EXPLORING THE HIGH MURDER RATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The objects of this research are: first, to explain some of the causes of high murder rates in South Africa. Second, to refute the labelling of South Africa as the murder capital of the world. Third, exploring some alternative ways to violence resulting in deaths.

The author investigated the following problems: murder done predominately by men, the inefficiency or shortcomings of the police to investigate murder successfully and lack of reports showing a drastic reduction of murders rates, possible due to lenient sanctions given by the courts.

The main results of the research are: first, South Africa has been incorrectly referred to as the murder capital of the world. A label that scares would be visitors away from the country. This misleading labelling turned out to be factually incorrect according to several reports. Second, there are myriads of reasons why the death rates are very high in South Africa namely: varieties and normalization of violence; socio-economic inequalities; high youth unemployment rates; alcohol and drugs; culture of violence; easy access to firearms; lenient prison sentence; membership of gangsters; ineffective police investigation units; Mental illnesses or psychotic disorders and satanic beliefs.

The area of practical use of the research: is for all citizens, directly or indirectly affected by police and safer communities. Criminal justice students in higher institutions and criminal justice practitioners, government officials, and policymakers.

1. Introduction

In this article, the author first, looks at the definitions of homicide, murder as very serious crimes. The author also looks at why South Africa is often referred to by some previous authors as a "violent country and the murder capital of the world". Second, the author explores the issues surrounding the labelling affixed to South Africa whether they are fair or unfair. Third, to find out what are the causes of murder within the South African context and the possible solutions to murder in South Africa. From biblical times to the present day, it was deemed unlawful to take another person's life. The bible tells us in the book of Exodus 20:13 "*Thou shall not kill.* It, therefore, proclaims that we should not unlawfully take anybody's life. Homicide is the killing of a human being. It is regarded as the most serious form of criminal conduct. Homicide may consist of the killing of oneself (suicide) or of another (murder or culpable homicide [1]. Homicide carries a higher amount of punishment if it is carried out intentionally (Murder). When carried out negligently becomes (Manslaughter) [2] the intention killing of infants is known as infanticide and while the killing of women by men is known as Femicide. The mass killing of human beings is called genocide. The act of killing one's father is called patricide. For a better understanding of murder. It is the unlawful and intentional killing of another person. Therefore, what constitutes murder in criminal law are (a) unlawful; (b) killing; (c) of a person; and (d) intention. All murders are homicides and criminals but not all homicides are murders and criminals [3].

For murder to be treated as a crime, the killing of a person must be unlawful. In a criminal law context, unlawfulness can be excluded by grounds of justification such as private defence, necessity, official capacity, and obedience to orders. Consent to be killed does not exclude the unlawfulness of Killing. Euthanasia is not ground or legal justification for murder [4]. In some countries of the word, the penalty for homicide receives the deservedly harshest punishment found within the ambit of the criminal justice sentencing guidelines of each specific country and their legal jurisdictions. In South Africa, Section 51(1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997 [5] provides that a Regional Court or High Court must sentence a person convicted of murder to imprisonment for life in the following circumstances:

– if the murder was planned or premeditated;

– if the deceased was a law enforcement officer who had been murdered while performing his/her functions as a law enforcement officer, irrespective of whether he/she was on duty or not.

– if the deceased was somebody due to give material evidence in court concerning any crimes listed in Schedule 1 of the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977.

Before 1995, the death sentence was allowed in South Africa. But in the case of Makwayane 1995 2 SACR 1(CC), the constitutional Court held that this form of punishment is unconstitutional because it amounts to an unjustifiable violation of the right to life, the right to dignity, and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment. It is also very important to highlight different types of sentencing for the crime of murder. Section 51(2) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997 states as follows that:

a. The court is obliged to impose the following minimum periods of imprisonment when any person is found guilty.

b. Fifteen years in respect of a first offender

c. Twenty years in respect of a third of a second offender;

d. Twenty-five years in respect of a third or subsequent offender.

1. 1. Objects of the research

First, to explain some of the causes of high murder rates in South Africa. Second, to refute the labelling of South Africa as the murder capital of the world. Third, exploring an alternative to violence resulting in deaths.

General Strain Theory.

General strain theory (GST) is extremely effective in exhibiting how certain types of strain can potentially lead to committing a crime. GST emphasizes the importance of stressors in determining the increase in negative emotions such as frustration and anger. These emotions may pressure individuals to take corrective action and thus turn to crime to reduce these strains [6]. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world where the gap between the rich and the poor has widened over the years. Once a person developed a sense of failure and not been able to access the necessities of life, they may resort to serious crimes out of desperation to live. The author argues that a common African proverbial saying is that it is only the rich that has too many friends and not the poor. One can conclude that there is no perfume-like success and no disgusting odour like a failure especially when such failures lead into becoming a constituent of the marginalised and down below class in society. Society has therefore put enormous strain on us, conscious or subconsciously so that we all must fight to succeed or die whilst trying to succeed [7]. The author argues that murder is a very horrendous crime committed by all types of people from different upbringings, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and genders. However, certain theories can find similarities between these types of individuals, and what prompts them to exhibit such violence. The crime of homicide, specifically murder, can be effectively explained by the general strain theory, which is highly associated with the role of hegemonic masculinity identity. The idea of hegemonic masculinity is another extremely important factor to be considered when explaining crime. Hegemonic masculinity is a type of masculinity that exhibits dominance and legitimises the male's position as an authoritative figure, which further creates the foundation of unequal gender practices A person experiencing romantic stressors like the experience of getting divorced, the breakdown of a relationship, and/or the lack of acceptance by women in both romantic and/or sexual advances by men before the act [8].

According to one recent report by Ongezwa of eCNA news media captioned '32 New Political murder cases recorded in Kwa Zulu Natal Province since June 2021'. Killing for political power which was the trademark of the evil apartheid regime has just commenced according to this report. [9]. It has also been reported that the murder rate in South Africa, is again at the highest it has been in 10 years, with an average of 58.4 murders per day in the country between April 2019 and March 2020, an increase of 1.4 % from the previous report. Sexual offences increased by 1.7 %, with sexual assault increasing by 4.2 %. The murder rate of 36 per 100,000 people was little changed from the previous year and compares with an international average of seven per 100,000. The number of rapes, sexual offenses, and car hi-jackings also increased. The author provides the

reader with a snapshot of the murder trend in South Africa by relying on the murder rate statistical breakdown reported by the South African Police Service (SAPS). They are as follows:

– the document reveals that between April 2019 and March 2020, 21 325 people were murdered in South Africa, an increase of 1.4 % from the previous report;

– "KwaZulu-Natal remains the province with the highest murders with 4 859 recorded cases followed by Gauteng with 4 555, the Western Cape with 3 975, and Eastern Cape with 3 879;

– "KwaZulu-Natal is the capital and recorded the highest number of murders out of all the nine provinces, which increased by 10.6 %," Umlazi and Inanda townships are the murder hotspots in the KwaZulu-Natal. Meanwhile, the Western Cape is showing some improvements with statistics indicating that specialised policing in targeted areas does produce results;

– for the first time in many years, Nyanga Police Station recorded a 36.0 % decrease in murder. "Even last year there was a decrease. Gauteng province tops the statistics with 4 639 cases, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 4 161, the Western Cape with 3 555, and Eastern Cape with 2 409. For the reporting year 2019/2020, seventy-three police officers were killed of which 35 were murdered on duty and 38 off-duty.

The author argues that it is both skewed and misleading to refer to South Africa as the "murder capital of the world. When you look at the world murder rate figures, it gives another picture and explains the unfairness in a prejudiced report about South Africa. The murder rate in South Africa has been stubbornly high for the last decade but in comparison to other countries of the world, South Africa is not the murder capital of the world. There is persuasive evidence supporting evidence that such labelling is misleading and skewed. It is also very damaging for the South Africa Tourism industry. The countries with the ten highest crime rates in the world are

1. Venezuela (84.36 %).
2. Papua New Guinea (80.04 %).
3. South Africa (77.29 %).
4. Afghanistan (76.97 %).
5. Honduras (76.65 %).
6. Trinidad and Tobago (72.43 %).
7. Brazil (68.31 %).
8. Guyana (68.15 %).
9. El Salvador (67.84 %).
10. Syria (67.42 %) [10].

1. 2. Problem description

The murder rate in South Africa is again the highest it has been in 10 years, with an average of 58.4 murders per day in the country between April 2019 and March 2020, an increase of 1.4 % from the previous report. Sexual offences increased by 1.7 %, with sexual assault increasing by 4.2 %. On average, 115.8 people are tragically raped in South Africa every day. Contact crimes also increased by 0.7 %. The majority of the murders had occurred during arguments when people had gathered around social spaces, and during robberies (residential and non-residential), street robberies, mob justice, and gang-related incidents. The Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal recorded double-digit murder increases of 21.5 % and 16.9 % respectively.

South Africa's murder rate continued to spiral during the first quarter of 2021 according to the latest SAPS crimes statistics. A total of 4,976 people were murdered within the first three months of 2021. An increase of 387 more deaths when compared to the corresponding period in the previous year [11]. Policemen have not been spared from the horrific murders that have ravaged the country unabated into 2021. Police Minister Bheki Cele, in releasing the latest crime statistics described the killing of police officers as an unfolding "crisis" in the country. He further stated that "I wish to start my address by highlighting a crisis that is unfolding and has the potential to threaten the country's peace and stability. The death of South African Police Service members at the hands of callous, heartless, and brazen criminals'. According to Minister Cele,

"In the first three months of this year, 24 police were killed. Eleven of them were killed on duty while preventing, combating, or solving a crime. Some were attacked or ambushed while conducting patrols and their official firearms stolen…I believe the call to put the shoulder to the

wheel was heeded by many of our officers in blue …there had been an overall decline of 8.5 % in contact Crimes such as assault GBH, sexual offences, common assault, and robbery and robbery with aggravating circumstances. The only two crimes in this category that recorded an increase, are Murder and Attempted murder, recording an 8,4 and 8.7 % increase respectively …a total of 4 976 people were killed in the first three months of 2021, which was 387 more people killed compared to the corresponding period in the previous financial year.

1. 2. Suggested solutions to the problem

Chandre Gould [10] it should come as no surprise that crime and violence remain so disturbingly high in South Africa. What is surprising is that there isn't even more crime and violence considering how we have dealt with our violent past, that poverty and inequality continue to increase, and that we have failed as a country to secure confidence in and respect for the rule of law.

South Africans are left traumatised and powerless year after year to see murder thrive on their defenceless citizens. Some would argue that the police are not doing enough to protect. In some instances, especially when during festive seasons, it is reported that serving police officers have either shot their wives, partners, or their beloved ones with service pistols. This becomes a tragedy, when police who are meant, mandated to protect citizens become killers. Some of the suggested solutions to the problem are:

1. Police need to be more proactive and adopt a preventative position towards murder crime.

2. The South African government must work relentlessly towards job creation and improved service delivery.

3. Promoting education which teaches citizens how to deal with provocative incidents and how to explore alternative resolution models.

4. A tougher sentence imposed by the courts for all convicted murderers if possible none should be entitled to any kind of parole. Life means life as this will serve as a deterrent.

5. Encourage communication and dialogue when it comes to resolving the contentious issue

6. Religious leaders of all faiths must play a role to educate their followers to denounce the use of violence.

7. Protection of women, vulnerable persons, and groups should become part of all citizens' civic responsibility.

Aim of research: was to explore some of the reason(s) that may be held responsible for the high unacceptable death toll rates in South Africa.

2. Materials and Methods

The author relies on researching secondary data about Police accountability, carried out an extensive literature review enabling him to gather information related to the topic under study. Secondary data is a process of carrying out a systematic review of previous literature as it relates to the research topic. It relives the author the burden of participation with research participants, who to identify, access to, and limited time frame available to conduct the research. In this study, the author collected secondary data from previous qualitative studies relating to the research topic.

3. Results and Discussions

High murder rates trends in South Africa

The author reports the following high murder rates to trend in South Africa within a very short time as follows:

– there were 827 children murdered in South Africa in 2012/13: that is more than two a day. Added to that are the 21 575 children who were assaulted, with almost half of those assaults being severe;

– in the same year, 2 266 women were murdered, and 141 130 women were victims of attempted murder, assault with grievous bodily harm (GBH), and common assault. As horrifying as these statistics are, the number of women and children who fell victim to violence is dwarfed by the number of similar attacks on men. In 2012/13 alone, 13 123 men were murdered. At best, half of these cases would have made it to court, and not all of those that make it to court result in a guilty verdict or the perpetrator being punished [12];

– South Africa's murder/homicide rate for 2017 was 35.90, a 5.5 % increase from 2016;

– South Africa's murder/homicide rate for 2016 was 34.00, a 0.59 % increase from 2015;

– South Africa's murder/homicide rate for 2015 was 33.80, a 3.68 % increase from 2014;

– South Africa murder/homicide rate for 2014 was 32.60, a 2.84 increase from 2013 [10].

The South African Police Service [11] reported that there has been a change at the top of the list of police stations that record the most murder cases in South Africa. With Kraaifontein previously occupying the top spot, the badge of dishonour has now passed on to Plessislaer in Kwa Zulu Natal. Within January –March 2021, the author presented the following reported murders by police station areas as follows:

1. Plessislaer, KZN:73.

2. Inanda, KZN: 63.

3. Umlazi, KZN: 61 (up 33 from last year).

4. Khayelitsha, Western Cape: 61 (up from nine from last year).

5. Mfuleni, Western Cape: 56.

6. Kraaifontein, Western Cape: 47.

7. Delft, Western Cape: 46.

8. Nyanga, Western Cape: 43.

9. Ivory Park, Gauteng: 40(up 21 from last year).

10. Gugulethu, Western Cape: 40.

The author argues that majority of these areas highlighted above are predominately black arrears, hardest hit by drugs and alcohol abusers, high unemployment with and deprived communities. The author argues that until 1994, South Africans had little reason to respect the law, and no reason to believe in the rule of law because the same was used to oppress them and perpetuate grave injustices. The police were seen as happy triggers officers and apparatus of the state-mandated to keep black majority South Africans under racial domination. Blacks were treated with disgrace even in the presence of their families treated like sub-human beings under the heydays of the successive callous and evil apartheid regime.

To make matters worse, the apartheid state was deeply corrupt at all levels, and those who held positions of power, whether as politicians or functionaries, were very seldom called to account before a court for acts of corruption or the abuse of power.

The author [13] also highlighted the discriminatory application of the law as 'Black men who murdered were more likely to face harsher sentences than white men who murdered, especially if the white murderer's victim was poor and black. Black women who were raped were less likely to have their cases investigated than cases in which white women were the victims. Although, the 2018 Global Peace Index listed South Africa as one of the most violent and dangerous places on earth, and getting worse. South Africa has a long history of violence. It was used as a tool of power and governance by colonialists to repress and control the indigenous people. The apartheid regime from 1948 used violence as part of its repertoire to gain and maintain social and political control (Global Peace Index 2018[14].

Causes of Murder.

Multiple factors can be held responsible for high murder rates in South Africa. Some of these factors are

– varieties and normalization of violence;

– socio-economic inequalities;

– high youth unemployment rates;

– alcohol and drugs;

– culture of violence: South Africa's tendency to resort to violence to solve conflicts and give a warped sense of justice;

– easy access to firearms;

– lenient prison sentences for offenders;

– lack of education and skills;

– gangsters culture;

– lack of police effectiveness and investigation;

– political affiliations;

– lust, love, and loot;

– mental illnesses or psychotic disorders;

– control and dominance;

– satanist and occultist beliefs [15, 16].

Evidence suggesting that South Africa is not the murder capital of the world.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Study on Homicide 2019, 464,000 people were murdered in 2017 – more than five times as many as were killed in armed conflicts during the same period. The report explains that many socioeconomic factors can drive homicide rates. These factors include gender stereotypes, social inequality, unemployment, political instability, firearms possession (just over half of all homicides are committed via firearms) ... and especially gangs, organized crime, and the drug trade. The report estimates that "an average of roughly 65,000 killings every year were related to organized crime and gangs over the period 2000–2017, and that up to 19 % of all homicides recorded globally in 2017 were related to organized crime and gangs." (UNODC, 2019) [13].

Factors known to contribute to lower murder rates and decreased crime overall include the wealth of a nation, the effectiveness of its law enforcement, the availability of weapons (especially firearms), and the severity of punishment for committing murder. For instance, Japan is a fairly wealthy nation with very strict regulations regarding gun possession and murder is punishable by hanging.

Top Countries with the Lowest Murder Rates (per 100k people) in 2017:

1. Japan (0.2).
2. Singapore (0.2).
3. Hong Kong (China) (0.3).

The top 10 Countries with the Highest Murder Rates (per 100k people) in 2017 are:

1. El Salvador (61.7).
2. Honduras (41.0).
3. Venezuela (49.9).
4. United States Virgin Islands (49.3 [2012 data]).
5. Jamaica (56.4).
6. Lesotho (43.6 [[2016 data]] per 100k people).
7. Belize (37.8).
8. Saint Vincent And The Grenadines (36.5 [2016 data]).
9. Saint Kitts And Nevis (36.1 [2012 data]).
10. South Africa (35.7).

While 2017's global murder rate was 6.1 (per 100k people), murder rates varied widely across the globe. Central America and the Caribbean were global hotspots, with countries such as El Salvador (61.7), Honduras (41), and Jamaica (56.4) posting murder rates up to 10 times higher than the global average. The South American countries Brazil (30.8), Venezuela (49.9), and Colombia (25) followed close behind. Even with the rest of South America and North America posting lower rates, the overall average for the Americas as a whole rose to 17.2. Africa's rate came in at 13.0. The following countries murder rate is as follows:

1. Luxembourg (0.3).
2. Indonesia (0.4).
3. Norway (0.5).
4. Oman (0.5).
5. Switzerland (0.5).
6. United Arab Emirates (0.5).
7. China (0.6).

Below is a list of each country's homicide rate (number of murders per 100,000 people). Note that accidental deaths and cases of "self-inflicted murder", more commonly called suicide, are not included in these statistics.

Here are the 10 countries with the highest homicide rates:

1. El Salvador (82.84 per 100k people).
2. Honduras (56.52 per 100k people).
3. Venezuela (56.33 per 100k people).
4. United States Virgin Islands (49.26 per 100k people).
5. Jamaica (47.01 per 100k people).
6. Lesotho (41.25 per 100k people).
7. Belize (37.60 per 100k people).
8. Saint Vincent And The Grenadines (36.46 per 100k people).

9. Saint Kitts And Nevis (34.23 per 100k people).

10. South Africa (33.97 per 100k people).

Countries with the Highest Crime Rate 2021.

The countries with the ten highest crime rates in the world are:

1. Venezuela (83.76).

2. Papua New Guinea (80.79).

3. South Africa (76.86).

4. Afghanistan (76.31).

5. Honduras (74.54).

6. Trinidad and Tobago (71.63).

7. Guyana (68.74).

8. El Salvador (67.79).

9. Brazil (67.49).

10. Jamaica (67.42).

*Note: – *All numerical rates are expressed per 100,000 people*

1. Venezuela.

Venezuela has a crime index of 83.76, the highest of any country in the world. The U.S. Department of State has issued a Level 4 travel advisory for Venezuela, indicating that it is unsafe to travel to the country, and travellers should not travel there. Venezuela's high crime rates have been attributed to reasons including corrupt authorities, a flawed judiciary system, and poor gun control.

2. Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea has a crime index of 80.79. In Papua New Guinea, crime, especially violent crime, is primarily fuelled by rapid social, economic, and political changes. Raskol gangs engage in small and large-scale criminal activity and consist mainly of members with little education and few employment opportunities. Organized crime in the form of corruption is also common in major cities and largely contributes to the high crime rate. Additionally, the geography of Papua New Guinea makes it appealing for drug and human trafficking.

3. South Africa.

South Africa has the third-highest crime rate in the world. South Africa has a notably high rate of assaults, rape, homicides, and other violent crimes. This has been attributed to several factors, including high levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment, social exclusion, and the normalization of violence. South Africa has one of the highest rape rates in the world. More than 1 in 4 men surveyed by the South African Medical Research Council admitted to committing rape. In 2012/13 alone, 13 123 men were murdered. At best, half of these cases would have it to court, and not all of those that make it to court result in a guilty verdict or the perpetrator being punished. With each year violence that violence, the number of South Africans who have experienced and witnessed violence increases, and so does the extent of national trauma [17].

4. Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has the fourth-highest crime rate. Crime is present in various forms, including corruption, assassinations/contract killings, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and money laundering. Afghanistan supplied 85 % of the world's illicit opium in 2020. The Taliban, which regained control of the country in 2021, has pledged to stamp out the opium industry, but it is such a vital part of the country's struggling economy that it will be difficult to eliminate. Widespread unemployment adds additional fuel for many of the country's crimes, such as robbery and assault.

5. Honduras.

With a crime index of 74.54, Honduras ranks fifth in the world in terms of crime rate. Honduras's peak of violent crime was in 2012 when the country experienced about 20 homicides per day, typically carried out by gun-toting gangs such as Barrio 18 or Mara Salvatrucha. Honduras is also considered to be a major drug route to the United States. Weak domestic law enforcement has made the country an easy point of entry for the illegal drug trade. The U.S. Department of State has issued a Level 3 travel advisory for Honduras, indicating that travellers should reconsider visiting the country.

6. Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago has the sixth-highest crime rate in the world. Trinidad and Tobago's government faces several challenges in its effect to reduce crime, such as bureaucratic resistance

to change, the negative influence of gangs, drugs, economic recession, and an overburdened legal system. There is a great demand for illegal weapons as well, which drug trafficking and gang-related activities fuel. Trinidad and Tobago has a Level 2 travel advisory, meaning that travellers should exercise increased caution. Visitors are typically victims of pickpocketing, assault, theft, and fraud.

7. Guyana.

Guyana has the eighth-highest crime rate worldwide of 68.74 %, and a murder rate of about four times higher than that of the United States. Despite a rigorous licensing requirement to own firearms, the use of weapons by criminals is common. Domestic violence happens regularly in Guyana, as the enforcement of domestic violence laws is weak. Armed robberies occur frequently as well, especially in Georgetown. Additionally, tourists are often the victims of hotel break-ins, robberies, and assaults.

8. El Salvador.

Organized crime is a massive problem in El Salvador, contributing to most social violence, with its two largest gangs, MS-13 and Barrio 18. There are an estimated 25,000 gang members at large in El Salvador, 9,000 in prison, and about 60,000 young people in youth gangs, which dominate the country. Many gangs have also cultivated relationships and in some cases territorial disputes, with drug traffickers. In addition to gangs, high unemployment rates and low wages in El Salvador have pushed families into marginalized areas where crimes are common. Property crimes, such as robbery, theft, and theft of vehicles, are the most common.

9. Brazil.

Brazil has the seventh-highest crime rate in the world with exceptionally high rates of violent crimes. Brazil's homicide rate was 23.6 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020 – and it has been as high as 30.8 in previous years. Brazil's most massive problem is organized crime, as organized crime has expanded in recent years, and violence between rival groups is a common occurrence. Drug trafficking, corruption, and domestic violence are all-pervasive issues in Brazil.

10. Jamaica.

Finishing the top ten list of countries with the highest crime rates in Jamaica, which is plagued by government corruption, gang activity, and high levels of violent crime, including sexual assault. The U.S. Overseas Security Advisory Council describes the Jamaican police force as understaffed and possessed of limited resources. Travelers are advised to especially avoid Spanish Town and parts of Kingston and Montego Bay (**Table 1**).

Table 1

World crime index 2021 (Top 10 countries)

Ranking	Country	Crime index	Population
1	Venezuela	83.76	28.704.954
2	Papua New Guinea	80.79	9.119.010
3	South Africa	76.86	60.041.994
4	Afghanistan	76.31	39.835.428
5	Honduras	74.54	10.062.991
6	Trinidad And Tobago	71.63	1.403.375
7	Guyana	68.74	790.326
8	El Salvador	67.79	6.518.499
9	Brazil	67.49	213.993.437
10	Jamaica	67.42	2.973.463

This is the most comparable of crime indicators and reveals that during 2011/12 there were 30.9 murders per 100 000 people. This means that South Africa has a murder rate four and a half times the international average, which is 6,9 murders per 100 000. It is important, however, to recognise that we have been becoming less violent over time. Since 1994, the murder rate has decreased by 54 %. Moreover, during the past decade, from 2002/03 to 2011/12, the total recorded violent crime rate has decreased by 32.2 %. South Africa is therefore a far safer society than ten years ago, but a lot more needs to be done before the country becomes as safe as many other societies in the world [18, 19].

Culture of violence.

In looking at the shocking murder statics given by the author, one can conclude that we live in a violent society where violence resulting in death has become normalised. This culture of violence serves as a breeding ground of fear, anger, and results in high crime rates. Unemployed youth are socialised into this violent culture found in communities [20].

The biosocial approach to murder further emphasises the importance of considering psychological disorders and biological factors in determining crime. The authors [21] reveal that greater than 10 % of murderers have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a similar majority of them have injured their head. Moreover, these offenders have encountered psychosocial factors including parental divorce, sexual or physical abuse, and have also undergone major surgery as an adolescent. The biosocial approach to murder further emphasises the importance of considering psychological disorders and biological factors in determining crime. It was reported that greater than 10 % of murderers have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a similar majority of them have injured their heads. Moreover, these offenders have encountered psychosocial factors including parental divorce, sexual or physical abuse, and have also undergone major surgery as an adolescent [22]. The author argued that the family structure was affected by harsh working conditions under the apartheid era in South Africa. It promoted unusual family life where breadwinners were disrupted and taken away from their families in some instances working in mines for months and not there for the growth and bonding of the family. Families became disorganised and dysfunctional, became where no discipline or moral values were left inculcated into family life. Discipline was unattended due to providing for one's family [23]; [24] Morrell; [25]. A period where boys were often socialised as the stronger sex, believing that women were weaker and should depend on them for survival. Boys were not reprimanded at home for wrongdoing and they hardly take responsibility for their actions. Girls were trained to behave like ladies and be very respectful and submissive to men a key factor in building a matrimonial home [26].

Limitation of the study. First, this study is qualitative research relying on secondary data. No face-to-face interviews were conducted to hear directly any person who has been convicted of murder. Conducting a field study with a prison establishment would have been more reliable in terms of data gathering and analysis of the data. This may limit further research on this topic.

Prospects for further research. This research provides an empirical foundation for other researchers who may be interested in this topic. First, to build on the existing knowledge and, second, inviting them to filling the academic lacuna as the see it necessary. In this regard, the author welcomes all constructive criticisms that will enrich this area of study now and in the future.

5. Conclusion

The labelling of South Africa as the murder capital of the world is not factually correct but misleading. First, in looking at the United Nations report, it does not put South Africa amongst the top seven countries with the highest murder rates per ratio of the entire population. South Africa is placed as top five countries with high numbers of violent crimes. One can simply understand why there are high numbers of violence-related deaths. The author concludes that human life is sacrosanct and must not be wasted. Section 11 of the Republic of South Africa Bill of rights states "that all human beings have a right to life. The right to life remains the most important of all fundamental human rights. As a life taken away lawfully and unlawfully cannot be restored. The essence of life needs to be clearly understood in the context. We must incorporate this into both our value chain system and ecosystem reinforcing the belief that human lives must be protected at all cost, something the state or any other person cannot terminate willy-nilly. Anyone who unlawfully takes another person's life must be punished severely**.**

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