

Methodology

How does the UK's CONTEST strategy effect frontline policing?

Chapter 3

As discussed in the previous chapters there is some room for improvement in the implementation of the CONTEST strategy and that it should be having an effect on frontline policing. As a part of the literature review the role of a response officer within CONTEST, has been established and an apparent gap in existing research has been identified. As such, the aim of the research is to now establish the general knowledge and understanding of CONTEST by frontline officers and how they believe it affects their job role, if at all.

3.1

Careful consideration has been taken when deciding on a research strategy for this paper, weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of all methodologies. In doing so I have decided that the research will be carried out by creating an online questionnaire that can be sent out to my target sample. I have chosen this method as when used properly it allows for reliable and easy access to results (Bihu 2021), while also allowing the possibility of quantitative results and qualitative. As discussed previously, the sample I will be using will be targeted and limited to all frontline officers. I will defining frontline officers as any public facing police officer from either neighbourhood policing teams or response units. I have done this because it is able to fill some of the gaps that the previous chapter left, such as, the readiness of non-specialised officers, which officers on response units and neighbour teams are classed as. This is only due to the wide variety of work they have to carry out and does not speak down on their overall competence at being a police officer. Taking this into account a quota sampling is best suited to the research and the method I am adopting and to gather participants I will send out the online questionnaire over police intranet systems, reducing pressure on potential participants and increasing easiness of completion.

3.2

As a part of the research the main focus will be placed on quantitative results as it will allow for clear, concise, and objective results (Pilcher and Corazzi, 2024; Lim, 2025). However, the participants will be asked to provide more detail onto their answers where applicable and able to do so, meaning that qualitative data will also be taken into account. This will allow for research results to include significantly more detail allowing for some context surrounding the participants answers (Oranga and Matere 2023). A mixed result approach will allow for easy analysis of results which can be done through completing graphs and charts because of the quantitative data and then reading through any extra qualitative answers that participants have given and highlighting those

that would be considered interesting to the overall research aim. The questionnaire will follow themes that will by nature answer the aforementioned research aims. The questions will be mainly themed surrounding knowledge, understanding and the ability to implement and the effects CONTEST has had on officer's day-to-day role. In doing this care has to be taken to not word the questions in a way that will influence the participants answer's or question the participants competence, as this will create invalid results and reduce the willingness to participate.

3.4

The methodology described does best fit the research I intend to conduct, the time frame available and the type of results I will be requiring, however, each part of the methodology does it have its strengths and limitations.

The sample I have selected, as discussed will be frontline police officers, and the questionnaire will be distributed through Gwent Police intranet systems and potentially a word of mouth. These would be classed as quota and snowball sampling respectively, both are non-random sample styles, with quota sampling being effective due to that even with a small sample size it can yield effective and informative results and getting a representative sample; snowballing is effective due to its ability to quickly gather a large sample size (Bhardwaj 2019). However, as a researcher due to the non-random nature of these sampling methods it is important to keep in mind any potential sample bias could arise, as mentioned by Etikan and Bala (2017). It is also important to consider that a snowball sample could cause participants who are not a part of the target sample to take part in the study.

The research method being an online questionnaire is an easy way to gather results to a large audience within a short space of time. As stated before, it can allow for a mixture of qualitative and quantitative answers and using each result analysis method individually yields its own and opposite strengths and weaknesses. While qualitative results hold a great deal of detail and relies heavily on interpretation of the qualitative answers for the research outcome and conclusion (Onwuegbuzie and Weinbaum 2017). This interpretation could mislead conclusions and discount the validity of the overall research outcome. Quantitative data, on the other hand, provides simple and unambiguous answers to the research question with the results (Khandker, Koolwal and Samad 2010), however, these answers can fail to provide context and individual circumstance. This is why a combination of both quantitative and qualitative results will create the most valid results, as it can combine the simple and structured results of quantitative while also allowing for the participants to provide context or additional information where able to do so with qualitative. While designing the questions for the participants the wording of the questions will be given great consideration ensuring that the questions are open and allow for qualitative detailed answers to be given but also

that they can be boiled to a simple answer that can be explained in a quantitative manner.

The main limitation of my research will likely be, firstly the sample size. Although the ways in which the questionnaire will be distributed will give the opportunity to a high number of potential participants there is a chance that only a small number will actually partake in the research. Secondly by choosing an online questionnaire as my research method this will cause an inability to change or adapt the questions asked to the participants reducing the potential amount of detail that could be provided in the answers.

3.5

In summary of this chapter, my methodology will consist of an online questionnaire, making use of a quota and snowballing sample technique, and a targeted sample of frontline police officers. I will then be aiming to have a mixture of quantitative and qualitative results which I will be able to analyse and draw conclusions from using graphs, tables, and analysis of written answers. This should allow for valid results and easily drawn conclusions for the research area, and research aims I have established.

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