

# **SUICIDE IDEATION AMONG POLICE MEMBERS IN THE EASTERN CAPE.**

by

CARMELITIA ELMARIE DE BRUIN

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Masters in Social Sciences: Counselling Psychology

in the

Department of Psychology at Fort Hare University (East London)

Supervisor: Professor Lionel Nicholas

Date submitted: April, 2008  
Place: East London

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank GOD for his guidance throughout the research process.

I wish to thank my research supervisor Professor Lionel Nicholas for assisting and encouraging me with this thesis.

I would also like to thank the South African Police Service for allowing this study to be conducted and the uniformed police members for being willing to participate in this study. The assistance of the Uitenhage and Kamesh police stations Commissioners are highly appreciated.

I acknowledge the co-operation, assistance and ongoing support of my colleagues, supervisors and dear friends.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my family, for their interest, support, understanding and motivation.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that: “Suicide Ideation among Police Members in the Eastern Cape” is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a research paper or degree at another university.

---

Miss. C. E. De Bruin

## ABSTRACT

Suicide, the endpoint of the continuum that begins with suicide ideation, is known to be an important precursor of attempted suicides. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of suicide ideation of police members and to determine the differences between suicide ideation of various demographic variables, in particular, the gender, rank and race groups of police members. The convenience sample ( $N = 111$ ) was drawn from police stations in the Nelson Mandela Metropole in the Eastern Cape Province. The Adult Suicide Ideation Questionnaire (ASIQ) and a Biographical Questionnaire were administered. The results indicated that 1.4 % of the sample showed significant levels of suicidal ideation scoring a high score above 31 (i.e., above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ).

The T-test, One-way (ANOVA) and the Pearson Chi-Square analysis showed no significant differences between suicide ideation and the demographic variables based on the police station, age, gender, race, rank, years of service, years of current position, educational qualifications, marital status, presence of medical conditions, number of alcoholic drinks consumed per week, smoking behaviour and exercise behaviour. However, participants with previous suicide attempts had significant high scores on ASIQ.

**Key Words:** police suicide, suicide ideation, demographic variables, rank, race, gender and stress.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	2
<b>DECLARATION</b>	3
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	4
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	5
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	7
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	8
Statement of the problem	9
Rationale	11
Aim and objectives of the investigation	11
Definitions	12
Conclusion	14
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
Introduction to the review of the literature	15
Suicide amongst police members	16
Theoretical Perspective	18
Research Trends on Suicide Ideation and demographic variables	21
Rank	30
Race	30
Gender	31
Summary and preview	35

### **CHAPTER 3:        METHODOLOGY**

Research Design	36
Sample	36
Procedures	37
Instruments	37
Ethical Considerations	39
Summary and preview	39

### **CHAPTER 4:        RESULTS** 40

### **CHAPTER 5:        DISCUSSION** 50

Limitations	52
Conclusion	53

### **REFERENCES** 54

### **APPENDIXES**

APPENDIX A: <i>Letter for permission to conduct research in the South African Police Service.</i>	65
---	----

APPENDIX B: <i>Letter of permission by the Head of Strategic Research and Psychological Services in the South African Police Service.</i>	66
---	----

APPENDIX C: <i>Letter of Instruction to participants</i>	68
--	----

APPENDIX D: <i>Biographical Questionnaire</i>	69
---	----

## **LIST OF TABLES**

		<b>PAGE</b>
Table 1	Demographic characteristics of the participants	40
Table 2	Health behaviours of the participants	42
Table 3	Frequencies for ASIQ	43
Table 4	T- test and One-way (ANOVA) statistics	44
Table 5	Pearson Chi-Square statistics	48

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the South African Police Service (SAPS) there are amplified rates of illness, post-traumatic stress, alcohol abuse, burnout, suicides, job satisfaction and job performance, as compared to norms of the general population (Rothmann & Strijdom, 2002). Other various potential stressors exist within South Africa, such as the high crime level, organizational transformation and demands as well as a lack of resources which challenge members of the police service (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005). Recent findings in a study by Minnaar & Mistry (2006) indicate that uniformed police members are currently operating under high levels of stress due to a variety of factors. The main stressors as identified from the focus group interviews were, poor working conditions, poor pay, lack of equipment and resources, shortages of vehicles, overload of cases to investigate and the perceptions that criminals have become more violent. Furthermore, chronic and acute stressors are critical co-morbid etiological considerations in suicidal behaviour (Schlebusch, 1995).

Suicidal behaviour is an area of psychological disturbance associated with possible severe mental and or physical health outcomes (Reynolds, 1991b). It is a complex phenomenon and the risk factors are multi-dimensional and multi-factorial. World-wide it has been shown that these factors regarding suicides are extensive, and including psychiatric, psychological, biological, sociological, genetic, cultural, somatic, personality issues, substance abuse, family dynamics, interpersonal problems, stress and other variables (Reynolds, 1991a).

Suicides in South Africa vary considerably across gender, age and ethnicity. In a South African study by Rabe (1993) the highest frequency of suicides observed in the sample of 830 subjects in the PE / Uitenhage magisterial districts were males aged between 30 to 39 and 60 to 69 years old in the white ethnic group. The frequency of male suicides in this sample is higher than that of



females. The groups at higher risk for parasuicide were females, coloureds and the age group of individuals between 20 to 29 years of age.

Contemporary research findings show that suicidal behaviour among black South Africans is a serious problem that is increasing (Schlebusch, 2005). It has been argued that this increase should be viewed as a genuine escalation of the problem rather than simply as a reflection of improved recording practices over recent years in post-apartheid South Africa (Schlebusch & Bosch, 2000 and Schlebusch, 2005).

Various direct and indirect forms of deliberate self-destructive behaviour are a major general health care problem. Schlebusch also argues that there is a real need within the South African context to investigate suicidal behaviour (Schlebusch, 2005).

#### Statement of the problem

Police suicides are a problem facing many law enforcement agencies. The problem is often ignored, misunderstood, misrepresented and under researched (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005). This issue is not a subject that is easily discussed in most police departments or by the families of police officers who have taken their own lives.

Many incidents are not reported to avoid the stigma associated with suicide (Masuku, 2000). Violanti (1996) contend that police investigators are usually the first at the scene of any suicide and can readily control information to protect the victim officers and their families from the stigma of suicide. Other factors associated with police suicide are their easy access to firearms, crime and corruption among police members and the police culture which often denies the problem and views it as disgraceful to both the victim and the profession (Masuku, 2000). Carrilho's (1997) research focused on the emotional, social, economic and cultural impact on family members and colleagues when members of the SAPS commit suicide in the Johannesburg Police Department.

He found that the families of SAPS members, who committed suicide, are affected by the economic, social, emotional and cultural impact in some way, while the colleagues are only affected in the emotional and social aspects.

Janik & Kravits (1994) contends that worldwide there is an increasing rate of suicide ideation among police members. Studies report that police officers have higher suicide incidence compared to the rates of the general population and those of other professions (Helmkamp, 1996).

Hackett & Violanti (2003) argues that some law enforcement agencies have had more officer deaths from suicide than from line-of-duty homicides. In some situations, this rate is higher than in other employment areas, as well as the general population of the USA. Law enforcement officers in the USA, suicide has been considered an occupational hazard, resulting from job stress, high rates of alcoholism and marital discord, and the availability of firearms (Marzuk, Nock, Leon, Portera and Tardiff, 2002).

Suicides by law enforcement officials continue to be alarming problem in this country. A study on suicide ideation was conducted in the North West Province, which showed that 10.58 % of the uniformed police members of the 287 participants showed significant levels of suicide ideation (scoring above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) (Rothmann & Van Rensburg, 2002).

The national study by Pienaar (2002) indicated an 8.64 % of 2396 SAPS participants surveyed had significant levels of suicide ideation. In the Eastern Cape Province it was found that 4.96% of the 307 participants showed significant levels of suicide ideation (scoring above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) (Meyer, Rothmann and Pienaar, 2003). The latest national study found 8.30 % of 1781 SAPS participants surveyed had significant level of suicide ideation (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005). Although South African researchers have investigated suicide ideation of police members, only

three studies on this topic have been undertaken in the Eastern Cape Province.

### Rationale

The SAPS needs to intervene to increase and or maintain the psychological health and to decrease suicidal behaviour of police members. Research into the relationship between suicide ideation and various demographic variables among uniformed police members in the Eastern Cape will be of great value to police members themselves and to professionals who look after the psychological health of the police force. This includes social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and general practitioners. These groups of professionals will be in a better position to assist police men and women in improving their psychological health and hence help create a more productive and effective police force (Stromnes, 1999). This type of research can thus contribute to an understanding, preventing and management of police suicides, by virtue of studying this phenomenon within a multicultural and in a different sociocultural context (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005). It can potentially contribute in the SAPS suicide prevention programmes to target specific at risk police members.

### The aim and objectives of the investigation

The aim of this study was to determine the level of suicide ideation of uniformed police members and to identify the demographic variables that could be used to predict suicide ideation within the Nelson Mandela Metropole in the Eastern Cape Province of the SAPS.

The objective of this cross-sectional survey study is to investigate the level of suicide ideation among uniformed police members of the SAPS and to determine predictors of suicide ideation.

The following hypothesis was formulated for this study:

## Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that there is a relationship between suicide ideation and variables such as: police station, age, gender, race, rank, years of service, years of current position, educational qualifications, marital status, presence of medical conditions, number of alcoholic drinks consumed per week, smoking behaviour, exercise behaviour and history of previous suicide attempt among uniformed police members in the SAPS.

## Definitions

Suicidal behaviour may be categorized as consisting of suicide completion, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation. It can be plotted on a continuum varying in severity from ideation to intent, attempt and completion (Reynolds, 1991b). Thus, suicidal behaviours occur in different forms that involve a degree of severity that can range from a person only wishing to be dead to actually killing him or herself (Schlebusch, 2005). Therefore suicide ideation comprises one aspect of suicidal behaviour and may be considered as an early marker for the risk of more serious suicidal behaviour (Reynolds, 1991b). It thus, forms part of the process of suicidal behaviour and is a complex phenomenon (Schlebusch, 2005).

## Suicide Ideation:

The construct of suicidal ideation may be defined as cognitions, thoughts or ideas about death, suicide, serious intent and self-injurious behaviours. These thoughts can be related to the planning, conduct and outcome of suicidal behaviour (Reynolds, 1991b) particularly as the last-mentioned relates to thoughts about the response of others (Reynolds, 1991a). This definition will be utilized in the present study because it has gained wide acceptance in literature (Reynolds, 1991a and Reynolds, 1991b).

Other researchers such as Rutter (1995) defines suicide ideation as thoughts, ideas, ruminations or fantasies about one's suicide or overt verbal threats to kill one. It refers to cognitions that can differ from fleeting thoughts that life is not worth living, to specific, well-thought out plans for killing oneself, to an intense delusional obsession with self-destruction.

Suicide ideation may not exclusively comprise about thoughts of death or suicide but may encompass views on life, the self an interpersonal relations (Appalsamy, 2004). While Schlebusch (2005) argues that suicide ideation is not restricted to just thinking about committing suicide; it can also include a person writing or talking about and or planning his or her suicidal behaviour.

#### Non-fatal suicidal behaviour:

This refers to self-inflicted suicidal behaviour that did not succeed in ending the person's life, and which embodies several manifestations such as those seen in attempted suicide and parasuicide. The difference between attempted suicide and parasuicide is really the intent to die or not, although both have non-fatal outcomes. Attempted suicide refers to non-fatal suicidal behaviour where there is a fortuitous survival of the intended suicide. In such an instance the person tried but failed to end his or her life (Schlebusch, 2005).

Parasuicide refers to non-fatal suicidal behaviour without the intention to die; it is more a cry for help. In such an instance the behaviour is used as an inappropriate problem-solving skill in the form of self-harm (Schlebusch, 2005). Rutter (1995) refers to parasuicide as acts in which individuals willfully cause self-injury. It involves behaviours varying from "minor" suicidal gestures to serious attempts, and may include the ingestion of substances not intended for human consumption or medicines in excess of recognized therapeutic doses. These actions, however, do not result in death.

### Fatal suicidal behaviour:

It refers to self-committed or completed suicidal behaviour that embodied the person's intent or aim to die and where that person managed to achieve that predetermined goal (Schlebusch, 2005). Rutter (1995) refers to completed suicide as any death that is direct or indirect result of an act accomplished by a person who knows or believes that this act will result in death. This term is applied only in cases of fatal outcome. Pieterse (1992) also defines suicide as an act with a fatal outcome that is deliberately initiated and performed by the deceased, in the knowledge or expectation of its fatal outcome, and with the outcome being considered by the actor as instrumental in bringing about desired changes in consciousness and social conditions.

### Conclusion

A pressing need for South African research on suicide ideation among police members was identified. This chapter also provided the rationale, the problem statement, research aims, definitions and the outline of the present study.

The second chapter reflects on the literature related to suicide, suicide ideation in the police and in relation to different demographic groups or variables in the SAPS context. Chapter three includes the description of the methodologies employed in this research. Finally, chapter four contains the results while chapter five consists of the discussion and suggestions for further research are presented.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### Introduction

Members of the SAPS work under extremely violent and traumatic circumstances and that as such psychological distress can be anticipated (Van Niekerk, 1997). Law enforcement is one of the most stressful professions globally (Anshel, 2000). Uniformed police members face a number of stressors particular to their field, ranging from organizational demands for example shift work, to the nature of police work itself, for instance exposure to violence and human suffering (Minnaar & Mistry, 2006). McCafferty, McCafferty & McCafferty (1992) argues that suicide of police members could largely be attributed to stressors at work. Many factors may contribute to suicide ideation of police members, including stressors in the work situation, factors outside of the work situation and personality dimensions as well as the interaction between these variables (Rossouw, 1998). Janik & Kravitz (1994) concluded that suicidal behaviour is stimulated by occupational police stress.

Rossouw (1998) reports concern about the increasing tendency of police members to wound or kill others before committing suicide. He argues that the typical SAPS member who is likely to commit suicide is an unmarried Black or Asian male, constable of between 24 and 29 years of age who speaks an African or Asian language at home. His duty consists of visible policing and he will be likely to commit suicide during a weekend between 18:00 and 24:00 by using his service weapon (Rossouw, 1997, 1998 and 1999). While women engage more frequently in suicidal thinking and make more suicide attempts than men whereas men complete suicide more often than women (Edwards & Holden, 2003).

More than 80% of the suicides in 1999 (Rossouw, 1999) and more than 90 % of the suicides in

2000 (Rossouw, 2000), were committed with the use of a service weapon. Violanti, (2004) contends that further inquiry into processes that lead to suicide in the police occupation is necessary.

### Suicide among police members

Recent international research states that suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> ranking cause of death in the USA population. (American Association of Suicidology, 2008). The National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMMSS) collects data from participating mortuaries in South Africa and describes fatal injuries and non-natural causes of death in this country.

In 2003 NIMMSS that reported 11.48 % of all non-natural deaths are suicides (Matzopoulos, 2004) and in 2004 this figure was 11.24 % (Matzopoulos, 2005). Matzopoulos, Norman and Bradshaw, (2004) state that the overall South African rates of 24.5 per 100 000 for males and 6.9 per 100 000 for females have been reported. Schlebusch (2005) argues that accurate South African suicide statistics are difficult to obtain, but studies reflect annual rates of up to 10 % or more (17.2 per 100 000 of the general population) of all unnatural death to be suicides.

The suicide figures for police officers showed that 269 members of the SAPS committed suicide in 1996 (Berman, 1999) and a total of 118 SAPS members committed suicide in the period of 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> October 1997 (Berman, 1998). A total of 122 suicides among police officials was reported in 1999 (Berman, 2001).

The police suicide statistics gradually declined during 2001 and 2002 to 101 in 2001 and 95 in 2002 (Mabe, 2004). In comparison with the first quarter of 2001 (1 January to 31 March 2001) the national suicide figure remained 20 out of every 100 000 police officials. A detailed analysis shows a decrease in suicides of 14.3 % (SAPS, 2001).



The suicide rates of the SAPS from 2003 to 2006 (Per 100 000 police officials) indicated that 30 per 100 000 police officials committed suicide in 2003, while the rates increased during 2004 to 2006 to 50 out of every 100 000 police officials in South Africa (P. Cochlan, personal communication, 26 February 2008).

The levels of police suicide vary considerably between provinces in South Africa. The provincial suicide statistics of 1998-1999 indicated that the majority of committed suicides were in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape provinces. There was a slight decrease in 1999 suicide statistics in KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape, while levels in North West remained constant. However, in the six other provinces the number of police who committed suicide increased. Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape lead the group, with increases of 46 % and 31 % respectively (Masuku, 2000).

Rossouw (2000) identified the Free State, North West Province, Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape to be suicide risk areas for the SAPS.

Violanti, Vena and Marshall (1998) compared police officers to other municipal workers and reported that officers had a higher suicide rate, lower homicide and accidental death rate. Carr, Hoge, Gardner and Potter (2004), contend that 17 % more suicides in the USA military were reported and an additional 4 % of deaths that were suspected suicides. However, this study suggests that reporting and classification errors may account for 21 % additional suicides in the military. Marzuk et al's, (2002) results indicated that the suicide rate among New York City police officers was 14.9 per 100 000 person-years compared with a suicide rate of New York City residents of 18.3 per 100 000 person-years.

Loo (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of police suicide rates and ratio's to the comparison population using 101 samples from the literature. Results showed that suicide rates based on short time frame studies were significantly higher than for long time frame studies. In other words,

police suicide studies show that suicide rates for police are not higher than the general population. There were regional differences such that rates in the Americas and Europe were higher than in the Caribbean and Asian regions. There were differences in rates between federal, regional, and municipal police forces.

A study undertaken by Hem, Berg and Ekeberg (2001) reviewed publications of 41 identified original studies on police suicide in Europe (6 studies), North America (13 studies), Australia (1 study) and 20 of which fulfilled the inclusion criteria. These results showed that some studies found elevated suicide rates among police officers; others showed an average or low rate of suicide. Mohandie & Hatcher (1999) research has yielded widely varying rates, ranging from 5.8 suicides per 100 000 police officers in London to 203.7 per 100 000 per year in Wyoming. However, the rates varied widely and were inconsistent and inconclusive especially because of methodological shortcomings. Most studies have been conducted in limited specific police populations, particularly in the United States of America.

Hem, Berg and Ekeberg, (2004) identified four nationwide studies of suicide in police from France (Bourgon, 1997), Germany (Schmidtke, Fricke and Lester, 1999) England and Wales (Kelly & Bunting, 1998) which does not suggest an increased suicide rate in police which is in accord with the results of Marzuk et al, (2002). However, the authors do not imply that suicide is not a problem among police officers.

### Theoretical Perspectives:

#### Firestone's theory of suicide ideation

Firestone (1997) developed the notion of suicide and the inner voice in order to explain the developmental process informing suicide ideation. The critical inner voice occurs as thoughts and can be defined as an integrated system of thoughts and attitudes, adversative toward self and

hostile towards others that are the core of an individual's maladaptive behaviour. The critical inner voice is often experienced as running commentary in one's mind that interprets events and interactions in ways that cause the person emotional pain and distress. When people view their lives from this negative perspective, they exaggerate the consequences of their mistakes, for example, and tell themselves that they will continue to fail and that they should give up altogether. This process of believing the negative prescriptions and prohibitions of the critical inner voice leads to self-limiting, self-defeating behaviours and negative consequences. In other words, people often make their actions correspond to the self-attacks of the voice.

He argues that people have self and anti-self systems that influence their behaviour and thoughts. The self-system refers to positive and unique aspects of a person: including biological genetic factors, affirmative qualities with parents and positive effects of education and experience.

The anti-self-system is developed early in childhood and represents the depersonalization that children experience in relation to painful experiences. When children are faced with such experiences, Firestone postulated that the defense mechanism of identifying with the aggressor takes place and negative, hostile parental introjects and voices leads to a division of the self, thus creating the anti-self system which houses such negative and hostile voices. Identification with the aggressor takes place in order to preserve some form of integration for the child, even though it paradoxically results in the formation of the anti-self system. Firestone argues that the intensity of presence of critical parents introjects comprises the anti-self system, would vary from individual to individual, but reaches its climax in the suicidal experiences (Firestone, 1997).

Reynolds (1991 a) argues that suicide ideation can be operationalised as ranging from comparatively mild wide-ranging thoughts about death and wishes that one was dead to serious ideation about particular plans and means of taking one's life. However, suicidal ideation is more

extensive than thoughts specific to wishes and plans of one's own suicide. Thoughts dealing with the response of others, including others viewpoint of one's self-worth after one's death and suicide as a means of retribution are cognitions that occur within this domain. Firestone (1997) also argues that destructive thoughts vary along a continuum of intensity ranging from mild self-approach to suicide ideation. Similarly, self-destructive behaviour exists on a continuum that may include self-denial, self-defeating behaviours, accident proneness, substance abuse, and eventually direct actions that cause bodily harm. Hence, there is a relationship between these two continuums whereby an individual's behaviour is strongly influenced by his or her negative thinking.

Individuals measuring high on suicide ideation wish they had never been born, feel life is not worth living, wish they were dead and think that others would realize their value when they are dead. They have thoughts of killing themselves as well as on the specific methods they can use and times or place at which to kill themselves (Reynolds, 1991 a). Suicidal ideation may be perceived given its specificity to cognitions, as a domain of self-statements consistent with a cognitive-behaviour focus.

In previous research, it has been viewed as a primary marker for suicidal risk (Bonner & Rich, 1987) and as a domain in the classification of suicidal behaviours. A number of investigators have viewed suicidal ideation as an important aspect of suicidal behaviour (Reynolds, 1991b). Schotte & Clum (1982) noted the importance of suicidal ideation, since there is an established relationship between the incidence of suicidal ideation and the likelihood of suicide attempts. Jin & Zhang (1998) found that a strong association exists between suicide ideation and suicide. While Jacobs, Brewer and Klein-Benheim (1999) argue that there is a general consensus in the field that the higher the suicide intent, the higher the risk for suicide. Ellis (2006) views cognition as the primary driver of death by suicide. He also observed that although assisting suicidal individuals through a period of crisis of critical and often lifesaving importance, after the crisis ends many

individuals will remain vulnerable to future suicidal episodes.

The interpersonal-psychological theory on suicidal behaviour proposes that suicide ideation is an operationalized form of the construct of suicidal desire. Results found an interaction of thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness predicted current suicide ideation. It was also found that greater levels of acquired capability were found among individuals with greater numbers of past attempts (Van Orden, Witte, Gorden, Bender and Joiner, 2008).

Suicidal ideation represents a domain of suicidal behaviour that by its nature may be measured best by a self-reported questionnaire. There is a growing concern about identifying those at risk for suicidal behaviours (Reynolds, 1991b).

#### Research trends on suicide ideation and demographic variables

A recent national study by (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005), on suicide ideation in the SAPS to determined the level of suicide ideation of police members and its relationship with various demographic variables. The Multiway frequency analysis found that police officers who measured high on suicide ideation differed from those who measured low in terms of rank, race, gender and province, educational level, the use of alcohol, the presence of a medical condition and a previous suicide attempt. The rank category indicated that the constables and sergeants (compared with higher ranks) showed higher than the expected frequencies. Police members with Grade 12 or lower (compared with those with diploma's or degrees) showed higher than the expected frequencies of high suicide ideation. The analysis also revealed that black police members were statistically significantly higher within the constable or sergeant rank in terms of suicide ideation, and had educational qualifications lower than Grade 12, which suggests an interaction between race, rank and education. Higher alcohol consumption was also related to suicide ideation. Police officers who indicated that they suffer from a medical condition that might affect their

performance in the SAPS showed higher than expected frequencies in the high suicide ideation group. Limpopo, Gauteng and Free State provinces (compared to Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces) showed higher than the expected frequencies of high suicide ideation. The Free State province should be regarded as a first priority for suicide prevention programmes, because 22 police members more than expected were observed in the high suicide ideation group. In addition, police officers who have made a previous suicide attempt were over- represented in the high suicide ideation category of this study. However, no statistically significant differences were found in terms of the marital status, age, years in service of the SAPS, years in the particular position and the size of the station of the high and low suicide ideation.

Rothmann & Strijdom (2002) found that a sense of coherence is related to suicide ideation in the case of white police members. The study population consisted of 120 police personnel in the North West Provinces. Sense of coherence and satisfaction with independence, social status and supervision explained 55.30 % of the variance in the suicide ideation scores of white police members. In other words the white police personnel are satisfied with their independence (probably they prefer to isolate themselves from other's support) and who are dissatisfied with their social status, company policy, working conditions as well as their supervisors, obtained higher scores on suicide ideation. White police member's dissatisfactions with their social position and the regard of the community are related to suicide ideation. The results also showed that black police personnel obtained higher mean scores on suicide ideation and sense of coherence scales than white police members. The black police personnel's are more dissatisfied with company policy, rewards and supervision (human aspect).

Rothmann & Van Rensburg (2002) conducted a study to determine the relationship between sense of coherence, generalised self-efficacy, locus of control and coping on the one hand as well as

suicide ideation among police personnel in the North West province. The study sample consisted of 287 uniformed police personnel. The results showed that sense of coherence and generalised self-efficacy are related to suicide ideation of police members. These results indicated that suicide ideation is higher in the case of functional police members who are currently working at police stations than in the case of those who are in training. The average sense of coherence of police members is relatively weaker, while it seems that the sense of coherence of police members who are working at police stations (compared with those that are currently in training) is relatively weak. No significant relationship between suicide ideation and coping strategies in police members were found in this study. Results also found that police members who suffer from a medical condition (compared to those who did not report suffering from a medical condition) have a weaker sense of coherence, lower self-efficacy and a higher external locus of control. Police members who took more than 14 alcoholic drinks per week (compared to those who take fewer drinks) have a weaker sense of coherence, lower self-efficacy, a higher external locus of control and more dysfunctional coping strategies, less job satisfaction and higher suicide ideation.

Consistent with previous findings of Rothmann & Strijdom (2002) study found that the low scores on sense of coherence were related to a greater incidence of suicide ideation in police members. However, the expected relationship between external locus of control and suicide ideation were not realized in this study. In addition, no significant relationships were found between locus of control and coping strategies (Rothmann & Van Rensburg, 2002).

A national study conducted by Pienaar (2002) investigated the relationship between suicide ideation, stress and coping in the SAPS. A stratified random sample of 2396 was taken of police members in nine provinces in South Africa. Previous charges in terms of disciplinary code and previous suicide attempts were related to suicide ideation. No statistical significant differences were found in terms of races, ranks, language groups, provinces and alcohol consumption.

A stepwise discriminant analysis showed that coping strategies (non-active coping, turning to religion and seeking emotional support), lack of social support (support from psychological services of the SAPS and friends not in the SAPS), previous suicide attempt, marital status, marital satisfaction, scholastic education, job satisfaction, province, race and physical exercise could all be used to predict suicide ideation. The officer most vulnerable to suicide ideation appears to be a Black male Sergeant or Inspector, who is most likely serving at a small or medium station. The Gauteng, Free State and the North West Province provinces (compared to Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces) have the highest suicide ideation levels among police officials. Further results showed that psychological services and top management of the SAPS consistently perform poorly regarding the amount, adequacy and availability of social support.

In an Eastern Cape study on coping, stress and suicide ideation found that passive coping strategies are related to suicide ideation (Meyer et al, 2003). However, this finding is inconsistent with the findings of Rothmann & Van Rensburg (2002), who found no practical significant relationship between suicide ideation and coping strategies in police members. Meyer et al, 2003, discriminant analysis showed that suicide attempt, medical conditions, use of alcohol, problem-focused coping strategies and police-specific demands correctly classified of 64. 2 % participants who scored high on suicide ideation. It was found that more male than female police officers attempts suicide. However, female police officers obtained higher scores on emotional support and problem-focused coping. Furthermore, significant negative relationships were found between suicide ideation on the one hand and relationship satisfaction and religion on the other hand. This implies that police members who are dissatisfied with their relationships (work, marital, family and friends) are more likely to have higher suicide ideation.

Pienaar & Rothmann, (2003) conducted a national study on suicide ideation, stress and coping in



the SAPS. A random stratified sample of 1431 uniformed police members in eight South African provinces (including Eastern Cape Province) participated in this study. Results of a stepwise discriminant analysis showed that previous suicide attempts, coping strategies (turning to religion, avoidance and non-active coping), insufficient social support, marital status, education, job satisfaction, province, race and physical exercise can be used to predict suicide ideation in the SAPS. These variables correctly identified 65.4 % of the high suicide ideation cases and 82.07 % of the low suicide ideation cases. The mainstream of officers indicated that they did not feel supported by psychological services and top management of the SAPS.

Furthermore, these sources of support scored poorly for the amount, availability and adequacy of support. Suicide ideation was negatively related to active coping strategies, coping by seeking emotional support and turning to religion. Police members, who actively engage and confront the stress they experience, mobilise the emotional support they need, and find meaning for events within a religious framework thus actively combat the effects of negative work experiences, and the transition thereof into suicide ideation. Turning to religion as the strongest prediction coping strategy in suicide ideation can be explained by the context in which it manifests itself. A strong culture exists within the organisation of using religion as a coping mechanism. Avoidance proved to be a stronger predictor of suicide ideation than active coping.

Swanepoel & Pienaar, (2004) investigated the relationship between suicide ideation, stress and coping in the SAPS in the Gauteng Province. Results found that 9.02 % of a sample of 266 uniformed police members has significant levels (scoring above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) of suicide ideation. The results also found that a previous suicide attempt, having previously been charged in terms of the disciplinary code, using passive coping strategies, using emotional support seeking as a coping strategy, suffering from a medical condition and gender were predictors of suicide ideation among police officials. From the results it is evident that the police stressors with

the highest severity are organisational in nature. This items relating to a lack of officers to handle specific tasks, inadequate or poor quality equipment, other officers not doing their jobs, the poor motivation of fellow officers, an inadequate salary and staff shortages. Only one item from the category of inherent police stressors, namely seeing criminals go free, scored a high severity rating. A significant relationship between suicide ideation and passive coping is evident in the research findings.

Van Der Merwe, Rothmann and Pienaar (2004), investigated the relationship between suicide ideation, stress and coping in the SAPS in the Free State Province. It was found that 14.76 % of a sample of 333 uniformed police members showed significant levels (scoring above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) of suicide ideation. Results indicated that passive coping, lacking problem-focused coping, former suicide attempts, gender, medical condition, alcohol consumption and police stresses are factors related to suicide ideation. The discriminant analysis furthermore indicated that these variables correctly classified 77.55% of the respondents with a high score of suicide ideation. It was found that members who are less likely to use problem-focused coping, and those less likely to seek social support, measure higher on suicide ideation. Especially male officers with longer years of service who had previously been charged in terms of the disciplinary code and who showed dysfunctional coping strategies measured high on suicide ideation.

Pienaar & Rothmann, (2005) and Pienaar, (2002), found significant levels (8.30 % and 8.64%) of suicide ideation in the SAPS in national surveys. The Free State provinces (14.76 %) level of suicide ideation is the highest of all the provinces in South Africa (Van Der Merwe et al, 2004).

International research has related suicide ideation to personality dimensions (Hem et al, 2001). Kerby (2003) found that low conscientiousness and low agreeableness are also related to increased

suicidal ideation. While a South African study by Rothmann, Meiring, Van der Walt and Barrick (2002), concluded that if conscientiousness is associated with poor job performance and if poor job performance is associated with stress and suicide ideation, then low conscientiousness might be related to suicide ideation. Pienaar, Rothmann and Van Der Vijer (2007) also demonstrated a reliable relationship between certain personality characteristics and suicide ideation. A stratified random sample of 1.794 police employees from eight South African provinces participated in this study. It was found that police officers at risk for developing suicide ideation had lower levels of coping, turning to religion, emotional stability, and conscientiousness and higher levels of avoidance coping. Job demands were higher in the high suicide ideation group than in the low suicide ideation group. However, when job demand was included with personality traits and coping strategies in the logistic regression analysis, these did not predict suicide ideation. It appears that the differences in experienced job demands of the high and low suicide ideation groups can be accounted for by personality traits and coping strategies. These findings suggest that police officers who did not use approach coping strategies and religion and who tended to avoid stressful situations were more inclined to think about suicide, especially if their levels of conscientiousness and emotional stability were also low.

Lennings (1995) study investigated suicide ideation and depression in a sample of 30 serving police officers and 88 students who were enrolled in a justice studies course with long term view of obtaining employment in the police or related services. This study failed to find that police were at any special risk compared to people with an interest in the justice profession but without any direct exposure to policing and the stressors involved. It has been claimed that police personnel have both higher and lower risks of suicide than the general population.

Berg, Hem, Lau, Loeb and Ekeberg's (2003) national study on suicide ideation and attempts among police had a sample of 3.272 Norwegian police officers and found low rates of suicide

ideation and suicide attempts. The lifetime prevalence of specific questionnaire items ranged from 24 % for the feeling that life was not worth living, 6.4 % for having seriously considered suicide, and 0.7 % for attempted suicide. Independent predictors of serious suicidal ideation were marital status, subjective health complaints, reality weakness, anxiety and depression. Serious suicidal ideation was mainly attributed to personal and family problems. Janik & Kravits (1994) found that marital problems and job suspension were important contributing factors to police officers attempting suicide.

Violanti, Castellano, O'Rourke and Paton (2006), explored suicide ideation in police officers in a reportedly high suicide risk group who worked in the proximity of the September 11, 2001 (9/11) World Trade Center Terrorist attack. Data were obtained for a period of 4 years (2001-2004) from Cop 2 Cop, a statewide New Jersey confidential phone hotline provided exclusively for police officers and their families. The results suggested that calls related to suicide ideation increased from pre-9/11 through 3 years post-9/11 and that the risk for urgent care suicide calls post 9/11 increased 1.65 times more quickly over time when compared to pre-9/11 urgent calls.

A recent study by Burke & Mikkelsen (2007) examined potential predictors of suicide ideation among a sample of 766 Norwegian police officers. They found that single police officers reported higher levels of both exhaustion and cynicism (burnout components), and officers engaging in less active coping and reporting lower levels of social support indicated more suicide ideation. Work demands showed a significant increment in explained variance suicide ideation. Police officers reporting greater emotional demands also reported suicide ideation. Results also indicates that personal demographics accounted for a significant amount of variance on suicide ideation while single police officers indicated higher levels of suicide ideation than did married police officers.

The nationwide study by (Berg, et al, 2003) found that of 6.4 % of respondents had significant levels of suicide ideation among police officers. Violanti et al, (2006), study found that the calls

related to suicide ideation increased from pre-9/11 through 3 years post-9/11 and that the risk for urgent care suicide calls post 9/11 increased 1.65 times more quickly over time when compared to pre-9/11 urgent calls among police officers.

Anshel (2000) states that alcohol or drug intake might serve as a means of coping with stress, but that it is not effective. He also argues that police members who suffer from medical conditions and who tend to abuse alcohol have more dysfunctional coping strategies and higher suicide ideation. Violanti's (2004) study's results suggests that certain traumatic police work exposures increase the risk of high level PTSD symptoms, which consequently increase the risk of high alcohol use and suicide ideation. The combined impact of PTSD and increased alcohol use led to a ten-fold increase risk for suicide ideation.

Edwards & Holden, (2003) contend that hopelessness is an important factor in suicide ideation. Their research results indicated that hopelessness made a significant contribution to the prediction of suicide ideation and likelihood of future suicidal behaviour for both men and women. However, it did not contribute for substantially to the prediction of suicide attempts.

Gibb, Andover and Beach's (2006) results found that more men indicated levels of hopelessness and depressive symptoms were significantly related to suicide ideation among only those with relative positive attitudes toward suicide.

Suicide rates generally have shown a positive relationship with age. The NIMMS reported that most suicide victims in the year 2000 were between the ages of 25 and 39 (Matzopoulos, 2001). In 2002 the NIMMS showed that more than half the suicide victims were in the age range 20 to 39 (Matzopoulos, 2003). During 2003 and 2004 the highest number of suicides occurred in the age

range 20 to 34 (Matzopoulos, 2004 and 2005) with the age group 15 to 19 showing an increase in suicides during the same year. Schlebusch, (2005), states that more suicides worldwide are committed by people in the 35 to 44 age group than in the older groups.

### Rank

Rank categories (of the year 2004, 2005 and 2006) who likely seems to commit suicide are firstly Inspectors; secondly Constables; thirdly Sergeants; fourthly Public Service Act members and lastly Captains (P. Cochlan, personal communication, 26 February 2008). Constables and Sergeants are the rank structure that works at the grassroots level (Minnaar & Mistry, 2006) and are often burdened with the operational level of policing, where they are exposed to scenes of violence and crime (Pienaar et al, 2007). They are the ones who are most likely to interact with suspects and members of the public on a daily basis. However, they are also likely to be involved in shooting incidents and common assaults (Minnaar & Mistry, 2006). Police officers with lower ranks and poor qualifications are especially likely to be confined to an impoverished environment and lack alternative employment and advancement opportunities (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2003). Constables and Sergeant might find it difficult to cope with the conditions in the SAPS, which is a conflict-prone organisation, perhaps because of the transformation that is taking place (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005). International research results indicate that older police officers have been in law enforcement longer, achieved higher rank and were also more likely to be assigned to sections where they perform fewer patrol duties (Patterson, 2001).

### Race

Previous research has shown that rates of suicides are lower among Black South Africans compared to other ethnic groups in the country (Schlebusch, 2000). Schlebusch also noted that

suicidal behaviour amongst black South Africans was becoming an increasing problem (Schlebusch, 2005).

Burrows & La flamme (2005) contend that suicide mortality rates are the highest among whites, in particularly white males while Rossouw's (2000) research findings in the SAPS indicate a higher rate of completed suicides among black males and females. In Pienaar and Rothmann's (2005) study indicated that males (compared to females) showed higher than expected frequencies of high suicide ideation. Black and Indian police members are more inclined towards suicide ideation.

### Gender

Studies have consistently shown that in South Africa more males than females commit suicide. In the last decade the male to female ratios seems to have increased in this society (Schlebusch, 2004). The male to female ratios were 5.8:1 for blacks, 5.3:1 for whites and 4.3:1 for Indians.

The USA suicide ratios were 2.1 for males and 0.5 for females (American Association of Suicidology, 2008). Madu & Matla's (2003), research results also indicated that a higher percentage of males than females had attempted suicide. Beetge (1993) and Hirsh & Ellis (1995) state that although women think about participating in suicide more often than men, the suicide rate among men is approximately four times higher than in the case of women.

Schlebusch (2003), found that gender is predictive of current levels of suicide ideation. It has been shown that while females report suicidal ideation more males attempt suicide. Meehan & Broom (2007) found that the majority of callers who phoned the national toll free suicide crisis line in South Africa were female between the ages of 16 and 18 years and lived in the provinces of Gauteng, North West or KwaZulu-Natal. Marzuk et al, (2002) contend that suicide rates among New York City's male police officers were comparable to their reference population. Female police officers had a higher risk of suicide than female residents of New York, but the number of

suicides of female police officers was small.

Swanepoel & Pienaar's (2004) results indicated that gender is predictive of current suicide ideation, while Pienaar & Rothmann's (2005), national study contends that males (compared to females) showed higher than expected frequencies of high suicide ideation.

Gender differences were found in an international study regarding suicide ideation, in that suicide ideation was positively predicted by neuroticism in females and negatively predicted by conscientiousness in males (Velting, 1999). Eshun (2003) contends that gender was a significant determinant for suicide ideation among Ghanaians, but not Americans. Stallones, Leff, Canetto, Garret and Mendelso (2007) investigated the prevalence of and risk factors associated with suicide ideation in a randomly drawn sample of 2,112 women ranging in age from 18-59 years. The results indicated that the overall prevalence rate of suicide ideation was not substantially higher than those found in other populations. However, emotional difficulties, substance abuse/ dependence, physical limitations, having been arrested and injuries were associated with suicidal ideation. Increased number of adversities was associated with increased prevalence of suicide ideation. Edwards & Holden, (2003) found for women, avoidance-distraction coping correlated positively with suicide ideation only, while it was significantly associated with both ideation and suicide attempts for men. The purpose in life questionnaire correlated negatively with both suicidal ideation and likelihood of future suicidal behaviour while sense of coherence correlated negatively with all the measures of suicidality for women and with ideation and future suicidal behaviour for men.

Rural China is the exception to this, where female suicide rates tend, on average, to be higher than those of males (Schlebusch, 2005). A recent study on suicide in China (Zhang, Jia, Jiang and Sun, 2006), found that the suicide attempters tended to be woman, never married, young, poor, and unhealthy. The stressful life events that account for the majority of suicidal incidents were mostly



familial or marital problems.

Velting (1999) explained that depressed women tend to contemplate their own emotional distress, which may lead to more serious depressive episodes. Elevated rates of depression in women are offset by higher rates of alcohol abuse among men. Canetto's (1997) review of research findings indicated that completed suicide is viewed more negatively for woman than for men. He argues that the association of suicide and masculinity may play a role in creating a genuine gap in rates of fatal suicidal behaviour. Canetto (2000) contends that females may be more reluctant to kill themselves than males because of the more negative views of female suicidal death. For males, the belief that suicide is masculine may contribute to their higher suicide death rates.

The SAPS has undergone tremendous transformation since the first democratic elections in 1994. Transformation from a police force to a police service was taking place, the rank structure was changed, and an affirmative action policy was implemented (Van Der Walt, 2002 and Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006). Young (1998) found that an inability to deal with emotional uncertainty in the context of recent political changes greatly contributed to apathy, depression and demotivation amongst police officers. This has a direct influence on productivity and efficiency.

Young's (2005) research results also suggest that the socio-historical circumstances in South Africa, the transformation effected in the police service, and political and structural uncertainty play an important role in contributing to an overwhelming sense of loss and uncertainty. Perceived losses include the loss of the supportive police subculture, loss of meaning in their work, loss of a sense competence and agency. Findings further reveal that officers experience a sense of being overwhelmed, powerless and helpless in the face of these historical and organizational changes. These feelings generate significant anxiety and impact negatively on officers' self-esteem.

In South African studies on police stress, (Gulle, Tredoux & Foster, 1998) found that in contrast to stressors reported by the US sample of police, most of which are inherent in the nature of the job, SAPS stressors were more organizationally oriented. Excessive paper-work, insufficient manpower, fellow officers not doing their job, inadequate or poor quality equipment, inadequate salary and court leniency with criminals were among the stressors which occurred most frequently within the police force were identified as stressors in the SAPS. In a study on stressful incidents among police members, found that duty-related injuries (shooting) pursuit of armed suspect, response to a scene involving the death of a child and having a accident with the departmental vehicle rated the four highest scores which relating to total emotional intensity (Peltzer, 2001). Roosendaal (2002) identified disinterested commanding officers, deficient opportunities for career development and promotion, financial pressure, the working conditions, and deficient support systems as factors contributing to stress in the SAPS.

Furthermore, findings in the latest national study on occupational stress in the SAPS identified the most important stressors such as, other officers not doing their job, inadequate or poor quality equipment, inadequate salaries and seeing criminals go free. Constables measured lower than Superintendents regarding Job Demands while for a Lack of Job Resources, Constables and Sergeants measured lower than Superintendents. Captains measured higher than Constables regarding Inherent Police Stressors. Superintendents and Senior Superintendents might thus be more exposed to the job stressors identified in this research. The researchers concluded that the findings that Captains measured higher than Constables regarding Inherent Police Stressors is somewhat more ambiguous. It would have been expected that the front-line police would suffer higher exposure to these kinds of stressors, and thus score higher (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006).

It has become almost a stereotype that police officials should be suffering from stress, given the degree and regularity of exposure to traumatic situations (Nel & Burgers, 1998). Many of the

stressors faced by the police personnel cannot be easily solved, as they constitute the nature of police work (Jones & Kagee, 2005).

### Summary and preview

In this chapter, literature pertaining to suicide, suicide ideation and different demographic groups or variables in the police, rank, race and gender research trends was overviewed.

I now turn to a description of the methodologies employed in the present research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### Research Design

The research objective was achieved through a cross-sectional survey. A sample was drawn from police stations in the Nelson Mandela Metropole (NMM) in the Eastern Cape Province. The NMM consists of Port-Elizabeth, Despatch and Uitenhage magisterial district with a population of over a million people. This Metropole has the highest number of people living in poverty in South Africa. African population dominates while the Coloured population is the second largest and the White population the third largest group in the Metropole. The majority (80.3%) of the population is illiterate while the unemployment rate is estimated at 46.4 %. The adult population of Uitenhage is an estimate of 118.189 in total (Eastern Cape Province, 2007).

#### Sample

The uniformed police members were approached at the Uitenhage and Kamesh police stations in the Nelson Mandela Metropole of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The number of employed police members at the Uitenhage police stations was 210 while, the number of employed police members at the Kamesh police station were 171. The convenience sample of the present study comprised of 111 of which 45.9% police members were of Uitenhage police station and 52.3% police members of Kamesh police station who completed the questionnaires. The age range of the participants was 21 - 62 years with mean age of 35.1 years. A total of 73.0 % of the sample consisted of males and 22.5% were females. The sample consisted of 34.2% Whites, 35.1% Blacks, and 27.9% Coloured and Indian police members.

## Procedure

The objective of the present study was explained to the uniformed police members. The researcher also provided participants a letter with factual information about the study. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous and they may withdraw at any point in the research process. Participants were also assured that individual results are confidential (Struwig & Stead, 2001 and Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). Assistance was provided from the two station commissioners at the Uitenhage police station as well as the Kamesh police station in collecting the data. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed 111 were completed, the response rate thus being 44.4 %.

## Instruments

The Adult Suicide Ideation Questionnaire was developed by William M. Reynolds which (Reynolds, 1991a) consists of 25 items to measure participants current level of suicide ideation and a biographical questionnaire.

Each of these items measures a specific suicidal behaviour or thought. Participants rate the frequency of suicidal thoughts or behaviour during the past month using a 7-point scale. The response format ranges from “almost every day” (6) to “never had the thought” (0). The item content ranges from generally wishes that one were dead or never born to distinctive risk factors such as thoughts of how and when to kill oneself. Other items evaluate the perceived response of others to a suicide attempt the belief that suicide is a possible solution to one’s problems.

Thus, the ASIQ yields a total score, ranging from 0 to 150 (Reynolds, 1991 a, p. 294).

Reynolds (1991a) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .96, while Osman, Kopper, Linehan, Barrios, Gutierrez and Bagge (1999) found a Cronbach’s alpha of .98. Therefore, the ASIQ has a high internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .96 to .98 in clinical and non-clinical

samples (Reynolds 1991a; 1991b and Osman et al., 1999).

The test-retest reliability of the ASIQ varied between .86 and .95 (Reynolds, 1999 a, p. 294). Reynolds (1991a), provided evidence for the content, construct and criterion-related validity of the ASIQ. Although no difference in ASIQ scores for gender was reported for community and psychiatric populations who did not attempt suicide, male suicide attempters obtained higher ASIQ scores than female attempters (Reynolds, 1991b).

Studies conducted in the North West Province, revealed Cronbach's alphas of .98 and .95 for white and black police members correspondingly (Rothmann & Strijdom, 2002 and Rothmann & Van Rensburg, 2002).

In the study of Rothmann and Pienaar (2005) and a previous study in the Eastern Cape Province (Meyer et al, 2003) the Cronbach's alpha for the ASIQ was .97.

The present study's Cronbach's alpha for the ASIQ was .99, which is acceptable compared to the guideline of  $\alpha > .70$  (Nunnally & Burnstein, 1994).

Biographical information asked in the questionnaire was:

Name of police station, age, gender, race, rank, years of service, years of current position (to assess advancement), educational qualifications, marital status, presence of medical conditions, number of alcoholic drinks consumed per week, smoking behaviour, exercise behaviour and history of previous suicide attempts (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005).

### Ethical Considerations

An application for permission to conduct the present research study in the South African Police Services was requested in writing to the SAPS Research Division and the Head of the SAPS Basic Training Division before the commencement of the research project. Permission was granted to proceed to conduct the present research study in the SAPS by the Head of Strategic Management for Research.

### Summary and Preview

In this chapter the research procedure, sampling technique and measurements were reviewed. The ethical considerations applicable to the study were also discussed. The research data and results will be presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The results of the demographic characteristics and health behaviours are presented and summarized in the following two tables.

Table 1

*Demographic characteristics of the participants (N = 111)*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Station	Uitenhage	45.90
	Kamesh	52.30
	Number did not indicate	1.80
Race	White	34.20
	Black	35.10
	Coloured	27.90
	Number did not indicate	2.70
Rank	Constable	36.90
	Sergeant	7.20
	Inspector	36.00
	Captain	9.90
	Superintendent	1.80
	Senior Superintendent	0.90
	Number did not indicate	7.20
Level of Education	Grade 10 (Standard 8)	12.60
	Grade 11 (Standard 9)	0.90
	Grade 12 (Matric)	57.70
	Technical college diploma	6.30
	Diploma	18.0
	University Degree	3.60
	Post-Graduate Degree	0.90
Gender	Male	73.00
	Female	22.50
	Number did not indicate	4.50



Year's work experience in the SAPS	Up to 1 year	14.40
	1 to 3 years	14.40
	3 to 5 years	9.90
	More than 5 years	27.90
	Other	30.60
	Number did not indicate	4.50
Years in current position	up to 1 year	26.10
	1 to 3 years	19.80
	3 to 5 years	8.10
	More than 5 years	27.00
	Other	17.10
	Number did not indicate	1.80
Age	18 to 25	13.50
	26 to 30	9.90
	31 to 35	20.70
	36 to 40	20.70
	41 to 45	9.00
	46+	8.10
	Number did not indicate	17.10
Marital	Single	30.60
	Engaged / in a relationship	5.40
	Married	55.90
	Divorced	4.50
	Separated	1.80
	Other	0.90
	Number did not indicate	0.90

Table 1 show that the study population consisted mainly of 36.9% constables, and 43.2% of sergeants and inspectors of the sample. Most participants had more than five years of service in the SAPS, and were employed for more than five years in their current position.

Of the sample, 57.7% had a Matric, 12.6% a Std 8 level of education and 18.0% tertiary education at a Technikon. The majority of 55.9% participants were married while 30.6% were single.

Table 2

*Health behaviours of the participants*

Item	Category	Percentage
Do you suffer from a medical condition	Yes	10.80
	No	89.20
How many days per week do you exercise	0	19.80
	1	09.00
	2	15.30
	3	23.40
	4	15.30
	5	12.60
	8	0.90
	10	0.90
	Number did not indicate	2.70
Alcohol consumption	0-4 drinks per week	74.80
	5-7 drinks per week	7.20
	8-14 drinks per week	7.20
	15 or more drinks per week	4.50
	Number did not indicate	6.30
Cigarette smoke	Yes	28.80
	No	70.30
	Number did not indicate	0.90
Previous attempt at suicide	Yes	4.50
	No	94.60
	Number did not indicate	0.90

Table 2 gives details of behaviours as reported by the study population. A total of 89.2 % of the participants indicated that they do not suffer from a medical condition. Furthermore, 23.4 % indicated that they exercise three days per week. A total of 74.8 % of participants indicated that they took 4 drinks per week while the majority of the participants do not smoke cigarettes.

Table 3

*Frequencies for ASIQ*

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I never had this thought	65	58.6
1.04	7	6.30
1.08	7	6.30
1.08	1	.90
1.12	3	2.70
1.16	4	3.60
1.20	2	1.80
1.24	1	.90
1.28	3	2.70
1.32	1	.90
1.36	1	.90
1.40	1	.90
1.56	3	2.70
1.72	1	.90
1.76	1	.90
2.12	1	.90
2.16	1	.90
2.44	1	.90
4.80	1	.90
6.96	1	.90
Almost every day	1	.90
Total	107	96.40
Missing System	4	3.60

Table 3 shows that the majority of participants “never had suicidal thoughts”. In addition, 4.5 % of the participants had attempted suicide previously.

The hypotheses stated that there is a relationship between suicide ideation and demographic groups such as: police station, age, gender, race, rank, years of service, years of current position (to assess advancement), educational qualifications, marital status, presence of medical conditions, number of alcoholic drinks consumed per week, smoking behaviour, exercise behaviour and history of previous suicide attempts amongst uniformed police members in the SAPS.

T-test and One-way analysis (ANOVA) was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc, 2003) to determine group differences.

Table 4 represents the differences using all the independent samples and the scores of the ASIQ.

<b>Item</b>	<b>T or F –values</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Gender</b>	$t(100) = .187$	$p > .05$		
Males			6.75	.96
Females			6.71	.79
<b>Race</b>	$F(2,102) = .583$	$p > .05$		
Whites			6.61	.137
Blacks			6.79	.65
Coloureds			6.82	.32
<b>Rank</b>	$t(98) = -.876$	$p > .05$		
Lower Group (N = 48)			6.65	.103
Higher Group (N = 52)			6.8	.82
<b>Station</b>	$t(58.50) = 1.98$	$p = .52$ tendency of significance		

Uitenhage			6.91	.20
Kamesh			6.58	.1.21
<b>Age</b>	t (55,86) = -1.43	p>.05		
Young (21-35 years)			6.78	.61
Mature (36-62 years)			6.92	.20
<b>Year's work experience in the SAPS</b>	t (104) = .066	p>.05		
0 to 5 years (N = 42)			6.75	.64
more than 5 years (N = 64)			6.73	1.05
<b>Year's in current position in the SAPS</b>	t (105) = .598	p>.05		
0 to 5 years (N = 59)			6.79	.56
more than 5 years (N = 48)			6.68	1.20
<b>Marital Status</b>	t (56.759) = -1.34	p>.05		
Living alone ( N = 39)			6.57	1.13
Living in Partnership (N = 67)			6.84	.73

<b>Education</b>	F (2,104) = .579	p>.05		
School (N = 13)			6.77	.47
Matric (N = 63)			6.81	.77
Tertiary (N = 31)			6.6	1.23
<b>Exercise</b>	F (2,101) = .203	p>.05		
No exercise (N = 19)			6.63	.90
1 -3 days per week (N = 53)			6.18	.82
4 and more days per week (N= 32)			6.72	1.07
<b>Alcohol</b>	t (99) = 1.092	p>.05		
Non alcohol (N = 56)			6.86	.30
Alcohol (N = 45)			6.70	1.03
<b>Smoking</b>	t (105) = -.521	p>.05		
Non smokers ( N= 77)			6.67	1.10
Smokers (N = 30)			6.77	.82

Table 4 shows that no statistical significant differences regarding the ASIQ were found for gender groups. The comparison of the three race groups (Whites, Blacks and Coloureds - one Indian was assigned to the Coloured group) revealed no statistical significant differences regarding suicide

ideation.

The comparison of the 2 rank groups including Lower (Constable and Sergeant) and Higher rank namely (Captain, Superintendent and Senior Superintendent) differences was analysed which found no statistical significant differences regarding the ASIQ for rank groups.

The differences of scores of ASIQ and the 2 police stations (Uitenhage and Kamesh) indicated no statistical significant differences.

Two age groups namely young (age 21-35 years) and mature (age 36-62 years) using median split (Median = 35 years) did not differ in comparison with suicide ideation.

Two groups for the Year's work experience in the SAPS item were assigned namely, 0 to 5 years group (n = 42) and more than 5 years group (n = 64). No statistical significant differences were found in their ASIQ scores.

Two groups for the Year's in current position in the SAPS item were assigned namely: 0 to 5 years group (N = 59) and more than 5 years group (N = 48) for differences in ASIQ scores. No statistical significant differences regarding the ASIQ for Year's in current position group.

Two groups for the Marital status item were assigned namely living alone group (n = 39) including: Single, Divorced, Separated and Other and a living in partnership group (n = 67) including: Engaged or in a relationship and Married.

No statistical significant differences regarding the ASIQ for Marital status group were found.

Three groups for the education item namely: School group (Grade 10 & 11 n = 13), Matric group (n = 63) and Tertiary group (Technical college diploma, Diploma, University Degree and Post-Graduate Degree n = 31) were assigned and showed no statistical significant differences in their scores of ASIQ.

Three groups for the exercise item were assigned namely: No exercise group (n = 19), 1 -3 days per

week (n = 53) group and 4 and more days per week (n= 32) group found no statistical significant differences between the scores of ASIQ.

The differences of scores of ASIQ and the alcohol (n= 45) and non alcohol (n = 56) group indicates. The smoking (n = 30) and non smoking (n = 77) group and the scores of ASIQ also indicated no statistical significant differences.

The group comparison for previous attempt at suicide could not have been conducted since only 4 participants did report previous attempt at suicide.

There are no statistical significant differences between suicide ideation and the demographic groups. Thus, the hypothesis is therefore rejected.

In this sample the contingent Pearson Chi-Square test was used for significance regarding differences between the suicide ideation group (“had suicidal thoughts”) and non suicide ideation group (“never had suicidal thoughts”) in terms of the demographic groups.

Table 5 represents Pearson Chi-Square statistics of suicide ideation and non suicide ideation groups in different demographic groups.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson Chi-Square Value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)</b>	<b>P</b>
Gender	.001	1	.974	<i>p &gt; .05</i>
Race	.586	2	.746	<i>p &gt; .05</i>
Rank	1.812	1	.178	<i>p &gt; .05</i>
Station	.207	1	.650	<i>p &gt; .05</i>
Age	.699	1	.403	<i>p &gt; .05</i>
Year's work experience in the				



SAPS	.304	1	.581	$p > .05$
Year's in current position in the SAPS	.112	1	.738	$p > .05$
Marital Status	2.134	1	.144	$p > .05$
Education	.656	2	.720	$p > .05$
Exercise	1.1018	2	.601	$p > .05$
Alcohol	2.828	1	.093	$p > .05$
Medical Condition	1.203	1	.273	$p > .05$
Smoking	.291	1	.589	$p > .05$

Table 5 shows no statistical significant differences between suicide ideation groups and non suicide ideation group and the demographic variables. Of participants four reported previous attempts at suicide.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to determine the level of suicide ideation of uniformed police members and to identify the demographic variables that could be used to predict suicide ideation within the Nelson Mandela Metropole in the Eastern Cape Province of the SAPS.

The study sought to determine whether there is a relationship between suicide ideation and demographic variables such as: police station, age, gender, race, rank, years of service, years of current position, educational qualifications, marital status, presence of medical conditions, number of alcoholic drinks consumed per week, smoking behaviour, exercise behaviour and history of previous suicide attempts amongst uniformed police members in the SAPS.

This study found that 1.4 % of the sample showed significant levels of suicidal ideation scoring a high score above 31 (i.e., above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) which was much lower than previous studies also.

The results of the present study indicated no statistical significant differences regarding the ASIQ and the demographic variables for age, gender, race, rank, years of service, years of current position, educational qualifications, marital status, presence of medical conditions, number of alcoholic drinks consumed per week, smoking behaviour and exercise behavior among uniformed police members in the Eastern Cape Province.

Thus, no statistical significant differences between suicide ideation and the demographic variables were found. No significant differences between suicide ideation groups (“had suicidal thoughts”) and non suicide ideation (“never had suicidal thoughts”) group and the demographic variables were also found.

This is supported by other research findings that no statistically significant differences were also

found in terms of the marital status, age, years in service of the SAPS, years in the particular position and the size of the station of the high and low suicide ideation in a recent national study (Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005).

Another national study by Pienaar (2002) also found no statistical significant differences in terms of races, ranks, language groups and provinces. Alcohol consumption also had no effect on ASIQ scores and thus supports this research results.

The participants with previous suicide attempts had significant high scores on ASIQ. This is also supported by all the South African studies (Pienaar, 2002; Meyer et al, 2003; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2003; Swanepoel & Pienaar, 2004; Van Der Merwe et al, 2004 and Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005) findings among police members.

This results was not supported by Pienaar & Rothmann's (2005) research findings as the police officers who measured high on suicide ideation (compared with low suicide ideation) were significantly higher than the expected frequencies in terms of rank, race, gender and province, educational level, the use of alcohol, the presence of a medical condition and a previous suicide attempt.

The present results found no statistical significant differences between race, rank and education while Pienaar & Rothmann's (2005) analysis revealed that Black and Indian police members were statistically significantly higher within the constable or sergeant rank in terms of suicide ideation.

This study found no gender differences in suicide ideation while Pienaar & Rothmann's (2005) found that males (compared to females) showed higher than expected frequencies of high suicide ideation. Meyer et al, (2003) found that more male than female police officers attempts suicide.

Police officers who have made a previous suicide attempt were over- represented in the high suicide ideation category of Pienaar & Rothmann's (2005) study. The present research found that a previous suicide attempt was under-represented in the high suicide ideation category. Rossouw

(2000) identified the Eastern Cape Province to be one of the risk areas in the SAPS while (Pienaar, 2002 and Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005) found that the Eastern Cape Province have low suicide ideation levels among police officials in the SAPS.

Meyer et al.'s (2003), results indicated that 4.96 % of a sample of 307 police members showed high levels of suicide ideation (scoring a high score above 31 of the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) in the Eastern Cape Province.

However, Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005 and Pienaar, 2005 found rates of significant levels (8.30 % and 8.64%) of suicide ideation in the SAPS in national studies.

Gauteng Province results found that 9.02 % of a sample of 266 uniformed police members has significant levels of suicide ideation (scoring a high score above 31 of the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile by ASIQ) (Swanepoel & Pienaar, 2004). The international study by (Berg, et al, 2003) found low rates of 6.4 % suicide ideation of a sample of 3,272 Norwegian police officers.

Recent international research states that suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> ranking cause of death in the USA population (American Association of Suicidology, 2008), while the overall South African rates of 24.5 per 100 000 for males and 6.9 per 100 000 for females have been reported more recently (Matzopoulos et al's, 2004).

## **LIMITATIONS**

It is important to interpret the results of this study in the light of its limitations, which are as follows:

This study relied exclusively on a self-reported method of data collection, which is subject to intentional distortions. Availability or convenience sampling was employed which have implications for generalizing the findings of this study.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study found relatively low levels of suicide ideation compared to other similar South African studies. However for participants in this study who did attempt suicide, suicide prevention should remain of concern to psychologists in the Eastern Cape SAPS. Variables that were found to be predictive of high suicide ideation in other studies were not predictive in the present study due to the low levels of suicide ideation in the sample.

## REFERENCES

- Anshel, M. H. (2000). A conceptual model and implications for coping with stressful events in police work. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 27, 375-400.
- American Association of Suicidology. (2008). USA suicide: 2005 final data. Retrieved on March, 26, 2008, from <http://www.suicidology.org/associations/1045/files/2005datapgb.pdf>.
- Appalsamy, P. (2002). *The development of a Process Theory of Suicidal Behaviour*. Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg.
- Beetge, B. (1993). "Selfmoord in die SA polisie: "Wat word tans daaraan gedoen?". *Servamus*, 17-20.
- Berg, A. M., Hem, E., Lau, B. Loeb, M., & Ekeberg, Q. (2003). Suicidal Ideation and attempts in Norwegian police. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 33 (3), 302-312.
- Berman, J. K. (Eds). (1998). *South African Survey. (1997/1998)*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Berman, J. K. (Eds). (1999). *South African Survey. (1999/2000)*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Berman, J. K (Eds). (2001). *South African Survey. (2000/2001)*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Blanche, M. T., Durrheim, K. & Painter, D. (2006). (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). *Research in Practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Bonner, R. L., & Rich, A. R. (1987). Toward a predictive model of suicide ideation and behavior: Some preliminary data in college students. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 17, 50-63.
- Bourgion, N. (1997). Le suicide dans la police nationale. *Population*, 52, 431-440.
- Burke, R. J., & Mikkelsen, A. (2007). Suicide ideation among police in Norway. *Policing: An*

- International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 30 (2), 228-236.
- Burrows, S., & La Flame, L. (2005). Living circumstances of suicide mortality in a South African City: An ecological study of differences across race groups and sexes. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 35 (5), 592-603.
- Carr, J. R., Hoge, C. W., Gardner, J., & Potter, R. (2004). Suicide Surveillance in the US military-reporting and classification biases in rate calculations. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 34 (3), 233-241.
- Carrilho, A. T. (1997). *The impact of suicide on the family and colleagues in selected Johannesburg Police Department*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.
- Canetto, S. S. (1997). Meanings of gender and suicidal behavior during adolescents. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 27, 339-351.
- Canetto, S. S. (2000). Cultural perspectives on the gender paradox of suicidal behavior. In Schlebusch, L., & Bosch, B.A. (Eds). (2000). *Suicidal Behaviour 4: Proceedings of the Fourth Southern Conference on Suicidology*. pp. 128-137. Durban: Department of Medically Applied Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Natal.
- Eastern Cape Province. (2007). Nelson Mandela Metropole; South African Info. Retrieved October 12, 2007, from <http://www.southafrica.com>. Info/doing\_business/investment/Opportunities/escape.htm.
- Edwards, M. J., & Holden, R. R., (2003). Coping, Meaning in life, and Suicidal Manifestations: Examining Gender Differences. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58 (10), 1133- 1150.
- Ellis, T. E. (Eds). (2006). *Cognition and Suicide: Theory, Research, and Therapy*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

- Eshun, S. (2003). Sociocultural determinants of suicide ideation: A comparison between American and Ghanaian college samples. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 33 (2), 165-171.
- Firestone, R.W. (1997). *Suicide and the inner voice: Risk Assessment, Treatment and Case Management*. California: Sage Publishers.
- Gibb, B. E., Andover, M.S., & Beach, S. R. (2006). Suicide ideation and attitudes toward suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 36 (1), 12-18.
- Gulle, G., Tredoux, C., & Foster, D. (1998). Inherent and organizational stress in SAPS: An empirical survey in the Western Cape". *South African Journal of Psychology*. 28, 129-134.
- Hackett, D. P. & Violanti, J. M. (2003). *Police Suicide: Tactics for Prevention*. Springfield, IL; Charles. C. Thomas Publishers.
- Helmkamp, J.C. (1996). Occupation and suicide among males in the US Armed Forces. *Suicide and Life- Threatening Behavior*, 24, 267-274.
- Hem, E., Berg, A. M., & Ekeberg, Q. (2001) Suicide in police: A critical review. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 31, 224-233.
- Hem, E., Berg, A. M., & Ekeberg, Q. (2004). Suicide among police officers. *American Psychiatric Association of Psychiatry*, 161, 767-768.
- Hirsh, J. & Ellis, J. B. (1995). Family support and other social factors predicting suicidal ideation. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 41, 26-30.
- Jacobs, D.G., Brewer, M., & Klein-Benheim, C. (1999). Suicide Assessment: An overview and recommended protocol. In Jacobs, D.G. (Eds). *The Harward Medical School Guide to Suicide Assessment and Intervention*. (pp.3-40). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Janik, J., & Kravitz, H.M. (1994). Linking work and domestic problems with police suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 24, 267-274.



- Jin, S., & Zhang, J. (1998). The effects of physical and psychological well-being on suicide ideation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 54, 401-413.
- Jones, R., & Kravitz, H. M., (2005). Predictors of post-traumatic stress symptoms among South African police personnel. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35 (2), 209-224.
- Kelly, S., & Bunting, J. (1998). Trends in suicide in England and Wales 1982-1996. *Population Trends*, 92, 29-41.
- Kerby, D. S. (2003). CART analysis with the unit-weighted regression to predict suicidal ideation from Big Five traits. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35, 249-261.
- Lennings, C. J. (1995). Suicide ideation and risk factors in police officers and justice students. *Police Studies*, 18 (3 & 4), 39-53.
- Loo, R. (2003). A Meta-analysis of police suicide rates: Findings and issues. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 33 (3), 313-325.
- Mabe, S. E. (2004). *Perceptions of personnel of police suicide and the role of a Chaplain*. Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of South Africa: Pretoria.
- Madu, S. N. & Matla, M. P. (2003). The prevalence of suicidal behaviours among secondary School adolescents in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 33 (2), 126-132.
- Masuku, S. (2000). *Forbidden subject: Suicide among SAPS officials*. Nedbank Institute for Security Studies Crime Index, 4(5). <http://www.issafrica.org/pubs/crimeindex>. Accessed on 04 October 2007.
- Marzuk, P. M., Nock, M. K., Leon, A. C., Portera, L. ,& Tardiff, K. (2002). Suicide among New York City Police Officers, 1977-1996. *AM J Psychiatry*, 159, 2068-2071.
- Matzopoulos, R. (Eds). (2001). *A profile of fatal injuries in South Africa: Second annual report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System 2000*. Tygerberg: MRC/ Unisa Crime,

Violence and Injury Lead Programme.

Matzopoulos, R. (Eds). (2003). *A profile of fatal injuries in South Africa: Second annual report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System 2002*. Tygerberg: MRC/ Unisa Crime, Violence and Injury Lead Programme.

Matzopoulos, R. (Eds). (2004). *A profile of fatal injuries in South Africa: Second annual report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System 2003*. Tygerberg: MRC/ Unisa Crime, Violence and Injury Lead Programme.

Matzopoulos, R. (Eds). (2005). *A profile of fatal injuries in South Africa: Second annual report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System 2004*. Tygerberg: MRC/ Unisa Crime, Violence and Injury Lead Programme.

Matzopoulos, R., Norman, R. & Bradshaw, D. (Eds). (2004). The burden of injury in South Africa: Fatal injury trends and international comparisons. In S. Suffla, A. Van Niekerk., & D. Duncan. (Eds). *Crime, Violence and Injury Prevention in South Africa: Developments and Challenges*. 9-12. Tygerberg: Medical Research Council- UNISA, Crime, Violence and Injury Lead Programme.

McCafferty, F. L., McCafferty, E. & McCafferty, M. A. (1992). Stress and suicide in police officers: Paradigm of occupational stress. *Southern Medical Journal*, 85, 233-243.

Meehen, S. & Broom, Y., (2007). Analysis of a national toll free suicide crisis line in South Africa. *Suicide & Life Threatening Behavior*, 37 (1), 66-78.

Meyer, R., Rothmann, S., & Pienaar, J. (2003). Coping, Stress and Suicide Ideation in the South African Police Service in the Eastern Cape. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 6 (4), 881-904.

Minnaar, A., & Mistry, D. (2006). Dealing with the use of force and stress related violence by members of the police: Some observations from selected case studies in Gauteng. *Acta*

*Criminologica*, 19 (3), 29-63.

Mohandie, K., & Hatcher, C. (1999). Suicide and violence risk in law enforcement: practical guidelines for risk assessment prevention and intervention. *Behavior Science Law*, 17, 357-276.

Nel, J., & Burgers, T. (1998). Stress and Trauma in the work environment: The South African Police Service. *Unisa Psychologia*, 25 (2), 17-25.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H., (1994). *Psychometric Theory*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Osman, A., Kopper, B.A., Linehan, M.M., Barrios, F. X., Gutierrez, P.M. & Bagge., C. L. (1999). Validation of the Suicide Ideation Questionnaire and the Response for Living Inventory in an adult psychiatric sample. *Psychological Assessment*, 11, 115-123.

Patterson, G. T. (2001). The relationship between demographic variables and exposure to traumatic incidents among police officers. *The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*, Volume: 2001-2.

Peltzer, K. (2001). Stress and Traumatic Symptoms among police officers at a South African Police Station. *Acta Criminologica*, 14 (3), 52-56.

Pienaar, J. (2002). *Coping, stress and suicide ideation in the South African Police Service*. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Potchefstroom.

Pienaar, J., & Rothmann, S. (2003, May). *Suicide Ideation, Stress and Coping in the South African Service*. Paper presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> European Congress of work and Organisational Psychology, Lisbon, Portugal.

Pienaar, J., & Rothmann, S. (2005). Suicide Ideation in the South African Police Service.

- South African Journal of Psychology*, 35 (1), 58-72.
- Pienaar, J., & Rothmann, S. (2006). Occupational Stress in the South African Police Service. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 32 (3), 72-78.
- Pienaar, J., Rothmann, S., & van de Vijer, F. J. (2007) Occupational Stress, Personality Traits, Coping, Strategies and Suicide Ideation in the South African Police Service. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34 (2), 246-258.
- Pieterse, J. J. (1992). "Selfmoord: 'n biopsigososiale verskynsel" *Servamus*. Feb.
- Rabe, W. (1993). *Suicide and Parasuicide: Gender, age and ethnic differences in the Port-Elizabeth/Uitenhage Magisterial Districts*. Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of Port-Elizabeth: Port-Elizabeth.
- Reynolds, W. M. (1991b). Psychological characteristics of the Adult Suicide Ideation Questionnaire with college students. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 56, 289-307.
- Reynolds, W.M. (1991a). *Adult Suicide Ideation Questionnaire: Professional Manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resource.
- Roosendaal, P. (2002). SAPS officials-victims of crime: The end result....suicide. *Servamus*. 95 (8), 20-24.
- Rothmann, S., Meiring, D., Van der Walt, H. S., & Barrick, M. (2002, April). *Predicting job performance using personality measures in South Africa*. Paper presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology, Toronto, Canada.
- Rothmann, S., & Strijdom, G. (2002). Suicide Ideation in the South African Police Services in the North West Province. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28 (1), 44-48.
- Rothmann, S., & Van Rensburg, P. (2002). Psychological Strengths, Coping and Suicide

- Ideation in the South African Police Service in the North West Province. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28 (3), 39-49.
- Rossouw, L. (1997). *Police suicide: Annual report-1994 to 1997*. Pretoria: South African Police Services.
- Rossouw, L. (1998). *Police suicide: Annual report-1998*. Pretoria: South African Police Services.
- Rossouw, L. (1999). *Police suicide: Annual report-1999*. Pretoria: South African Police Services.
- Rossouw, L. (2000). *Police suicide: Annual report-2000*. Pretoria: South African Police Services.
- Rutter, M. (1995). *Psycho-social disturbances in young people: Challenges for perceptions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- South African Police Services. (2001). SAPS responds to inaccurate reports on high police suicide. Retrieved on March, 25, 2008, <http://www.info.gov.zaspeeches/2001/011003346p1004.htm>.
- Schlebusch, L. (Eds). (1995). *Suicidal Behaviour 3: Proceedings of the Fourth Southern Conference on Suicidology*. Durban: Department of Medically Applied Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Natal.
- Schlebusch, L., & Bosch, B.A. (Eds). (2000). *Suicidal Behaviour 4: Proceedings of the Fourth Southern Conference on Suicidology*. Durban: Department of Medically Applied Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Natal.
- Schlebusch, L. (2000, April). *An overview of suicidal behaviour in South Africa at the dawn of the new millennium*. Proceedings of the Fourth Southern African Conference on Suicidology. (pp.3-9). Durban, South Africa.

- Schlebusch, L. (2003). *An overview of research on suicidal behaviour in South Africa*.  
Paper presented at the XXII World Congress of the International association for  
Suicide Prevention, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Schlebusch, L. (2005). *Suicidal Behaviour in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of  
KwaZulu Natal Press.
- Schmidtke, A., Fricke, S., & Lester, D. (1999). Suicide among German federal and state police  
officers. *Psychological Reports*, 84, 157-166.
- Schotte, D. E., & Clum, G.A. (1982). Suicide Ideation in a college population: A test of a model.  
*Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 50, 690-696.
- Stallones, L., Leff, M., Canetto, S., Garret, C., & Mendelso, B. (2007). Suicidal ideation among  
low-income women in Family Assistance Programs. *Women & Health*, 45 (4), 65-83.
- Stromnes, J. (1999). *The incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Police officers*.  
Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of South Africa: Pretoria
- Struwig, F. W., & Stead, G.B. (2001). *Planning, Designing and Reporting Research*.  
Cape Town: Maskew Miller Langman Publishers.
- Swanepoel, C., & Pienaar, J. (2004). Coping, Stress and Suicide Ideation in the South  
African Police Service in Gauteng Province. *Acta Criminologica*, 17 (2), 17-33.
- SPSS Inc. (2003). *SPSS 12.0 for Windows*. Chicago, IL: Author.
- Van Der Merwe. A.S., Rothmann, S., & Pienaar, J. (2004). Coping-Strategiee, Stress en  
Self-moord-denkbeeldvorming in die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiediens in die Vrystaat  
*South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 30 (1), 29-36.
- Van Der Walt, J. (2002, March). *Burnout: The socially acknowledged form of social  
distancing: A group analytical explorative study among psychologist in the South  
African Police Service*. Paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> South African Burnout

Conference, Potchefstroom.

Van Niekerk, D. A. (1997). *Trauma-related Psychiatric Symptoms in South African policemen.*

Unpublished Masters Thesis. Rand Afrikaans University.

Van Orden, K. A., Witte, T. K., Gordon, K. H., Bender, T. W., & Joiner, T. E., (2008). Suicide desire and the capability for suicide: Tests of the interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior among adults. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 76 (1), 72-83.

Velting, D. M., (1999). Suicidal ideation and the five-factor model of personality. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 27, 943-952.

Violanti, J. M. (1995). The mystery within: Understanding Police Suicide. *FBI Law Enforcements Bulletin*, 64 (2), 19-23.

Violanti, J. M. (1996). *Police Suicide: Epidemic in blue*. Springfield, IL: C. C. Thomas.

Violanti, J. M., Vena, J. E., & Marshall, J. R. (1998). Suicides, homicides, and accidental death: A comparative risk assessment of police officers and municipal workers. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 30 (1), 99-104.

Violanti, J. M. (2004). Predictors of Suicide Ideation. *Suicide & Life Threatening Behavior*, 34 (3), 277-283.

Violanti, J. M., Castellano, C., O'Rourke, J., & Paton, D. (2006). Proximity to the 9/11 Terrorist Attack and Suicide ideation in Police officers. *Traumatology*, 12 (3), 248-254.

Young, M. (1998). *Die narratiewe van lede van die radiobeheereenheid van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie Diens*. Ongepubliseerde Meestersgraad Verhandelings, Johannesburg: Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit.

Young, M. (2005). *Exploring the meaning of trauma in the South African Police Service*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. University of Pretoria: South Africa.

Zhang, J., Jia, S., Jiang, C., & Sun, J. (2006). Characteristics of Chinese Suicide Attempters: An Emergency room study. *Death Studies*, 30, 259-268.



**APPENDIX A: Letter for permission to conduct research in the South**

*African Police Service.*

University of Fort-Hare (EL campus)  
Psychological Service Centre  
21 Commissioner Street  
East London  
5200  
31 July 2007

South African Police Service  
The Head of Strategic Research & Management  
Psychological Services  
Pretoria 0001  
0001

Attention Director A. Grobler

**RE: Request for permission to conduct a research study in the SAPS.**

This letter serves as an application to conduct a research study in the South African Police Services. I am a contract worker of the SAPS within the **Division of Personnel Services Section: Psychological Services. Personal details: 1. Name: C. E. De Bruin 2. Persal No: 2208097-0.**

I am a registered student for a Masters Degree in Psychology by Course Work at the University of Fort-Hare (East London Campus) doing 2<sup>nd</sup> year (Internship) of the course at the University's Psychological Services Centre.

The research topic is "Suicide Ideation among police members in the Eastern Cape". The research approach will be quantitative in nature since the aim is to investigate the level of suicide ideation among uniformed members of the SAPS. It will also investigate the differences between suicide ideation of various demographic groups. In particular, the differences among gender and racial groups.

Permission was granted to proceed with this intended topic by the University's Faculty of Social Science (Psychology).

The research process is now at the stage where approval or permission is awaiting from the SAPS where this study is intent to take place.

Your assistance in granting permission for this study will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

---

Carmelitia De Bruin (Intern Psychologist)  
Tel (043) 704 7114

**APPENDIX B:**      *Letter of permission by the Head of Strategic Research and  
Psychological Services in the South African Police Service.*

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

ycrwysing Reference	0445851-6	The Head
Navrae Enquiries	Supt D Meiring	Psychological Services
Telefoon Telephone	(012)3935466	Head Office Pretoria
Faksnommer Fax number	(012)3935312	2007-08-20

- A.    The Head  
      Psychological Services
- B.    The Head  
      Strategic Management  
      Research

**APPLICATION FOR SAPS CONTRACT WORKERS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN  
THE SAPS**

1.    Application to conduct research in SAPS is hereby applied for 3 of Psychological Services contract workers in the Eastern Cape.
2.    These students are currently busy with the completion of their dissertations at the University of Fort Hare under the supervision of Prof L Nicolas. All three students research proposal have been accepted by the University and they are seeking approval to conduct the field research in SAPS.
3.    See a letter attached along with the students proposals.
4.    For approval

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D Meiring', is written over a faint, circular official stamp. The stamp contains the letters 'SU' and 'PT'.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**  
D Meiring

DIRECTOR  
SECTION HEAD: PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES AND SPORT AND RECREATION

DIR A. GROBLER

Recommended /

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Schnetler', written over a horizontal line.

SENIOR SUPT

HEAD: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT  
RESEARCH  
J SCHNETLER

Approved

**APPENDIX C:** *Letter of Instruction to participants*

Dear participant.

This study forms part of my Masters thesis which deals with questions around suicidal ideations and behaviour among police members. I would like to thank you for giving some of your time for my research. To complete the questionnaire it will take approximately 20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will remain anonymous and no one will be able to discover your identity. You are free to discuss any issues arising from this questionnaire with the researcher.

The questionnaire consists of 2 parts:

- The first section deals with demographic information. In this section you can write your answers in the appropriate space or mark your answer with **an “X”** (where applicable).
- In the second section you are to rate the frequency of suicidal thoughts or behaviour during the past month in the 7 point rating scales for each 25 items. Please rate your answer with **an X** in each scale, ranging from 0 (“never had the thoughts”) to 6 (“almost every day”).

It is important to note, that I am interested in what you personally think. There are also no right or wrong answers. Please answer all questions.

Thank you for participating in this research project.

Kind Regards

Carmelitia De Bruin.

## **Biographic Information**

We would like some demographic information from police members. These questions are asked in order for us to be able to study differences between men and woman, or investigate the influence of age, rank, race, level of education etc. Write your answers in the appropriate space or mark your answer with an “X” (where applicable):

THE FIRST QUESTION IS <b>VOLUNTARY</b>
--

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FILL IN THE DETAILS IF YOU WISH TO REMAIN <b>ANONYMOUS</b> .
---

1. Name:

--

2. Name of Police Station

--

3. Age in years:

--

4. Sex:

Male	Female
1	2

### 5. Race

White	Black	Coloured	Indian	Other
1	2	3	4	5

### 6. Rank:

Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Captain	Superintendent	Senior Superintendent
1	2	3	4	5	6

### 7. Years of experience in the SAPS:

1 year or less	1 to 3 years	3 to 5 years	More than 5 years	Other
1	2	3	4	5

### 8. Years in current position:

1 year or less	1 to 3 years	3 to 5 years	More than 5 years	Other
1	2	3	4	5

### 9. Marital Status:

Single	Engaged /in a relationship	Married	Divorced	Separated	Remarried	Other

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

#### 10. Level of Education

Grade 10 Standard 8	Grade 11 Standard 9	Grade 12 Matric	Technical college diploma	Diploma	University Degree (BA, BComm)	Post graduate Degree (Hons, MA)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

#### 11. Do you suffer from a Medical condition?

YES	NO
1	2

#### 12. Ho many days per week do you exercise?

Number of days

#### 13. What are your alcohol consumptions per week?

Number of drinks per week

#### 14. Do you smoke cigarettes?

YES	NO
1	2

15. Have you attempted to commit suicide previously?

YES	NO
1	2

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Carmelitia De Bruin

~~~~~