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Enhancing Crime Prevention by Converting Data into Intelligence within the South African Police Service

Mpho Maboja ^{1*}, Juanida Suzette Horne ²

^{1,2} Department of Police Practice, School of Criminal Justice, College of Law, University of South Africa, Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria, South Africa.

*Corresponding author: etshihm@unisa.ac.za

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Abstract: In South Africa, crime, particularly violent crime, remains a persistent public concern, frequently spotlighted in media discourse. The South African Police Service, as mandated by Section 205(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), is entrusted with preventing, combating and investigating crime. Central to fulfilling this mandate is accurate and timely crime information, including the nature, location, motive, and timing of criminal incidents, vital for guiding effective policing responses. Over time, crime analysis has emerged as an essential tool in transforming raw data into actionable intelligence, enabling evidence-based policing practices. This paper highlights the benefits of crime analysis in supporting law enforcement strategies, informing resource allocation, guiding operational decisions, and enhancing the ability of police to detect, understand, and prevent crime. This paper explores enhancing crime prevention by converting data into intelligence within the South African Police Service. Adopting a qualitative research methodology, data were collected through an extensive literature review and in-depth interviews with South African Police Service officials, Crime Information Management and Analysis Centre members at the station level, and representatives from the Office of the Crime Registrar at both provincial and national levels. Additionally, two international experts were interviewed to provide comparative insights and global perspectives on the role of crime analysis in policing. This paper's findings reveal that, although the South African Police Service has formalised crime analysis structures, significant gaps remain in stakeholders' understanding of crime analysis's various types, processes, and objectives. It further underscores the importance of standardised training, professionalisation, and the full integration of crime analysis into all levels of police practice.

The paper provides recommendations to improve the effectiveness of crime analysis in policing. These include embedding crime analysis into daily operational planning, promoting interdepartmental information sharing, enhancing accountability through regular Crime Information Management and Analysis meetings, and increasing the strategic use of crime analysis products across units. It is also recommended that provincial and national crime registrars develop a practical pocketbook to standardise crime analysis outputs, detailing analytical report types, uses, formats, and production frequency. The research further stresses the need for continuous capacity development and managerial support to foster a culture of analytical thinking within the South African Police Service. In conclusion, the paper outlines the strategic value of institutionalising crime analysis in contemporary policing. When effectively implemented, crime analysis strengthens intelligence-led, problem-oriented, and hotspot policing models. By converting data into intelligence, the South African Police can improve responsiveness, adapt strategies to emerging crime trends, and achieve more effective crime prevention outcomes.

Keywords: Crime analysis, crime data, crime information, Crime Information Management and Analysis Centre, crime reduction, crime prevention, data, information analysis, intelligence, South African Police Service

Introduction

South Africa grapples with a persistently high crime rate, with media outlets frequently highlighting the severity and brutality of offences, particularly violent crimes, which have cemented crime as a central public concern (Govender, 2013:49; Maboa & Horne, 2024a:539). This pervasive issue demands robust responses from law enforcement agencies, notably the South African Police Service (SAPS), whose constitutional mandate under Section 205(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) emphasises the prevention, combating, and investigation of crime. Effective crime management hinges on comprehensive data collection and analysis, encompassing details such as the nature, location, motive, and circumstances of crimes, as well as the identities of perpetrators and victims (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 2010:99; Tshishonga, 2022:141). Such data forms the foundation for informed strategies to address criminal activity, enabling law enforcement to move beyond reactive measures toward proactive and intelligence-driven approaches.

To this end, crime analysis has emerged as a pivotal tool within the SAPS, transforming raw data into actionable intelligence to enhance crime prevention efforts. Scholars such as Goldstein (2005:397), Maboa and Horne (2024a:535), Sekhukhune (2017:11), and the SAPS (2018:2) underscore that crime analysis systematically addresses the fundamental questions of criminal activity, namely the who, what, when, where, why, and how of providing a structured framework to understand and mitigate crime. As Walker and Drawe (2018:2) articulate, crime analysis involves the systematic examination of criminal behaviour and public disorder to support offender apprehension, assess crime prevention strategies, and disseminate evaluated intelligence to law enforcement agencies. This process leverages a wealth of information from law enforcement records, criminal justice systems, and public domains to identify crime patterns, trends, and series, enabling timely and targeted interventions (Horne, 2009:70-71; Osborne & Wernicke, 2003:4-5; Tshishonga, 2022:141-142). By analysing these elements, crime analysts can not only identify perpetrators but also anticipate future criminal events, thereby facilitating proactive prevention strategies (Bland, Ariel & Ridgeon, 2022:41; Maboa & Horne, 2024b:141).

The SAPS has acknowledged the importance of crime analysis by creating a specialised unit to maximise its benefits. Although crime analysis does not directly prevent or reduce crime, incorporating it into policing operations greatly strengthens crime prevention strategies. Santos (2014:174) offers a useful comparison, likening crime analysis to a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan in medicine; much like an MRI identifies medical issues and guides treatment without actually healing the patient, crime analysis reveals crucial information about criminal trends and patterns, enabling but not replacing action. Rather than offering a solution itself, crime analysis provides law enforcement with the intelligence necessary to craft effective responses. A notable example is the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR) pilot project on crime analysis and mapping, which resulted in more accurate data and measurable crime reduction in specific areas (Stylianides, 2010:8). By employing various tools and datasets, crime analysis enables officers to gain a deeper understanding of local crime dynamics, enhancing their ability to detect, mitigate and prevent criminal activities (Hansgen, 2016:7).

Despite the indirect role of crime analysis in crime reduction, the connection between crime analysis and effective policing is undeniable when supported by strategic implementation. Crime analysis fulfils several critical purposes; it capitalises on existing data within law enforcement and public domains, informs officers of specific and general crime patterns, provides objective methods to assess crime issues across local, regional, national and global scales, and supports proactive crime detection and prevention in a rapidly evolving societal context (Osborne & Wernicke, 2003:4-5; Tshishonga, 2022:141-142). This paper aimed to explore and elucidate how crime analysis enhances crime prevention within the SAPS by transforming data into actionable intelligence. It examined the conceptual framework, historical evolution, purposes, types, processes, and operational functions of crime analysis within the SAPS, offering a comprehensive overview of its role in modern policing. By delving into these dimensions, the paper highlights how crime analysis empowers the SAPS to address South Africa's complex crime landscape with greater precision and effectiveness, ultimately contributing to safer communities.

Literature review

Overview of crime analysis

Crime analysis has been a cornerstone of law enforcement since officers began identifying similarities in reported crimes, a practice dating back to early investigative efforts (Buck, Austin, Cooper, Gagnon, Hodges, Martensen & O'Neal, 1973:1). Broadly categorised into two forms, namely formal and informal crime analysis, this discipline has evolved significantly, with distinct characteristics shaping its application in modern policing. Informal crime analysis, as described by Buck et al. (1973:3) and Bruce (2017:4), relies on the subjective comparison of a police officer's

current investigation with past experiences of colleagues. This approach is inherently limited, characterised by bias, outdated methods, and dependence on individual memory and experience. The identification of crime patterns through informal analysis is often slow, non-coordinated, and restricted to recognising only prominent or limited modus operandi characteristics. Consequently, this method struggles to detect broader, generalised crime patterns across a community or region, hampering its effectiveness in addressing complex crime dynamics (Bruce, 2017:4; Buck et al., 1973:3).

In contrast, formal crime analysis represents a structured and systematic approach, where pattern identification is assigned to specialised units within law enforcement agencies (Buck et al., 1973:4). This form of analysis is distinguished by its objectivity, enabling a comprehensive review of crime occurrences and modus operandi patterns. Formal crime analysis facilitates quicker identification of criminal patterns, providing a robust communication link between operational units and crime analysis teams. Formal crime analysis, furthermore, employs systematised methods for storing and retrieving crime data, offering a broader perspective on the general crime landscape (Buck et al., 1973:3; Bruce, 2017:4). This structured approach enhances coordination and supports the development of proactive strategies, making it a critical tool in modern policing. As Piza and Feng (2017:340) note, formal crime analysis has become a driving force in the evolution of contemporary policing practices, enabling law enforcement to respond more effectively to emerging crime trends.

The growing reliance on formal crime analysis is evident globally, with police departments increasingly integrating this practice into their investigative frameworks (IACA, 2014:1). This expansion underscores the need for standardised terms and definitions within the crime analysis profession to ensure consistency and clarity across jurisdictions. Formal crime analysis not only supports operational efficiency but also enhances strategic decision-making by providing actionable intelligence derived from data. By focusing on systematic data collection, storage and analysis, law enforcement can move beyond reactive measures, fostering a proactive approach to crime prevention and mitigation. This paper focuses on formal crime analysis, exploring its role in transforming data into intelligence to strengthen crime prevention within the SAPS.

The definition and meaning of crime analysis

Crime analysis is a critical function within law enforcement that systematically examines crime-related data to support policing strategies, investigations, and resource allocation. Horne (2009:69) defines crime analysis as an investigative tool that employs systematic and analytical processes to study crime scenes, offender profiles, and victim characteristics. This process generates timely and relevant insights into crime trends, patterns, and correlations by leveraging data from police reports and crime statistics (Horne, 2009:69-70; Wortley & Mazerolle, 2008:1-2). Similarly, Tshishonga (2022:147-148) describes crime analysis as the study of reported crimes to identify key elements such as the who, what, where, when, how, and modus operandi of suspects, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the crime situation.

Crime analysis is further characterised as the systematic qualitative and quantitative examination of crime and law enforcement data, integrated with socio-demographic and spatial variables. This approach aids in apprehending offenders, preventing crime, reducing disorder, and evaluating policing practices (Bruce, 2017:6; Horne, 2009:69-70; IACA, 2014:2; Ratcliffe, 2007:13; Santos, 2014:149). Crime analysis serves as a cornerstone of evidence-based policing (EBP) by optimising patrol strategies, investigative efforts, and preventive interventions through data-driven insights (Maboa & Horne, 2024b:141). The outputs of crime analysis support various police functions, including criminal investigations, offender apprehension, prosecution, crime suppression, and resource deployment planning (IACA, 2014:2; Ratcliffe, 2007:13; Santos, 2014:149).

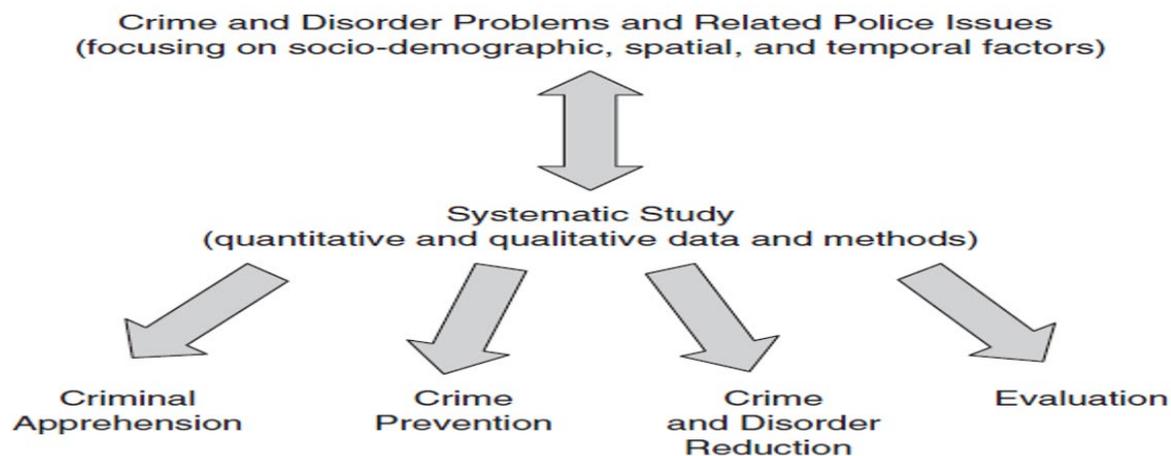
Crime analysis within the SAPS is a systematic process that supports policing by identifying crime patterns, trends, and relationships to inform resource allocation and operational strategies. Bruce (2004:15) describes crime analysis as the analytical study of criminal incidents to detect patterns, trends, and issues, enabling the development of targeted strategies and tactics to address them. Similarly, Cope (2004:188) defines crime analysis as the process of analysing crime data alongside other relevant sources to prioritise police activities, leveraging spatial, victimisation, and offender data to guide resource deployment.

Advanced methodologies in crime analysis involve the use of large datasets, modern technology, and systematic techniques to identify relationships between crime data and other relevant sources. Taylor, Boba, and Egge (2013:6) emphasise that these methods enhance police efforts in arresting offenders and reducing crime through prevention and evaluation. Carter (2015:4) underscores the role of crime analysis in providing timely information on crime trends and patterns, which supports administrative and operational planning for resource deployment and case clearance.

The International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA, 2014:2) and Bruce (2017:6) describe crime analysis as a professional discipline that employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyse data valuable to police and communities. Qualitative data, such as crime themes and patterns, complements quantitative data, including variables like time, date, location, and crime type, which are amenable to statistical analysis (Katantamalundu, 2004:23; Tshishonga, 2022:145). Crime analysis is not anecdotal but relies on robust theoretical frameworks, rigorous data collection, statistical methods, and advanced analytical software. It underpins evidence-based approaches and organisational models such as problem-oriented policing, hotspot policing, and stratified policing (Guerette, Przeszlowski, Lee-Silcox & Zgoba, 2021:1426-1427).

Importantly, crime analysis encompasses all data analysis conducted by law enforcement, except for forensic evidence analysis (e.g., DNA) and administrative analyses related to budgeting or personnel (Bruce, 2017:6; IACA, 2014:2). Bruce (2017a:6–7) clarifies that crime analysis encompasses the integration of various forms of data analysis within law enforcement, extending beyond crime-specific information to include other types of data relevant to police operations. Moreover, Bruce (2017:6–7) emphasises that crime analysis plays a supportive role across all major police functions. However, crime analysis is distinct from crime scene investigation, forensic science, profiling and criminological research. Figure 1 summarises the composite aspects of crime analysis.

Figure 1: Summary of composite aspects of crime analysis



Source: Anon, 2005:8

The historical background of crime analysis in the SAPS

Crime analysis within the SAPS is a relatively recent development, emerging as part of broader structural and operational transformations following South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 (Mashiloane, 2014:107). The evolution of crime analysis reflects the SAPS's efforts to enhance its intelligence and investigative capabilities through systematic data management and analysis. In February 1990, the Security Branch (SB) was restructured into the Crime Intelligence Service (CIS). By April 1991, the CIS merged with the detective branch to form the Crime Combating and Investigation (CCI) division, which operated until June 1994 (Buys, 2007:256). In July 1994, the SAPS established the National Crime Investigation Service (NCIS), marking a shift toward specialised investigative functions. The separation of internal security and crime intelligence from detective operations occurred in December 1998 with the creation of the Crime Intelligence Agency (CI). Within the CI Division at SAPS headquarters, seven components were established, including the Crime Information Management Centre (CIMC) (Buys, 2007:256).

The CIMC was designed to provide comprehensive crime analysis beyond mere statistical reporting, aiming to explain crime trends at national and provincial levels (De Kock, 2014:4). However, dissatisfaction with the CIMC's performance, voiced by the then-Minister Mufamadi and the government, prompted the formation of a committee to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of crime information (De Kock, 2014:4). This led to the establishment of the Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC). The CIAC, operating at the police station level, was tasked with conducting crime analysis, processing geographic crime information products, and supporting detectives in case investigations (Govender, 2011:118-119). As part of ongoing reforms, the SAPS introduced the Crime Registrar component in 2015, following a decision made in 2014. Reporting directly to the National Commissioner

and functioning across all organisational levels, the Crime Registrar was established to ensure the use of controlled, scientific procedures to produce validated and reliable crime information (SAPS, 2015:2; SAPS, 2017:4). This component underscores the SAPS's commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of crime data to support EBP and operational decision-making.

The purpose of crime analysis

Crime analysis serves as a vital tool in supporting law enforcement operations by providing data-driven insights to enhance policing strategies, investigations, and resource allocation. Buck et al. (1973:1) outline that the primary purposes of crime analysis include assisting in the screening, prioritisation, and organisation of suspect lists for specific crimes based on crime characteristics and offender modus operandi. Additionally, crime analysis serves to connect and associate crimes with suspects already in custody while also enhancing the strategic deployment of preventive patrols and other policing functions to facilitate real-time observation and intervention during crimes in progress (Buck et al., 1973:1). Table 1 depicts an overview of the crime analysis mission.

Table 1: Overview of the mission of crime analysis

Support	Activity	Method or technique	
Detective	Case investigation	Known offender	Modus operandi Associates Status Location
Detective	Case investigation	Offence correlation	Evidence Location Time, day, week, month, year Property Crime-specific Victim, witness
Detective	Special operations	Locational stake-out patterns	
Patrol	Manpower allocations	Crime pattern information	
		Crime prediction policies	
Patrol	Tactical assignments	Crime location patterns	
Patrol	Suppression	Identification of active offenders in the policing area	
Patrol	Patrol effectiveness improvement	Characteristics - unique crime types	
Planning	Strategy development	Categorise crime problems	
		Demographic correlations	
		Prediction of the future	
		Problem areas	

Source: Buck et al., 1973:1

Crime analysis delivers timely and relevant information on crime patterns and trends derived from police reports, supporting operational and strategic objectives (Horne, 2009:69-70; Maboa & Horne, 2024:142; Wortley & Mazerolle, 2008:1-2). According to multiple scholars, crime analysis outputs facilitate criminal investigations, offender apprehension, prosecution, crime and disorder reduction, resource deployment planning and the evaluation of policing strategies (Bruce, 2017:6; IACA, 2014:2; Maboa & Horne, 2024b:143; Ratcliffe, 2007:13; Santos, 2014:149; Taylor et al., 2013:6). Specifically, crime analysis serves the following key functions, as noted by Boba (2001:10-11) and Mashiloane (2014:112):

- **Apprehending criminals:** Crime analysis supports law enforcement in identifying and apprehending offenders by providing actionable intelligence, such as suspect prioritisation and linkage of crime series, aligning with core policing objectives.
- **Preventing crime:** By analysing spatial, temporal, and situational factors such as the timing, location, and nature of residential burglaries, crime analysis informs targeted prevention strategies, including community education and patrol planning (e.g., advising residents to secure garage doors).

- **Reducing disorder:** Crime analysis aids in addressing disorder issues, such as noise complaints or trespassing, by identifying patterns and enabling proactive interventions to prevent escalation into more serious problems.
- **Evaluating organisational procedures:** Crime analysis supports the assessment of resource allocation, crime prevention programmes, geographic boundary realignment, staffing forecasts, and performance metrics, enhancing organisational efficiency and accountability.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA, 2005, as cited in Santos, 2017:6-7) highlights additional benefits of crime analysis, including enhanced investigative and prosecutorial capabilities, support for agency missions, and the provision of crime trend data for threat, risk, and vulnerability assessments. Crime analysis also facilitates training, database development, inter-agency collaboration, compliance with legal frameworks, and support for fusion centres. Ultimately, the primary objective of crime analysis is to strengthen police operations across criminal investigations, apprehension, prosecution, patrol activities, crime prevention, problem-solving, and operational accountability (Santos, 2017:6-7).

The types of crime analysis

Crime analysis encompasses various types that provide structure to the profession, define roles and responsibilities for crime analysts and enhance police organisations' analytical capabilities (Santos, 2017:97). These types of crime analysis are distinguished by their purpose, data sources, techniques, frequency and intended audience (Boba, 2001:11; IACA, 2014:3). Bruce (2012:11-12) identifies three primary types of crime analysis, namely crime analysis, criminal intelligence analysis and criminal investigative analysis.

- **Crime analysis:** This type of analysis involves systematic processes to deliver timely and relevant insights into crime patterns and trends, supporting resource deployment, crime prevention, investigations, and case clearances (Carter, 2015:4).
- **Criminal intelligence analysis:** This type of analysis is focused on individuals, groups, and networks involved in crime. This analysis examines offenders' and repeat victims' activities, motives, and connections to understand organised criminal behaviour (Bruce, 2004:15; IACA, 2014:4).
- **Criminal investigative analysis:** This type of analysis is centred on compiling and maintaining profiles of known offenders, particularly serial criminals, to assist law enforcement in prioritising suspects for serious crimes (Bruce, 2004:17; Stenton, 2009:43).

IACA categorises crime analysis into four types, ranging from specific to general, including crime intelligence analysis, tactical crime analysis, strategic crime analysis, and administrative crime analysis (IACA, 2014:3-4). In the context of the SAPS, crime analysis and crime intelligence analysis are managed by separate divisions, with this paper focusing solely on crime analysis. Drawing from Bruce (2012:14) and Grana and Windell (2021:205), the recognised types of crime analysis within the SAPS are operational, tactical, administrative, and strategic crime analysis. Table 2 below provides an overview of these crime analysis types.

Table 2: Types of crime analysis

Type of crime analysis	Description and purpose of analysis	Process, techniques and example
Tactical	Tactical analysis involves the utilisation of police data to establish short-term priorities for investigations and patrol deployment. It supports the identification of immediate crime problems and facilitates suspect apprehension. This type of analysis typically includes descriptive statistics and concise summaries intended for operational personnel and public communication. (Sources: Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:12; IACA, 2014:4; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506-507)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of repeat incidents Identification of crime patterns Linking known offenders to prior offences Examination of crime correlations Development of target profiles Analysis of temporal, spatial, offender, victim and modus operandi variables in high-profile crimes Crime series analysis Weekly crime and arrest statistics Annual comparative crime analyses

Type of crime analysis	Description and purpose of analysis	Process, techniques and example
		Distribution of suspect bulletins Mapping and analysis of gang territories (Sources: Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:12; IACA, 2014:4; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506-507)
Strategic	This type of analysis supports long-term strategic planning by examining multi-year data and applying statistical methods to inform and evaluate policies, strategies and crime prevention initiatives. It focuses on identifying trends, persistent hotspots and emerging issues and produces reports that highlight deviations in crime patterns and assist with informed resource allocation. (Sources: Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:13; IACA, 2014:4; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506-507)	Trend analysis Hotspot identification and analysis Problem-oriented crime analysis Rigorous evaluation of crime control initiatives Optimisation of policing workforce deployment Forecasting of future crime trends Strategic resource allocation Situational crime analysis (Sources: Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:13; IACA, 2014:4; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506-507)
Operational	This type of analysis focuses on identifying problems, directing resources and demonstrating outcomes, primarily targeting mid-level management. It involves supporting law enforcement agencies in resource allocation and planning crime reduction initiatives. Additionally, it aids the police in establishing short-term priorities by identifying hotspots and patterns of criminal activity to effectively guide officer deployment. (Sources: Grana & Windell, 2021:219; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7)	Hotspot analysis Crime density mapping Correlation analysis Examination of neighbourhood characteristics linked to crime, such as inadequate lighting Analysis of incident data to identify patterns and serial offences Weekly CompStat reviews for performance assessment (Sources: Grana & Windell, 2021:219; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7)
Administrative	This type of analysis centres on providing economic, geographic or social information to administrative personnel. It is tailored to meet the administrative requirements of the police organisation, government and community. The analysis involves various techniques and produces outputs such as statistics, data printouts, maps and charts, which are generated both routinely and upon request. (Sources: Bruce, 2017:7; Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:13; IACA, 2014:3-5)	Districting and redistricting analysis Patrol staffing analysis Cost-benefit analysis Resource deployment planning for special events Feasibility studies Preparation of special research projects (Sources: Bruce, 2017:7; Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:13; IACA, 2014:3-5)

Sources: Bruce, 2017:7; Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:13; Grana & Windell, 2021:219; IACA, 2014:3-5; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506-507

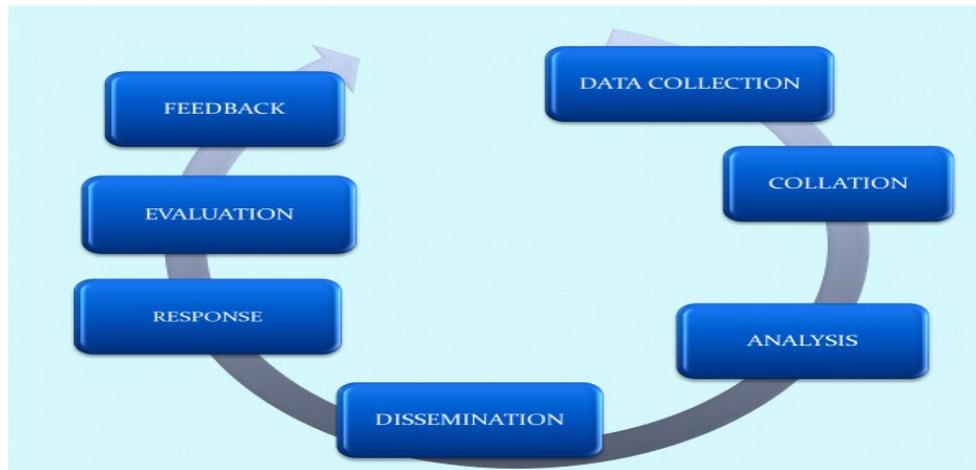
While these types of crime analysis serve distinct purposes, they are not mutually exclusive and can be integrated to meet organisational needs (Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7). Understanding the specific types of analysis conducted within

a police organisation, whether tactical, operational, administrative, strategic or a combination, enables clients to align their requests with the crime analysis unit's objectives, optimising the impact of crime analysis on policing outcomes.

The crime analysis process

The crime analysis process is a structured, multi-step approach that transforms raw data into actionable intelligence to support law enforcement operations. Horne (2009:71) describes crime analysis as a systematic process involving five key stages, namely data collection, collation, analysis, dissemination, and evaluation of feedback. Similarly, Hill (sa:4) outlines these five stages, emphasising their role in generating meaningful crime-related insights. Bruce (2017:19-24) expands on this framework by including a sixth stage, namely response, positioned between dissemination and evaluation. This six-stage process comprises data collection and management, data scanning and querying, data analysis, information dissemination, response, and evaluation with feedback. Figure 2 depicts the crime analysis process as outlined by Hill (sa:4) and Bruce (2017:19-24).

Figure 2: The crime analysis process

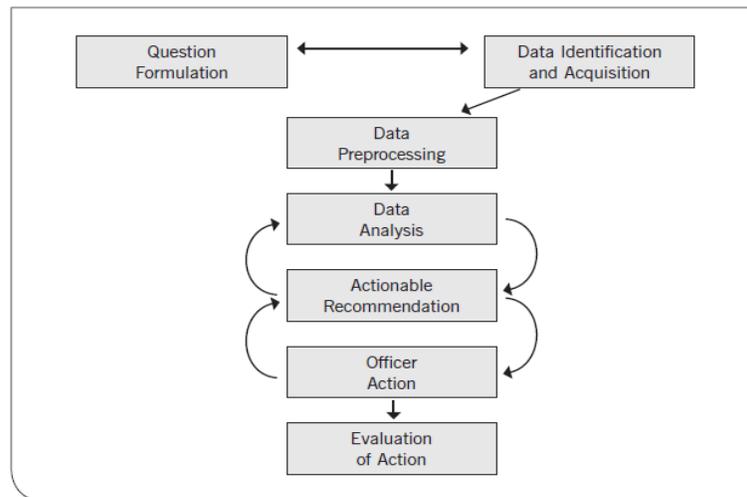


Source: Adapted from Bruce, 2017:19-24; Hill, sa:4

Data collection and management involve gathering relevant data, such as crime reports, arrest records, calls for service and incident reports to identify patterns and series. Collation entails scanning, querying, sorting and organising data to ensure its meaningfulness. The analysis stage examines variables like date, time, day of the week and patterns to identify problems. Dissemination involves distributing written analytical products to clients, such as police personnel or decision-makers. The response stage operationalises these products by informing the development of strategies and tactics. Finally, evaluation and feedback assess the effectiveness of the analysis and identify areas for improvement (Bruce, 2017:19-24; Hill, sa:4).

Crime analysis processes share common steps that transform raw data into actionable solutions for addressing crime (Bachner, 2013:11). Correspondingly, Bachner's (2013:11) crime analysis model comprises seven steps, closely aligned with the crime analysis process delineated by Bruce (2017:19). Figure 3 illustrates Bachner's (2013:11) crime analysis model.

Next page

Figure 3: Model of crime analysis

Source: Bachner, 2013:11

The crime analysis model process begins with formulating a tactical or strategic question to identify the problem. The analyst then determines whether the organisation possesses sufficient data or resources to address the question. If inadequate, additional data may be acquired, or the question may be adjusted to fit available data. Next, data is prepared through cleaning, recoding variables, inputting missing data, validating data, and matching observations. The analysis phase addresses the research question, generating operationally relevant recommendations for communication to officers and decision-makers (Bachner, 2013:11). The crime analysis process concludes with an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the outcomes (Bachner, 2013:11-13). Despite the potential benefits of crime analysis, Bruce (2017, 27) highlights a significant limitation observed in many agencies where there is an emphasis on merely disseminating information rather than developing analytically sound strategies. Bruce (2017, 27) argues that this shortcoming compromises the efficiency and effectiveness of policing efforts.

The functions and use of crime analysis within the SAPS

The primary objectives of crime analysis within the SAPS are to prevent crime, suppress criminal activities, reduce disorder, and apprehend offenders (Mashiloane, 2014:112). To achieve these goals, crime analysis products must be effectively utilised across all policing levels, including operational units such as patrol officers, client service centres, crime prevention teams, and detectives. The SAPS employs both operational and strategic crime analysis with strategic statistics derived from principal offences (excluding unfounded cases) and operational statistics encompassing all registered crimes, including metadata on the SAPS corporate crime registration system (SAPS, 2017:5). Effective application of these products is critical for reducing disorder and enhancing policing outcomes (Mashiloane, 2014:112).

Crime analysts employ a range of techniques to achieve these objectives, as outlined by Horne (2009:72-74) and Mashiloane (2014:136). These include link analysis, crime flow charting, financial trend analysis, association analysis, spatial and geographical pattern analysis, crime mapping, geographic information systems (GIS), profiling, timeline analysis, and document analysis. Additional techniques include visual investigative analysis, threat and vulnerability assessments, event and commodity flow analysis, and analysis of telephone records and time series (Mashiloane, 2014:136). These methods support functions such as identifying emerging crime patterns, profiling targets, supporting crime prevention programmes, and informing departmental planning and budgeting (Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:14-19).

At the station level, the SAPS crime analysts are responsible for daily crime information management, as described by Sekhukhune (2017:11-14). Their duties include conducting case docket analysis and system audits to collect crime data, compiling crime patterns and threat analyses, mapping crimes using GIS or manual pin maps, maintaining crime matrices for priority crimes, and identifying hotspots and flashpoints. Analysts also correlate geographical features (e.g., highways, open fields, or taverns) with crime occurrences. Fieldwork is integral, involving visits to hotspots during peak crime times to assess environmental factors, photographing relevant features for Station Crime Combating Forum (SCCF) meetings, interviewing victims and community members, and collaborating with investigators to

confirm case linkages (Sekhukhune, 2017:11-14). Analysts also brief and debrief shift members and patrol officers to ensure operational alignment (Sekhukhune, 2017:11-14).

Crime analysts produce various products, including data quality checks, crime situation reports, crime threat analyses, and profiles of repeat or group offenders and most-wanted individuals (SAPS, 2018:9-59). Table 3 depicts the crime information analysis products produced for station crime analysis within the SAPS.

Table 3: Crime information analysis products for station crime analysis within the SAPS

Crime information product	Description of the purpose and function of the product
Data quality assurance report on predetermined elements or variables	The crime analyst reviews all crime elements recorded in the SAPS Crime Administration System (CAS or ICDMS) for accuracy and completeness by cross-checking against case dockets to enhance the quality of crime data.
Data quality assurance report (summary of cases registered on the CAS)	The crime analyst examines comments on each case registered in the CAS system to improve the quality of case summaries, ensuring a thorough review of case remarks.
Maps: Electronic map if GIS is available and manual map if there is no GIS	The analyst verifies the accuracy of crime mapping by checking whether registered cases are correctly geo-coded.
Strategic stream (crime statistics)	The crime analyst ensures that all strategic crime statistics are transferred to the strategic stream, confirming that all qualifying cases are included.
24/72-hour crime matrix (daily crime report)	Analysis is performed to provide a current crime overview of the precinct, typically covering the previous 24 to 72 hours.
Monthly crime statistics comparisons	Statistical crime analysis is conducted to assess crime trends, determining whether crime levels are rising or falling.
Environmental analysis findings	The analyst examines the relationship between crime hotspots (flashpoints) and environmental factors to understand the underlying causes of hotspot formation.
Causal factors (generators of crime)	Case docket analysis and suspect interviews are conducted to identify crime generators and contributing factors.
Basic or standard suspect profile	Suspect profiling is carried out to gather additional information about offenders.
Crime statistics analysis	Statistical methods are applied to evaluate the direction of crime patterns.
Station crime priorities and threats	Station management reviews the crime picture collaboratively to prioritise crime categories and reach consensus on focus areas.
Crime prevention pattern analysis findings	This process involves analysing the what, when, where and how aspects of crime to equip crime prevention units with targeted crime information, facilitating the deployment of resources on specific days, times and geographic locations for proactive policing purposes.
Repeat, serial and group offender products	The crime analyst performs case docket analysis and links case dockets to identify and establish crime series.
Most wanted offenders	Information is collected and analysed from investigating officers to support the detection of most-wanted suspects.

Crime information product	Description of the purpose and function of the product
Verified drug posts	Fieldwork is conducted to identify and gather information on drug outlets.
Unlicensed and problematic licensed liquor outlets	Fieldwork also involves identifying and collecting data on problematic liquor outlets.
Problematic firearms and second-hand dealers	The analyst undertakes field investigations to identify and document issues related to firearms and second-hand dealers.
Problematic chop shops	Fieldwork extends to identifying and gathering information on problematic scrapyards from relevant sources
Threats	Information is collected from various sources to provide operational units with current threats affecting the station.
Early warning information	The crime analyst gathers data from relevant sources to supply the station with proactive intelligence.
Parolee information	Data is collected from correctional services registers and other pertinent sources to assist operational members in monitoring parolee movements.
Organised crime threat analysis (OCTA) matrix	Linkage, matrix and association analyses are conducted to detect potential organised crime activities.
Station intelligence profile	Crime analysts compile information from all relevant sources to develop a comprehensive profile of the station precinct.

Source: SAPS, 2018:9-59

Key techniques for conducting these analyses include statistical analysis, geographic crime mapping, crime pattern analysis, linkage analysis, case docket analysis, profiling, and fieldwork (Krause, 2007:34, 54-60; SAPS, 2014:148-149). Statistical analysis quantifies crime trends to inform policy and programme development. Crime mapping identifies geographic hotspots and patterns using pin or thematic maps (Kempen, 2019:11). Crime pattern analysis detects series, trends and perpetrator profiles to guide tactical responses (Bullock & Tilley, 2003:46). Linkage analysis connects cases through shared characteristics, such as modus operandi, using data from the SAPS Business Intelligence System and GIS (Krause, 2007:54; SAPS, 2014:148-149). Case docket analysis extracts detailed insights into the "what, where, who, when, and how" of crimes, supporting investigations and identifying irregularities (Krause, 2007:57; Van Graan & Van der Watt, 2014:148). Profiling compiles offender characteristics to aid identification, drawing on victim interviews and behavioural data (SAPS, 2014:9-10). Fieldwork enhances understanding by examining crime scenes, interviewing stakeholders, and assessing environmental factors contributing to crime (Krause, 2007:59-60). These techniques and products collectively enable the SAPS to address crime strategically and operationally.

Research methodology

This study utilised a qualitative case study design to investigate the transformation of data into intelligence for enhanced crime prevention within the SAPS. Rooted in an interpretivist, anti-positivist paradigm, the approach enabled a deep exploration of subjective meanings and organisational dynamics in crime analysis practices (Berg & Lune, 2012:3; Lune, Pumar & Koppel, 2010:80). The research sought to offer actionable recommendations for enhancing crime prevention by converting data into intelligence within the South African Police Service.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule with a purposively selected sample of 48 participants from the Tshwane policing district in Gauteng and related entities. The sample comprised five National and Provincial Crime Registrar members (Sample A), 12 Crime Information Management and Analysis Centre (CIMAC) members (Sample B), seven station commanders (Sample C), nine Visible Policing (VISPOL) heads

(Sample D), 13 detective commanders (Sample E) and two IACA members (Sample F). This diverse selection ensured varied perspectives on crime analysis, the crime analysis process, its functions, and use within the SAPS.

The data analysis followed a multi-method qualitative approach. Interview transcripts, augmented by detailed field notes, underwent thematic analysis to identify and categorise patterns and variations in participant responses (Anderson, 2014:240). Content analysis supplemented this by quantifying recurring themes. Convergent analysis integrates insights from both methods, bolstering reliability through triangulation (Connelly, 2016:436). Findings were presented using direct quotations, summary tables, and narrative descriptions, reflecting participants' professional insights and operational experiences.

Ethical approval was secured from the University of South Africa's Research Ethics Committee (REC) under reference number ST159, with additional authorisation from the SAPS. Participants were provided with comprehensive information sheets detailing the study's objectives and procedures, and they gave written informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout to adhere to ethical research standards.

Results and discussions

The definition and meaning of crime analysis

The literature review underscores crime analysis as a systematic and analytical process aimed at studying victim and offender characteristics, crime scenes, and contextual elements to transform raw data into actionable intelligence. This process is instrumental in identifying crime series, patterns, and correlations in trends, ultimately providing relevant and timely information to guide policing decisions (Horne, 2009:69–70; Tshishonga, 2022:144). Crime analysis further involves the structured application of large datasets and modern technological tools to examine a range of policing concerns, including crime, disorder problems, quality of life issues and internal police operations by leveraging socio-demographic, spatial and temporal variables (Tshishonga, 2022:352). Scholars have also highlighted that crime analysis operates as both a profession and a process that employs qualitative approaches to understand crime themes and patterns and quantitative methods to analyse variables such as time, date, location and crime type (Bruce, 2017a:6; IACA, 2014:2; Maboa & Horne, 2024:141; Ratcliffe, 2007:13; Santos, 2014:149).

Qualitative analysis of participant responses revealed a broad but cohesive understanding of crime analysis. The participants in the study consistently described crime analysis as the study and interpretation of crime incidents with a focus on answering fundamental investigative questions. As one participant from Sample A explained, "*analysing the who, how, where, what, when and how of crime*", while a participant from Sample E similarly stated it involves "*to analyse the who, how, where, what, when and how of crime*". The articulation of crime analysis to identify crime patterns, trends, and hotspots was prominent across several samples in the study. For example, a participant from Sample B stated it is used to "*analyse crime to find out what, how, where and when it happened*", while another from Sample C indicated its purpose is "*to know the hotspots*".

The identification of modus operandi featured prominently, particularly in Samples B, C, and D, with narratives from the participants highlighting its role in suspect profiling, as seen in responses such as "*establishing the modus operandi of suspects*". Notably, Sample F contributed an international perspective, framing crime analysis as "*using available technology and skills to make sense of large data sets related to crime in order to provide actionable intelligence*". This reflects the literature's emphasis on the integration of technological tools and analytical techniques for strategic decision-making (IACA, 2014:2; Horne, 2009:69). Moreover, participants emphasised the purpose-driven nature of crime analysis, viewing it not only as a process of investigation but as one intended to produce a final product or intelligence report for relevant stakeholders. This understanding of the participants in the study aligns with the academic view that crime analysis plays a critical role in informing operational, tactical, and strategic policing interventions (Ratcliffe, 2007:13; Santos, 2014:149).

The purpose of crime analysis

The literature reviewed in this study affirms that crime analysis serves multiple strategic and operational purposes within the criminal justice system. Crime analysis is specifically employed to support criminal investigations, aid in suspect identification and arrest, enhance the prosecution process, and facilitate the prevention and reduction of crime and disorder. Additionally, crime analysis contributes to evaluating organisational procedures and policing efforts, assisting both administrative and operational personnel in resource allocation and deployment planning (Boba, 2001:10–11; Bruce, 2017a:6; IACA, 2014:2; Mashiloane, 2014:112; Maboa & Horne, 2024:142; Ratcliffe, 2007:13; Santos, 2014:149; Taylor et al., 2013:6). The literature in this study further underscores its role in supporting broader police and criminal justice planning efforts by generating data for programme and tactical evaluations. This includes

the strategic identification, screening, and prioritisation of suspect lists based on crime characteristics and known modus operandi, as well as aiding in the linkage of suspects in custody to specific crimes (Boba, 2001:10–11; Santos, 2014:149).

Qualitative findings from participant interviews corroborate these scholarly perspectives, demonstrating a practical understanding of the multifaceted role of crime analysis in policing. The participants in this study articulated that crime analysis is undertaken *"to break down, study and analyse the crime that has occurred in order to determine, update, give information and clarity on the what, when, why, where, who and how of the crime"*. The purpose of crime analysis was further described by the participants as *"to create and give a clear picture of crime,"* thereby providing an informed basis for police action. Participants across Samples A to F repeatedly emphasised crime analysis as a critical operational tool. As one participant from Sample A stated, its purpose is *"to guide the operational members,"* while another from Sample B noted it *"guide[s], direct[s] and inform[s] daily operations and members"*. This sentiment was echoed in Sample E, where a participant highlighted its function *"to guide the police to be able to prevent crime"*.

Moreover, the identification of crime hotspots and suspect modus operandi was a recurrent theme, with Sample B participants referencing the *"identification of hotspot areas"* and Sample D participants stating that crime analysis helps *"to determine the modus operandi of suspects"*. Sample D participants also emphasised analytical depth, indicating that crime analysis is used *"to break down the crimes and to see what crimes happen where, how, why, and also how to address that crime"*. From a broader, international perspective, Sample F participants framed the purpose as *"using available technology and skills to make sense of large data sets related to crime in order to provide actionable intelligence to the stakeholders,"* highlighting a more strategic and technologically integrated approach. The participants' responses in this study align with the academic literature, particularly regarding crime analysis's role in operational support, strategic planning, crime prevention, and data-informed resource management (Ratcliffe, 2007:13; IACA, 2014:2; Santos, 2014:149). While local participants (Samples A–E) focused on tactical and operational outcomes, such as guidance in deployment, hotspot identification, and prevention, the international perspective provided by Sample F introduced the additional dimension of stakeholder intelligence and risk evaluation.

The types of crime analysis

The literature in this study identifies three overarching categories of analysis within law enforcement, namely crime analysis, criminal intelligence analysis and criminal investigative analysis (Bruce, 2004:15; Bruce, 2012:11–12; Carter, 2015:4; Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:12; IACA, 2014:4; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506–507). Within the SAPS, each of these types is employed through distinct divisions or components, affirming their institutional relevance (Bruce, 2012:14; Grana & Windell, 2021:205). However, this study specifically focused on crime analysis, distinct from intelligence or investigative analysis. Within the domain of crime analysis, the literature describes a typology based on factors such as data sources, analytical techniques, intended audience, frequency, and the purpose of analysis. These types of crime analysis, namely tactical, strategic, operational and administrative crime analysis, constitute the structural framework of the profession, guiding the roles, job descriptions and expected outputs of crime analysts (Boba, 2001:11; Santos, 2017:97). The International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA, 2014:4) formally recognises four major categories of crime analysis, namely tactical, strategic, administrative and crime intelligence analysis. However, other scholars and practitioners refer to a similar set that includes tactical, strategic, operational, and administrative crime analysis (Bruce, 2004:15; Carter, 2015:4; Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7; Santos & Taylor, 2013:506–507). Despite distinct functions, these categories are not mutually exclusive and often complement one another in practice (Matthies & Chiu, 2014:7).

Empirical data gathered during the study from Samples A to F provided valuable insights into their perceptions of the various types of crime analysis, though these did not always align precisely with the classifications found in the literature. For instance, several participants referred to *crime pattern analysis* and *crime threat analysis* concepts that are typically considered components or techniques within broader types, such as tactical or strategic analysis. Sample A participants identified *"strategic analysis"* as important for long-term crime trends and planning, while Sample B participants focused on *"operational analysis"* as central to daily deployments. In Sample D, crime pattern recognition emerged strongly, with participants describing crime analysis as *"analysing crime to see what the patterns of crime are"*. Sample B participants also mentioned *"modus operandi"* and *"statistical analysis"*, which, although analytically useful, are tools or methods rather than standalone types.

None of the participants from Samples A to E explicitly mentioned *administrative crime analysis*, which is a recognised category in the literature (IACA, 2014:5). This omission from the participants suggests a potential gap in awareness of the broader typological framework of crime analysis. Sample F participants, offering an international

perspective, were more aligned with academic classifications. One participant stated, "*intelligence, tactical, strategic and administration*", directly referencing all key types recognised by IACA (2014:5). Another international participant emphasised analyst diversity, observing, "*we have employed analysts with different backgrounds,*" highlighting variation in analytical specialisation and approach rather than typology. The participant responses demonstrated a predominantly practical understanding of crime analysis, shaped by their direct operational experiences and day-to-day policing functions. The recurring focus on crime patterns, threats, and immediate operational concerns reflects a practitioner-oriented perspective that prioritises actionable outcomes. However, the limited reference to formally recognised typologies within academic literature points to a conceptual gap that may hinder the full utilisation of crime analysis frameworks. This study found that addressing this gap through structured and standardised training drawing on the typological foundations outlined by Bruce (2012:11-12), IACA (2014:4), and Santos and Taylor (2013:506-507) has the potential to enhance analytical competency and foster greater coherence in the application of crime analysis across SAPS divisions.

The crime analysis process

The crime analysis process, as defined in the literature, is a structured, multi-phase procedure aimed at transforming raw data into actionable intelligence to support policing functions. Horne (2009:71) and Hill (sa:4) identify five core stages in this process, namely data collection, collation, analysis, dissemination, and evaluation with feedback. Bruce (2017:19–24) extends this framework to include a sixth stage response positioned between dissemination and evaluation. Bruce's (2017:19–24) model consists of the following sequential steps: data collection and management; collation; data analysis; dissemination; response; and evaluation and feedback. Similarly, Bachner (2013:11) outlines a seven-step model that aligns closely with Bruce's, reinforcing the systematic and iterative nature of the crime analysis cycle. These steps facilitate the extraction of meaningful patterns from diverse data sources, such as crime reports, arrest records, and calls for service, which are then used to guide policing strategies and evaluate interventions.

Participant feedback across all samples (A to F) in this study revealed varied levels of familiarity with the crime analysis process. Several participants' responses reflected partial alignment with the stages outlined in the literature. For example, a participant from Sample A underscored the importance of quality data and interpretation by stating, "*verify and ensure that the information you need to collect is of a quality... collect and analyse the information, do triangulation and come to a conclusion.*" Similarly, a participant from Sample B highlighted analytic techniques and system-based comparison: "*identify the problem, identify the modus operandi, use the BI system, compare that problematic crime*". Sample C participants demonstrated a more case-specific focus, with a participant explaining the process as "*reading the case dockets for statements to identify types of crime*". These responses reflect practical experience with the data collection and analysis phases of the process, but show limited engagement with the full procedural cycle.

In contrast, a significant proportion of participants from Samples D and E stated "*I don't know*" when asked about the crime analysis process, suggesting limited exposure or direct involvement. This finding of the study implies a potential operational divide within the SAPS between those conducting crime analysis and broader policing personnel. Meanwhile, international participants from Sample F demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the process, explicitly referencing the core stages to include "*collection, collation, analysis, dissemination and evaluation/feedback*". One international participant further expanded on this by including additional procedural elements such as "*draw up a clear and concise problem statement*" and "*assessing outcomes,*" indicating a strategic orientation and analytical sophistication. Notably, across all local samples (A–E), no participants mentioned the "response" stage, which Bruce (2017a:22) identifies as a crucial link between analysis and action. This study found that the absence of this element, "response," highlights a critical gap in the operationalisation of crime analysis within the SAPS.

The functions and uses of crime analysis within the SAPS

The literature reviewed in this study defines crime analysis as the systematic study of crime incidents with the objective of identifying emerging crime problems, patterns, and trends, and disseminating relevant information to aid law enforcement in developing effective strategies and tactics (Bruce, 2004:15; Cope, 2004:188). The practical application of crime analysis includes the identification of current and evolving crime patterns, target profiling, provision of data to support crime prevention strategies, resource allocation, departmental planning, deployment planning, and budget forecasting (Cope, 2004:188). A range of analytical techniques such as linkage analysis, flowcharting, financial and association analysis, spatial and geographic pattern analysis, crime mapping using GIS, profiling, timeline analysis and document analysis are employed to support these objectives (Gottlieb & Arenberg, 1992:14–19; Horne, 2009:72–74; Mashiloane, 2014:136; Sekhukhune, 2017:11–14). These tools are particularly

pertinent in conducting crime threat analyses, where techniques like statistical analysis, geographic profiling, matrix-based linkage analysis, case docket reviews, and fieldwork are used to generate crime information products for decision-making.

Within the SAPS, crime analysis is largely practised through both operational and strategic approaches, depending on the nature of requests from internal clients. Analysts are expected to select appropriate methodologies based on the assignment and to produce a range of crime analysis outputs accordingly (Berning & Mashiloane, 2012:86; Van Graan & Van der Watt, 2014:145). Empirical data collected from the participants in Samples A to E indicated varied interpretations of how crime analysis is utilised within the SAPS. While the majority of participants expressed that crime analysis is primarily used for planning, their responses displayed a range of understandings. Sample C participants noted that analysis is used *"to plan the operations"*, and Sample A participants stated it is *"used for planning purposes"*. Similarly, Sample B participants identified operational utility, with the majority of the participants indicating that analysis is used *"for operations"*. Crime prevention was another commonly mentioned function, particularly by Sample E participants, where some participants explained that analysis is used to *"guide crime prevention"*. Sample D participants focused on spatial applications, stating that crime analysis supports the *"identification of hotspots"*, reflecting alignment with geographic analysis practices.

International participants from Sample F presented a more comprehensive view, describing crime analysis as supporting both investigative and operational domains. One participant stated that crime analysis *"support[s] police in their investigations and operations,"* specifically referencing the use of techniques like geographic profiling to narrow down suspect locations. Another participant from Sample F indicated that *"crime scene-specific applications, such as location-based intelligence, are integral to their processes"*, which extend beyond the typical SAPS station-level applications. Despite general recognition of crime analysis's operational benefits, discrepancies in the consistency and depth of application emerged. One participant from Sample A remarked, *"It's not used, but they claim they're using it,"* reflecting scepticism about the practical implementation of crime analysis within certain policing environments. This study found that while the theoretical framework for crime analysis is well-established, its practical integration within SAPS remains inconsistent.

The opinions of the participants in Samples C, D, and E in this study regarding the specific analytical products used indicated regular production of items such as profiling reports, crime pattern analysis (CPA), crime threat analysis (CTA), 24-hour crime reports, comparative statistics, and modus operandi analysis. While most responses from the participants were broadly consistent with known SAPS products at the station level, a few participants' responses were misaligned with the standard typology, indicating a lack of uniform understanding across divisions. This supports the assertion that many SAPS personnel may operate with a general, rather than technically grounded, understanding of crime analysis (Bruce, 2004:15; SAPS, 2014:148–149). This study found that crime analysis is used for planning, operational support, and crime prevention, as echoed in literature by Bruce (2004:15), Cope (2004:188), and SAPS (2014:148–149). This study further found that the inconsistencies in the application of crime analysis highlight the need for improved standardisation, clearer operational guidelines, and enhanced training to ensure comprehensive integration of crime analysis within all levels of the SAPS.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings of this study, informed by both an extensive review of the literature and insights gathered from participant interviews, several key recommendations are advanced in this paper to enhance crime prevention by converting data into intelligence within the South African Police Service. To address the widespread misunderstanding of crime analysis concepts and practices within the SAPS, it is recommended that all station-level personnel, CIMAC clients, and crime analysts receive targeted training. This training should cover the definition, objectives, and scope of crime analysis, with emphasis on the use of modern technologies and analytical techniques to generate actionable intelligence. The purpose of crime analysis should be clearly articulated to include the support of daily policing operations, the identification of crime hotspots, the clarification of crime dynamics (who, what, where, when, why, and how), the profiling of criminal threats and modus operandi, and the formulation of evidence-based crime prevention strategies.

Given the limited understanding among participants in this study regarding the types and processes of crime analysis, it is further recommended that capacity-building workshops be introduced. These workshops should focus on distinguishing between tactical, strategic, operational, and administrative crime analysis while also strengthening understanding of the full analytical process, ranging from problem statement formulation, parameter identification, data collection and collation to in-depth analysis, the development of recommendations, report writing, dissemination, and the assessment of impact through feedback and outcome evaluation. To enhance the practical value of crime

analysis, its products must be fully integrated into operational planning and decision-making. Daily and weekly crime reports should be utilised consistently by detectives, VISPOL units, and station commanders to guide responses to crime patterns, risks, and emerging threats. CIMAC accountability mechanisms should also be institutionalised through structured forums, such as daily Station Crime Combating Forum (SCCF) meetings for addressing short-term priorities, bi-monthly sessions for repeat incidents, and quarterly reviews for long-term strategy assessment.

Moreover, crime analysis should play a proactive role in investigative work, particularly through geographic profiling in cases involving multiple crime scenes or suspected serial offenders. This will enable more focused investigations and improve case resolution rates. To ensure standardisation and broader understanding of crime analysis outputs, it is recommended that the Provincial and National Crime Registrars develop and disseminate standardised reference materials such as pocketbooks that define crime analysis product typologies, benefits, production frequencies, and applications. Such resources will promote uniformity, improve analytical output quality, and support more strategic applications across SAPS precincts nationwide.

Conclusion

The conversion of data into intelligence represents a critical strategic intervention for strengthening crime prevention within the SAPS. As shown throughout this paper, the deliberate application of structured crime analysis, rooted in accurate, standardised, and reliable data, serves as a catalyst for shifting policing from reactive responses to intelligence-led, proactive strategies. By integrating data-driven insights into daily operations, the SAPS can more effectively fulfil its constitutional mandate to prevent, combat, and investigate crime.

Crime analysis offers a multidimensional understanding of criminal behaviour, identifying patterns in offender modus operandi, geographical hotspots, and temporal trends. These insights are essential for designing targeted interventions, prioritising investigative resources, and anticipating emerging threats. However, the paper has identified critical limitations in the current operationalisation of crime analysis within SAPS, including inadequate training, uneven application of analytical methods, and the absence of institutionalised accountability structures. Closing these operational gaps requires a concerted focus on the professionalisation of crime analysis. This includes comprehensive training programmes, structured capacity-building efforts, and formalised knowledge management through standard operating procedures and reference materials curated by Crime Registrars. Institutional platforms such as daily and periodic CIMAC forums must be leveraged to ensure accountability, coordination, and the continuous development of analytical competencies.

Embedding crime analysis into the core functions of policing, such as case prioritisation, resource allocation, hotspot policing, and serial offender tracking, will transform intelligence from a support tool into a strategic enabler. When embedded within frontline operations and strategic planning, crime analysis empowers personnel to make informed decisions that improve operational readiness and enhance public safety outcomes. Ultimately, converting data into intelligence is not a peripheral function but a central pillar of evidence-based policing. By reinforcing this function through institutional commitment, analytical rigour, and data integrity, the SAPS can significantly enhance its crime prevention capabilities. Strengthening this approach will not only reduce criminal opportunities but also foster safer communities, elevate public trust, and affirm the role of the SAPS as a modern, intelligence-driven policing agency in service of a democratic South Africa.

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