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Alleged corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials in the selected rural areas of Giyani, Limpopo Province: Exploring the causes and experiences



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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to explore alleged corrupt practices of stock theft by public sector officials in the selected rural areas of Giyani in the Limpopo Province, South Africa, focusing on causes and experiences. The local South African Police Service (SAPS) and Department of Justice and Constitutional Development: Giyani Magistrates' Court (DOJ & CD: GMC) officials are allegedly touted to be allegedly involved in corrupt and fraudulent activities relating to this crime. From a qualitative standpoint; this study purposively selected 64 participants to form part of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) for data collection based on their respective knowledge and exposure to this crime. The collected data was analyzed to reach structured, reliable and conclusions adopting the Tesch technique. Major findings of this study indicate that the local SAPS and DOJ & CD: GMC were implicated in corruption acts, it is established that limited wages, greediness, profit and power, opportunity, as well as inadequate training, poor hiring practices and failure to adhere to a code of ethics are some of the notable causes of police corruption on stock theft cases. The improvement in legislation, punitive methods, remunerations, political partisanship, and the use of anti-corrupt strategies are cited as some recommendations in this study. Moreover, relevant stakeholders should work closely with provincial structures at rural communal levels, while avoiding a silo mentality to enhance collective actions thereof.

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Introduction

From the data analysed, it became clear that stock theft is high in the Giyani policing Area (GPA), and the current preventative measures against stock theft in the area under study, and elsewhere, are slow to give dividends; thus, there is a long way to go to eradicate it completely. This suggests that the strategies implemented so far have not been successful. These inefficiencies should be corrected. These evaluations indicated that South Africa is exposed to a high rate of crime due to high levels of police corruption, and this kind of corruption causes distrust to police officials since they are the ones allowing crime to flourish by doing misconduct actions. Among various challenges that are faced by South African farmers in general, stock theft is still one of the biggest challenges for livestock farmers. While it affects all provinces and is a priority crime in most provinces except Gauteng, it is a much more serious threat in regions that are bordering other countries (Cross-border stock theft), for example; some areas of the Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, SAPS Research Unit (2010).

South Africa is part of the top eight exposed countries to corruption, namely: Argentina, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Kenya, Solomon Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, as well as Hong Kong. Its police members were implicated in corruption activities and listed or recorded in a new corruption book, namely: Police Corruption and Police Reforms in Developing Societies. South Africa's police officials were largely discerned to be corrupt. Transparency International (2013) (in Corruption Watch, 2015:1) reveals that

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about 83% South African participants felt that SAPS are corrupt. Gauteng Province recorded the most reports of corruption with 45% of all cases received during 2018, followed by KwaZulu-Natal. This, we believe, is largely explained by the relatively large population of Gauteng, the scale of economic activity and the fact that national government administration is headquartered in the province. For the first time, Limpopo Province made the top three with 8% of reports, most likely a result of Corruption Watch's public awareness drive in the province in late 2017. The largest number of reports received (22%) focused on corruption in the education sector, while complaints about the SAPS increased from 6% in 2017 to 9% in 2018, reaching their highest level over the seven-year period. Third on the list are reports of corruption and illegal activities at licensing centres throughout the country, Corruption Watch (2021).

For problem conceptualisation [The provincial focus – Limpopo Province]; Tshikalange (2021) reports that Two (02) men were arrested after they were found in possession of sheep (About 561 sheep out of 800 were recovered from the pair) valued at R4.9 million that they fraudulently obtained from a farm owner near Smithfield in the Free State. This followed months-long investigation that covered the Free State, Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces between December 2020 and February 2021. These suspects acted on false pretences, as they claimed to be representing a certain bank that works with farmers. They entered into a business deal with the farm owner that involved 1,000 ewes and 300 rams. The farmer signed on the dotted line and he delivered the livestock (800 sheep) to Makhado (Formerly Louis Trichardt of Limpopo Province, as per the agreement with the 'bank.'

Furthermore, DefenceWeb (2021) highlights that the 2019/20 crime statistics showed about 2 332 incidents of stock theft reported to the local SAPS. This is more than Six (06) a day. As a result, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) are given additional task, as they are deployed to protect South Africa's land borders is apprehension and return of stolen livestock as well as handing suspects to police for further investigations. This supported the primary 'Operation Corona' tasking of ensuring South African sovereignty as far as illegal incursions across all the concerned borders. This operation confirmed that the stock theft issue has found its way to Limpopo Province with Three (03) suspects were arrested in Mookgopong and Roedtan. The made arrests are the first outcome of a province-wide investigation into this crime, involving a collaborative efforts between the local SAPS and private security companies pooling resources.

Head (2020) entitles corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials as '*cow-ruption*,' the reported scandals threatens to shake cattle ownership and destroys foundations of Limpopo Province local government. Over 100 bovine animals were reported missing from a research facility (Mara Research Centre) belonging to the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). The Regional Ministry suspects that some of their own officials are to be blamed. The value of the stolen livestock was estimated to be at roughly R3 million, equating to an average cost of R30 000 per cow. This scheme comes at a time where government corruption is once again dominating the discourse in South Africa. Both provincial and national departments have been implicated in several tender scams related to the Coronavirus disease- 2019 (Covid-19). However, this latest case of 'moo-ting' was unique in nature. It is believed that stock theft begun at the start of lockdown, and gradually continued over a four-month period. The centre is a national key point, but there have been frequent complaints about the protections in place, with particular concerns raised about the 'dilapidated fencing.'

Business Insider South Africa (2020) shares that more than 100 people; many attached to the local SAPS, as well as in provincial and municipal governments were arrested, as the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the Hawks (The South Africa's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation – DPCI, which targets organised crime, economic crime, corruption, and other serious crime) prosecuted those involved in numerous corruption scandals involving stock theft. National Police Commissioner [Khehla John Sithole] confirmed that 257 SAPS officers have now been arrested in connection with 178 corruption cases as part of a 'clean-up operation.' The South African Press Association [SAPA] (2009) confirms that Two (02) local SAPS officers allegedly involved in stock theft cases appeared briefly in the Standerton Magistrate's Court in Mpumalanga Province. The SAPS Inspector aged 37 under the Standerton SAPS STU was arrested and charged with defeating the ends of justice last month. This was after a livestock farmer caught Three (03) men stealing his Bonsmara cattle on June 13 2009. Given to the SAPS member, Two (02) of them were released, with only One (01) detained, to be released five days later without a charge. However, the farmer in question was not happy with the manner in which the matter was handled and reported it to the local SAPS STU's Commander. Then, the SAPS member was re-apprehended.

In a separate incident, SAPS Inspector aged 47, along with two other Two (02) men, aged 28 respectively, had their case of stock theft postponed to the 17th of July 2009 by the same court. The matter was put down to allow the three to get legal aid representatives. They were arrested last month after they allegedly used a police vehicle to tow a private trailer that had been used for stealing livestock. The 02 officers were reported to be still working, however, as soon as departmental investigations are complete they would face a disciplinary hearing, SAPA (2009). Pijoos (2020) highlights that More than 26,000 sheep were stolen in South Africa in just three months [The second quarter of 2020/2021]. This prompted for the establishment of task team to look into stock theft Bethlehem in the Free State, as the meeting with concerned farmers refers. Geldenhuys (2012a) points out that stock theft is not a new crime it is probably as old as agriculture, itself. Since the earliest times, stock theft has had far-reaching consequences. Geldenhuys (2012b) reveals that over and above the investigation of stock theft cases, SAPS STUs also had to deal with other issues, including finding stray animals, and assisting in disputes over ownership, and branding. Coleman (2021) supports that stock theft remains one of the greatest threats to the long-term sustainability of livestock production in South Africa, North West included. Furthermore, it is

believed that stock theft is one of the most important challenges faced by resource-poor farmers, with the potential to cripple their livelihoods (Greyling, 2007:41).

In essence, the level of policing of stock theft in the GPA appears to be negligible, and one could conclude that the police's approach to the problem in question is far from effective, since it is becoming a flood that directly threatens the livelihoods of livestock farmers, and poses a serious risk economically. Consequently, this has cast a shadow on the preventative measures employed by the Giyani SAPS STU owing to the sharp increase in stock theft in the Giyani area of Limpopo province. Livestock farmers in the GPA have expressed worries over the rampant cases of stock theft in the area. Undoubtedly, the escalating stock theft syndicate activities pose a threat to the community. The farmers in question claims that those who have been arrested in connection with the thefts have not received appropriate punishment. The incidences of stock thefts are on the rise at an alarming rate, affecting livestock farmers in the area.

Importantly, the alleged corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials in the selected rural areas of Giyani, Limpopo Province: therefore, this study explores the related causes and experiences thereof. In an attempt to indicate study specific gaps, as addressed by this study. The researcher submits that this subject is neglected by researchers [Rural criminologists] in the field of humanities and related disciplines. The lack of criminological attention placed on this growing problem. As the current study presents, the existing knowledge on the corrupt practices, associated with stock theft is not interpreted, disseminated and implemented accordingly to adequately address this crime.

The researcher is a native resident of Giyani, where complaints of persistent stock theft crime are prevalent and signs of corrupt practices linked to this crime evident. Practically, while attending communal meetings, the researcher grasped the extent of this subject in the GPA. The researcher, then, became concerned about the emergency of corruption on stock theft, negatively fuelling devastating increase. Moreover, the relations between Giyani SAPS STU officers, livestock owners, and local community members, while trying to combat, prevent and investigate this crime efficiently. By the time of conducting this study, GPA had approximately Six hundred (600) farms, across 91 villages; policed by only Seven (07) officers attached to the Giyani SAPS STU. As a result, the corrupt practices on stock theft is escalating, and the GPA, and environs, seem to be mostly affected, since the Giyani SAPS STU are facing quite a stern challenge in preventing this scourge. In essence, the level of policing of corrupt practices on stock theft in the GPA appears to be negligible, and one could conclude that the police's approach to the problem in question is far from effective, since it is becoming a flood that directly threatens the livelihoods of livestock farmers, and poses a serious risk economically.

Consequently, this has cast a shadow on the existing combative, preventative and investigative measures employed by the Giyani SAPS STU. The local livestock farmers in the GPA have expressed worries over the rampant cases of corruption practices on stock theft in the area. Undoubtedly, the escalating stock theft syndicate activities pose a threat to the surrounding community. The farmers in question claim that those who have been arrested in connection with the thefts have not received appropriate punishment. The incidences of stock thefts are on the rise at an alarming rate, affecting them hugely. Therefore, the expressions on the causes and experiences of relevant stakeholders focusing on alleged corrupt practices relating to stock theft by public sector officials are explored, with the induction of preliminary literature studies, confined to the Eight (08) 'causes of corruption committed by public sector officials in South Africa [The list is inexhaustible],' this is followed by methodology, as well as 'analysis, interpretation, presentation of results and discussions' and conclusions and recommendations sections.

Literature Review

Preliminary literature studies

According to Naher, Hoque, Hassan, Balabanova, Adams and Ahmed (2020), common types of corruption like informal payments, bribery and absenteeism, amongst others have largely financial factors as the underlying cause. Poor salary and benefits, poor incentives and motivation, and poor governance have a damaging impact on ... [Policing of stock theft, alleged corrupt practices included] This often result in high out-of-pocket expenditure, erosion of trust in the system, and reduced service utilisation. Implementing regulations remain constrained not only due to lack of institutional capacity but also political commitment. Lack of good governance encourage ... [Public sector officials in this regard] to bend the rules of law and make centrally designed anti-corruption measures largely ineffective. Alternatively, a few bottom-up community-engaged interventions have been tested showing promising results. However, the challenge is to scale up the successful ones for measurable impact.

Causes of corruption committed by public sector officials in South Africa

A deep understanding of what causes police corruption is known as an instrument to construct measures that can be used to combat police corruption in South Africa. According to Mofokeng (2016:154), "in South Africa, both public and organisational discourses around police corruption have tended towards over-simplification, revolving around one of three themes: the rotten apple theory, salary levels, and corrupting the public." Most middle-aged police officials are likely to lose focus than others and they normally involve themselves in corruption since goals are eroded to recruits. Gender exclusion as well as race play an important role for police officials to lose focus on ethics. Police officials are most often to lose their careers due to these affiliative actions (Faull, 2007:1).

Low salaries or limited wages

Low salaries police officials receive from the government leads to higher rates of corruption within the department. The issue of insufficient wages makes police officials experience a supplement for their income to cover their monthly expenses (Benson, 2008:10). Daily Maverick Institute of Security Studies [ISS] Today (2018:1) published an article entitled: '*Are SAPS salaries fair?*' The purpose of the article was to indicate if salaries that are received by police members are good enough to reemploy former police members since SAPS was about to reenlist former police members to get back to work. The article indicated a range of salaries received by police members per year based on their occupations; constables normally received between R175 000 and R213000, sergeants between R222 000 and R270 000, and warrant officers between R278 000 and R407 000. SAPS managers received up to two million Rands per year (ISS Today, 2018:1). The article also reveals that senior police managers in the SAPS who earn higher in most cases are the ones mostly found guilty of corruption. For example, former Western Cape SAPS Commissioner [Arno Lamour] and the former national commissioner, Jackie Selebi found guilty of corruption hence they were earning higher than other police members (ISS Today, 2018:1). According to Mashaba (2018:1), the former police reenlistment post indicated how police members were poorly paid by the State, Constables received R14633 per month as it corresponds with the amount above/of between R175000 and R213000 per year. Behind these salaries, many details of what is to be deducted were omitted providing a clear idea of what is to be deducted from that amount of R14633 per month, this includes the following; tax, unemployment insurance fund, union fees, and medical aid fees (Mashaba, 2018:1).

Inadequate training and lack of equipment

Mbhele (2016:1) indicates that proper training of police officials within the SAPS plays an important role in the criminal justice system as well as to restore faith in the SAPS. It revealed that training skills were lost along the way, due to the lack of leadership to be held responsible to enhance strict measures on what to be taught or learned in basic training within the SAPS. It indicated that not even a single cent was used to train SAPS Senior Management Services (SMS) officials. In 2014/15 the total expenditure of SAPS training was about 0.1%. Failing to effectively provide leadership skills to SMS leads to an increase in police corruption cases (Mbhele, 2016:1). Topics that are used in these police academies ill-prepared new SAPS appointed recruits to deal with crimes that require solid understanding such as corruption (Mbhele, 2016:1).

Poor hiring practices or poor selection of officers

Poor hiring practices also contribute to the cause of police corruption. The Minister of Police [Cele] in 2010 admitted that "as South Africans, we have not been big on quality but big on quantity meaning as individuals, we have been chasing quantity rather than quality". To prevent police corruption in the SAPS, more recruitment of police members must be done (Vilakazi, 2015:39). There are stories behind the SAPS hiring system, citizens are unhappy with the type of the system SAPS use to appoint recruits. Almost every year the SAPS advertises a post for youth between the ages of 18 to 30 for them to take part in the Basic Police Learning Development Program. This requires a National Senior Certificate and proof of whether you are a South African citizen. During the selection process, applicants are subjected to a fitness, psychometric, integrity test as well as medical evaluation; this includes the process of vetting and verifying fingerprints. Fitness screening, physical fitness as well as verification of criminal profile comes right after an applicant passed the first selection processes. A stipend of about R4, 500 is given to trainees in the training phase (Brothwell, 2010:1). Police corruption exists, as the recruitment system is corrupt, involving paying of bribes, some using this career as an escape plan to cover their daily living expenses, not to serve the Nation, but to benefit themselves (Zulu, 2017:03).

Greediness, profit and power

The desire for wealth and gains within members of the SAPS increase the levels of police corruption in South Africa. There are police members who are using this profession as a way of quickly getting themselves richer. The agenda is not to serve but to raise money to enrich themselves. The fact that there is corruption within the Department of Police, clearly shows that greediness takes part in motivating police members to participate in corruption. Greedy people normally consider themselves first but put other people's needs and feelings behind, they lack empathy, expertise in manipulation, always use a short path and they have no limits but take it all. Greediness can be known as something someone is born with (A Syndrome), something addictive (De Vries, 2016:1-2).

Failure to adhere to a code of ethics

Schwartz (2002:28) shares that the 'code of ethics' is known as a "written formal document which consists of moral standards which help to guide employee or corporate behaviour." Usually, this code promotes people's behaviour within organisations. Failure to enforce these codes in an organisation like SAPS, results in the rise of crime (corruption) within the organisation (Schwartz, 2002:28-29). This means that in most cases corruption results from the unethical nature of a corrupt individual, sometimes from people you interact with, and sometimes is because of the weak rules and regulations employed within that organisation. SAPS cannot function ethically when its members cannot adhere to moral standards (Juntunen, Käyhkö, & Rotterdam, 2008:10).

Rationalised police members

In most cases, people who are found guilty of corruption normally say that 'the devil made me do it,' from a psychological point of views this is known as a way of justifying one's actions called Rationalised, so an individual accepts that he/she involved in corruption but in a form of shifting the blame to something that s/he thinks motivated the crime. The rationalised behaviour triggers the levels of police corruption in South African to rise more since people who are rationalised believe that corruption is acceptable.' There are

rationalised police officials within the SAPS who believe that corruption is the right thing to do for them to be rich, so they make use of corruption to be police culture to loot (De Klerk, 2017:254-255). There are three pillars according to Freud, which are normally known as the fraud triangle; namely:

- i. Pressure: Can be financial or nonfinancial.
- ii. Opportunity: The availability or lack of supervision,
- iii. Rationalisation: Justification.

Opportunity

In the criminological field, there is something called the 'Opportunity Model' developed by Peacock (2013:21), it is based on explaining predatory victimisation, the model indicated that people's victimisation depends on their lifestyle and their daily routine. In this case of police corruption, it can be used as something that corrupt police members use to effectively commit corruption within the SAPS. This model consists of five factors: namely:

- i. Exposure: Involves physical visibility of place, person, or item.
- ii. Proximity: Physical distance in between targeted place, person, or item.
- iii. Guardianship: Lack of any supervision.
- iv. Target attractiveness: Symbolic desirability of people's property or place's property.
- v. Properties of specific offenses: Based on obtaining items.

The availability of these factors triggers the levels of police corruption in South Africa to rise since police members in most cases use opportunities to effectively commit corruption (Peacock, 2013:21). Some corrupt police members within the SAPS saw the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to benefit themselves using new rules and regulations implemented for Covid-19 by the President and his cabinet. They were using the rules implemented for the lockdown to loot or extort money from citizens or motorists.

Corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials

The high number of SAPS officers and employees still involved in corrupt, and fraudulent, incidents of crime, as well as the seriousness, thereof, is alarming, and unacceptable to the management of the SAPS. Not a day goes by without the media reporting on an incident, or incidents, of SAPS officers, reservists, or employees being arrested for involvement in criminal activities. Mofokeng (2006:34) is of the opinion that the task environment can be viewed as a second classic approach towards understanding and combating police corruption, besides the individual police member. This phenomenon tends to focus heavily on the environment in which police officers operate. There are persuasive arguments presenting the view that this is the most important factor influencing a police officer's behaviour. Much of what has been written tends to examine the relationship between the nature of the environment within which police officers work, and the extent to which corruption occurs. Mofokeng, 2006:34) went on to identify a number of 'constant' environmental, causal factors that affect the development of corruption. These include: Low direct managerial visibility of police actions; low public visibility of many police actions; peer group secrecy; low status in society, due to low pay; and, frequent contacts with criminals with significant resources, who will attempt to influence the discretion of the police officers.

One of the most insightful perspectives on how the 'task environment' could lead to corruption comes from Peter Manning and John Redlinger's (1991) paper: '*Invitational Edges*,' Mofokeng (2006: 34). Manning *et al.* (1991) (in Mofokeng, 2006:35) explain how the policing of illegitimate markets, such as drug markets, positions police officers on the 'invitational edge of corruption': "The structural constraints of legally suppressed markets expose the agent to an accumulation of attempted influence. Because sellers want effective control over their markets, they must find ways to neutralise enforcement agencies. If they cannot avoid at least arrest and charge, and it is probable that eventually they cannot, and then they must attempt to gain favourable influence with agents." Collusion between police officers and drug syndicates has been recorded in South Africa. In some cases, syndicates, or drug dealers pay police officers, to use their policing powers to undermine competition from other syndicates: "They [drug syndicate members] give information to corrupt members of South African Narcotics and Alcohol Bureau (SANAB) at the airport about a consignment coming in from Brazil or Hong Kong. After the arrest is made, the dealer pays to have the seized illicit consignment released to them," observes, Mofokeng (2006: 35).

However, the 'task environment' takes on a more insidious form in South Africa. Not only do the police accept bribes for 'turning a blind eye' to illegitimate markets, but many police officers will deliberately exploit their powers over those who work in these markets, according to Mofokeng (2006:35). In addition, the situation is similar, in the rural areas, where the practice of giving gifts to the police, in exchange for services, is also relatively common. According to Harris (2001) (in Mofokeng, 2006:36), if a farmer was helped to recover livestock stolen in a case of stock theft, he will often hand something over to the investigators, maybe a goat, or half a sheep: "Task environment factors pose particular difficulties for police managers who wish to combat police corruption. In some cases the decriminalisation of certain activities can reduce the extent of police corruption, as was the case in the United States (US) during the early 20th century when the prohibition of alcohol was lifted," Mofokeng (2006). Grobler and Joubert (2004:90) call

for the full implementation of the Public Finance Management Act (No. 1 of 1999) in order to bring tighter controls, better supervision, and ongoing skills training to public servants and officials in South Africa.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted to collect data in a comprehensive manner (Maluleke, 2016). The researcher attempted to identify, and explore, the actual perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of members of the Giyani SAPS STU, livestock farmers, as well as other community members, regarding this subject. From the stated qualitative standpoint, this study purposively selected 68 participants to form part of FGDs and KIIs for data collections based on their respective knowledge and exposure to this crime. The population sample of the study was based on the selected target groups, taken from GPA, and, Makosha and Xikukwani villages (Ward 14). The targeted participants were as follows: (10): SAPS officers attached to the local police station, (09): Giyani SAPS STU officers, 20: Prominent local farmers (20:10 from each village); (12): Community members (12:6 from each village), (04): Community Policing Forum (CPF) managers (4:2 from each village); and (04): leaders of the local Faith-based organisations. The KIIs were conducted with participants from (02): DAFF (Involving the Veterinary Services; Land and Infrastructure; and, Natural Resource Management managers), (02): Mopani District officials (Community Researcher and a Community Liaison Officer); (02): Giyani Municipality officials; the Occupational Health and Safety Officer; Community Safety and Liaison Officer); and (03): Giyani Magistrates' Court personnel; Senior Prosecutor, Control Public Prosecutor; Court Interpreter.

The selection of the participants was based on their knowledge of stock theft prevalence in the GPA, Limpopo Province; the victims of this crime; and, members of communities affected by this practice. Literature studies from DAFF media releases, South African online newspapers and media reports, journal articles, internet searches (i.e. Electronic databases – Google Scholar, EbscoHost, Emerald Insight, Jstor, ProQuest, Sabinet, Sage Online and Science Direct) and Farmers Weekly publications and Servamus Magazine were reviewed, among others (Maluleke, 2020), Mokwena and Maluleke (2020), Mokwena, Motsepe, Maluleke and Shandu (2020). The collected data was thematically analysed to answer the objective of this study, focusing on themes with concepts, or similar features (Maluleke, 2014).

Analysis, interpretation, presentation of results and discussions

Alleged corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials in the selected Giyani rural areas of Limpopo Province

"... When we call them (The SAPS STUs members) they do not respond immediately, if they come, they can only do so after 4 hours. In some instances, we go to the police station only to be told they are no vehicles to attend to us. However, the close villages to the inner city are the most problematic, villages such as Makosha (ward 14), Mavalani (ward 20) and Siyandhani." FGD No. 2 (Makosha community leader).

Allegations of SAPS and DoJ & CD officials' involvement in stock theft corrupt practices during the FGDs, it emerged that the police are alleged to be involved in stock theft in Giyani. As incidents of theft increase, some livestock farmers, officials at the DAFF in Giyani, as well as members of the public, said they knew those who are involved, but were afraid of victimisation. Some threatened to take the law into their own hands to protect their animals, as they did not know who to turn to, citing police involvement as very disturbing. The livestock farmers said they were under siege, and alleged that the police collude with criminals. One emerging farmer said he had lost all his cattle, saying Nine (09) of his cows were stolen in January 1996, and no-one had been arrested by the year 2021. The majority of Giyani residents cite vigilantism as a solution to problems caused by stock theft.

"We are intending to take the law into our own hands as the police have failed to help. It should be emphasized that stock theft stock theft in the area is a thorny issue in our area. Since the police are not coming closer to the affected area while our animals are stolen, slaughtered and sold." FGD No. 3 (Makosha prominent livestock farmer).

Another participant added that the business sector and the public seemed not to understand how the Giyani SAPS STU operate, and what they could do about it:

"The police do not always co-operate when contacted to deal with stock theft cases. I admit that there is a disconnection between the law and its enforcement. The laws are partially effective in the sense that not all stock owners are aware of stock theft legislation or any mechanism to support and assist them in this crisis situation especially in the rural areas." FGD No. 2 (Makosha local Faith-based organisation leader).

It also emerged from the FGDs that there were wider societal attitudes, which allow fraud to fester, and be tolerated. There are those who do not view fraud as criminal behaviour, due to the high level of unemployment, and some sectors of the community remain passive to it. Some idolised criminals as the "Robin Hoods" of their communities, distributing resources from the 'haves' to the 'have-nots'. There are also some victims, who became complicit in a scam, but insisted they were not helping to facilitate the crime of fraud. Other victims admitted that it was their fault for falling for a scam, and for taking no action to report it. Indeed, the very word, 'scam', implies something slightly less serious than a crime. This tolerance of the operations of fraud syndicates signals how collaboration was seen as ineffective by the FGDs:

“Livestock owners have more powers than they realise, particularly with the fact that livestock farming form part of their daily living, the majority of rural people still regard livestock as an important symbol of wealth. However, this is dented when the police criminality towards stock theft, it is instantly recognisable prevention of stock theft in Giyani remain a problem and a major problem is the Giyani SAPS STU is under staffed, they have inadequate equipment, the livestock farmers they do not take proper care of their stock, for example, brand making. The mentioned challenges serve as a catalyst for stock theft growth and they also form an inextricable part of stock theft prevalent in our area (GPA).” KII (DoJ & CD: GMC official).

“So even before the debate about the police involvement to stock theft in Giyani, if they are involved at higher skill and this involvement is not carefully and accounted for, they will obviously be found guilty in the court of public opinion. The fact is it does seem clear that laws have indeed been broken by some of the SAPS members.” FGD No. 2 (Xikukwana local Faith-based organisation member).

Identified study themes on the causes of police corruption in South Africa

Stemming from section 1 of this study ‘*introduction and problem formulation*,’ Geldenhuys (2012a) pointed out that stock theft is not a new crime it is probably as old as agriculture, itself and it is believed that stock theft is one of the most important challenges faced by resource-poor farmers, with the potential to cripple their livelihoods (Greyling, 2007). Negatively, Geldenhuys (2012b) revealed that from investigations of stock theft cases, SAPS STUs also dealt with other issues, including finding stray animals, and assisting in disputes over ownership, and branding and this is very concerning. Pijoos (2020) shared that approximately 7,339 cases of stock theft were opened during the second quarter of 2020/2021. With Coleman (2021) acknowledging that this crime remains one of the greatest threats to the long-term sustainability of livestock production in the North West Province of South Africa, other provinces included.

Corruption Watch (2015) indicated that South Africa is part of the top eight exposed countries to corruption. The trending corruption issues reported by the public over the year were abuse of power, bribery and procurement *corruption*. Furthermore, the extent, nature and disturbing of prevalence of stock theft corruption by pulic sector officials in the selected areas of Limpopo Province were shared by Tshikalange (2021), DefenceWeb (2021) and Head (2020) in this study. This was supported by the Business Insider South Africa (2020) by sharing that this problem also affects and involvement of SAPS and DoJ & CD officials in committing stock theft in other provinces of South Africa, such as *Limpopo*, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, Free State and North West this was also confirmed by the National Police Commissioner in the year 2020 and the SAPA (2009) and (Central South Africa, 2020). The SAPS Research Unit (2010) revealed that in some stock theft cases in the commercial farms are believed to be perpetuated by the involvement farm workers, as they are believed to be colluding with potential stock thieves by providing detailed compromising information about the farm(s) security to them. The eNCA (2020) reported that the IPID investigated allegations of police collusion on cases of stock theft around the Free State town of Senekal.

The ‘*Monetary issues*’ are cited as some of the causes of corruption in South Africa, this was based on the reviewed literature on section 2 of this study detailing the ‘*causes of police corruption in South Africa*,’ Benson (2008), ISS Today (2018), Mashaba (2018), Faull (2007), Mbhele (2016), Vilakazi (2015), Brothwell (2010), Zulu (2017), Kets de Vries (2016), Schwartz (2002), Juntunen *et al.* (2008), De Klerk (2017) and Peacock (2013) indicated that all the stated causes of police corruption originates from monetary issues, police claim to be corrupted because they are poorly paid, the organisation fails to recruit suitable or qualified candidates due to corruption and insufficient funds, candidates are poorly trained due to insufficient funds to purchase tools and equipment. Some police members are just greedy although they are paid well, they keep on wanting more. Some police members commit crimes because of the pressure of financial challenges, so when they get the opportunity to commit the crime, they just do it since they see it as monetary relief.

Under this sub-heading ‘*low salaries*’ under this section (2 of this study) Benson (2008) went on to states that the issue of insufficient wages as it makes police officials experience a supplement for their income to cover their monthly expenses. ISS Today (2018) further indicated that salaries received by police members. With Mashaba (2018) highlighting that the amount of salaries received by police members according to their occupation. Mbhele (2016) in this section ‘*inadequate training and lack of equipment*’ of section 2 of this study, it is highlighted that skills that are offered in police academies in most cases are regarded as not corresponding with the real police work. He indicated that proper training of police officials within the SAPS plays an important role in the criminal justice system as well as to restore faith in the SAPS’

This section of this study ‘*poor hiring practices or Poor selection of officers*’, Vilakazi (2015) indicated that to prevent police corruption in the SAPS, more recruitment of police members must be done. Brothwell (2010) also indicated that there are stories behind the SAPS hiring system, citizens are unhappy with the type of the system SAPS use to appoint recruits. While Zulu (2017) showcased that after applicants being tested or assessed, they are usually dumped almost on the last phase of training without being told what went wrong. In this section 2.4.4 ‘*greediness, profit, power*’ of this study, Kets de Vries (2016) indicated that the agenda behind policing is not to serve but to raise money to enrich themselves, and greediness takes part in motivating police members to participate in corruption.

In this section ‘*failure to adhere to a code of ethics*’ of this study, Schwartz (2002) indicated that failure to enforce these codes in an organisation like SAPS, results in the rise of crime (Corruption) within the organisation. This author (Schwartz, 2002) believed

that there are four stages of ethical codes. Juntunen *et al.* (2008) further indicated that unethical behaviour of individuals in an organisation creates corruption within that organisation and SAPS cannot function ethically when its members cannot adhere to moral standards.

De Klerk (2017) indicated the following in this section of this study '*rationalised police members*' confirmed that rationalised behaviour triggers the levels of police corruption in South African to rise more since people who are rationalised believe that corruption is acceptable. In this section '*opportunity*' of this study, Peacock (2013) presented five factors that result in victimisation, which can be used by police officials to achieve acts of corruption. Whereas, Mofokeng and Maluleke (2014) confirmed that it is also revealed that corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials is occurring in South Africa, selected areas of GPA included, as confirmed by Mofokeng and Maluleke (2014).

Conclusions

In conclusions, the intelligence-led operations currently employed by the Giyani SAPS STU to prevent, combat and investigate corruption by the public sector officials require a radical, new approach, involving closer collaboration, interaction, and information exchange of all roleplayers within the GPA. This radical approach will call for the establishment of intelligence function that produces operational and tactical intelligence within the Giyani SAPS STU, where it is currently inadequate. Stock theft corruption is not only threatening the sustainability of the country's livestock industry and food security, but destroys high potential genetic material. Therefore, the Giyani SAPS STU officers should ensure that community meetings are held frequently, and that closer co-operation with almost all the relevant stakeholders are initiated at all costs, patrols involving the livestock farmers, community, the police, and interested parties, are pivotal. The use of informants, and CPFs, to provide detailed information, regarding the-said crime, should be practised, and discussed, regularly by the relevant police station Commanders and SAPS STUs Commanders. Therefore, the following recommendations are made in this study:

Promoting greater awareness in the province and neighbouring countries can be better used to combat, prevent, investigate and police this crime effectively. It is essential for the Giyani SAPS STU, in collaboration with the local SAPS, as well as the livestock forums (I.e. *Mahlasegi* Cluster Livestock Forum - MCLF), to promote greater awareness of stock theft corruption by the public sector officials and the related risks and actions across GPA and Limpopo province in context. Meetings and joint operations should be scheduled between neighbouring countries and South Africa, to exchange strategies and intelligence, to regulate, detect, and monitor the movements of livestock and corrupt activities.

The policing of corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials should also be geared toward improving resources, advancing training, and offering better education, as it is of the utmost importance that Giyani SAPS STU personnel be consistently exposed to relevant and advanced training that will develop their knowledge of investigating stock theft corrupt practices by the public sector officials, and analytical skills. Both the local SAPS, at police station level, and Satellite units, as well as the-said unit, to a certain extent, should be encouraged to share, and co-ordinate, their intelligence-gathering and -analysis capabilities better, and establish a unified strategic view of the stock theft corrupt related threats, internally and externally.

For future research directions and limitations, the need for the development of corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials; effective combative, preventive and investigate strategies by all relevant '*Anti-stock theft stakeholders*' should serve as an empowerment model for addressing stock theft in the GPA, and elsewhere. The model in question should view stakeholders' evolution. For continuity, this model should argue for comprehensive, preventative measures rooted in local rural communities across the country, governing the protection of livestock, as well as ensuring that affected parties benefit from this initiative. This sector would remain relevant, and competitive, in the fight against stock theft, based on collaborations. While livestock farming has always been a critical contributor to the GPA economy, the potential for prevention and investment in the area of study has been neglected. Currently, the preventative measures in place are inadequate for efficient policing of this crime. In many rural communities, livestock keeping has been perceived as a "primary symbol of wealth", not something invaluable. Thus, extensive research should be conducted to empower the Giyani SAPS STU, local SAPS officers, prominent livestock farmers, community members, and other interested, relevant stakeholders, to be aware of what should be done to curb stock theft in the GPA [Corrupt practices on stock theft by public sector officials]. Finally, the enforcement of the Stock Theft Act in South Africa is primordial, the implementation of the Anti-Stock Theft Strategy is strongly advised, and the enhancement of co-operation with other relevant stakeholders is, hereby, encouraged.

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