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**Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply  
in the Safety and Security Sector**

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**Research Report**

(March 2023)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is in the best interest of the Safety and Security Sector to understand the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the sector in order to ensure continuous planning of skills development. This study aimed to contribute to this knowledge by exploring the perceptions of members in the Safety and Security Sector on the impact of COVID-19 on their respective organization. This was deemed necessary considering the widespread awareness that practically all economic sectors have been impacted. It was also underpinned by the National Skills Development Plan 2030 which seeks to ensure that South Africans have adequate and appropriate high-quality skills, economic growth, employment creation and social development.

To ensure that the aim of this study was achieved, a qualitative research design was utilized which assisted the researcher to focus on the exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on the Sector. Data collection for this study was achieved by means of literature review and an open-ended survey conducted on an individual basis with selected participants. It combined a set of pre-determined questions that enabled the researcher to explore further particular themes and responses.

The findings of the study indicated that COVID-19 negativity affected the Sector. In terms of skills supply, it impacted on employees learning and development as the different organizations in the Sector could not supply skills training for their employees and could not recruit new employees during the pandemic. On skills demand, it revealed the kind of skills the Sector would need in the future; these skills included digital, adaptability, communication, flexibility, creativity, and innovation. These findings reveal the importance of developing new training methods or else evolving the way the Sector supplies skills. It is imperative however that these respond to skills needs and the emerging skills gaps.

**Keywords:** *COVID-19, skills demand and supply, training, and development, fourth industrial revolution*

## CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION

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*“If COVID-19 was the first pandemic, Monkeypox the second, what is the third going to be?” (Steven Magee, 2020)*

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, the former Minister of Health Doctor Zweli Mkhize confirmed the first case of Corona virus in South Africa (Mkhize, 2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (WHO, 2019). Following the confirmation of the first case, the South African Cabinet decided to proclaim a State of National Disaster on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, as well as to form a National Corona-virus Command Council headed by the President Cyril Ramaphosa to direct South Africa's response to the COVID-19 threat. On the same day, the former Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, declared a national disaster in accordance with the Disaster Management Act, 2000 (hereafter DMA) (SA, 2020).

Following consultation with a broad variety of stakeholders in the nation, the president Cyril Ramaphosa announced the countermeasures to the increased COVID-19 epidemic on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020. These steps comprised of a 21-day nationwide lockdown beginning at midnight on Thursday, March 26 and lasting until April 16, 2020. The objective for the shutdown was to identify techniques to flatten the curve of the virus. The President emphasized that the national lockdown was implemented in accordance with the DMA, so all South Africans must remain in their houses except health workers in the public and private sectors, emergency personnel, those in security services - such as police, traffic officers, military medical personnel, soldiers - and others deemed to be providing essential services.

To lessen the effects of the nationwide lockdown, all levels of government, numerous social partners, as well as the corporate sector had to implement steps to assure the survival of the vulnerable, the delivery of necessities, as well as everyone's safety and security. The central challenge of rapid responses to institutionalising decisions across the country became the next key priority steps for provincial and local government. In other cases, provinces were forced to implement special extra measures to help them deal with the difficulties and social demands for enforcement and sustenance.

In terms of strategy, the departments in the safety and security sector like the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Defence (DoD), Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and other private securities became a prominent component in the response to limiting the spread of the virus. While the duties of these departments were clearly established as frontline law enforcement, it was forced to take on an unusual role of enforcing Regulations under the DMA in addition to combating crime in the country. These sectors responded promptly by preparing strategies to cope with policing during the pandemic, recognizing that such an occurrence was unprecedented and would undoubtedly necessitate a different approach.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Recognising a problem is the core of any research (Naidoo, 2015), as all research studies are intended to address a problem. Once a problem has been identified, the researcher collects applicable information to solve the problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The research problem for this study reads as follows:

The COVID-19 as well as the associated lockdown and social distancing regulations affected not only the education and training in higher institutions (Chun, Comyn and Moreno da Fonseca, 2021) but also impacted on the skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector. This is evidence from the findings of Pitt and Cruywagen (2021) which revealed that there were 840 SAPS members and support staff which succumbed to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. In harmony with this, according to the SASSETA COVID-19 report, the Corona virus impacted on the safety and security sectors development capability and reduced human resources as some individuals got sick and succumbed to the virus. Shortage of human resources has a detrimental effect on the safety and security sector and therefore there is a dire need for the facilitation of skills development in the safety and security sector. Bearing in mind the undeniable fact that with the COVID-19 some skills in the Sector may have become less appropriate, and the skills needed should be adjusted with the expectation that pandemics may continue to emerge (SASSETA, 2021).

Therefore, it is imperative that SASSETA comprehends the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply on the Sector, in order to identify and address these skills needed This would ensure that, supply responds to current demands; in that way, the Safety and Security Sector would be strengthened in this recovery period and develop more resilience to coming epidemics.

### **1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Pandey and Pandey (2015:9) argue that the aim of research is “to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedure”. They further mention that it is to establish facts that are hidden and have not been established before. The specific purpose of this research is to achieve new insights into *the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector*. This knowledge can be beneficial in the planning of skills development in the sector, thus contributing to the National Skills Development Plan 2030 which seeks to ensure that South Africans have adequate and appropriate high-quality skills, economic growth, employment creation and social development (NSDP, 2020/21).

To achieve the aim mentioned above, the following research objectives were formulated:

- To determine the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector.
- To explore ways in which the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply can be reduced in the safety and security sector.
- To establish the skills needed to strengthen the safety and security sector during COVID-19 recovery period and develop more resilience to coming epidemics.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

According to Noaks and Wincup (2004), researchers must carefully consider all the important themes they hope to tackle at the beginning of their study, and then construct the research in accordance with these important themes. Denscombe (2002:31) explains that research questions stipulate precisely what the researcher is going to be investigating as well as what will be “observed, measured and interrogated” with the aim of shedding light on the topic. Therefore, in light of the problem under study and the related research objectives, the researcher formulated the following key research questions:

- How has COVID-19 impacted on the skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector?
- What can be done to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector?

- Which skills are needed to strengthen the safety and security sector during the COVID-19 recovery period and to develop more resilience to coming epidemics?

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The motivation of the study was underpinned by the aim of the National Skills Development Plan 2030 which seeks to ensure that South Africans have adequate and appropriate high-quality skills, economic growth, employment creation and social development (NSDP, 2020/21).

As mentioned *supra* the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the shortage of human resources in the Safety and Security Sector however the demand for the services in the sector continued to increase. Therefore, it is imperative for the Safety and Security SETA to facilitate skills development in the sector and to ensure that the new skills which were brought by the pandemic are identified and addressed. However, to do this, it is essential for the SETA to fully comprehend the precise impact COVID-19 on skills demand and supply on the safety and security sector, which will boost the capacity to create a focused approach. As a result, it is envisaged that the findings of this study would enable the safety and security to develop more resilience to coming pandemics.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODS**

To respond to the research questions that gave direction to the study, the researcher utilised a qualitative research design grounded in the interpretive research paradigm. The qualitative research design offered the researcher the opportunity to read the research participants responses who enlightened the phenomenon on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector according to their own perspectives. The researcher conducted opened ended surveys with 23 (n=23) participants in the sector who were selected using the purposive sampling techniques. These techniques were chosen because it was envisaged that the recruited participants would possess rich information regarding the topic under study and that their experiences and understandings would elicit



important data. To analyse the data that were provided by the participants, the researcher used thematic analysis. Using this method meant identifying key themes (or patterns) and this elicited pivotal discussion points as uncovered by the participants' views and experiences related to the problem under investigation. A more detailed discussion of the research methods is presented in Chapter Three of this report.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF REPORT**

The research processes for the current study are presented in different chapters that are structured as follows:

### **Chapter One: General Orientation**

This is the introductory chapter that outlines the intent of the study, the background, and the context in which the study was conducted. The discourse outlines the rationale for the study, its aim, and objectives, as well as the key research questions that guided the investigation. The chapter is concluded with a map of the report and a brief summative remark.

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In this chapter the literature that was found to be relevant to the topic under investigation is explored and discussed. The literature was reviewed to create a background to the study with specific focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the safety and security sector. The discourse locates the current study in the body of existing knowledge regarding the phenomenon under study.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter presents the scientific methodology that was employed to achieve the research aim and objectives and to address the research questions. The research was qualitative in nature and approach and the research elements and how they were employed are clarified. The discourse thus elucidates the steps, techniques, procedures, and approaches that were followed to obtain, analyse, and evaluate the data. This chapter also highlights some of the strengths and limitations these methods posed in the process of data collection and evaluation. Furthermore, the ethical considerations that were adhered to are addressed.

## **Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Interpretation of the Findings**

This chapter presents the data and discusses the emerging findings in detail. Data were collected from 23 research participants by means of an open-ended survey. The findings are analysed and the similarities as well as differences amongst the participants' views are explored and explained using thematic analysis. The findings are discussed and compared with those extracted from the literature by means of a process that validates the data analysis and the resultant findings. An explanation for the conclusions that were drawn from the findings is also provided.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

A detailed summary of each section is presented at the end of each chapter, and the aim of this chapter is to present key conclusions based on the research aims and objectives formulated in the first chapter. This chapter therefore commences with a summary of the findings pertaining to each research objective as presented in Chapter One and a discussion of the extent to which these research objectives were achieved. This is followed by various recommendations that emerged from the results as well as suggestions for further research on the impact of COVID-19.

### **1.8 SUMMARY**

The phenomenon of the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector was highlighted in this introductory chapter. Six aspects that constituted the background to the study were discussed. First, an understanding of COVID-19 in the South African context was elucidated. Followed by a discussion of the problem under investigation and the rationale for the study. The purpose of the study was expounded, and the research objectives and research questions were listed. The chapter was concluded with an outline of the report structure and a brief conclusion. Chapter Two will present excerpts from and some discussion on the related literature that was reviewed, with specific focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the safety and security sector.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

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*“It is a social duty to focus your expertise onto fixing a global pandemic.” (Steven Magee: n.d)*

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a general orientation of this study in relation to the problem under investigation, study objectives, the research questions as well as an explanation of the rationale/key contributions made by this study. Against this backdrop, the literature review serves as an essential part of any research project and is a valued input to virtually every single operative step (Kumar, 2011). According to Neuman (2011:124), a literature review “builds on the idea that knowledge accumulates and that we can learn from and build on what others have done.” Furthermore, Leedy (1989:12) states that the objective of a literature review “is the referral in an area, not specifically similar but collateral to, the area of study.” For this study, the literature review will provide a premise of conducted studies on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector and those related to the area of study.

This chapter will begin by mentioning the Policy frameworks affecting skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector, secondly it will discuss the roles and responsibilities of different departments in the safety and security sector, thirdly it will highlight the impact of COVID-19 on the skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector. Lastly, it will examine ways in which the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply can be reduced in the safety and security sector.

### 2.2 Policy frameworks affecting skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector.

The national policies and strategies serve as a framework for skills demand and supply. These policies also have implications for skills planning in the sector. Below are national policies and strategies that are either meant to promote or have skills development implications for the sector.

#### 2.2.1 The Medium-term Strategic Framework 2019 – 2024

In October 2019, the South African Cabinet approved its Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) as government's blueprint for the next five-year planning cycle (i.e., 2019-2024). This national planning framework seeks to drive coherence and impact throughout the education and training system and the society at large (DPME, 2019).

Out of the seven priorities of the 2019 -2024 MTSF, four are of paramount importance to the safety and security sector, namely:

- **Priority 1:** Building a capable, ethical, and developmental state.
- **Priority 2:** Economic transformation and job creation, and Decent employment through inclusive growth.
- **Priority 3:** Education, skills, and health; and
- **Priority 6:** Social Cohesion and Safer Communities (DPME, 2019).

SASSETA is directly contributing to Priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the MTSF by awarding bursaries, internships, learnerships, internships and skills programmes to unemployed and employed beneficiaries in the safety and security sector as the per the annual Serve Level Agreement between SASSETA and the DHET (DHET, 2019). The SETA also supports Priority of the MTSF by supporting Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Trade Unions as per the Service Level Agreement with the DHET (DHET, 2019).

### **2.2.2 National Skills Development Plan (NSDP)**

The purpose of the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) is to ensure that South Africa has adequate, appropriate, and high-quality skills that contribute towards economic growth, employment creation and social development (DHET, 2019). The NSDP call upon SASSETA to play a role on both the demand and supply side of the labour market.

On the demand side, SASSETA will continue to conduct labour market research and develop sector skills plans (SSP); develop Strategic Plans (SP), Annual Performance Plans (APP) and Service Level Agreements (SLA); as well as submit quarterly reports to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Whereas on the supply side, the SASSETA will continue to address sector skills needs and priorities; address scarce and critical skills (PIVOTAL) through implementation of learning programmes (i.e., Artisans and Learnerships); facilitate easy access and different entry points (Articulation and RPL); and collaborate with the relevant Quality Council, especially the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO) to ensure quality and provision of learning programmes (DHET, 2019).

The Sector Skills Plan of SASSETA is aligned with the outcomes of the NSDP, government imperatives and industry initiatives in relation to skills development.

### **2.2.3 The Human Resource Development Strategy of South Africa (HRDS-SA)**

The Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRDS-SA) is a macro-overarching strategy which seeks to locate education and training within the broader developmental agenda of the country. The strategy plays a critical role in shaping skills development for the economic sectors. It drives the alignment of various government programmes in addressing human capital and skills shortages and emphasises the need for a national ‘scarce skills list’ which is aligned to South Africa's social and economic priority goals (Republic of South Africa, 2001). SASSETA will continue to pursue and advance the objectives of the Human Resource Development Strategy through skills development projects implemented for both employed and unemployed beneficiaries.

### **2.2.4 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training**

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) also calls for partnerships to strengthen linkages between the post education sector and workplaces. SASSETA continues to forge strategic partnerships to bolster their skills development commitments in the safety and security.

### **2.2.5 The South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan**

The South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) encapsulates a comprehensive health response to save lives and curb the spread of the pandemic. In addition, the plan includes interventions that are intended to restore the economy while controlling the health risks. Finally, the ERRP involves building a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive South African economy (Presidency, 2020).

Key priorities of the ERRP include gender equality and economic inclusion of women and youth, green economy interventions. Moreover, skills development is at the centre of successful implementation of the plan (among others) (Presidency). SASSETA will continue to support women and youth over and above the implementation of skills development initiatives as captured in the Annual Performance Plan (APP) and the Service Level Agreement (SLA).

### **2.3 The role and responsibilities of different Sub-Sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The South African Police Services, private security companies as well as the Department of Defense were particularly responsible for the regular upholding of public order and guaranteeing compliance with a number of stringent requirements as set by the government. These included but not limited to social distancing regulations, restrictions on movements for non-essential workers, the wearing of face mask in the public as well as the enforcement of alcohol and cigarette regulations. The majority of these actions attempted to safeguard the public health of South Africans and to control the spread of COVID-19 (Leloup and Cools, 2022) however these DMA Regulations introduced numerous new causes of dissatisfaction in the public as freedoms were restricted.

Furthermore, considering that these institutions were never trained to deal with pandemics, these institutions faced a challenge of understanding and enforcing numerous new and frequently changing regulations (Schwartz, Burger, and Smit, 2021). As a result, most of them used severe methods to combat the pandemic, and the police, military and security personnel were then viewed as threats to society since they were ruthlessly abusing the public (SASSETA, 2021). Schwartz et. al (2021) mention that this impacted on the relationship with the community and caused the relationship to likely deteriorate. The authors further mention that apart from some clarity problems relating to the wording of the regulations itself, there appeared to be a lack of adequate training of the police about these additional and new legislation (the Regulations) and what it was trying to achieve. This can be attributed to the constant workload the policing departments had during the pandemic and therefore had no time to attend professional training and courses which SASSETA partners provide to teach them to perform their duties effectively (SASSETA, 2021).

Furthermore, the Department of Justice continued with its normal operations of ensuring the application of the rule of law; therefore, anyone that broke the law – including the contravention of the Disaster Management regulations – had their day in court (Lamola, 2020). The number of people in courtroom, court precincts and justice service points were limited however, this was in accordance with section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) to address, prevent and contain the spread of the COVID 19 in all court precincts and justice service points. Therefore, only people with a material interest in a case were admitted into the courts and they included accused persons, witnesses, victims of domestic violence and/or sexual violence, the elderly, people living with disabilities, family

members, the media, representatives of special interests, support groups and those supporting children (Lamola, 2020).

The responsibility of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) was to prevent the Corona virus from spreading inside the Correctional Centre's as a result the government gave amnesty to 43,000 inmates (Masweneng, 2020). However, a large number of inmates remained at the Correctional Centre in the care of DCS officials who are only trained in the supervision, custody, safety, and regulation of inmates. These officials had to ensure that the COVID-19 does not spread in the Centre and had to deal with depressed inmates who had their visitations banned due to COVID-19 regulations. According to SASSETA (2021) all of these is attributed to sector training institutions' inability to successfully carry out their duties of ensuring that the Correctional officials are capable of their jobs; this includes expert instruction on how to carry out their duties correctly in the event of these unforeseen tragedies like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The above findings allude to the importance of having constant trainings in the safety and security sector even during pandemics as this would assist in keeping staff members abreast on contemporary practices. Furthermore, it is imperative that the sector invest in technology advancements so that while such trainings are continuing individuals are also safe and protected from the pandemic.

## **2.4 The impact of COVID-19 on the safety and security sector**

According to Barr (2020) one major impact of COVID-19 for the law enforcement agencies involved departmental resource management including financial, personnel as well as equipment. Bates (2020) and Schuppe (2020) stated that in the United States many police departments plan for public health emergency situations and train officers about pandemic responses however many small police departments and sheriff's offices were still underprepared for the vast effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors mentioned that law enforcement resources were quickly exhausted as they had to deal with the new responsibilities related to community health issues in addition to their routine service demands (Bates 2020; Schuppe 2020). Sanberg et al. (2010) further mention that the financial burden for agencies was also a major issue, as unforeseen costs for occupational health and safety programs, PPE and storage, liability, and other essential resources piled up.

In the South African context, Schwartz et.al (2021) mentioned that there was a serious problem with managing human resources during the pandemic. The author highlights that this

was firstly due to constrained capacity, which was a result of internal measures to ‘flatten the curve’. As a result, many operations had to be carried out with a 50/50 rotation of office occupancy. In terms of operating capacity, this was a significant challenge as individuals had to take on additional responsibility while at the same time the productivity was expected to remain the same (Schwartz et.al, 2021).

Another study conducted by Schwartz et. al. (2021) discovered that the members in the law enforcement subsector struggled to cope with the stressors which arose due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The author explains that the stressor was related to the risk of illness and death and the difficulty of having to operate in conditions of fear and uncertainty. Individuals were filled with confusion, shock, frustration, and fear among both members and the communities they serve. In dealing with the public, police members were now hyper aware of risk, despite the measures taken to reduce that risk. They even had to be afraid of things that had previously passed without any thought, like sharing a pen that had been used by a member of the public. They described the discomfort and indignity of having to remove their uniforms at the end of a shift ‘in the yard or garage’, in the hope of protecting their families from infection. Added to the usual strains of the job, law enforcers also had to face an unknown, an unseen enemy. The author stressed that while the public and other government representatives had room to complain and resist unpopular Regulations, the police had no choice but to follow orders and do what needed to be done according to the law.

In addition to the above, research conducted by the Safety and Security Sector Education Training Authority (SASSETA) indicated that the sector industry was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as some officials in the sector lost their life’s due to the Corona Virus. This implied that there was a skills gap that had an impact on service delivery because of a labour shortage (SASSETA, 2021). Given that they must be trained so they can do their jobs in a more professional manner, replacing officers in a short amount of time is quite challenging. Furthermore, the report indicated that a number of individuals who succumbed to the virus were the elderly which meant that the most skilled staff in the security industry lost their life’s due to this virus (SASSETA, 2021).

Furthermore, research has also indicated that COVID-19 has worsened South Africa’s system of developing skills of young people. According to Allais (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has affected not only how we live, think and work but also how we acquire skills. This is particularly crucial for young people as a large number of them are excluded from labour market. The South Africa’s latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey showed joblessness for those aged between 15 and 34 is at 46,3% (StatsSA, 2021). The author further highlights that,



few vocational colleges have the necessary facilities for online learning, few students have the prior educational background that makes online learning workable and only 10 out of 50 colleges had learner management systems enabling online teaching and learning. Another area which the affected pandemic affected is workplace placements, companies have been unable to accommodate learners; this has similarly been a long-standing challenge (Allais, 2020).

In harmony with the above findings, (Aebi, 2020) found that the safety and training institutions had a difficult time fulfilling their obligations because of the pandemic. First, the authorities were impacted by the unexpected barn of such a large assembly since they are unable to continue their training of the security forces due to concerns about the virus. The alternative is for the government to make significant investments in the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), where some of the courses will be provided online and participants can learn in the comfort of their own homes. ICT development would necessitate a significant capital investment by reforming the current training system.

## **2.5 Ways in which the impact of COVID-19 can be reduced in the safety and security sector.**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) one of the ways in which the effects of COVID-19 could be reduced is by conducting regular cleansing and sanitising of the local offices and company cars, wearing of face masks, social distancing as well as washing of hands. Furthermore, according to the World Bank (2020) skills development programs which are computer-based can help mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, either in the immediate coping phase or when economies start to recover. The author highlights that this should include redesigning projects to launch online training, design gender-specific online programs, strengthen industry linkage for online work, and increase co-working spaces to address increased unemployment.

This is in harmony with research conducted by SASSETA which emphasise the importance of introducing better policy trainings predominantly because of the challenges which emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned *supra*, the COVID-19 outbreak impacted on the flow of new recruits in the sector as a result there is a dire need to improve the training methods whilst taking advantage of the increase in the usage of technologies. (SASSETA, 2021).

In harmony with the above, Schwartz et. al. (2021) mentioned that COVID-19 demonstrated the significance of technology as members were forced to use technology because of the need for remote meetings. The authors also highlight the challenges that this had on departments like the South African Police Services in the rural area as the lack of internet access in those location in rural places prevented more centralized officials from holding meaningful meetings. As a result, the authors emphasised the importance of developing such communities to ensure that when other pandemics arise all the areas are ready to deal with its effects effectively (Schwartz et. al. ,2021).

Moreover, the World Bank (2020) mentioned that digital solutions such as learning and working from home can be a solution however these differs substantially across countries and population groups, depending on access to electricity, internet connectivity, devices, or media, learning platforms, and the preparedness of instructors and learners for remote education. Compared to other parts of the education system, the focus on practical skills and work readiness creates challenges for remote learning, since it generally is a weak substitute for practical activities and learning-by-doing, which constitutes a substantial part of TVET and other skills training programs. Therefore, there is a need for a balance nevertheless there is plenty of opportunities which exist especially for programs with a strong emphasis on academic subjects and which have practical activities that are already computer-based.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented relevant information from the literature regarding the topic under investigation, with specific focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the safety and security sector. It is evident from the discussion above that the pandemic COVID-19 has affected the safety and security sector. The following chapter will outline the research methodology and procedures that were used to elicit relevant data to achieve the objectives of the study and eventually answer the key research questions.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

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*“There is no single truth about peoples lived experience of the COVID-19 crisis” (Miles Sibley, 2021).*

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methods form the backbone of any research project. These methods make fieldwork possible and provide a systematic guide to the data collection processes in which the goals of the research project can be met. The main aim of this research is to explore the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector as well as to establish which skills are needed to strengthen the Sector against future pandemics. To achieve this aim, the researcher had to select the most suitable research design and overall methodology. Consequently, the motivation for using the specific research design and methodology is provided and discussed in detail. This chapter also outlines the research paradigm, the selection of participants, data collection method, the process of data analysis along with ethical considerations. Lastly, the limitations and challenges experienced in conducting the study are briefly outlined.

### 3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To explore the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector, the researcher adopted a qualitative research method. Qualitative research involves “an in-depth investigation of knowledge” (Crix, 2004:119). Bryman (2004:26) defines qualitative research as a “research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data”. The use of a qualitative method facilitates a more in-depth understanding of factors that would be difficult to get in a quantitative survey alone. Subjective factors such as opinion, attitude, personality, emotion, motivation, interest, personal problems, mood, drive, and frustration are relatively more complex, and hence more difficult to capture quantitatively than variables that can be empirically verified (Baumgartner & Strong, 1998:248).

Consequently, the qualitative research methodology enabled the researcher to explore the attitudes, opinions, perceptions, and views of the officials in the safety and security sector on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the sector. Which brought about

new insight on this phenomenon. Possible recommendations on how the safety and security sector can be strengthened against future pandemics is provided by this study. The qualitative design was suitable to elicit the participants' views and perceptions regarding the topic under investigation as it facilitated a setting in which the selected participants could frankly and comprehensively explain and describe their feelings and experiences. Furthermore, most officials from the sector continued to work throughout the pandemic and occasionally witnessed the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in their respective organisations. As a result, eliciting authentic data from these participants was thus facilitated by the qualitative research method.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Gray (2013) mentions that research methods are categorised in relation to their unique objectives; for instance, a study may be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. To facilitate this investigation, the current study devised the exploratory and descriptive research design.

#### **3.3.1 Explorative research**

Exploratory research, as the term implies, aims to address the research questions rather than provide definitive answers to existing problems. According to Bryman (2004), exploratory research determines the nature of a problem. It is thus not designed to give conclusive evidence but to better aid comprehension of the problem under investigation. Furthermore, exploratory research facilitates progression in the investigative process as it attempts to explain a certain phenomenon in terms of the presence or absence and nature of certain relationships among key variables.

In addition to the above, de Vos et al. (2011) explains that exploratory research is frequently undertaken in new fields of inquiry to assist the researcher to become familiar with the situation. George, Jacobs, Kinney, Haakenstad, Singh, Rasanathan, and Chopra (2021) further clarifies that exploratory research is conducted when not much is known concerning a specific topic. Therefore, the explorative nature of the current study permitted the researcher to explore, to obtain knowledge, and to comprehend the experiences of the selected study participants. This process also enabled the researcher to construct situational knowledge on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector. The rationale for engaging in an exploratory enquiry was that the researcher wanted to discover new information that did not exist in scholarly literature. This was done by posing exploratory

questions to the participants to find answers to the *how*, *what*, *where*, and *how* questions, among others. Exploratory questions play a significant role when researching people's perceptions and attitudes. Accordingly, the explorative nature of the study was useful as it facilitated the opportunity to pose questions whose answers elicited understanding of the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector.

### **3.3.2 Descriptive research**

Descriptive research can be understood as a statement of affairs as they are at present, with the researcher having no control over variables. Moreover, "descriptive research may be characterised as simply the attempt to determine, describe or identify what is, rather than establishing why it is that way or how it came to be" (Bayens & Roberson, 2011:86). This means that in qualitative studies, descriptions are more likely to refer to a more intensive examination of phenomena and their deeper meanings, thus leading to a more comprehensive understanding. Bayens and Roberson (2011:28) define descriptive research as the search for information related to a relatively unknown population or phenomenon for the sake of providing a representative description. The information is often represented in terms of means and frequencies that are used to describe the population or phenomenon for the sake of generalised qualitative comparison across contexts.

This study included relevant stakeholders who understand the phenomenon under investigation. Their understanding was probed by means of an intensive open-ended survey guide aimed at ascertaining their viewpoints on the subject, and to provide more detailed information on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector.

## **3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Both quantitative and qualitative research designs are "grounded in different research paradigms" (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004:234). Babbie (2007:32) defines paradigms as "models or frameworks for observation and understanding which shape both what we see and how we understand it". Furthermore, Steyn (2018) as well as Maxfield and Babbie (2018) state that, there are three paradigms in research which are positivist, hermeneutics (descriptive-interpretive), as well as semiotics (constructionist). In the present study, the researcher selected the interpretive research paradigm as the most appropriate for this research.

According to Shank (2002:5) qualitative research design is “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”. By systematic, the author refers to “planned, ordered and public”, which abides by the regulations approved upon by the participants of that qualitative research community. By empirical, the author denotes that the kind of inquiry is based on the sphere of experiences. Inquiry into meaning states that the researchers are attempting to comprehend exactly how other individuals make sense of their experiences. Accordingly, qualitative research permits the assessment of meaning involved in societal issues (Creswell, 2014). Consequently, an interpretive research paradigm which is suitable for a qualitative research design indicates that the researcher seeks to “comprehend social members’ definitions as well as understanding of situations, hence it is not concerned with the search for broadly applicable laws and rules, but rather seeks to produce descriptive analysis that emphasizes deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena” (Henning, Rensburg & Smit, 2004:20).

Furthermore, research studies that use an interpretive paradigm emphasises the understanding of phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them (Myers, 2013; Warden & Wong, 2007). In basic terms, this study focused on getting a deeper understanding of the participants perceptions on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector. To be precise, the purpose of this research was on to determine the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector from the standpoint of the research participants in the sector.

The table below outlines the characteristics of intepretivism as a paradigm with specific reference to this study. Apparently, a paradigm is characterised by the nature of reality (ontology), nature of knowledge and the relationship between the inquirer and the inquired-into (epistemology) and the methodology used (Cantrell, 2001).

**Table 3.4.1: Characteristics of intepretivism**

Feature	Description
Ontology	-There are multiple social realities which exist because of different individual experiences including people’s understanding, viewpoints, and interpretations as well as experiences. This feature enabled the researcher to inquire on the day-to-day working experiences of the participants in the safety and security sector, with the purpose of making sense of their

	experiences by interacting with them to capture the essence of their reality regarding the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the sector.
Epistemology	-Those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life in natural settings. The researcher seeks to understand the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector as ‘perceived’ by the employees in the safety and security sector.
Methodology	-Qualitative (opened ended survey)

Source: Cantrell, 2001

### 3.5 TARGET POPULATION, SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The target population is the population to which the researcher would ideally like to generalise his or her results (Welman et al., 2005:122). White (2005:113) defines population as “all elements that can be included in the research”. The population can be people, television programs, curricula, or anything that is investigated as the focus of the research project. The target population for this study refers to all people working in the safety and security sector in South Africa.

As this population was far too large to include in the study, a study sample was required. Blaickie (2003) defines a sample as a subset of a population's constituents that is used to generate generalisations about the entire population. “The ideal sample is one that provides a perfect representation of a population with all the relevant features of the population” (Blaickie, 2003:161). The study population for the current study included the different departments in the safety and security sector namely the Policing, Correctional Service, National Defence, Justice, Law Firms and Security Companies. The study sample that was selected from these groups finally comprised of fifty (23) participants in total as indicated below:

**Table 3.5.1: Sample Size and Strata**

Stratum	Size
Policing	3
Correctional Service	2

Justice	1
National Defence	1
Law Firms	7
Private Security Companies	9
<b>Overall</b>	<b>23</b>

Source: *Author*

To select these participants, the researcher used purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique is also referred to as judgment sampling (Etikan, Musa & Alkasim, 2016). Qualitative research samples purposively (Carter & Little, 2007). This type of sampling uses purposeful selection of participants because of the attributes the participants hold. To put it in much simpler terms, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002). Baxter and Babbie (2003:135) also offer a comprehensive definition and define it as a method “where a researcher uses his/her own judgment to select a population that reflects an important aspect of the research. It is obtained according to the discretion of someone who is familiar with the relevant characteristics of the population”, hence the choice of purposive sampling and requesting the management in the respective organisation to select the participants which would complete the opened ended survey.

It was envisaged that these participants would possess rich information on the study subject and their experiences would be of importance to the study subject. The employees in the safety and security sector continued to work during the pandemic therefore often witnessed the impact of COVID-19 in their respective sectors. It is against this background that purposive sampling was chosen. Denscombe (1998) explains that when using purposive sampling, the researcher already knows something about the specific people that are selected to participate because, they are seen as a unit of analysis that would produce the most valuable data and they are selected with a specific purpose in mind. Furthermore, Du Plooy (1995) states that the benefit of using purposive sampling is that the unit of analysis chosen are characterised by experiential knowledge and can contribute meaningfully to the study.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE**

#### **3.6.1 Open ended survey**



This research utilized primary data since it is the best and reliable data for the current study considering that the corona virus pandemic is new and not much in terms of research has been conducted on it. As a result, the research instrument which was chosen for this study was an open-ended survey. The survey was electronically distributed to the respondents via emails. This method of data collection was chosen because of its inexpensive nature. The open-ended questions on the survey were used to address the objectives and research questions of this this.

This method gave the participant much more flexibility in answering questions and it allowed the respondents according to Lichtman (2014:248) to tell their story in their own words. The researcher considered only the questions related to the impact of the COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector.

### **3.6.2 Literature/ Document Review**

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), in academic research, the classic way to identify a research problem is to conduct a literature review. Bryman (2004) identifies different reasons why a review of literature is so important. These include discovering recent and authoritative aspects about the subject, identifying the available instrumentation that has proven validity and reliability, and to ascertain the widest definitions of key concepts in the field. In other words, a review of literature is aimed at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified (De Vos et al. 2002).

Several primary and secondary sources were consulted by the researcher. These included government annual reports, government impact studies on COVID-19, textbooks, unpublished dissertations and theses, peer-reviewed journal publications and open-ended surveys with the selected study participants.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Marshall and Rossman (1999:150) define data analysis as the “process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data”. They describe this process as messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, as well as fascinating, which does not progress in a linear fashion and is not neat. To analyse the data that was provided by the study population in the safety and security sector the researcher utilized a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis

is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data as it organises and describes data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006:18). A thematic analysis was helpful in sourcing out data from all the aggregate data that was gathered and to recognise patterns of importance over the information that gave a response to the research questions and objectives of this study.

As a result, in the first stage of data analysis the researcher read the information which was provided in the survey multiple times, more especially the unanalysed ones to become acquainted with its content and to ensure reliability in decoding the information from the surveys. Familiarisation with the data also enabled the researcher to acquire an initial comprehension of the information. By doing such, it enabled the researcher in the second stage to be able to distinguish vital components and topics that were applicable in answering the problem, questions, and objectives of this study. The vital components and topics of information that emerged from the participants were examined, and this included both the similar and contradictory ones, which were examined according to their relevance to the objectives of the study.

During the third stage, the researcher looked for common denominators and differences within and across the material and these common denominators and differences formed themes. The researcher divided the information into themes, in which the themes that were not applicable were discarded, and relevant themes were compared with the findings obtained from the literature review. The researcher could then in stage four review the themes to be certain that the themes are logical and that they adequately fit amongst the coded information and the themes. In the fifth stage, the researcher defined all the themes, which enabled the researcher to do the final stage of writing the final report.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher submitted the research proposal to the Executive manager for approval to conduct the study to ensure that the study is in line with the strategic objectives of the SETA. Upon the approval to conduct this research, an email was sent to the relevant departments in the safety and security sector to conduct the research in their respective organisations. Once the participants were selected, the participants were emailed an informed consent form that they had to read and sign if they agree to participate in this study. The consent form informed the participants about their rights, it also clarified that no one is forced to participate in the

survey. Furthermore, confidentiality was assured, participant's names were not used when the researcher wrote the final report of this study instead their particulars were coded.

As anticipated this study did not cause any harm to the participants selected and there was no negative effect on the participants selected in this study. Furthermore, the participants were also not subjected to any physical, psychological, illegal, and or any negativity affecting the individual's career or job. In essence, there was no risks associated with participating in this study.

### **3.9 LIMITATIONS**

As apparent in all studies, limitations are certain, and this study is no exception. One of the limitations to this research was that it did not aim to offer final and conclusive solutions to the existing problem. The aim was merely to explore the research questions, as it is an exploratory study. Further limitations of this study are outlined and summarised below:

#### **3.9.1 Limited previous research in South African context**

There is a lack of literature in the South African context concerning the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply, and as a result it was challenging to compile a literature review on the linkage focusing it on South African context. The researcher perceived this as a serious limitation because every country is unique. However, for that reason, the researcher depended greatly on international studies to give an understanding as well as knowledge on the subject being studied.

#### **3.9.2 The study participants**

Initially the researcher had hoped to have hundred and fifty (150) participants in the study, however, only twenty-three (23) of those participants agreed to participant in the study. The fact that this sample size was small, the outcomes from this sample cannot be considered as a representation of the large South African population. However, representativeness is not a priority in qualitative research.

#### **3.9.3 Time delimitation**

Hectic day-to-day work demands caused delays in honouring dates which were set for survey responses, considering that the participants work in the safety and security sector other emergencies would arise. This challenge was very difficult to control considering that the participants were required to complete the survey at a time which was more convenient for them. Nonetheless, this challenge encountered by the researcher did not hinder the researcher from accomplishing the research objectives of the current study.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology that was employed in the execution of the study. The nature of the study, ethical considerations, and limitations were discussed. Despite the limitation of a small sample size and the fact that that results may not be generalised to other SETAs in the South African context at large, it is argued that the study holds value as a means for further research into the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply as the findings can be transferred to other settings where similar research problems are prevalent.

As a result, based on the information presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that the current study was executed within the framework of sound and appropriate scientific inquiry to meet its aims and objectives. In the next chapter the data and findings will be presented in relation to the aim and objectives as presented in Chapter One.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

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*“The connection between [work] effort and reward got broken during the pandemic.” (Julia Pollak, 2020)*

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four the data that was procured by means of an open-ended survey conducted with a variety of selected stakeholders will be presented. These stakeholders provided primary data for the study and the participants included officials from the Policing, Correctional Service, National Defence, Justice, Law Firms and Private Security Companies. Their experiences, views, and opinions on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector were elicited. The data are presented thematically, and this is accompanied by discussions and interpretations. The term ‘interpretation’ refers to the process of linking research findings and results to existing literature to determine if the current study findings are supported or disputed by those of earlier research (Mouton, 2011). Interpretation thus entails weighing competing explanations or interpretations of one's data and demonstrating how well the data support the most obvious interpretations.

As a result, the data was analysed with the purpose of determining the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector from the perspectives and knowledge of a range of participants. As well as to arrive at an understanding of which skills are needed to strengthen the safety and security sector during COVID-19 recovery period and develop more resilience to coming epidemics. While the themes overlay, the analysis has been done in relation to the aims and objectives discussed in Chapter One.

For purpose of this segment of data presentation and interpretation of findings, the questions below (represented in italics) were constructed by the researcher in the surveys. The data is presented in the form of verbatim direct quotes from the participants. Individuals are not identified by name in accordance with the policy of anonymity and for ethical consideration.

### 4.2 Objective one: The impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the Safety and Security Sector

The following question was posed:

*How has COVID-19 impacted on the skills demand and supply in your organization?*

The COVID-19 as well as the associated lockdown and social distancing regulations affected not only the education and training in higher institutions (Chun, Comyn and Moreno da Fonseca, 2021) but also impacted on the skills demand and supply in different sectors of the economy. As a result, the safety and security sector was not exempted from the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply. This is evident from the responses presented by the participants below, as they shared very common perceptions with regards to this impact.

#### **4.2.1 Theme One: Skills supply**

The participants mentioned that COVID-19 *restricted training and the development of skills in the sector*. This means that COVID-19 impacted negatively on the supply of skills. Below is an excerpt that exemplifies their responses:

*“It impacted on our recruitment and training process. In observance of the Covid-19 safety regulations such as the need for social distancing, restrictions, and limitations of large gatherings, it became impossible for the training to resume. The basic training of new recruits involves extensive physical contact and with the COVID-19 restrictions which were in place, it was not possible to subject new recruits to a basic training curriculum without increasing the risk of exposing them to being infected with the coronavirus.”*

*“It slowed down the trainings because only few people were allowed to gather, no interns were placed due to COVID restrictions”.*

*“Most training centres were not available, and some closed during lockdown. Security agencies and national defence suspended their academies and in-service training activities”.*

*“Limited skills development implementation for 2021/2022. Limited recruitment options”.*

*“It limited opportunities for training staff and addressing skills gaps. This was really concerning since training of staff improves performance, reduces errors, and can provide a valuable intrinsic motivator”.*

*“National key point, skill programme was suspended for more than seven months, and this had a negative impact on meeting skill development objectives”.*

*“In my organisation, the people with skills needed are old correctional service officers. These officers are the ones training newly recruited e officers. In this instance, due to corona outbreak they booked sick time and again and no one would be able to train the newly recruited correctional service officers.”.*

From the responses which have been provided above it is evident that the COVID-19 impacted on employees learning and development as the different departments in the sector could not supply skills training for their employees and could not recruit new employees during the pandemic. This finding highlights the importance of the sector exploring ways in which they can effectively supply skills even during a pandemic.

#### **4.2.2 Theme Two: Multifaceted impact (Lost of skills, financial, societal, and economic)**

Furthermore, some individuals expressed that the security industry was severely affected as some security officers passed away from the Corona Virus. This implied that there was a skills gap that had an impact on service delivery because of a labor shortage. Given that they must be trained so they can do their jobs in a more professional manner, replacing officers in a short amount of time is quite challenging. A representative example of this notion is the following comments:

*“Most of our members got infected by Corona virus. The service started to slow down. The reason for this was because members booked off sick due to the virus and after all they had to quarantine themselves and this affected us negatively. In some other instances, we did not go on our shifts in different houses and companies that we guarded due to fear. Further to that, other security officers succumbed to Corona, and it opened vacancies which were not easy to replace within a month. The other problem is that thugs took advantage of the situation and started to intensify their criminal activities”.*

*“We lost institutional memory as we lost knowledgeable senior officers who already added value in the organization. This resulted in unplanned envisaged costs, which need a large budget to enable recruiting more people. There was also fear of unknown that deteriorates service delivery”.*

It is obvious from the above that the pandemic had a substantial influence on the safety and security sector, given that the pandemic originally targeted the elderly and people with

underlying medical issues. This means that the most skilled staff in the security industry was lost, and new recruits need to be trained which is such a lengthy process.

In addition to the above, other participants shared that during the COVID-19 their businesses struggled to cope financially therefore they had to retrench some employees which resulted in a loss of skills in their organisations. They also shared that, it also impacted on their skills development initiatives as they had to limit their skills development plans due to financial constraints as result as they would only train when a certain skill is needed by a client. It is ought to be noted that, most of these responses were provided by private security companies and law firms, verbatim responses are as follows:

*“The Department is under severe budget constraints that had been exasperated by the Corona-19 budgets cuts, the cost of sanitising courts and providing personal protective equipment and the additional costs of Commissions of Inquiry and the need to support entities under its umbrella”.*

*“Our clients terminated their contracts with us which led to retrenchment of staff and reduction of posts in our organization”.*

*“Because of the lockdown, staff was retrenched and could not access the market afterwards”.*

*“We lost a lot of business and so do not have the additional income to spend on skills development. We are only doing skills development where the client requires certain skills to be developed”.*

*“Focus is less on skills development due to margin cuts taken because of COVID-19. So, training and development are done in accordance with critical skills training priority lists”.*

*“We have a skills training gap due to financial staring during covid which delay and put under pressure to meet the requirements of the firm”.*

From the above responses, it is evident that while the government was rightfully concentrating on employing strategies to save individuals lives, the coronavirus was also threatening the survival of businesses across the sector. This devastating financial, societal, and economic impact of COVID-19 may also cost more lives in the long run; therefore, it is imperative that the government and the SASSETA intervenes in assisting these businesses to come back from their current deficit.



### 4.2.3 Theme Three: Skills gap

In addition to the above, some participants felt that COVID-19 impacted on the way in which they conducted their normal businesses and trainings, whereas others felt that COVID-19 revealed the shortage of computer skills in their organisations. The participants responses are recorded verbatim to underscore this finding:

*“COVID- 19 has shown a gap in computer skills, the working environment is changing and getting more IT orientated. Therefore, there is a need for digital literacy, basic computer skills and leadership skills for hybrid teams in the organization”.*

*“COVID has impacted the way we conduct business, meetings are conducted virtually, reporting techniques and presentations, this has impacted on individual performances and the whole team, but we must encourage teamwork. Leaders have had to improve the skills needed to manage performance of teams during this pandemic”.*

*“The need for training for both professional and support staff became evident since Covid, where the majority of the staff was required to work remotely and employees where introduced to the new way of interacting via Microsoft teams. Presentation skills also become a need as staff were required to show their work online during meetings. There were also some challenges with time management where people were used to being constantly supervised and remote working required discipline. Employees were faced with the abnormality of not having anyone to lean towards for assistance where close supervision was not available. Hence, employees were required to adjust to working more independently at a fast pace”.*

*“During COVID-19 pandemic, the first was required to send their staff to work from home and it became quite necessary for everyone to be technologically savvy. Computer literacy became a priority to effectively work remotely”.*

It is clear from the above that the most significant change post covid would have to be technological as the responses explicitly reveal the need to expediate the transition to digitization. As a result, technology should not be considered a separate sector in every business however businesses should redesign their operations to be more virtual and asset-lite; the businesses that would do this would thrive during future pandemics.

Additionally, the researcher tried to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the sector as a result, the following question was included in the open-ended survey:

*How has COVID-19 affected the kinds of skills your organisation will need in the future?*

#### **4.2.4 Theme Four: Future skills**

From the analysis, it is apparent that the skills required in the sector during and after COVID-19 are digital, adaptability, communication, flexibility, creativity, and innovation with others. The responses are presented below,

*“We need people who possess skills of adaptability and flexibility. Any person or organisation that wants to prosper in the post-coronavirus world and in future pandemics needs individuals who can adapt to workplaces that are always changing as well as be able to consistently upgrade and refresh their skills”.*

*“Good communication skills surfaced as key to efficacy, and it is a skill which everyone needs in the organization. Good communication within the coordinating structures to the public is imperative”.*

*“The organisation needs technology orientation. As automation and artificial intelligence (AI) shape business, conscious effort and training is needed for inhouse lawyers to develop skills in the areas of technology, data analytics and data security”.*

*“We need more skilled tactical, advanced response officers to deal with the advancement of crime. Control room operators that are efficient and can communicate with clients and keep up with software developments”.*

*“The market demand has shifted to clients requiring of National Key Points and Reaction Officers. Therefore, emphasis has now to be put on training officers on NKP and Reactions (firearm)”.*

*“A development of an IT system, including the Integrated Justice System and the Audio-Visual Remand system. IT had long been considered important, but Covid-19 had starkly highlighted the importance of electronic communication”.*

*“The need for creativity and innovation is very important as we need individuals who would be able to come up with new ways of delivering services during a pandemic or new products which would assist”.*

*“The organization needs more 4IR technical skills”.*

It is clear from all the responses which have been provided under this objective that the corona virus impacted the sector in different ways; this is in keeping with widespread awareness that practically all economic sectors have been impacted. This is also consistent with the fact that Covid 19 has had broad, multifaceted effects which is financial, social, and psychological (Donald, 2020).

#### **4.3 Objective Two: To explore ways in which the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply can be reduced in the Safety and Security Sector.**

##### **4.3.1 Theme Five: Way to reduce the impact.**

The responses above on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the sector suggest that this problem is prevalent, as it did not only have a negative effect on the trainings and development in the sector, but it also had financial implications. Therefore, there is a need to explore ways in which the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply can be reduced sector. Hence the participants were asked *what can be done to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector?* They stated the following,

*“As mentioned supra the pandemic affected the flow of new recruits in the sector and thus there is need to enhance new training mechanisms while at the same time taking advantage of the rise in the use of technologies such as the fourth industrial revolution”.*

*“It is imperative for the organizations at any given time to adhere to the regulations which are provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) which emphasise the importance of organizations doing regular cleaning, hand washing, sanitization of offices, using face masks, social distancing and cleaning of squad cars. This would assist as less people would get sick and succumb to the virus as a result less skills would be lost in the sector”.*

*“There is a need for the safety and security sector to hire more manpower for future pandemics, strengthen community policing and community-police relationship. During the pandemic the combination of expanded mandate and restricted capacity*

*made police officers feel that they could not perform their duties and that they disappointed in terms of service delivery. As more members became ill, the service delivery in an area dropped quite significantly and there was no replenishment of that and then the intent was there, the understanding was there, the mandate was there, but we needed more boots on the ground. So, hiring more people and strengthening community policing would assist to minimise the effects of the virus to the sector”.*

*“Another impact of this period has been a greater understanding of the importance of technology. The need for virtual meetings pushed members to utilise technology. However, stations in deep rural areas do not all have access to internet, which made it impossible for more centralised leaders to have proper meetings with them. Therefore, it is imperative that the government fast tracks rural coverage, so that all stations can be covered during a pandemic”.*

According to the research above, all participants agreed that hiring new recruits, utilization of technology, regular cleaning of workstations, vehicle sanitization, use of virtual forums, conference calls, and increased community policing would help lessen the impact of COVID-19 on the sector.

#### **4.4 Objective Three: To establish the skills needed to strengthen the Safety and Security Sector during COVID-19 recovery period and develop more resilience to coming epidemics.**

The question that was posed was:

*Which skills are needed to strengthen your organization during the COVID-19 recovery period and to develop more resilience to coming epidemics?*

From the responses provided from the questions above, it is undeniable that with the COVID-19 some skills in the sector have become less appropriate, and the skills needed should be adjusted with the expectation that pandemics may continue to emerge. This raises questions regarding the skills which are needed to strengthen the safety and security sector.

##### **4.4.1 Theme Six: Skills demand**

The participants explicitly stated that the in-demand skill which would strengthen the sector is artificial intelligence. Below are responses that highlight this theme:

*“There is a need for the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in crime prevention and computational power. We now live in a world where computers and computer systems can perform our jobs more efficiently, quickly, and affordably so it can strengthen the Security sector. As AI and other technologies start to take a more active role, cybersecurity is one area where this has become essential, and this does not even require us to be psychically there”.*

*“The Sector needs to increase its focus more on technology, it is necessary to focus its trainings and skills development in new technologies and IT. Knowledge and experience in dealing with new technology would benefit the Sector, these should include Artificial intelligence-based solutions including facial recognition technology, crime forecasting and robots”.*

*“It is our contention that we all need to put more effort into growing the cyber security industry. Investment in training interventions for young people who want to pursue this career path can help us build a strong cyber security workforce. We need to develop as a matter of urgency a deeper understanding cyber security landscape and insights into how we can start addressing the cyber security challenges. A new strategy is required for recruiting and retaining cyber security talent”.*

*“Cyber-crime and technology skills would strengthen the safety and security sector”.*

From the responses which have been provided above, it is evident that security technology is finally evolving from being viewed as tools that are just used to keep people and property safe into a strategic tool that can help in areas of crime prevention and predictive policing. The participants mentioned that AI-based security solutions and cameras are needed to strengthen the Safety and Security Sector as these would not require much physical contact between law enforcements and communities during pandemics. These AI based solutions include facial Recognition technology, Cameras, Predictive Policing as well as Robots.

In addition to the above, it is worth noticing that one of the participants mentioned an interesting point that was not mentioned by other participants in the study, that it is important to get a system which would synchronise communication and data management across the

departments in the Safety and Security Sector. Below is an excerpt that exemplifies their responses:

*“Training in new operating systems due to technological changes would benefit the Sector, we also need Software Developers. A well-equipped information technology mentor that can build the managing system that can management our work and coordinate it across all the Sectors”.*

It ought to be noted that the response given by the participant above is in harmony Schwartz (2021) findings which the author stated that there is a need for modernising data management in the South African criminal justice sector. The author emphasises the importance of developing an electronic-based system which would integrate data between the police, courts, and prisons. This prospect for integration and coordination within and between sectors would however rely in no small part on digital capacity and competency.

Furthermore, in an attempt to ascertain the skills which are required to strengthen the safety and security sector and to gain more resilience to coming pandemics, the researcher posed the question below.

*Did your organization identify any skills shortages during the novel Corona Virus outbreak? If so, what are they?*

This question received limited attention, as the participants mostly referred to the responses which they had given to the initial question on this objective above, the responses are presented below:

*“Yes, Cyber Security Skills, Software Development skills., Computer courses on IT management. The organisational should become more digital”.*

*“Yes, AIR skills. More technical skills are needed in the Sector”.*

*“Yes, the new world of work has increased the need to data analytics and data science, data analyst, software engineers. The organisation should increase digital operations- digital upskilled knowledge”.*

From the responses which have been provided above, it is clear that there is a distinct shortage of digital skills in the safety and security sector which is a cause for grave concern as there is a dire need for the implementation of these skills in order for the sector to develop resilience to coming pandemics. The implementation of these skills would assist in combating cybercrime as well as in delivering effective security services even during pandemics.

#### 4.5 Responses to general probing questions

The final question which was posed is:

*Is there anything more that you wish to add regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your organisation?*

The participants were also afforded the opportunity to offer responses outside the frame of the survey schedule. This open-ended question was included to ensure that the data would be enriched as the responses might point to themes or a direction in the investigation that the researcher had not foreseen. This proved to be a valuable approach as the participants offered insightful responses that added valuable information. The participants offered the following responses,

*“As more and more individuals lose their jobs due to the weakening economy, crime rates are beginning to rise. As a result of SAPS's are unable to keep up with crime prevention due to the rising crime rate, private security firms are filling the gap however this is only limited to their clients. Therefore, the government must also train more individuals as security officers to work with the SAPS since SA requires more private security”.*

The participants thus unexpectedly highlighted that a formal cooperation agreement between SAPS and private security companies is a necessity. However, this relationship requires clear guidelines as the one is obviously profit-driven while the other is community service driven. The next participant highlighted the importance of having a variety of trainings for security guards and for the government to intervene by providing a learnerships or bursaries for individuals to be trained as security guards. Below is an excerpt that exemplifies their responses:

*“What I have noticed is that there isn't a lot of training options in our profession as security officers. We do what is available, therefore we need the government to assist with more skills development and to also provide bursaries/learnerships for individuals to be trained as security officers since SA needs more private security, it would also assist with the high unemployment rate”.*

The responses brought no new information to light in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector but served to strengthen the importance of offering more skills training for security officers as well as the importance of

the police officials working together with the private security companies to effectively prevent crime in the community.

#### **4.6 SUMMARY**

The analysis of the data and resultant findings were presented in this chapter with reference to the three objectives for the investigation into the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector. The next chapter will conclude the discussion on the findings and recommendations will be offered based on these findings.



## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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*“We are in this together, and we will come through this together.”*

*(António Guterres, 2020)*

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the research problem which was described in Chapter One of this report. Considering the analysis of the data presented in Chapter Four, pertaining to the attitude and perception of the participants on the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector, the extent to which the aims of the study (see Chapter One) have been achieved can now be discussed. Recommendations for future research pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 and associated factors based on the findings of the current study are presented in this chapter.

### 5.2 Conclusions relating to the achievement of the objectives of the study.

The following discussion relates to the conclusions derived from the results of the study based on the objectives with the express purpose of considering the achievement of the aim of the research.

#### 5.2.1 To determine the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector.

The first aim of the study refers to exploring the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector. This was accomplished using an open-ended survey guide (See Appendix one). From the analysis of the data, it was evident that the COVID-19 had a significant negative impact on the Sector.

#### *Skills supply*

The supply of skills in the Sector was impacted by the COVID-19 as it restricted training and development in the Sector. This was an issue for concern considering that practical training is a crucial component for most of the departments in the safety and security sector and these

trainings are very difficult to conduct remotely. Furthermore, considering that most occupations in the safety and security sector require close contact with others, the officials in the sector were frequently exposed to COVID-19 which caused some of them to get sick and others succumbing to the virus. Accordingly, this impacted the sector as it resulted in labour shortages in different departments of the sector and a lack of manpower in any department is an unsettling problem as this has a negative effect on service delivery. These findings reveal the importance of developing new training methods or else evolving the way the sector supplies skills. It is imperative however that these respond to skills needs and the emerging skills gaps which are discussed under skills demand.

Moreover, skills demand and supply were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since the pandemic resulted in economic disruptions which caused some companies in the safety and security sector to downscale- bringing with-it large-scale retrenchments which ultimately resulted in a loss of skills. These economic disruptions also impacted on the skills development initiatives in the sector as these had to be limited due to financial constraints.

***Skills demand***

Further analysis of the data revealed that COVID-19 impacted the kind of skills which the sector would need in the future to thrive in the rapidly evolving world. These skills included digital, adaptability, communication, flexibility, creativity, and innovation.

**5.2.2 To explore ways in which the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply can be reduced in the safety and security sector.**

To achieve this objective, the participants were asked to share what can be done to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the Safety and Security Sector. This objective was also accomplished, and the cited ways are identified and summarised in the following table below:

**Table 5.2.2.1: Ways in which the impact of COVID-19 can be reduced in the Sector.**

Cited ways.	Understanding of how the cited ways can reduce the impact
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1. Hiring new recruits	-The participants felt that throughout the pandemic they were faced with human and physical resource constraints since members would get sick. Therefore, hiring more individuals in the sector would put less pressure on individuals during a pandemic and would not impact service delivery in the sector.
2. Following guidelines as provided by the WHO	-The participants emphasised that adhering to the regulations of the WHO would reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. These regulations include, regular cleaning of workstations, vehicle sanitization, hand washing, wearing of face masks and social distancing. This practice can encourage more preventative behaviours and reduce transmission altogether in the sector. Ultimately, this would help since fewer people would become ill and pass away from the virus, thus reducing the loss of expertise in the field.
3. Strengthening community policing	-Strengthening community policing can reduce that impact of COVID-19 on the sector considering that, 'CPFs play a very, very vital role in terms of trying to keep the momentum making sure that that relationship between the police and the community is maintained and improved and promoted'. Therefore, compliance to COVID-19 regulations is a team effort because the protection of people from contracting the virus is/was everybody's problem, and it was impossible to have a police officer in every corner of the street.

Source: Researcher's analysis

### **5.2.3 To establish the skills needed to strengthen the Safety and Security Sector during COVID-19 recovery period and develop more resilience to coming epidemics.**

The analysis highlighted that most of the participants felt that technology is a "must-have" rather than an optional need in the safety and security sector. The participants clearly stated that there is a need to accelerate the transition to digitalization, adaptation of cyber security solutions and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The notion behind the adaptation of Artificial intelligence (AI) as a key skills in strengthening the sector and helping it gain more resilience to coming epidemics is that machines are able to independently comprehend, react to, and carry out tasks that ordinarily call for human intelligence and decision-making processes, but without direct human involvement and participation. Some of these smart solutions which

were mentioned included facial recognition technology, crime forecasting and robots. Overall, the final objective of this study was accomplished, and it can be concluded that the skills needed to strengthen the sector are digital, adaptability, communication, flexibility, creativity, and innovation; these skills would guarantee resilience to coming epidemics when collaborated.

### **5.3 Recommendations for the attention of the safety and security sector**

**Recommendation One:** The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear how important it is for the safety and security sector to accelerate its adoption of technology. Therefore, it is imperative that the SASSETA invests heavily in developing digital skills to individuals in the Sector; these skills should be in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Furthermore, the SETA should provide more bursaries to students who wish to pursue careers in cyber security or careers which provide trainings in Artificial Intelligence in the sector.

**Recommendation Two:** The participants highlighted the fact that there was a loss of internal capacity as some of their members got sick during the pandemic and some succumbed to the virus. This resulted in a lack of manpower in their respective organisations and consequently impacted negatively on service delivery; these organisation included the Department of Correction Services, security companies as well as the South African Police Services. It is therefore highly recommended that the government and SASSETA pulls out all the stops in ensuring that those vacancies are filled, and more officials are trained in those organisations to increase manpower. Given the heavy responsibility which these organisations must perform, they need enough manpower to perform their core duties effectively, especially during a pandemic.

**Recommendation Three:** Most of the participants felt that COVID-19 restricted training and the development of skills in their respective organisations, these trainings included the placement of interns and in-service trainings amongst others. The reasons for this included financial constraints and the need to adhere to social distancing regulations. Therefore, it is recommended that SASSETSA assists its partners by offering grants in order for them to continue with the skills development initiatives which they had planned before the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, there is a dire need for SASSETA to encourage the huge

investment of Information Communication Technology (ICT) related training and allow new development in the curriculum which would enable its training partners or stakeholders to perform online trainings.

**Recommendation Four:** The findings revealed that some of the private security companies struggled to cope financially due to the pandemic as a result they had to retrench some employees resulting in a loss of skills in their organisation. Hence, it is recommended that the SASSETA intervenes by giving funding to these businesses to help them come back from their current deficit.

**Recommendation Five:** The participants also emphasised the importance of cooperation between law enforcement and private security in South Africa. Therefore, it is necessary that the government implements a formal national cooperation agreement between SAPS and PSI. This agreement should have a clear mandate which supports or gives guidelines regarding the role of the PSI and the Police, it should also include clear instructions outlining the exact relationship between these two entities as well as the expected standards service delivery. Such an agreement would assist in supplementing policing services as needed in the events of a pandemic.

**Recommendation Six:** It also emerged from the data that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the service delivery of the SAPS to the community, this was due to the expanded mandate and a lack of manpower in the organisation. Therefore, it is imperative that the safety and security sector strengthens community policing relations since the police cannot be isolated from the community which they serve, and this can be a strategy to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. Furthermore, it is imperative for SASSETA to encourage the professionalisation of Community Police Forums through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); this would assist the SAPS in addressing some of its challenges in the community.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for future research**

Taking into consideration the understudied nature of the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply on the different sectors of the economy in South Africa, more research is required to explore this phenomenon. Such studies should elicit both quantitative and qualitative data for comparative purposes, these studies, and the recommendations they offer would be highly beneficial to the different SETAs in South Africa.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

With hope, this study has made numerous empirical as well as valid contributions by exploring the impact of COVID-19 on skills demand and supply in the safety and security sector and explaining the factors associated with it. The discussion of literature surrounding this impact was of the essence.

**6.**

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