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An analysis of the South African Drug Crime situation through Criminological Theories

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Abstract: The goal of criminological theory is to help one gain an understating of crime and criminal justice. Theories cover the making and the breaking of the law, criminal and deviant behaviour, as well as forms of criminal activity. South Africa has been ranked among the top ten countries with the highest crime in the world. This paper will focus on drug crime. Classical school, Rational choice, Routine activities, Sutherland's differential association, Merton's anomie, Securitisation, Democratic, Strain, Situational control and Integrated theories are discussed in this paper to explain the drug crime situation in South Africa. In pursuit of the objectives of the study, the research paradigm was rooted in positivism. Consequently, a quantitative approach was adopted and a cross-sectional design was employed. Through convenience sampling, 130 respondents who were recruited at public transport stations in the Gauteng Province. The findings demonstrate that among others, respondents were of the view that some of the public servants and law enforcement officials are enables of the high drug crime rate in South Africa. Furthermore, the respondents consider the South African Police officials collude with drug dealers for monetary gain, instead of performing crime prevention and order maintenance functions. The findings of this study corroborated with the existing theories that better explain the roots of the high drug crime in South Africa and identified possible recommendations to address the problem.

Keywords: criminological theories, crime, drugs, law enforcement, South Africa

Introduction

South Africa drug crime situation has been a concern for decades despite the law enforcement efforts and criminal Justice system in place. The non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations and community efforts are failing to curb the illicit drugs. It is alleged that the criminal syndicated have infiltrated politicians, law makers and the police. While heroine is still the major drug of abuse amongst the youth, including crystal meth, khat and cocaine are reported to be increasingly abused. The development of relevant community-led drug prevention strategies, social policies and legislation needs to be updated through involvement of criminologists using available information in the public domain, of illicit drug demand, supply and cross-border drug smuggling in South Africa. Drug demand and drug supply are interrelated and drug smuggling continues as long as there is a demand for drugs, which then increases drug supply routes to and from the country.

Problem statement

A highly respected police officer has shaken South Africa's government - and won the admiration of many ordinary people - with his explosive allegations that organised crime groups have penetrated the upper echelons of President Cyril Ramaphosa's administration. Gen Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi called a press conference to accuse Police Minister Senzo Mchunu of having ties to criminal gangs. South Africans have long been concerned about organised crime, which, leading crime expert Dr Johan Burger pointed out, was at a "very serious level". One of the most notorious cases was that of South Africa's longest-serving police chief, Jackie Selebi, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2010 after being convicted of taking bribes from an Italian drug lord, Glen Agliotti, in exchange for turning a blind eye to his criminal activity. But Gen Mkhwanazi's intervention was unprecedented - the first time that a police officer had publicly accused a cabinet member, let alone the one in charge of policing, of having links to criminal gangs (Ngcobo, 2025). Burger (2012) as cited by (Mothibi, Roelofse, & Maluleke, 2015:652) argues that entire police departments are alleged to be corrupt, providing a variety of services to criminals,

such as 'losing' docket, and selling firearms and drugs. In informal settlements of South Africa, children as young as 4 year old are exposed to drugs in their families and surroundings. During a month of August 2025, a mother and three men who encouraged her four-year old son to light and smoke what the mother admitted to be mandrax have been charged with attempted murder. They were apprehended after a video of the boy went viral (Nqunjana, 2025). Meanwhile, in Ga-Rankuwa township, some religious organisations (church groups) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are intervening to ensure a drug-free society through spiritual/faith healing, rehabilitation and other various strategies (Machethe and Obioha, 2018:67). The impact of these organisations seems to be unsuccessful, which highlights the need for analysis of the drug situation through criminological theories.

Materials and methods

An integrative theoretical review was adopted as the primary method of gathering data to understand the causes of the South African drug situation. The research question that guided this study is: What are the views of the concerned citizens on the causes of high drug crime rate in South Africa? A quantitative approach was adopted and a cross-sectional design was employed. The data-gathering instrument was a paper-based, self-administered structured questionnaire, which included a standardised measuring instrument using a five-point Likert scale. Three fieldworkers together with the researcher, through convenience sampling, circulated 300 questionnaires, which produced 130 usable questionnaires for analysis. Questionnaires were spread at all major public transport ranks in Gauteng province, which includes Springs Taxi Rank in Johannesburg, Bosman Train and Bus station in Pretoria and Kempton Park taxi rank all in Gauteng Province. These taxi ranks have commuters who travel to different provinces within South Africa. Hence, this study opted for convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling design. The result of this choice was that the author had to sacrifice the generalisability of the results. Convenience sampling, which is also known as haphazard or accidental sampling, is used to sample the population according to practical criteria such as their availability at a given time, accessibility, geographic location, and willingness to participate in a study (Elfil & Negida, 2017), (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). More specifically, a cross-sectional survey was deemed the most appropriate design. Surveys that are cross-sectional allow the researcher to describe a single entity in its entirety within a specific time frame (Dantzker & Hunter, 2012). A cross-sectional survey design was countenanced because it is less demanding in its design requirements and consequently provided the researcher with some flexibility to conduct the research effectively. Furthermore, the design is well-known for easing the analysis process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). A cross-sectional survey is also a fast and inexpensive method to reach a relatively large sample of respondents (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015), (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Respondents in the survey were asked to state their level of agreement with those given statements. The data collected was analysed by coding and was computerised. Answers within the questionnaire were assigned numerical codes and entered into Microsoft Excel. The codes from Excel were subsequently transported into the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Field, 2013), (IBM, 2021) for coding and more analysis (McCormick, Salcedo & Poh, 2015). The quality of the data was confirmed through demonstrating validity and reliability. Ethical reflections are an important piece of any study, especially research that deals with human participants. Hence, all research involves ethical permission and endorsement in order to be conducted. For the purposes of this study, ethical consent was approved by the Tshwane University of Technology, primarily on the condition that the participants agreed to the request to conduct the study.

Theoretical Perspectives that Explain Drug Situation in South Africa

Classical School Theories

According to Vold, Bernard and Snipe (2002: 8–9), classical criminology theories developed by Jeremy Bentham and Cesare de Beccaria during the 18th century, explains that crime will only occur if the profits gained from the crime outweigh the costs. Crime is generally committed willingly, with the motive being the fulfilling of the offender's self-interest or enrichment. Another causal factor to an individual committing a crime is the absence of effective prevention and punishment measures (Vold *et al.*, 2002: 8–9). Lockedup (2020), indicates on their website that drug mules can earn up to an estimated R70 000 per successfully smuggled parcel. Accordingly, such financial incentives make unemployed people generally the most vulnerable in terms of being recruited by the criminal drug smuggling syndicates. Hübschle (2008: np), found that, although drug mules gain economically by smuggling drugs, this purported amount paid to drug mules is 'small' in contrast to the massive profits the drug trafficking syndicates make. Caulkins, Burnett and Leslie (2009: 66-67), conducted research on the rate and factors that influence the payment of drug mules. Their study indicated that drug mules are mainly paid in relation to the category and weight of drugs being trafficked regardless of the method used for smuggling.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theorists argue that crime is seen as a choice that is influenced by its costs and benefits through rational reasoning. In order to effectively deal with crime, the costs (which include possible risks or threat of sanctions if unsuccessful in the perpetration of crime) related to committing the crime must be raised (Vold *et al.*, 2002: 196–197). Additionally, the possibility of punishment will only be effective if learnt via direct experiences of criminals with punishment. Accordingly, criminals also apply punishment escaping tactics as part of their experiences, as well as indirectly by observing whether others who commit similar crime are punished or succeed to evade punishment.

Similarly, Siegel and McCormick (2006), maintains that according to this theory, individuals evaluate their choice of activities in accordance with each option's ability to produce gain, pleasure and happiness. Rational choice provides a minor perspective on why individual criminals decide to commit specific crimes; people choose to involve in crime because it can be gratifying, easy, satisfying and exciting. The vital principle of this theory is that people are rational beings whose behaviour can be controlled or modified by a fear of penalty. In this way, it is believed criminals can be influenced to refrain from offending by increasing their fear of punishment. In terms of setting the quantum of punishment, according to this theory, sanctions should be limited to what is needed to discourage people from choosing crime.

According to South African Press Association (2013), despite media attention on South African drug mules imprisoned overseas and case studies of death sentences passed on South Africans in some countries, the amount of drug mules do not seem to be affected by the experiences of others in receiving severe sanctions and punishment for trafficking drugs across borders into other countries. For example, the punishment of being caught smuggling drugs into Indonesia, includes “being taken to a remote, undisclosed location at night and executed by firing squad” (SAPA, 2013). The South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS) stated that as of August 2010, 854 foreign nationals were currently imprisoned in South Africa for drug-related crimes. According to the DCS, from August 2010, 294 of those imprisoned are still awaiting trial and 560 have been sentenced (DCS, 2010). The DCS does not distinguish between different drug crime categories and therefore it is difficult to determine what numbers of the incarcerated have been imprisoned for specifically drug smuggling crimes such as being a drug mule or trader.

Routine Activities Theory

Miro (2014: 1), states that routine activities theory was first formulated by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979), and later developed by Felson. The routine activities theory provides a macro viewpoint on crime in that it predicts how changes in social and economic settings impact the overall crime and victimization rate. Felson and Cohen (1980), emphasize that criminal activities are a “structurally significant phenomenon”, meaning that violations are neither accidental nor trivial events. In consequence, it is the routine of activities individuals partake in over the course of their day and night lives that makes some individuals more exposed to being regarded as suitable targets by a rationally calculating criminal. The routine activities theory relates the pattern of offending to the ordinary patterns of social interaction. Crime is consequently ordinary and is reliant on available opportunities to offend. If there is a defenseless target and there are satisfactory rewards, a motivated criminal will commit a crime.

Moreover, in terms of appropriate targets, the choice is influenced by the criminal’s perception of the target’s defenselessness; the more suitable and accessible the target, the more likely that a crime will occur. The number of inspired offenders in the population also affects crime levels. It is thought that offenders are less likely to commit crimes if they can attain individual goals through legitimate means. The presence of capable guardians is also held to deter individuals from offending. Guardianship can be the physical presence of a person who is able to act in a defensive manner, or in the form of more passive mechanical devices, such as video surveillance or security systems. These physical security measures help limit a criminal’s access to suitable targets. The essential aspect of the routine activities theory is the interaction of motivation, opportunity and targets. In this way, the presence of guardians will prevent most offenders, rendering even attractive targets off limits. Therefore, the presence of opportunity coupled with a lack of guardianship increases criminal motivations and the probability of an offence taking place. This implies that drug dealers may not get involved in criminal activities if the opportunity to commit crime is limited

Differential Association Theory

Edwin Sutherland (1939) differential association theory suggests that people learn values, motives, attitudes and techniques for criminal behaviour through their interactions with others. Sutherland argues that criminal behaviour is learnt. This learning can include *modus operandi* to commit crime (Vold *et al.*, 2002: 160). Another important element of the theory is that it was Sutherland’s opinion that people will commit crime through a persons’ definition of criminal behaviour that is favourable to law violation (Vold *et al.*, 2002: 160). Van Heerden (2014:72) states that during

interviews with drug mules in a special assignment documentary, it was clearly indicated that drug mules did not view the “trips as drug smuggling but rather as an opportunity to travel, something they would have never been given, given the circumstances in which they grew up in”. Moreover, these mules also referred to drugs as ‘bananas’, ‘bolitas’ and ‘pellets’ and therefore justified their misconduct by not relating to drugs as dangerous substances but rather as a common service.

Merton’s Anomie Theory

According to Robert Merton’s anomie theory, the gap between economic success and the opportunity to obtain this goal creates structural strain. This strain causes an individual’s norms and values to weaken and thus ‘anomie’ occurs (Vold *et al.*, 2002: 134). Merton argues how a common overweight on economic success goals weakens individual commitment to social rules and produce a predominantly severe strain on individuals in underprivileged social settings. The term ‘anomie’ is further explained as “a condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals”. This results in an overall moral decline and subsequently a lack of suitable ambitions (Gerber & Macionis, 2010: 97).

Van Heerden (2014: 73), points out that in the Special Assignment documentary, most drug mules got involved in drug smuggling for the extensive monetary rewards or the perceived potential thereof. Furthermore, the documentary, also referred to some of the drug mules as victims. These victims were recruited by illicit drug syndicates under false pretences such as an overseas occupational opportunity or fully paid holidays. These proposals purposely exploited most mules dire financial conditions.

Securitisation Theory in Border Security

In order to manage and protect the borders, states put measures in place to protect their interests against any probable attack or unlawful activities. Securitisation theory is in relation to border security that is supposed to prevent illicit drug trafficking in South African borders. By putting measures to secure and protect their vital interests in place, states hope to maintain their power and territorial integrity. Securitisation theory explains how a certain issue (the border), is changed by a player into a matter of security. According to Hough and Du Plessis (2000: 45), security is seen as the absence of threats, not only of warfare, but also of poverty, oppression and lack of education, which are also seen as examples of threats or constrictions.

Waever (1995: 5), points out that the Securitisation theory aims to understand who securitises (securitising actor), on what issues (threats), for whom (reference objects), why, with what results and under what conditions. The securitisation act has three basic components which entail the following:

- a) Securitising actor/agent - an entity that makes the securitising move or statement;
- b) Reference Object - the object that is being threatened and needs to be protected;
- c) Audience - the target of the securitisation act that needs to be persuaded to accept the issue as a security threat.

In order for the process of securitisation to take place, all three basic components mentioned above must exist. In other words, the securitisation theory provides that there must be a securitising actor/entity that attempts or advocates a securitising move or statement. Secondly, there must be a reference object that is being threatened and needs protection and lastly, there must be an audience or target of the securitisation act that needs to be persuaded to accept the issue as a security threat. In a nutshell, the state or government acts as a securitising agent or entity on behalf of its citizens and makes moves to securitise a particular object, in this case establishing and safeguarding borders. In providing security to borders or citizens and other national interests, these become the reference objects (borders, state, citizens or national interests). Lastly there must be an audience (citizens), that must be persuaded to accept the issue as a security threat.

More often than not, the audience (citizens), that must be persuaded to accept the issue as a security threat is not consulted when a securitisation moves or statement is made. Those in power dictate what should be securitised and how it should be securitised. The question is: Who is this audience that must be persuaded to accept an issue as a security threat? Does the word audience refer to the citizens of the state only and exclude foreigners? If it excludes foreigners, how can the host state protect and secure them without their involvement?

The new visa regime and the Zimbabwe Special Dispensation are good examples of a securitisation theory where the audience (citizens and foreigners), were not afforded a voice, except during a limited period for community consultation and comments on the planned legislative changes. In most cases, this process becomes academic since many of those who are affected are not well represented or may be disadvantaged by their level of knowledge. This

practice is not supportive of the democratic theory, which requires that anyone who accepts the democratic theory of political legitimation domestically is thereby committed to refusing the unilateral domestic right to control state borders, because the demos of democratic theory is in principle unbounded. The regime of boundaries must be democratically justified to foreigners as well as citizens, in a political forum in which both foreigners and citizens can contribute (Abizedeh, 2008: 37). Border policing measures must be informed by the three basic components of the securitisation act. It is imperative to study the effectiveness of border control and security measures to prevent and combat drug trafficking at selected South African borders. The securitisation theory provides the basis to understanding the theory behind border control and security.

Democratic Theory for Border Control and Security

South Africa, as a country that subscribes to the values of democracy, is required by Abizedeh's (2008: 37), argument to at least refuse any unilateral domestic right to control government boundaries, because the demos of democratic theory is in principle unbounded. The theory requires that the regime of borders, must be democratically justified to foreigners as well as citizens. The theory further requires a political forum in which both foreigners and citizens take part. The democratic theory assists in assessing the extent to which both foreigners and citizens participate in the determination of border control and security measures. This is also emphasised in the *Draft African Union Strategy for Enhancing Border Management in Africa* (African Union, 2012: 18), where community involvement is regarded as one of the main pillars of the strategy. This pillar is critically relevant when one considers the geo-political, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic interconnectedness of South Africa and its neighbours of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Taking cognisance of the democratic theory in formulating border control and security measures can help in addressing the impact which ethnicity, culture and language relations have on effective border control and security and in eradicating the challenges associated with such variables. Although border control and security are about national security (protecting national interests and vital interests), the principles of national security as espoused in the Constitution postulate that national security must reflect the resolve of South Africans as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life. Democratic theory requires South Africans to participate in the endeavours of border control and security.

These border control and security measures must be justified to the citizens, who must also be given the opportunity to participate therein. As reflected under the securitisation theory, those who determine what needs to be securitised and on which issues, for whom, why, with what results and under what conditions, in many instances fail to create a platform for other partners (citizens and foreigners), to participate. If the democratic theory in relation to border control and security is anything to go by, the principles of national security as enshrined in the Constitution relate only to South African citizens and exclude foreigners. However, the democratic theory requires participation of both foreigners and citizens, especially since borders define geographical boundaries and the legal jurisdiction of political entities such as sovereign states, federal states, kingdoms and national governments. They are also regarded as a concrete representation of peoples' cultural value systems and statehood (Abizedeh, 2008: 37).

In subscribing to the principle of democratic theory, any unilateral domestic right to control state-run boundaries must be rejected. The participation of both citizens and foreigners is critical, as these border control and security measures impact on the fundamental right to liberty, which includes freedom of movement. Although rights are not absolute, such measures must be justifiable to both citizens and foreigners. Many migration policies and rules cannot be justified to citizens and foreigners, since they are not always involved in the formulation of the aforementioned policies and rules. The decisions are taken by those in authority who pretend to represent the views of the citizens and foreigners. These views manifest in various ways, especially when citizens attack foreign nationals. If these measures were justified to citizens, they might have a better understanding of the presence of foreigners. On the other hand, foreigners would understand and receive border control and security measures that affect them more easily, especially when they are democratically justified to them. The introduction of the new visa regime which requires travellers with minors to carry unabridged birth certificates has created a lot of disapproval from various sectors of society, both internal and external of the borders. This calls for democratic and transparent processes when determining border security and control measures.

The three border security theories can provide a critical basis of building blocks when determining border security and control measures. As provided by Salter and Mutlu (as cited in Mahlangu, 2016: 34–35), in their psychoanalytical theory, government sometimes over-react by implementing border control measures which sometimes do not prevent illegal activities such as drug trafficking from happening. This can be associated with the act of securitisation which sometimes negatively impacts on other issues such as the economy or international relations. Democratic theory to

border security attempts to provide a balancing act by advocating citizens' and foreigner contribution in matters affecting their security across state borders. These theories can balance each other in ensuring effective border control and security measures, as each has strength and weaknesses.

Strain Theory

Strain theory as developed by Robert K. Merton in 1938, argues that certain strains or stressors increase the probability of crime. These strains lead to undesirable emotions, such as frustration and anger. These emotions create pressure for remedial action, such as committing crime to reduce or escape from strain. For example, individuals undergoing chronic unemployment may commit drug production, distribution or sale to obtain money. Merton argued that the failure of individuals to meet up with the cultural goals of the society forces them into criminal behaviour in order to achieve their goals. The desire of any society is to see its citizens excel, but not all citizens have access to equal socio-economic prospects to meet societal demand. This discrepancy creates a strong sense of strain on citizens. This is responsible for all manner of deviant and criminal behaviour such as drug trafficking among citizens. For example, in Nigeria the desire to get to the top is the dream of a significant number of Nigerians, especially the youths. Nevertheless, the means of achieving this dream is not evenly distributed and accessed by all Nigerians. The manner of resource distribution in Nigeria handicaps some people to the benefit of others. The frustrated underprivileged members of the Nigerian society are subjected to pressure on how to achieve their dreams and life aspirations. Consequently, this breeds disapproval and strain on them to involve in illicit drug trafficking. Critics argued that the social strain theory has oversimplified social structures, values and the connection between individuals and social values. By this mindset, the assumption is that the circumstances that create criminality are "fixable" and as such, crime can be fiddled and manipulated by appropriate social engineering (Ukwai, Okpa & Akwaji, 2019: 25).

Situational Control Theory

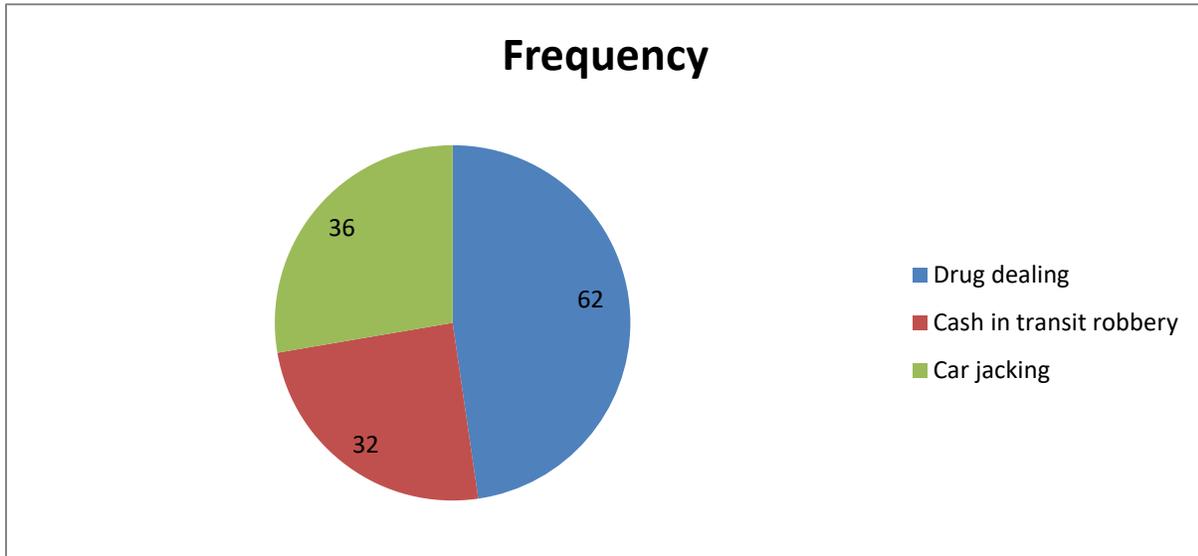
Clarke (1997: 7), describes this model as dubbed by Downes and Rock (1982), and was subsequently developed into the rational choice perspective on crime, but it served initially to deflect criminological criticism of the theoretical nature of situational prevention and to guide thinking about practical ways of reducing opportunities for crime. Clarke (1997: 4), explains that situational crime prevention comprises of opportunity-reducing measures that are directed at extremely specific forms of crime; involve the management, design or manipulation of the direct environment in as orderly and permanent way as possible; make crime harder and more dangerous, or less gratifying and excusable as judged by a wide range of criminals. He further explains that situational measures must be tailored to vastly specific categories of crime, which means that differences must be made, not between broad categories such as burglary and robbery, but rather between the different kinds of offences falling under each of these categories.

Integrated Theory

According to Ronald, Sellers and Sellers (2013: 45), theoretical integration happens when two or more theories are combined in such a manner so as to make the new theory explaining criminal activity in a more complete manner. It can also be used to combine two opposing theories which, upon reflection, were not as incompatible as once assumed. The goal is to produce a theory that is greater to any theory individually. It also make out the fact that new theories are not created in isolation, and that they are created with the knowledge grown from earlier theoretical exercises. Elliott Delbert is one of the first to integrate strain, control and social learning theories to explaining illicit drugs in 1985 (Ronald, Sellers & Sellers, 2013: 47). Brown, Ebensen and Geis (1996: 358), asserts that the integrated approach to theory construction combines existing theories in order to better explain the root causes of crime. This theory describes mechanisms by which neighbourhood disorganisation, attachment to families and social values contribute to involvement with drugs. This model was initially created to explain the root causes of delinquency, but it was later more fully developed to explain adolescents' drug-using behaviour. Integrated or integrationist models combining the effects of control, strain and social learning theories undoubtedly make the most sense in explaining why people are involved in illicit drug dealing (Schmallegger & Bartollas, 2008: 395).

Results

Figure 1: Responses on the easiest to commit lucrative crime in South Africa



The responses above corroborates with classical school theories which explains the greater profits gained by drug syndicates. These responses from the respondents are similar to the SAPS Annual Crime Report (2019). The SAPS Annual Crime Report reflects that during the 2017/2018 financial year, increases in the number of cases of drug-related crime were recorded in all the provinces, continuing the trend already observed in 2016/2017. The highest increases were recorded in Limpopo (36,1% or 1 199) cases, North West (15,5% or 1 853) cases and Mpumalanga (13,1% or 1 507) cases. Most cases of drug-related crime were still recorded in the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. The latter three provinces combined also contributed 64,1 percent to the increase in cases recorded during 2017/2018 (SAPS, 2019: 117).

The responses above highlighted the need for the active participation of communities to work together with the SAPS to minimise victimisation. Community-based crime prevention programmes are unlikely to be successful if they do not recognise the usual ways in which people and institutions involve in crime prevention. Citizens' participation in community programmes is voluntary because these involve the social and institutional arrangements of civil society. Elsewhere as in the case of the South African context, the lack of capacity, organisation or legitimacy of the authorities, giving civil society and citizen-based groups rather than the police the key role in carrying community crime prevention, especially at the local level (Hope, 2015: 31). In South Africa community-based programmes, such as, but not limited to Community Policing Forums (CPFs), appear to lack effectiveness (Chiliza, 2005; Fouche, 2003 & Salomane, 2010).

Research indicates that it is important that the mode of governance in civil society is indirect and diffused, as holders of power (including government), have to govern local societies 'at a distance', influencing and shaping the background environment and utilising a range of fundamentally non-coercive measures in order to involve private citizens in crime prevention (Hope, 2015: 31). The difficulty of encouraging people to transform their lifestyles for experimental crime prevention purposes (even if it is thought such experiments would harvest more methodologically reliable information for the public good), is that people already involve in crime prevention and self-protective behaviour as part of their everyday lives to ensure their personal security, regardless of whether experts think such practices are effective. It will be difficult to persuade them to give up the conducts and practices that help them to feel secure.

Table 1: Respondent's knowledge of criminal charges that have harsh or appropriate sanctions

Crime	Yes	Unsure	Total
Murder	58 (75.32)	19 (24.68)	77 (100.00)
Gender-based violence	10 (55.56)	08 (44.44)	18 (100.00)
Rape	10 (71.43)	4 (28.57)	14 (100.00)
Drug dealing	13 (57.14)	8 (19.05)	21 (100.00)
Total	91 (70.00)	39 (30.00)	130 (100.00)

Table 1 illustrates that a large percentage (75%), of respondents agreed that murder has harsh or appropriate sanction. Only a small percentage (57%) percent agreed that drug dealing has appropriate of harsh sentence. The reason for this explained by Rational choice theory. People choose to be involved in drug dealing because of less harsh or no punishment imposed on other drug dealers. There is less fear to commit be involved in drug dealing.

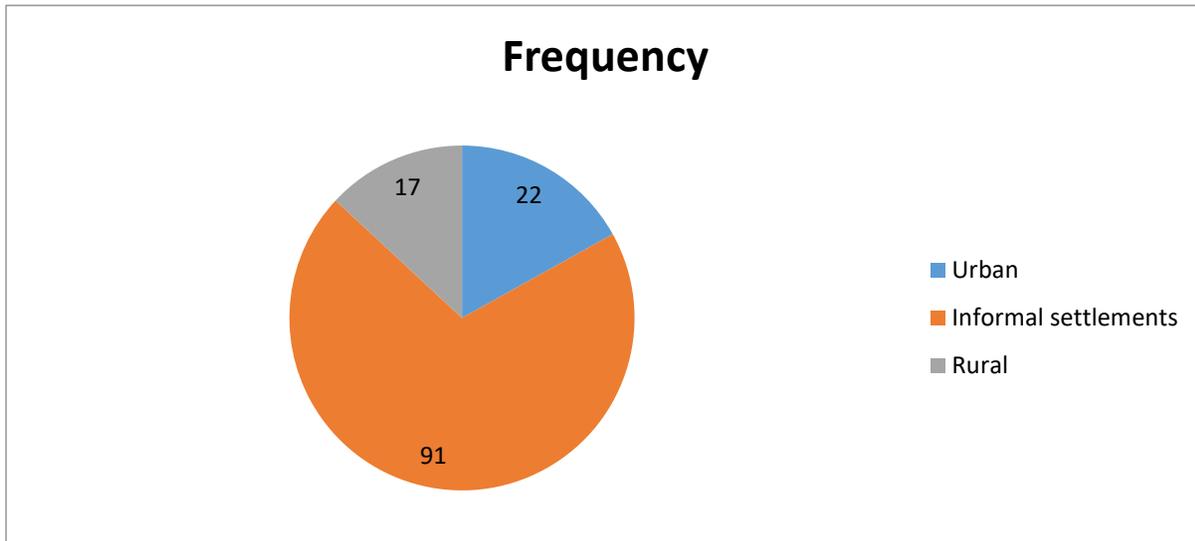
Figure 2: Knowledge of settlement areas where most drug dealing occurs

Figure 2 illustrates that 91 percent of respondents pointed out that drug dealing occurs mostly in informal settlements in South Africa more than in Urban and rural settlements. The population group that dominates informal settlements in South Africa are the unemployed youth, underprivileged communities who moved close to urban areas in search of better opportunities, undocumented foreign nationals and gangsters. According to routine activities theory, these population groups become vulnerable targets to drug syndicates such as Nigerians and Tanzanians.

This is also seen in Europe, according to Green (1998: 16), Nicolas Dorn argues that 'there is a practice in Europe of describing drug dealers in terms of foreign nationals and, in particular, to adequate organised trafficking and other criminality with nationalities outside the European Union'. This was made clear by the Secretary General of INTERPOL who, when addressing a conference of British chief police officers claimed, '*most of the better-established criminal organisations in Europe and elsewhere have very distinct ethnic features. The common distinctiveness of history and language, combined with political frustration, can bring together groups of individuals who may seek to involve in criminal acts to further their goals*' (Kandall, 1994, as cited in Green (1998: 16)). Nigerians have assumed a perhaps unpredictably significant role in the global illicit drugs trade, emerging in the 1980's Nigeria as an important transit country (Nadleman 1998, as cited in Machethe and Mofokeng (2024:11)). Apart from a small amount of

cannabis cultivated locally, Nigeria is not a producer of opium or cocaine. Yet Nigerians are over-represented in apprehension and prison statistics in countries all over the world (Green,1998: 46).

Table 2: Respondent's knowledge of whether popular illicit drugs are produced within South Africa

Country of production	Yes	Uncertain	Total
Foreign Countries	79 (71.17)	32 (28.83)	111 (100.00)
South Africa	12 (63.16)	7 (36.84)	19 (100.00)
Total	91 (70.00)	39 (30.00)	130 (100.00)

Table 2 illustrates that a higher percentage (71%) of respondents pointed out that illicit drugs that are popular in South Africa are produced outside of South Africa. Only (63%) of respondents indicated that the drugs are produced within the country. This is in line with Securitisation theory in border security. The state has put measures at South African borders such as Border Management Security, South African Police Service, South African National Defence Force and other agencies to manage and control the access in borders. However, due to the availability of drugs in the country, the strategies in place seems less effective.

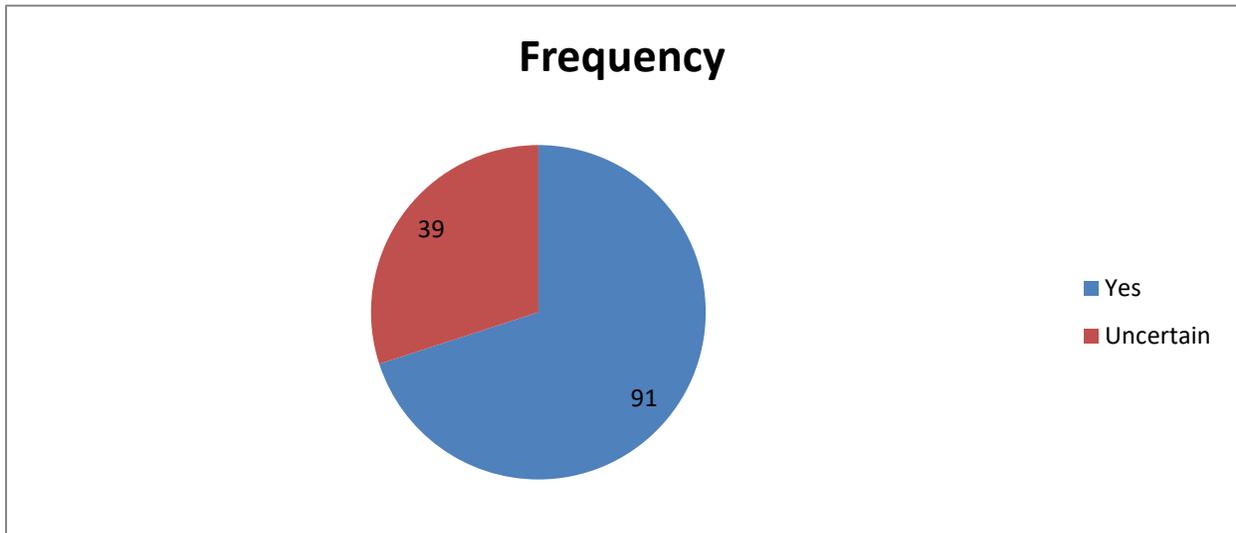
Table 3: The common race involved in drug related crime

Race	Yes	Unsure	Total
Black	58 (75.32)	19 (24.68)	77 (100.00)
White	10 (55.56)	08 (44.44)	18 (100.00)
Coloured	10 (71.43)	4 (28.57)	14 (100.00)
Indian	13 (57.14)	8 (19.05)	21 (100.00)
Total	91 (70.00)	39 (30.00)	130 (100.00)

Additionally, table 3 above indicates that 75 % of are involved in drug gealing, followed by 71% of coloured community. This response pattern is explained by Strain theory. Most black and coloured community are underprivileged and as a result, they experience strain due to high unemployment. They see drug dealing as an opportunity to make money.

Similarly, a study of Rajin (2017: 139), reveals that the lawbreakers are arrested so numerous times and they are well-known in the community and among the police. Their friendships compel the police to take bribe or gifts in exchange for their release when they have committed a crime. The police official performing crime prevention duties find the offenders committing a crime, but their friendship influences the police to take the bribe and thus contributing to corruption. According to Rajin (2017: 187), within the community there are drug dealers, the thieves and many other offenders and these offenders have no intention of going to prison, therefore they feel that because the police are paid low salaries, they are easily bribed.

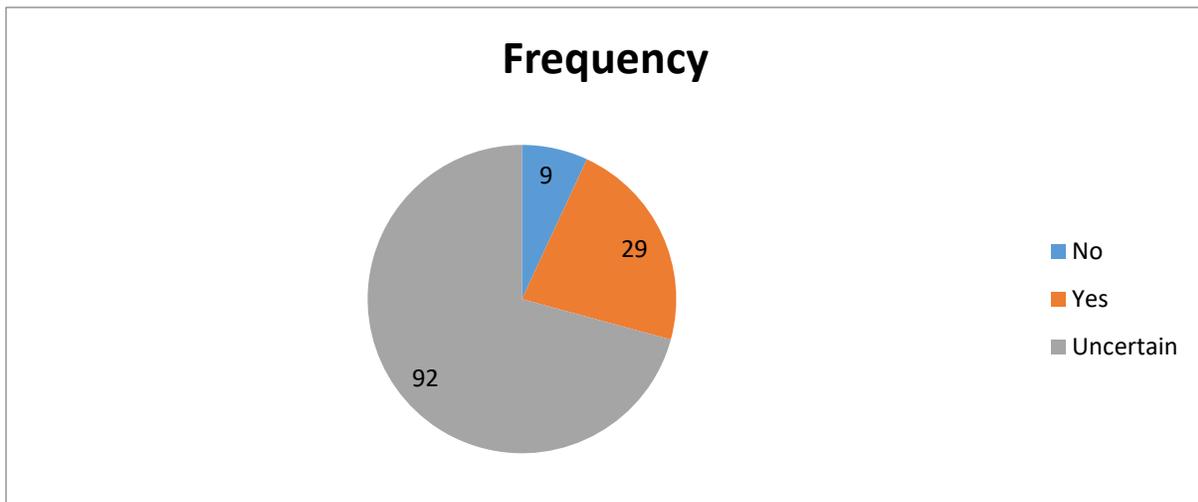
Figure 3: Respondent's knowledge of whether the police are involved in drug dealing in South Africa



The South African Police Service involvement in drug dealing

Figure 3 illustrates that a large percentage (91%), of respondents indicated that the police are involved in the trafficking of illicit drugs in their respective communities, while 39% were not sure of whether the police are involved in drug trafficking. The police may be experiencing structural strain and as a result their norms and values weaken according to Merton's anomie theory. They become unethical and end up in drug dealing. Some police officials according to classical school involve in drug dealing motivated greed and profit.

Figure 4: Respondent's knowledge of whether politicians are allowing drugs into South Africa



Furthermore, figure 4 above indicates that 29 percent of respondents pointed out that politicians are involved in drug dealing, while a vast amount of 92 percent were uncertain. Another 9 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that politicians are involved in drug dealing.

Table 3: Respondent's knowledge of officials who are involved in drug dealing

Title	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Correctional officials	5 (41.67)	3 (25.00)	4 (33.33)	12 (100.00)
Public Prosecutors	3 (30.00)	2 (20.00)	5 (50.00)	10 (100.00)
Magistrates	21 (38.18)	15 (27.27)	19 (34.55)	55 (100.00)
Police officials	22 (42.31)	09 (17.31)	21 (40.38)	52 (100.00)
Total	51 (39.53)	29 (22.48)	49 (37.98)	129 (100.00)

Statement: Public officials involved in drug dealing

Furthermore, table 3 above indicates that the majority (42%) if respondents indicated that police officials are involved in drug dealing, whereas 42% pointed out correctional officials. 38% pointed out magistrates and 30% pointed out public prosecutors.

Figure 5: Respondents knowledge of whether home affairs officials are enablers of drug dealing

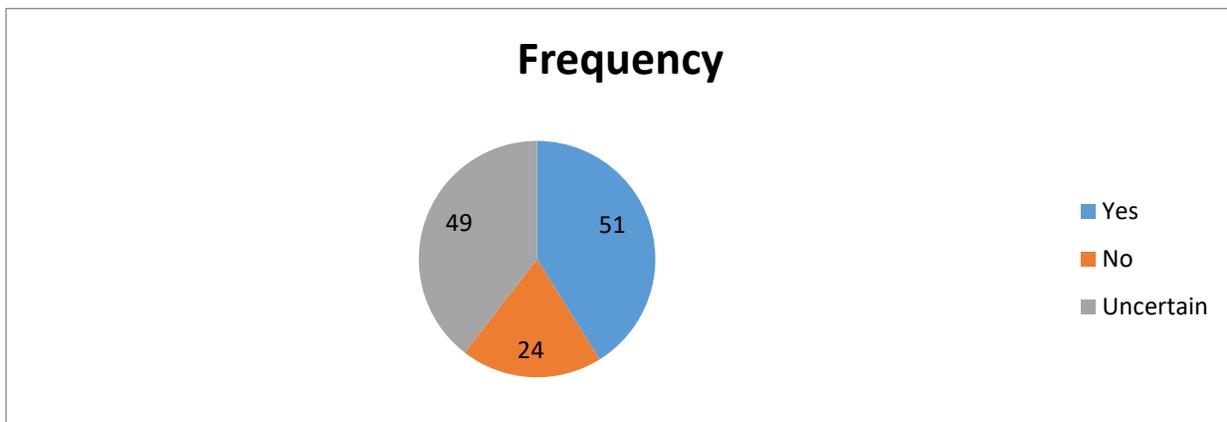


Figure 5 above indicates that majority 51% of respondents pointed out that most South African department of home affairs officials are enablers of drug dealing. 49% were uncertain and only 24% disagreed with the statement that department of home affairs officials are enablers of drug dealing.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS-

Impartial theory.

I recommend a development if Impartial theory aimed to oversee all law enforcement agencies as a whole. Impartial theory means that officers will treat all individuals and groups fairly and without bias, regardless of their background, beliefs, or circumstances. This theory explains the importance of impartiality for maintaining public trust, ensuring effective policing, and upholding the rule of law. The actions of law enforcement should be open to public scrutiny, and officers should be accountable for their decisions and conduct. Impartiality helps prevent biased policing practices, such as racial profiling and other forms of discrimination, which can erode public trust and lead to negative consequences.

Consequential theory

This theory is also suggested by the author, which refers to the indirect or secondary effects of an action or event, particularly those that extend beyond the immediate or direct consequences. It's often used in the context of damages or losses that are a result of a primary action, rather than a direct result. For example, a poorly handled law

enforcement operation could lead to a loss of public trust, which is a consequential effect beyond the immediate operational outcome. Those who are involved in illicit drugs at any level must receive a suitable punishment.

Moreover, Criminologists should be involved in policy making for illicit drugs preventative measures. They study the causes of crime, analyze crime patterns, and develop strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity. By analyzing crime data and trends, criminologists provide valuable insights to policymakers, helping them create laws and regulations that address crime at its root causes. Criminological theories should be integrated into study materials, dissertations and thesis and be taught at tertiary institutions and law enforcement colleges. Criminologists must work with law enforcement agencies to develop crime-fighting strategies, analyse crime scenes, and understand criminal behavior, which can improve law enforcement effectiveness. In court settings, forensic criminologists can apply their knowledge to analyze criminal behavior, assess risk, and provide expert testimony to aid in sentencing and rehabilitation decision. Law enforcement and crime prevention agencies should recruit criminologists into key roles that shapes the organisations. Research and development of more valid theories and models should be made fashionable in order to come with feasible solution for South Africa and other countries affected by high drug crime.

Criminology in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR)

During this Fourth Industrial revelation (4IR) era, criminologists must be involved in strategising value-added technology to improve the monitoring of borders and valued-added technology to monitor and evaluate the issuing of passports, permits and visa. Criminologists should be involved in making decisions to establish the special investigations units which will be involved in a number of wide-scale investigations into public service corruption, including investigations of government involvements in organised crime.

Conclusion

From the above theories reviewed and perceptions of the community, mismanagement of illicit drugs is explained by different theories for every level of involvement by drug dealers. It is evident that the role of criminology has been neglected and overlooked in the past decades to deal with illicit drug situation in South Africa. Integrated theories best explain illicit drugs production, distribution and sale. South African community members have lost faith in the Criminal Justice System. The responses revealed corruption that occurs between the police, prosecutors and judges which exacerbate the availability of illicit drugs in South Africa. Drug dealers easily escape the might of the law and the community suffers the consequences. Organised criminal syndicates exist in order to make a profit. Profits are usually made out of serving the market for illicit drugs. These organised crime syndicates can usually succeed only with the assistance of public servants in the criminal justice system and of officials responsible for policing. Such officials are often easily "bought" by organised crime syndicates, who are able to gain huge profits as the demand for illicit drugs is high in the country. The recruitment of such corrupt officials is a key element in the survival and success of organised crime. So, for example, corrupt policemen supply drug lords with state transport and keep them informed of police investigations, raids and roadblocks, so that they may evade arrest, avoid the capture of evidence against them or even pay for dockets against them to be lost. Corrupt prosecutors lose vital evidence. Corrupt home affairs officials and border management authorities may assist in safe routes for illicit drugs. Children as young as four-year-old in certain informal settlements in south Africa are exposed to illicit drugs due lack of family structure, lack of good role models and poverty. Illicit drug demand in South Africa will continue to increase if the drug supply routes and drug smuggling operations by syndicates are not addressed more firmly by the authorities with involvement of criminologists.

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