

Police Science Between Empiricism and Normativity: Specifics of Scientific Research

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Abstract: Scientific research in the field of police sciences faces numerous epistemological, methodological and ethical challenges due to the nature of police action that takes place on the border between empirical facts and normative values. The paper analyses the key specifics of research in police sciences, including epistemological foundations, methodological approaches, research design, data collection and analysis, organisation of the research process, and presentation of results. A special focus is placed on balancing the objectivity of scientific methods with the practical implications for policing, as well as on ethical dilemmas arising from research on sensitive topics such as corruption, abuse of power, and police effectiveness. The paper emphasises the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, the application of evidence-based methodology, and the standardisation of research procedures to increase the relevance and reliability of scientific findings. It also discusses the need to enhance ethical protocols that safeguard respondents and maintain the integrity of research. The paper emphasises the importance of a reflective, critical scientific paradigm that accounts for the complexity and dynamism of policing, thereby ensuring the continuous development of both theoretical and practical knowledge in the discipline.

Keywords: police sciences, epistemology, methodology of scientific research, evidence-based approach, interdisciplinarity.

INTRODUCTION

Police science is a specific area of research that sits at the intersection of empirical analysis and the normative frameworks that shape policing. Unlike other social sciences, police sciences integrate quantitative and qualitative methods to address complex questions of security, crime prevention, and institutional effectiveness (Milojević et al., 2025b). However, the nature of policing and its role in society make research in this area methodologically and epistemologically challenging. This paper aims to provide a critical review of the challenges faced by researchers and to offer guidelines for improving methodological approaches in police science.

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EPISTEMOLOGICAL PECULIARITIES OF POLICE SCIENCES: BETWEEN EMPIRICISM AND NORMATIVITY

Epistemological analysis is a fundamental epistemological framework for understanding how knowledge is generated, validated, and interpreted in the police sciences. Despite empirical research in this area relying on methodological principles derived from general scientific practice, the underlying epistemological assumptions remain specific because policing is inherently normative and socio-contextual (Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Dimitrakos, 2021).

Police science, as a multidisciplinary field, is characterised by the integration of empirical knowledge and normative assumptions arising from the police's role in society. A key epistemological specificity lies in the fact that knowledge about police activities is inextricably linked to value systems, social norms and political interests. Such a dualism – between what is perceived as “scientific” and what is normative – is reflected in theoretical discussions of the role of the police, in which empirical observations cannot be separated from socio-ethical and political interpretations of reality (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016).

Further epistemological complexity arises from the fact that police sciences, as a discipline, often seek to strike a balance between the natural and social sciences. On the one hand, the pursuit of objectivity requires the application of strictly defined scientific criteria. On the other hand, the normative aspects of policing require reflection on the ethical and political implications. This epistemological dualism emphasises the importance of critically examining fundamental assumptions, whereby concepts such as “objectivity”, “value neutrality” and “pragmatic rationality” must be reinterpreted in the context of the specific requirements and functions of police institutions (Reiner, 2010).

The interdisciplinary character of police sciences opens space for epistemological plurality, in which elements of empirical methods and philosophical reflection are combined. While empirical approaches enable the measurement and quantification of aspects of policing, the epistemological dimension of research necessitates a deeper reflection on how these data are contextualised within a broader socio-political framework. Such integration results in epistemological reflexivity that recognises the limits of traditional scientific models and encourages the development of new theoretical approaches better suited to the complexity and heterogeneity of police knowledge (Maguire et al., 2007). In addition, the epistemological perspective in police science often emphasises the need for a multidimensional approach in which normative questions are treated not solely as external conditions of research, but as integral parts of the knowledge-generation process itself. Such an approach enables a more effective integration of empirical findings with theoretical discussions, resulting in a more systematic and reflective epistemology that can address the challenges of contemporary society, particularly the complexity of issues related to security, control, and justice. Namely, a broader epistemology is needed that encompasses methodological pluralism, the avoidance of epistemological monolithism, and the proactive application of interdisciplinarity and epistemological anarchism to research, policy, and practice (Lydon, 2022).

The presented epistemological specifics highlight the need for constant re-examination of the fundamental assumptions that underpin the scientific paradigm of police sciences. The dualism between the empirical approach and normative reflection encourages the development of a critical epistemology that seeks to break the illusion of pure objectivity



in research that, by its very nature, is rooted in the socio-political context (Milošević & Milojević, 2000). Such an approach enables analysts to identify implicit assumptions that shape data interpretation, thereby creating space for the development of new theoretical models that better capture the nuances of policing (Reiner, 2010).

A further challenge lies in integrating epistemologies across the different scientific disciplines that contribute to the development of police sciences. While traditional empirical models emphasise measurability and quantification, epistemological reflection necessitates consideration of qualitative aspects and contextual variables (Milojević et al., 2012). It is this epistemological plurality that ensures that scientific research in police science does not remain limited to reductive models but rather reflects the complexity and dynamism of the social relations within which the police operate (Maguire et al., 2007).

Thus, the epistemological specifics of scientific research in police sciences are reflected in the complex interaction between empirical data and normative assumptions, which results in a dynamic epistemological framework (Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Dimitrakos, 2021). Through the analysis of fundamental epistemological theories and consideration of interdisciplinary challenges, it is evident that police science necessitates an approach that is reflective, critical, and capable of integrating the multidimensional aspects of reality. Ultimately, the development of such an epistemological framework represents not only a theoretical challenge but also an imperative for improving the quality and relevance of police science research (Popper, 2005; Maguire et al., 2007; Reiner, 2010).

DESIGNING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN POLICE SCIENCES: SPECIFICS OF METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS AND CHALLENGES

Scientific research design is a crucial stage in achieving quality and relevant knowledge. In the field of police sciences, this process gains additional weight due to the specifics of police functions in society and the complexity of contemporary security challenges (Milojević et al., 2025a).

The basis of scientific research lies in selecting a relevant topic and precisely formulating the research problem. In police science, the choice of topic must align with current challenges in security and the efficiency of police activities. The process of defining the problem involves identifying pressures arising from the socio-political environment, as well as challenges within the organisation and the police's functioning. A clearly defined problem enables you to formulate specific research questions and hypotheses, which in turn lead to the development of a theoretical framework. Such an approach ensures that the project focuses on real challenges and, at the same time, contributes to improving knowledge of the functioning of police structures (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016).

A key component of research design is selecting an appropriate theoretical framework that conceptually supports the research problem. In the context of police science, this framework typically integrates elements of sociology, criminology, law, and political science, allowing for a holistic understanding of the specifics of policing. A thorough conceptual foundation enables the researcher to precisely define variables and their relationships, which is essential for the validity of the research design and for formulating hypotheses that reflect the reality of police action (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016).



The research objectives serve as a guide for the project. In the field of police science, the research objectives include analysing factors that affect the efficiency of police procedures, exploring innovations in organisational structures, and examining the impact of political changes on police work. The precise formulation of goals and hypotheses contributes to the creation of a clear research plan and ensures that results are interpreted in light of the predefined goals (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016).

The design of the research must also include arguments about scientific and social justification. In the field of police sciences, the importance of research is reflected in its potential to improve police institution practices, thereby increasing societal security. Scientific justification is reflected in theoretical originality and contribution to subsequent research. In contrast, social justification stems from the practical application of results in enhancing police procedures and public policy (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). This ensures the multidimensional significance of the project, enriching the academic literature and having concrete implications for police work (Reiner, 2010).

Designing research in police science faces several specific challenges. Primarily, researchers must reconcile theoretical concepts with the practical realities of policing, which often involve working in complex socio-political contexts. Additionally, limited access to relevant literature and the scarcity of empirical studies in specific segments of policing can pose an obstacle (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). Therefore, successful design requires an interdisciplinary approach, as well as a thorough understanding of the functions and challenges of police institutions, which contributes to the creation of a research project that is both scientifically robust and practically relevant (Termiz, 2009).

A well-designed research project enables a systematic approach to addressing the challenges faced by police institutions, thereby improving practice and creating new knowledge. Despite numerous challenges, an interdisciplinary approach and thorough planning enable the creation of a research project that is both relevant to the academic community and applicable in the practical improvement of police work.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APPLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC METHODS IN POLICE SCIENCE: A BALANCE BETWEEN OBJECTIVITY AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The application of scientific methods in police science research provides a systematic, empirically grounded understanding of the phenomena at the heart of police institutions' work. The scientific approach enables not only the verification and evaluation of the existing theoretical assumptions but also the development of new models and strategies, which contribute to improving police action efficiency and to the recording of results used to create public policy guidelines (Hagan, 2005; Bachman & Schutt, 2007).

The scientific method is tailored to the specific needs of police science. Although the discipline's methodology relies on general scientific principles, its application must be sensitive to the operational nature of policing. This adaptability is reflected in the ability to examine assumptions about the functioning of police systems, crime-prevention strategies, and the effectiveness of specific interventions using rigorous methods (Maguire et al., 2007).



In practice, the application of scientific methods to research in police science requires a specific interpretation and operationalisation of concepts related to policing, such as perception of security, use of coercive means, and public trust. The scientific method in this context involves formulating clearly defined hypotheses that are then empirically tested through systematically collected data (Alimpić, 2018). However, the very process of applying the methods – from formulating questions to rigorous testing – must be adapted to the dynamic conditions in which police institutions operate, thus ensuring that the research is relevant and applicable (Reiner, 2010).

An important contribution to the application of scientific methods in police science is the development of evidence-based approaches. This approach enables rigorous testing and comparison of police interventions, ensuring that decisions are based on empirical evidence. The application of quasi-experimental design, controlled studies, and meta-analyses enables researchers to objectively assess the effectiveness of specific measures, thereby contributing to the development of science-based practices in policing (Lum et al., 2011). Standardisation of the application of scientific methods is a key element in achieving research reproducibility in the field of police sciences. The introduction of standard procedures for formulating hypotheses, operationalising variables, and evaluating results contributes to the creation of a reliable scientific corpus that enables the development of both theory and practice (Kesić, 2013). Such standardisation, along with the continuous revision and adaptation of methodological approaches to the specifics of policing, enables scientific research to serve as a solid foundation for evidence-based decision-making in public safety (Bachman & Schutt, 2007).

The application of scientific methods poses several unique challenges in police science. The dynamics and complexity of the operational environment, as well as the need for a rapid response in crises, necessitate flexibility in applying standard methodological approaches. Nevertheless, through continuous adaptation and integration of modern scientific methods, it is possible to achieve a high level of validity and reliability of research, which is a challenge, but also an imperative for the improvement of scientific knowledge in the field of police sciences (Hagan, 2005; Maguire et al., 2007).

The application of scientific methods enables rigorous hypothesis testing and the evaluation of the effects of various interventions, thereby contributing to the development of evidence-based practices in police work. Although the context of policing is specific and requires adapting standard scientific methods, continuous adaptation and standardisation of approaches create a robust research framework. Such an approach not only enhances theoretical understanding of policing but also provides an empirical basis for informed public policy decision-making, thereby contributing to improvements in police institutions' security and efficiency.

ORGANIZATION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM APPROACHES IN POLICE SCIENCES

Organising research in police science is a critical factor for the successful implementation of scientific projects. Individual research work enables in-depth engagement with specific topics, providing an opportunity to improve personal research skills and to elaborate on



theoretical concepts (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). In police sciences, where complex problems are often involved, an individual approach allows the researcher to focus on detailed analysis of specific aspects without being influenced by group dynamics. This approach allows for greater flexibility and autonomy, but it also requires a high level of self-discipline in methodological decision-making (Hagan, 2005).

Team research in police sciences brings significant benefits through the integration of different expertise and experiences. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field, the team approach enables the synthesis of perspectives from sociology, criminology, political science, and other disciplines, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). Within teams, clearly defined roles, effective leadership, and transparent communication are key to ensuring synergy and efficiency. However, the challenges of teamwork include the need for constant coordination and integration of different methodological approaches, which requires developed managerial and interpersonal skills (Stokols et al., 2008). The organisational structure of the team research must be adapted to the police's activities. Among the most important elements are: (1) A clear definition of roles and responsibilities, which allows for the effective use of expertise and prevents overlapping activities; (2) Effective communication and coordination of work with the use of collaborative tools and clearly defined communication channels; (3) Leadership and management of a team by an experienced manager plays a key role in directing work, motivating members and resolving conflict situations; (4) Flexibility and adaptability in the event of changing conditions or new challenges (Maguire et al., 2007). While a team-based approach allows for a diversity of expertise, it also brings challenges such as: (1) Coordination and mutual understanding across disciplines, (2) Reconciliation of individual and collective goals by trade-off, (3) Limitation of time and financial resources (Stokols et al., 2008).

An optimal research process often relies on a combination of individual and team activities. While individual work allows for detailed analysis of specific aspects, teamwork fosters the exchange of ideas and the integration of diverse expertise, particularly in complex fields such as police science. The synergy of these approaches enables the research team to develop a more comprehensive conceptual framework and formulate innovative strategies to solve practical problems (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). Effective organisation of such hybrid models requires careful planning, clearly defining goals and roles, and establishing mechanisms for continuous evaluation (Stokols et al., 2008; Maguire et al., 2007).

Organising research in police science, whether individual or team-based, requires careful planning and the implementation of structural elements that enable effective collaboration and the integration of diverse expertise. An individual approach offers deeper engagement with specific topics, while teamwork fosters synergy and comprehensive research. Improving organisational mechanisms in research is crucial for developing evidence-based practices that significantly enhance police activities and inform the creation of public policy guidelines. Further research in this area can contribute to the development of new models of research organisation, adapted to the dynamic conditions of modern police operations.



DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS IN POLICE SCIENCE: PECULIARITIES OF METHODOLOGICAL STANDARDS AND OPERATIONAL OBSTACLES

Data collection is a crucial step in police science research, providing the empirical foundation for theoretical assumptions and evidence-based decision-making in policing practice. The specifics of this process stem from the operational nature of police work, structural and administrative obstacles, and the complexity of police institutions' operations.

Data collection in police science involves a range of methods that combine quantitative and qualitative techniques (Milašinović & Kešetović, 2012). Quantitative approaches most often involve the analysis of administrative data, statistical reports, and official records collected within police organisations. On the other hand, qualitative approaches – such as structured and semi-structured interviews and direct observation – allow for a deeper understanding of operational practices and the contexts in which police entities operate (Hagan, 2005; Bachman & Schutt, 2007; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016).

In police science, primary data sources are often found within the police organisation itself. This includes event logs, internal reports, crime statistics, records of operational interventions, and other relevant documents. In addition, secondary sources such as independent surveys, media sources, and case studies also play an important role in supplementing and verifying the data obtained (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). The use of these sources enables researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of police institutions; however, it also poses challenges regarding the accuracy, standardisation, and timeliness of the data (Maguire et al., 2007).

The specifics of data collection in this area arise from several factors: (1) Availability of data: due to the operational nature of police work, access to internal records is often procedurally restricted; (2) Standardization and validity of differently recorded data; (3) Contextual sensitivity: police data must be interpreted in the light of the specific context – operational conditions, regional specificities and socio-political environment. This implies that researchers must be familiar with the internal procedures and structures of police institutions' work to interpret the data obtained correctly (Reiner, 2010).

Although the availability of data is a key prerequisite for the quality of research, researchers in police science face several challenges, including: (1) Administrative barriers that make data collection difficult; (2) Confidentiality and security limit access to highly protected data; (3) Variability of data sources by method of collection and degree of comparability (Hagan, 2005; Bachman & Schutt, 2007).

The specifics of data collection in police research are shaped through unique operational, administrative and contextual factors that require adapted methodological approaches. Successful data collection is the foundation for the further development of theoretical models and evidence-based decisions, which are crucial for improving the efficiency and transparency of policing (Braga & Tucker, 2019; Piza & Welsh, 2022). Further improvements in data collection approaches can contribute to better standardisation and integration of sources, thereby strengthening the quality of scientific research in police science.

Data processing and analysis are crucial stages in the research process in police science, as they enable the transformation of raw data into empirically grounded conclusions that contribute to the improvement of operational and strategic policies within police institutions. The data processing process involves a series of steps, including data cleaning,



verification, integration, and transformation, to ensure the accuracy and comparability of the raw data. In the context of police science, data often come from multiple sources – administrative databases, operational reports, statistical records, and media sources – and challenges arise regarding format standardisation, inconsistencies in recording, and data incompleteness (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). The quality of data processing is crucial, as it affects the validity of further analysis and evidence-based decision-making within policing (Braga & Tucker, 2019; Piza & Welsh, 2022). Standardisation of data processing involves establishing uniform procedures for cleaning, encoding, integrating, and sharing data, enabling their systematic use in research. The use of software tools such as SPSS, SAS, GIS, and Python libraries (e.g., Pandas) enables the automation and reproducibility of processes, thereby improving the reliability of results.

Data analysis involves applying statistical techniques and algorithms to interpret processed data. In police science, different analytical methods are used depending on the nature of the data and the research problem. Quantitative analysis includes descriptive statistics, inferential methods, regression models, analysis of variance, and advanced techniques such as time-series analysis and multivariate data analysis (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). These techniques enable the identification of patterns in crime statistics, the assessment of police intervention effectiveness, and the prediction of crime trends (Lum et al., 2011). In addition to quantitative methods, qualitative data analysis enables a deeper understanding of the context and meaning behind operational practices. Methods such as thematic analysis, content analysis, and narrative analysis allow researchers to identify key themes, patterns, and interpretations in interviews, meeting minutes, and other textual materials. The use of software tools, such as NVivo, contributes to the systematisation and transparency of the coding and interpreting data process (Hagan, 2005).

The specifics of data processing and analysis in police sciences arise from several factors: (1) Complexity and heterogeneity of data: police data often include different types of information – numerical, textual, geolocation and time stamps. This heterogeneity requires the application of multifunctional approaches to data processing, as well as the ability to integrate data from different sources into a coherent database for analysis; (2) Standardization and consolidation: due to the variability in the way data are recorded between different units, it is necessary to establish standardized processing protocols to ensure the consistency and reliability of analytical results; (3) Use of advanced analytical tools: given the large amounts of data and the need for rapid decision-making, researchers in law enforcement increasingly use advanced software tools and machine learning techniques to analyse data, allowing for more accurate modelling and prediction of trends in crime and security challenges (Reiner, 2010).

Although modern tools and techniques are available, researchers face several challenges: (1) Deficiencies and incompleteness of data: problems with incomplete or incorrectly recorded data can affect the validity of the analysis, and it is crucial to apply robust techniques to identify and correct these deficiencies; (2) Integration of data from different sources: different recording systems and different data collection methodologies lead to challenges in their consolidation, which requires the application of specialized procedures for data reconciliation; (3) Complexity of statistical analysis: given the dynamics and complexity of criminal and security phenomena, researchers must use sophisticated statistical models and algorithms, which requires high expertise and adequate interpretation of results.



Data processing and analysis in police science are critical components of the research process, enabling the transformation of raw information into empirically based conclusions. The specifics of this process include challenges related to heterogeneity, standardisation, data integration and sharing, and the need to apply advanced analytical tools. Overcoming these challenges enables researchers to develop robust models that support evidence-based policing, thereby improving the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguarding public safety.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: HOW SCIENCE CAN IMPROVE POLICE PRACTICE

Presenting the results of research in the field of police sciences is a crucial stage in communicating scientific knowledge, both within the academic community and to practical users – decision-makers, operational managers, and the broader society. A clear, transparent and accessible presentation of results enables a better interpretation of research findings and encourages the application of evidence-based practices in police work (Braga & Tucker, 2019; Piza & Welsh, 2022).

The presentation of research results includes a variety of formats, including reports, scientific articles, conference presentations, and multimedia presentations. In police science, due to the operational nature of research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is often used. Graphical representations, such as graphs, tables, and maps, allow for clear visualisation of statistical data and trends, while qualitative representations – e.g., thematic analyses or case studies – illuminate deeper contextual aspects of the results. A multidimensional approach to presenting results enhances the comprehensibility and applicability of research findings (Lum et al., 2011). Effective data visualisation is crucial for presenting results, particularly when working with complex policing systems. The use of statistical analysis software tools enables the creation of interactive charts, diagrams, and infographics that not only facilitate interpretation but also enhance data transparency and clarity. Presenting results visually enables rapid identification of patterns, anomalies, and trends, which is extremely important for decision-makers who rely on evidence in their work (Reiner, 2010).

The key to successful presentation of results lies in a clearly defined presentation structure. The presentation should begin with a summary of the key findings, followed by a detailed analysis of the individual results, and conclude with a discussion of the implications and recommendations for practice. In police science, where results can directly impact operational strategies, the presentation must focus on practical aspects – e.g., the impact of specific measures on crime reduction or internal control. Clearly defined conclusions and recommendations facilitate the application of research findings in the real world (Lum et al., 2011). The presentation of results in police science should not be limited to the academic community. The ability to adapt scientific knowledge and bridge the gap between theoretical models and practical application is crucial. This includes the creation of customised reports for decision-makers, concise policy briefs, and interactive presentations that facilitate questioning and discussion. Such an approach strengthens cooperation among researchers, practitioners, and the public, which is necessary for the successful implementation of new strategies and measures within police institutions (Reiner, 2010).



Presenting research results in police science is a complex process that requires a carefully designed communication strategy. By combining visual and textual formats, adopting a clear, well-defined presentation structure, and tailoring the communication to the target audience, it is possible to effectively convey the research's key findings. Transparent presentation of results not only enhances the credibility of research but also fosters evidence-based practice, which is crucial for improving the effectiveness of police institutions and informing public policy guidelines.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN POLICE SCIENCE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: BETWEEN ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Within the framework of policing, ethical dilemmas are complex phenomena that manifest in research and require careful consideration of the discipline's specific moral and legal issues. Research in police science often involves highly sensitive topics, including crime, corruption, abuse of power, and human rights. An ethical dilemma in this context may arise from the need to balance between the interest of scientists in explaining irregularities or improving the practice of policing, and the protection of the rights of data subjects, as well as from the potential conflict between transparency and confidentiality, and the deterioration of relations between the police and the community (Kutnjak Ivković, 2003).

One of the key ethical challenges is to ensure the protection of the identity and confidentiality of data subjects, thereby protecting individuals who often face dilemmas when providing honest information, fearing retaliation or professional repercussions. Research in police science may include interviews with officers, victims, or community members whose statements of abuse or corrupt practices may have serious consequences. Kutnjak Ivković (2003) notes in his study of police corruption that officers often avoid giving honest answers out of fear of self-incrimination. Similar dilemmas can be observed in research on abuse of power, where researchers must carefully consider the ethical aspects of access to and protection of information. In such cases, the researcher is obligated to establish protective measures that prevent potential harm to subjects while simultaneously allowing the collection of relevant data (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2004).

Research that reveals police malpractice has significant potential to improve practice and contribute to reforms. However, it can also violate individuals' privacy or even lead to retaliation. In such cases, researchers face a dilemma: how to balance the need to inform the public about potential abuses with a commitment to protect the individuals directly involved. Such a conflict requires exceptional ethical sensitivity and often involves a risk assessment that must be based on the highest ethical standards (Rose-Ackermann, 2002).

A particular challenge is the researcher's position vis-à-vis the respondents. In the context of police science, the researcher may be perceived as a member of the system or as a critical observer, and publishing specific findings can undermine mutual trust and lead to ethical consequences for both parties. Such ambiguity can affect access to information and the authenticity of the data collected (Skolnick, 2011).



In many cases, research in police science can yield findings with legal implications. Researchers are therefore faced with the question of whether and to what extent they have an obligation to report irregularities to the competent authorities, a question that can lead to a conflict between academic freedom and legal responsibility. This problem further complicates the relationship between scientists and institutions, requiring clearly defined ethical protocols that align with legislation (Kutnjak Ivković, 2003).

Given these challenges, it is recommended that clear ethical guidelines be established for conducting research in police science. These guidelines should include: (1) Protecting the identity of data subjects: implementing strict anonymity and confidentiality, while implementing security protocols that protect the identity of individuals; (2) Balance between the public interest and the rights of the individual: decisions to publish results should be based on an assessment of the benefits to the community versus the potential harms to individuals; (3) Clearly defining the role of researchers: researchers must be aware of their position and influence on the dynamics of data collection, and strive to minimize possible conflicts of interest; (4) Legal framework and obligations: in cooperation with legal professionals, protocols should be established to ensure that detected irregularities are treated in accordance with the legislation, while protecting the rights of data subjects (UNODC, 2004).

Ethical dilemmas in police science research necessitate a multidimensional approach that balances the interests of the scientific community, public interest, and individual protection. Given the sensitivity of the topics being explored, it is of utmost importance that ethical challenges are addressed at the highest level of expertise and responsibility. Clearly defined protocols, protection of the identity of data subjects, transparency in procedures, and harmonisation with legal norms are the foundation for ethically correct research, which will contribute to improving practice in police science and, at the same time, preserve the dignity and rights of all actors involved.

CONCLUSION

Scientific research in police science faces several challenges arising from the specific nature of policing, including the need to balance empirical data and normative frameworks. Methodological approaches in this area must account for the interdisciplinary nature of police science, which requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the complexity of the phenomena under investigation.

Designing research in this area involves carefully defining problems, formulating clear hypotheses, and selecting an appropriate theoretical framework. However, researchers often face limited access to data, administrative barriers, and ethical dilemmas arising from working with sensitive information. Therefore, it is crucial to develop methodological strategies that preserve scientific objectivity while also considering the practical implications of research.

One key challenge is ethical dilemmas, particularly when researching topics such as the use of coercive measures, corruption, and human rights. Researchers must ensure respondents' identities are protected and confidentiality is maintained, while also striving to make their findings accessible and applicable in practice. Additionally, the presentation of research results must be clear and accessible to both academics and practitioners, so that the contribution of scientific research can be maximised.



The specifics of scientific research in police sciences require flexibility and adaptation of methodological approaches to the real working conditions of police institutions. The development of evidence-based methodologies, the improvement of ethical protocols, and the strengthening of cooperation between the academic and operational spheres are key factors that can contribute to a more robust scientific basis for police practices and the enhancement of security policies.

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