appear sufficiently trained to perform their duties.
- B6 More visible traffic police officers are needed on our roads.
- B7 Traffic police officers respond speedily to calls for assistance.
- B8 I witness many road traffic offences because of poor law enforcement by traffic police officers.
- B9 Due to comprehensive traffic legislation, traffic institutions believe that road users will naturally adhere to the traffic rules without any hesitation.
- B10 During the past twelve months, I observed some excellent work performed by traffic police officers.
- B11 Traffic police officers use their emergency equipment (blue lights and sirens) responsibly.
- B12 Traffic police officers care for motorists in need of assistance.
- B13 Traffic police officers portray a professional image when dealing with the public.
- B14 When I see blue lights and hear sirens, my first reaction is to make way for the traffic vehicle to pass.

C. INTERACTION WITH TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS [IACTPO]

As a driver of a motor vehicle or a passenger, not wearing a safety belt or speeding, for example, are you aware of the consequences when stopped by a traffic police officer? Every

traffic stop by a traffic police officer results in an interaction directly affecting human behaviour. Your first impression of a traffic police officer determines your approach towards the traffic police officer. Please indicate which statement best fits your opinion to understand this interaction process better.

Scale: Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Not certain (3); Disagree (2); Strongly disagree (1)

- C1 I fear being stopped by a traffic police officer.
- C2 I feel upset when a traffic police officer stops me.
- C3 A traffic police officer identified him or her to me during a traffic stop.
- C4 A traffic police officer clearly explained the reason for stopping me.
- C5 The identity of traffic police officers is always visible on their uniforms.
- C6 During the traffic stop, the traffic police officer treated me with disrespect.
- C7 During the traffic stop, the traffic police officer treated me fairly.
- C8 During the traffic stop, the traffic police officer disrespected my rights.
- C9 I have noticed in the media that traffic police officers abuse the public.
- C10 A traffic police officer physically abused me during a traffic stop.
- C11 A traffic police officer verbally abused me during a traffic stop.
- C12 I know someone that a traffic police officer abused during a traffic stop.

D. IMPACT OF THE PUBLIC IMAGE ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM [IPICJS]

Traffic policing represents the administrative and functional arm of the government to ensure road safety. By implication, traffic police officers have more direct contact with individuals. The primary goal of traffic police officers is to deter drivers from offending by creating a safe road environment. In this section, you will be provided with statements to assist the researcher in understanding (through your experience as a road user) how the image of traffic police officers impacts the criminal justice system.

Scale: Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Not certain (3); Disagree (2); Strongly disagree (1)

- D1 Road safety has improved over the past twelve months.

- D2 I support how traffic police officers act in public.
- D3 I have confidence in the capabilities of traffic police officers as protectors of law and order.
- D4 I feel safe using our public roads.
- D5 When I see a traffic police officer, I am cautious not to offend because of the risk of being apprehended.
- D6 I believe people will judge me when I receive a traffic fine.
- D7 The probability of punishment for a traffic violation does not prevent me from offending.
- D8 Compulsory rehabilitation measures such as revoking driver's licenses or training programmes against habitual traffic offenders must be introduced.
- D9 Traffic police institutions lack legitimacy because their traffic officers operate outside the boundaries of the law.
- D10 Traffic police officers refrain from prosecuting traffic offenders to avoid facing public scrutiny/criticism.
- D11 I believe traffic police officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoing for fear of institutional judgement.
- D12 I believe traffic police officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoing for fear of retaliation.
- D13 I will assist the traffic police by giving evidence in court.
- D14 I will report serious traffic offences to the traffic police without fear or prejudice.
- D15 I believe that there is anarchy on our roads.

E. VARIABLES THAT AFFECT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS [VAPUIM]

Traffic police officers earned a bad name because of incompetency, ineffectiveness, lack of integrity, and credibility. There is an unspoken directive about ticket quotas. There is further a generalised public perception that traffic officers are corrupt, implying a lack of ethical conduct and professionalism among traffic police officers. In this section, you will be given statements to assist the researcher in clarifying how certain variables affect the public image of traffic police officers.

Scale: Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Not certain (3); Disagree (2); Strongly disagree (1)

- E1 The service I received when visiting a traffic institution is professional.
- E2 My first impression of a traffic police officer is a friendly custodian of the law.
- E3 When I see a traffic police officer, I see a person representing authority.
- E4 The appearance of a traffic police officer demands respect.
- E5 I have no respect for traffic police officers.
- E6 I have no trust in the legitimacy of the duties performed by traffic police officers.
- E7 Politicians influence the legitimacy of traffic police institutions.
- E8 I have no trust in traffic police officers.
- E9 I believe that most traffic officers are unethical in their conduct.
- E10 Traffic police officers issue fines to meet traffic ticket quotas.
- E11 Before driving, the notion of a bribe during a potential traffic stop already occupies my thoughts.
- E12 Traffic police officers use traffic stops to ask for bribes.
- E13 Accepting a bribe is more severe than offering a bribe.
- E14 I see nothing wrong with paying a bribe, as it is considered acceptable in South Africa.

To the following statements, indicate a Yes or No and briefly explain your selected choice.

- E15 Someone I know has paid the bribe requested by a traffic police officer.
 - Yes
 - No
 - If yes, explain why the person paid the bribe.
- E16 I paid a bribe requested by a traffic police officer.
 - Yes
 - No
 - If yes, why did you pay a bribe?
- E17 I offered a bribe to a traffic police officer to avoid prosecution.
 - Yes
 - No
 - If yes, was there another reason for offering the bribe?
- E18 I would prefer to pay a bribe and avoid prosecution in future.

Yes

No

If yes, why would you pay a bribe to avoid prosecution in future?

F. GENERAL [GNL]

This section allows your input on improving traffic policing in South Africa. Although these questions are not compulsory, they allow for additional information not covered in the above questions.

F1. What is required to improve the public image of traffic police officers?

Your input is essential towards the success of this research study. _____

Thank you so much for your participation.

ANNEXURE D: Questionnaire As Appeared Electronically

PhD Research Questionnaire

Unisa Research Number: # 1080
STADIO Research number: 2022-IRP 008

Purpose of the study

As part of my PhD research thesis at the University of South Africa (Unisa), I am conducting a research survey to Develop a Model to Improve Public Perceptions of the Professional Image of Traffic Police Officers in South Africa.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. I **guarantee your confidentiality and anonymity**. It should take between 20 - 30 minutes to complete.

Next

Page 1 of 8

Microsoft 365

PhD Research Questionnaire

Unisa Research Number: # 1080
STADIO Research number: 2022-IRP 008

* Required

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

As a selected participant, I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information sheet that I already received via email and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I understand that my participation is **anonymous** and that my personal details are **not required** during any stage of my participation.
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings but that my participation will be kept **confidential** unless otherwise specified.
- I agree to the completion of the questionnaire.

1. PLEASE TICK THE FOLLOWING CHECKBOX PROVIDED TO CONFIRM YOUR CONSENT TO BE A VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANT IN THIS RESEARCH. *

☐ Yes

ANNEXURE E: Participant Information Sheet

ANNEXURE 4.3



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethical clearance #: 1080

STADIO Research permission #: 2022-IRP 008

RESEARCH INFORMATION: AN ONLINE ANONYMOUS SURVEY PROJECT

Dear prospective respondent,

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by Andre Roets under the supervision of BW Haefele, a professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Security Studies, towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. I hold the degrees BA Pol Honours [Cum Laude] and a MA Criminology.

The survey you will receive has been designed to study and develop A Model to Improve the Public Perceptions of the Professional Image of Traffic Police Officers (TPOs) in South Africa. You were selected to participate in this survey because, as a public member, you have the knowledge to provide valuable information towards the study. You received this information letter as a selected participant informing you of the intended study and the purpose of your participation.

By completing this survey, you agree that the information you provided in the questionnaire may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

It is anticipated that the information I gain from this survey will help me to:

- a. Explore and describe the public perception of South African Traffic Police Officers' role fulfilment.
- b. Identify and describe the variables that affect the public image of traffic police officers.
- c. Evaluate how the public experience their interaction with traffic police officers.



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- d. Explain the criminological significance of the impact that the public image of traffic police officers may exert on the criminal justice system.
- e. Make recommendations to traffic police administrators regarding possible intervention measures that may resolve negative factors impacting the public image of traffic police officers.
- f. Propose a model to improve the public image of traffic police officers in South Africa.

You are, however, under no obligation to complete the survey, and you can withdraw from the study before submitting the survey without any obligation to motivate your withdrawal. The survey is developed to collect information anonymously, meaning that the information you provide cannot be connected to you personally. If you choose to participate in this survey, it will take 20 - 30 minutes of your time.

Unisa's Ethics Review Committee (ERC) reviewed and approved the research. The primary researcher, Andre Roets, can be contacted during office hours at AndreR@studio.ac.za. The study leader, Professor BW Häfele, can be contacted during office hours at haefebw@unisa.ac.za. Should you have any questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson of the ERC, Professor Lincoln Fitz, at fitzlg@unisa.ac.za. Alternatively, you can report any serious unethical behaviour at the University's Toll-Free Hotline, 0800 86 96 93.

Your assistance in making this study a success is appreciated.



Andre Roets



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ANNEXURE F: Unisa Ethics Approval

Annexure 4.4



College of Law_RERC

Date: 06/07/2023

Dear: Mr Andre Roets

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
06/07/2023 to 06/07/2026**

Ref #: 1080

Name: Mr Andre Roets

Student #: 0619-346-3

Staff #:

Researcher: Mr Andre Roets

12 Serengeti Village, 4 Robert street, Berton Park

Boksburg

6193463@mylife.unisa.ac.za 0837852238

Supervisor: Professor Benjamin Haefele haefebw@unisa.ac.za

A Model to Improve Public Perceptions of the Professional Image of Traffic Police Officials in South Africa

Qualification: PHD

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Law_RERC for the above mentioned research study Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The **medium risk application** was **reviewed** by College of Law_RERC on **06/07/2023** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College of Law_RERC.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date 06/07/2026. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal, for Ethics Research Committee approval.

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from Unisa.
2. De-identified data must be safely stored on password protected PCs.
3. Care should be taken by the researcher when publishing the results to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the university.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication practices, principle 7 referring to Social awareness, must be ensured: "Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible." Unisa will not be liable for any failure to comply with this principle.

Note

The reference number 1080 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof Lincoln Fitz
Chair of College of Law_RERC
E-mail: fitzlg@unisa.ac.za



Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Law_RERC
E-mail: koleoj@unisa.ac.za

ANNEXURE G: Qualitative Interview Schedule Guide

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

OBJECTIVE

Formally open the interview and follow the following process.

The process followed by the researcher:

1. Open the interview by introducing himself to the participant.
2. Explain the purpose of the research to the participant.
3. Explain the expected role in the study to the participant.
4. Explain the rights of the participant in this research.
5. Request the participant to sign the Informed Consent Form to reflect agreed participation in the study.
6. Request whether the participant requires or wants to receive a copy of the signed consent form.

A. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

- A1. Gender: Male/Female
- A2. Age group: 18-19 20-29 30-39
40-49 50-59 60+
- A3. Ethnicity: African / Coloured / White / Asian / Indian
Other (Specify)
- A4. Highest personal achievement: Senior Certificate (SC) / Higher Certificate (HC) / National Diploma (ND) / Bachelor's Degree (BD) / Honours Degree (HD) / Master's Degree (MD) / Doctorate (DD)
- A5. Mode of Transport: Driver / Motorcyclist / Passenger (specify)
Public transport
- A6. Residing province: Gauteng (GP) / Free `state (FS) / Limpopo (LP) / Mpumalanga (MP) / North-West (NW) / Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) / Eastern Cape (EC) / Northern Cape (NC) / Western Cape (WC)

B. OBJECTIVE 1: Role Fulfilment

Mobilisation through the development of motor cars is an integral part of every person's life. Road traffic policing forms part of the criminal justice system (CJS) to improve road safety and reduce traffic crimes. To determine whether traffic police officers effectively reduce traffic crime and improve road safety, the researcher will ask you questions about their role fulfilment.

B1. What is your first impression when seeing a traffic police officer in uniform?

B2. How would you describe the delivery of services by TPOs to the public?

Probe for a reason.

Probe – Your opinion about their appearance in public?

Probe - Portrays a professional image?

B3. Do you think TPOs are sufficiently trained to guarantee your safety on the road?

B4. In your opinion, are traffic police officers visible enough on our roads?

B5. Think about the past three months - how often have you seen a traffic police officer when using a public road?

B6. How would you describe assistance rendered by TPOs to motorists who need it?

B7. How would you describe traffic police officers' use of blue lights and sirens?

B8. What is your immediate reaction when you see blue lights and/or hear a siren?

B9. Have you observed any good work performed by traffic police officers during the last twelve months?

B10. Why, in your opinion, are there so many traffic offences?

Probe – Have you witnessed any?

C. OBJECTIVE 3: Interaction

As the driver of a motor vehicle or a passenger, not wearing a safety belt or speeding, for example, are you aware of the consequences when stopped by a traffic police officer? Every traffic stop by a traffic police officer results in an interaction directly affecting human behaviour. Your first impression of a traffic police officer determines your approach towards the traffic officer. The researcher will ask you specific questions in this section to understand this interaction process.

C1. When was the last time that a traffic police officer stopped you?

Probe – When was the last time a TPO stopped a vehicle in which you were a passenger?

Probe - Was it a male or female TPO?

The attitude – friendly or not?

- C2. Do you get upset when being stopped by a traffic police officer?
Depending on C1 – do you think that you might get upset if stopped by a traffic police officer?
- C3. When stopped by a traffic police officer, s/he identifies him or herself.
- C4. When stopped by a traffic police officer, the reason for the stop was explained.
- C5. Do you think that traffic police officers treat people with respect?
- C6. Have you ever been abused by a traffic police officer - verbally or physically?
Probe – Do you know someone that a traffic police officer abused?
- C7. Do you know anyone a traffic officer abused during a traffic stop?
- C8. Do you fear being stopped by a traffic police officer?
During daytime?
Night-time?
- C9. Do you think that articles in the media affect your opinion about the image of TPOs?

D. OBJECTIVE 4: Impact of the public image on the Criminal Justice System

Traffic policing, through its traffic police officers, represents the administrative and functional arm of the government to ensure road safety. By implication, traffic police officers have more direct contact with individuals. The primary goal of traffic police officers is to deter drivers from offending and create a safe road environment. In this section, you will be asked questions to assist the researcher in understanding how the image of traffic police officers impacts the criminal justice system through your experience as a road user.

- D1. Do you believe road safety has improved over the past twelve months?
- D2. When using a public road, do you feel safe?
- D3. How would you describe your confidence in the abilities of Traffic police officers as protectors of law and order on our roads?
- D4. When you see a traffic police officer, do you drive more cautiously?
Depending on the answer – probe for a reason

- D5. Consider the possibility of prosecution for a traffic violation – will it prevent you from committing a traffic offence?
- D6. Do you think others will judge you if you receive a traffic fine?
Probe – depending on the answer
- D7. What is your opinion in assisting traffic officers?
Probe - Will you report serious traffic offences to the traffic police?
Probe - Testifying in court?
- D8. Should compulsory rehabilitation measures such as revoking driver's licenses or training programmes against habitual traffic offenders be introduced?
- D9. Traffic officers refrain from reporting their colleagues' wrongdoings. What is your opinion?
Probe – Being labelled or retaliation?
- D10. Do you think that there is chaos on our roads?
Probe for a response – why?

E. OBJECTIVE 2: Variables that affect the public image of Traffic police officers

Traffic police officers earned a bad name because of incompetency, ineffectiveness, lack of integrity, and credibility. There is an unspoken directive about ticket quotas. There is further a generalised public perception that traffic officers are corrupt, implying a lack of ethical conduct and professionalism among traffic police officers. In this section, you will be asked questions to assist the researcher in clarifying how certain variables affect the public image of traffic police officers.

- E1. When you see a traffic police officer, do you see a person representing authority?
- E2. Describe your respect for TPOs.
Probe - Depending on the answer – based on:
What you heard from others
What you read in the newspapers
Personal experience
- E3. How would you describe your trust in Traffic police officers?
- E4. Do you trust the lawfulness of the duties that Traffic police officers perform?

- E5. Do you think that politicians influence the legitimacy (lawfulness) of traffic police institutions?
- E6. Do you believe that traffic officers work according to ticket quotas?
- E7. Would you say that most traffic officers are unethical?
Why?
- E8. Do you think that traffic stops are used for bribes?
- E9. A TPO accepting a bribe is more severe than the person offering it. What is your opinion?
- E10. Would you say that bribery in the traffic profession has become acceptable in South Africa?
- E11. Have a traffic police officer ever demanded a bribe from you?
Probe -Have you paid the bribe? Why did you pay the bribe?
Probe – Do you know someone that paid money requested by a traffic police officer? Why did the person pay the bribe?
- E12. Have you ever bribed a traffic police officer to avoid prosecution?
Probe – if yes, was there another reason for
Probe – if you are in a situation where you know that you are going to be prosecuted, will you consider offering money?
Probe – Do you know someone who offered a traffic police officer a bribe in exchange for a traffic fine?
- E13. Would you rather pay a bribe and avoid prosecution?
Probe for a reason

F. GENERAL INFORMATION

To probe participants to provide additional information not covered above, which they believe may improve the perceived image of Traffic police officers in South Africa.

- F1. What, in your opinion, is required to improve the public image of Traffic police officers?

I sincerely appreciate your time and effort in assisting me with this discussion. I assure you that the information you provided will be invaluable to the outcome of this research study.

ANNEXURE H: Informed Consent Form agreed upon to participate in the research

Informed Consent Form agreed upon to participate in the research titled “A Model to Improve Public Perceptions of the Professional Image of Traffic Police Officials in South Africa”.

Dear research participant

Thank you for participating in this research study. Before commencing this research initiative, informed consent must be obtained from you, the research participant, to ensure and maintain ethical standards throughout the study.

This consent form may include terms that you do not understand. Please ask me to pause as we go through the information, and I will gladly take the time to explain. If you have any questions afterward, feel free to ask me.

Informed consent for this one-to-one interview entails the following:

Principal Researcher

Andre Roets, contact number 064-521-4123, email address 6193463@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

1. Purpose

I am André Roets, and I am conducting research to fulfil the Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Criminology and Security Science degree at the University of South Africa (Unisa). This study aims to develop a model to improve public perceptions about the professional image of traffic police officers in South Africa.

Intended Outcomes of the Study

The study is intended to contribute to our understanding of how traffic police administrators can identify shortcomings to improve the professional image of the traffic profession. The knowledge gained from the study will contribute to the literature on role fulfilment and public perceptions, on what variables affect the public image of

traffic police officers and how the public experience interaction with traffic police officers.

The results of the study will be published as an article in a peer-reviewed academic journal and may be shared in professional conference presentations.

2. Research intervention

This research will involve your participation in a one-on-one interview. This interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes and will be performed only once.

3. Participant selection

You have been selected to participate in this research because, as a motor vehicle driver, you will contribute to my understanding of public perceptions about the professional image of traffic police officers in South Africa.

4. Procedures

You will take part in a discussion with me at this identified location. During the interview, you will be asked a series of closed and open-ended questions about the abovementioned topic. I will guide the discussion. You may speak as long as you like, and there are no right or wrong responses. The primary goal of this interview is to share your experience.

A follow-up interview may be scheduled if clarifications are required.

No one else but you, the respondent who takes part in this discussion, and myself will be present during this discussion.

With your permission, the entire interview will be tape-recorded, but no one is to be identified by name during the recording. The discussion is confidential, and your name will not be written on anything or used in the final report.

Only my supervisor, Prof. BW Häefele, and I can access your responses and tape recordings. The electronic recordings, notes and transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer for archiving purposes.

5. Risks

There are no direct risks in participating in this study.

6. Benefits

There will be no benefit (compensation) to you, for your participation will assist the researcher in clarifying and understanding public perceptions about the professional image of traffic police officers in South Africa.

The community at large and the traffic profession will benefit because traffic police administrators will be in a better position to identify shortcomings and improve traffic police professionalism.

7. Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence.

8. Confidentiality

Your participation is strictly confidential; your identity is kept anonymous, and you will be assigned a pseudonym in the form of a number in any publications or presentations. Any reference and/or information applicable to you as a respondent from this interview will be a number, not your name.

The audio recordings will be destroyed after they are transcribed, and the transcriptions will be stored in accordance with Unisa's mandatory storage period.

9. Sharing the results

Results from the information gathered in this research will be documented as a thesis and published so that other interested people may learn from the research.

10. Whom to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask them later, you may contact me at 064 521 4123 or 6193463@mylife.unisa.ac.za. You may also contact my supervisor, Prof. Ben Haéfele (haefebw@unisa.ac.za or 012-429-6003 / 6574).

11. Ethics

Please note that the Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa, the custodian in protecting participants from harm, has approved this research project.

Certificate of Consent

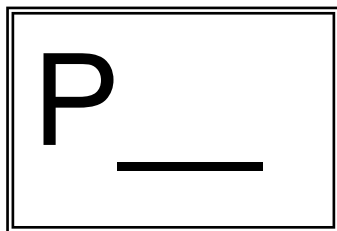
I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have asked have been answered satisfactorily. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Date acknowledged : _____ / _____ / 20_____

I have accurately read out the information to the potential participant. I confirm that the participant was allowed to ask questions about the study, and all questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Andre Roets : _____

Date : _____ / _____ / 20_____



ANNEXURE I: Turnitin Report

Similarity Report

PAPER NAME

**Public Perception of professional image
of TPOs_2019-2026.docx**

AUTHOR

ANDRE ROETS

WORD COUNT

152321 Words

CHARACTER COUNT

894869 Characters

PAGE COUNT

560 Pages

FILE SIZE

6.8MB

SUBMISSION DATE

Jan 11, 2026 3:00 PM GMT+2

REPORT DATE

Jan 11, 2026 3:11 PM GMT+2

● 16% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

- 9% Internet database
- 12% Publications database
- Crossref database
- Crossref Posted Content database
- 10% Submitted Works database

● Excluded from Similarity Report

- Manually excluded sources

Summary

ANNEXURE J: Quoted Verbatim Responses for Open Question

Table 6.29: Perceived public requirements to improve the image of TPOs in SA – quoted verbatim responses of identified themes

Professionalism	Visible law enforcement	Accountability	Training	Ethics	TPO abuse - Bribery	Education	Resources
<i>“Officers should treat people fairly and equally ... Officers must always look neat and be always professional”.</i>	<i>“Be visible to remove ‘random’ people (not referring to Outsurance points men/women) from directing traffic at busy intersections in exchange for ‘tips’”.</i>	<i>“There should be more supervision and consequences. More accountability. Sitting in your ass with the blue lights and eating KFC does not constitute working”.</i>	<i>“Their training must also address the issues relating to mainstream law enforcement and ethics”.</i>	<i>“Ethical Traffic Policing, Accountability, Zero Government influence”.</i>	<i>“If it’s possible to ensure the traffic officers don’t take bribes then their image could improve ...”.</i>	<i>“Regularly sharing updates on the actions taken against officers who violate these protocols demonstrates accountability”.</i>	<i>“Improved image of the police force and sufficient resources to effectively execute their duties”.</i>
<i>“Traffic police officers must maintain professionalism in their execution of their duties to ensure the public can trust them in</i>	<i>“I am specifically referring to the public transportation and taxis. They are not stopped and given traffic tickets by traffic officers”.</i>	<i>“Officers who are found to have contravened their work ethics must be suspended and prosecuted. If found guilty, they</i>	<i>“The image of the police can be improved by ... in-service training should update knowledge and behavioural requirements”.</i>	<i>“intensive military training for traffic officers and ... formal training of Code of conduct be offered to traffic police</i>	<i>“The public image of traffic officers is mostly distorted due to the fact that they accept bribes from motorists”.</i>	<i>“A comprehensive drive to inform public of latest legislation and their rights should be undertaken by the government</i>	<i>“Members of traffic must be posted with partners in their vehicles to maintain safety”.</i>

the work they do”.		<i>should be dismissed”.</i>		<i>officers on a regular basis”.</i>		<i>and/or the minister of transport”.</i>	
“Ultimately, improving the public image of traffic police officers requires a commitment to professionalism, transparency, community engagement, and open communication”.	<i>“Traffic officials should be more visible and act against the transgressions that are observed. Law enforcement is an ongoing task and should be done constantly and consistently”.</i>	<i>“Cameras need to be installed in police officers' vests so that we aren't harassed for bribes”.</i>	<i>“Traffic officers should receive better training on how to execute their duties ... more professional manner ... Changing the public perception of traffic officers will prove to be a very difficult task as the public already has a set image of officers and their nature.</i>	<i>“If public officers take pride in their job and wear their uniforms with pride. And importantly adhere to their code of conduct, It would definitely change the image”.</i>	<i>“I think Gauteng traffic officers like bribe too much. I know this because I stay in Gauteng for a long time till I relocated to Northern Cape because if work. I found completely different kinds of traffic officers”.</i>	<i>“An awareness campaign on why they are important and that they are here to improve traffic conditions may be helpful”.</i>	<i>“Traffic Officers be given resources to do their job properly and they must work 24/7 on our SA Roads”.</i>
“Most Traffic officers walk up to you in a lazy way, they use their uniform and status to make you understand they are in control. Please	<i>“They need to be seen more on the streets especially during loadshedding directing traffic as that is the time most road users break all rules of the road.</i>	<i>“Regular surprise inspections should be conducted by senior management. Zero tolerance of corruption and</i>	<i>“Definitely better training, some traffic police officers can't even run because they are extremely obese or overweight. The health of our</i>	<i>“Ethical behaviour”.</i>	<i>“Those who respect their job and do not accept bribes must be encouraged and protected from their colleagues ...”.</i>	<i>“Creating a community outreach programme for traffic officers to interact with the public and give awareness and education on</i>	<i>“Politicians must generally be kept out of administration and traffic officers be supported with equipment to perform their duties better”.</i>

<i>they have to look not fat and lazy and speak properly”.</i>	<i>Also be present at pick up and drop off at schools ... “.</i>	<i>immediate dismissal”.</i>	<i>police officers is one of my main concerns”.</i>			<i>road/traffic rules and regulation to schools”.</i>	
<i>“They should also present as neat and fit individuals, since we have plenty of obese officers”.</i>	<i>“More visible traffic police needed on our roads”.</i>	<i>“Unfortunately, bodycams may be the only solution to keep people accountable”.</i>	<i>“Regular training on new policy”.</i>	<i>“To be more ethical”.</i>	<i>“To know that they working for the public and not for themselves”.</i>	<i>“Actively engaging with the community can foster positive relationships between traffic police officer and the public”.</i>	<i>“Need more traffic officers and more visible vehicles with blue lights”.</i>
<i>“It starts with individual discipline which is identifiable but mere looking at an officer’s dress code. A complete uniform with name tag and properly dressed as per prescription of the traffic department”.</i>	<i>“Spend less time on non-value adding administration, which is creating frustrations and wasting professionals time, and spend more time on the roads to ensure safety on roads”.</i>	<i>“Prosecution of corrupt and abusive TP officials would, in my opinion, improve the public image and the effectiveness of the sector”..</i>	<i>“Better training, more visibility, actually dealing with issues like firecrackers because it falls under jurisdiction. Stop using vehicles for personal use (our neighbour brings his vehicle home) and when a call is made, we are told there are not enough vehicles.</i>	<i>“In my non-professional opinion, it almost seems like there is no hope. What can you really do to improve a system that has been allowed to get so out of control as it has. I don’t know if there is anyone checking the work of traffic officers. If there isn’t, then</i>	<i>“Fraud in the licencing department goes unpunished due to the higher level of corruption of the officials. High unethical conduct in the department is gross and there is lack of care of the safety of the public”.</i>	<i>“Traffic must make sure that stopping cars does not necessarily mean they must give an offender a fine, but they must also educate the public about danger if committing that offenses”.</i>	<i>“South Africa needs 1000 times more Traffic Police Officers even also in residential areas to discipline the road users who do not obey the traffic laws”.</i>

				<i>that is what needs to change. Also, when new officers start, they learn the old habits of older officers and therefore carry on this shit show that we have going. Aren't traffic police officers supposed to be people of strict morals and discipline?"</i>			
<i>"The attitude of the officers needs to be improved and the timeliness of answering urgent calls ... be improved".</i>	<i>"I honestly cannot say that I have seen any traffic police in my city for years. I have however seen roadblocks held by JMPD to check car licenses. We have total anarchy on our roads, and this is due to no visible policing in the city".</i>	<i>"Better leadership ... can improve the public image of traffic police officers".</i>	<i>"I truly believe that we need to invest in the development of soft skills in our traffic officers. Traffic officers lack common courtesy, are not friendly, and have very poor interpersonal skills.</i>	<i>"Traffic police officers should adhere to the ethical code of conduct for the legitimacy of their institutions".</i>	<i>"At traffic departments, officials behind desks (including admin) should refrain from asking 'what can you do for me, if I help you".</i>	<i>"Building positive relationships with the community through initiatives like workshops, safety seminars, and awareness campaigns ...".</i>	<i>"Manpower to avoid conducting duties alone in the vehicle, it's dangerous outside, criminals don't hesitate to disarm and murder the members".</i>

<i>"I have seen many traffic officers smoking and cursing in their uniform ... but it does not look professional."</i>	<i>"Traffic officers should be visible at all times, hiding does not improve the behaviour of drivers ...".</i>	<i>"Get rid of officers that's there to enhance themselves instead of upholding the law as required".</i>	<i>"Ongoing workshop and resources to equip officials".</i>	<i>"Appointment of competent officers with integrity and positive ethical values".</i>	<i>"They need to stop making roadblock to ask for bribes and intimidate the public".</i>	<i>"Community awareness of consequences of payment of bribe to traffic officers".</i>	<i>"Buy more vehicles and make sure that they do not use public transport wearing uniforms"</i>
<i>"The Traffic Officers should make sure that they are always professional and should have respect for their jobs and the public".</i>	<i>"The fact that people are committing serious traffic offenses in the presence of traffic officers who do nothing, in my opinion, is a case of the monkey see, monkey do. Why not me if others can get away with it?"</i>	<i>"Cameras in their uniforms to see what they do during work hours. Perhaps people might feel actually safe".</i>	<i>"Training about the law and to apply the law. I have noticed that EMPD is unaware of the new bylaws passed during 2021 in Ekurhuleni".</i>	<i>"Ethical conduct should be promoted amongst traffic police officers".</i>	<i>"Need to uplift the public image of officers, need to stop bribes, and unlawful prosecution".</i>	<i>"Traffic police officers can improve their public image by providing education and training to the public about their roles and responsibilities".</i>	<i>"Increase traffic police officers, and rotate them per areas of operations".</i>
<i>"The way in which traffic officers carry themselves play a very big role in how we perceive them, and how seriously we take</i>	<i>"There needs to be a zero tolerance on traffic violations no matter who the driver of the vehicle is and what type of vehicle it is".</i>	<i>"They need body cams to monitor every situation. The recent incidents of them doing unauthorized</i>	<i>"To improve the public image of traffic police officers, more thorough skills development training ... ".</i>	<i>"Good ethical and lawful practice from traffic officers".</i>	<i>"I also think that many of them believe they are above the law. They can solicit a bribe and go unpunished".</i>	<i>"Teach public on what to look for to ensure they are dealing with legitimate officers."</i>	<i>"To hire more traffic officer and trained them well"</i>

<i>them. The majority of traffic officers don't appear and present as both mentally and physically agile people, or physically strong and fit.</i>		<i>stops is even more scary".</i>					
<i>"My view is that they ought to be "a set apart" group of citizens who model the excellence, and responsible kind of behaviour they expect from citizens.</i>	<i>"We need more patrolling the streets, not just to check if licenses are expired but also make sure there is law and order on the road and less accidents".</i>	<i>"Accountability for traffic officers not fulfilling their constitutional and public duties and unambiguity in terms of corruption in the traffic police force. No tolerance when a traffic officer disregards his/her duties".</i>	<i>"to ensure they have adequate training as to how to deal with people and that they should be identifying themselves and explaining why they have stopped an individual".</i>	<i>"Ethics training workshops for traffic officials".</i>	<i>"It is required that the traffic police officers are kept informed how their wrong actions will affect the image of the institution".</i>	<i>"Provincial and Local government must on a regular basis market the services, responsibilities and duties of the traffic police services in the media and other platforms to boost the public image of the Traffic Services".</i>	<i>More advanced resources for the traffic department</i>