



The skills need of small and emerging enterprises in the safety and security sector in the face COVID-19.

Research Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the global economy. In response to the pandemic, the South African government implemented the nationwide lockdown. As a result, various sectors such as airlines, tourism, hospitality and manufacturing amongst others, were adversely affected. Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMMEs) are one of the key drivers of economic growth because they play a prominent role in job creation, production enhancement and poverty reduction. This pandemic has really hindered the functioning of SMME's which changed the norm of working environments. The following study sought to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMMEs in the safety and security sector in relations to skills development, their skills need including how SASSETA can assist these SMME's.

The study utilized the mixed research method, i.e., simultaneous collection of secondary quantitative and primary qualitative data to answer the research questions. Secondary data utilised was obtained from SASSETA's 2020/21 Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs) of small and medium companies, while primary data was collected through telephonic semi-structured interviews to observe COVID-19 regulations such as social distancing. SMMEs from the private security and legal subsector were sampled.

Moreover, findings of the study show both the positive and negative impact the pandemic had on SMMEs within the safety and security sector. Some companies were able to cut cost which was beneficial while others were able to retain their staff during the pandemic. However, most SMMEs experienced negative effects such as loss of clients, decline in revenue, insufficient resources working remotely and reduced staff productivity. Furthermore, the study discovered that SMMEs need skills such as time management, interpersonal/soft skills, accessor, and moderation training. This study also found that some businesses implemented skills training for their employees during the lockdown like Microsoft office, CCTV training, tax compliance while others provide inhouse training. Participants expressed that they would need SASSETA's support with discretionary grants and assistance in customer care training for their employees.

List of acronyms

Acronyms	Description
4IR	4 th Industrial Revolution
COVID-19	Corona virus disease 2019
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DTIC [DTIC]	Department of Trade and Industry [Department of Trade, Industry and Competition]
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
IT	Information Technology
NDP	National Development Plan
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
SASSETA	Safety and Security Sector Education and training Authority
SEFA	Small Enterprise Finance Agency
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SMMEs	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background

Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) play an essential role in the economic and social development of a country. These enterprises are also regarded as central to job creation particularly for entry level and unskilled labour force as they tend to be relatively labour intensive than large enterprises¹. SMMEs are often described as efficient, in relations to larger corporates². Small businesses make up the largest business sector in every world economy, governments around the world are promoting SMMEs as a part of their national development strategy³ South African SMMEs make up approximately 90% of all business entities operating in the country, while simultaneously contributing up to 57% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)⁴.

Research indicates a year-on-year upsurge in the number of operational SMMEs in South Africa. The number of these enterprises grew by 3.8% from 2.56 million in the 3rd quarter of 2018 to 2.65 million in the 3rd quarter of 2019⁵. The importance of these enterprise as the life wire of the South African economy could never be over emphasizes. For instance, the National Development Plan (2030) highlights the importance of these businesses in terms of job creation, innovation, and competitiveness. As a result, the NDP projects that by 2030, 90% of new jobs will be created by SMMEs in South Africa⁶.

There has been an international economic recession due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic as a result, outbreak of the virus has resulted in economic turmoil owing to the banning of air travel as well as closure of non-essential businesses⁷.

However, SMMEs in the country have one of the worst sustainability rates in the world. This could mainly be attributable to the influence of unmanaged economic factors which incorporate but not limited to scarcity of skills, particularly basic business skills⁸. Many authors have articulated the importance of SMMEs and not only mentioned that small business was the

¹ Ramagaga, P.M., 2016. *Factors affecting corporate South Africa strategies to support SMMEs* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

² Leboea, S.T., 2017. *The factors influencing SME failure in South Africa* (Master's thesis, University of Cape Town).

³ Fourie, C., 2020. *The development of a small business owner competency model* (Doctoral dissertation).

⁴ Bruwer, J.P. and Smith, J., 2018. The role of basic business skills development and their influence on South African small, medium and micro enterprise sustainability. *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies*.

⁵ SEDA. 2020. SMME Quarterly Update 3rd Quarter 2019.

<http://www.seda.org.za/Publications/Publications/SMME%20Quarterly%202019-Q3.pdf>

⁶ NDP. 2011. National Development Plan: Vision for 2030. National Planning Commission. Pretoria, South Africa.

⁷ SEDA. 2020. SMME Quarterly Update 3rd Quarter 2019.

<http://www.seda.org.za/Publications/Publications/SMME%20Quarterly%202019-Q3.pdf>

⁸ Bruwer, J.P. and Smith, J., 2018. The role of basic business skills development and their influence on South African small, medium and micro enterprise sustainability. *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies*.

essential condition for economic growth, but that the training of their workforce was even more important. For instance, small business owners need personal skills, business skills, managerial skills and technical skills to run a successful business⁹.

In support of the SMMEs, The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) seek to develop and strengthen facilitate skills development support programmes. Outcome 6 of the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030 objective is to provide skills development support for entrepreneurial activities and the establishment of new enterprises and cooperatives¹⁰.

1.2 Research problem

In response to COVID-19, the government announced a National State of Disaster on the 15th of March 2020, including an array of measures aimed at limiting the spread of the epidemic¹¹. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant operational disruption in various enterprises as a result, some of the small businesses are closing their operations. Hence, there is a need to identify the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMMEs in relation to skills development.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this research study is to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMMEs in relation to skills development in the safety and security sector.

1.4 Research questions

- How have the COVID-19 pandemic affected SMMEs in relations to skills development within the safety and security sector?
- What are the skills needs of SMMEs in the safety and security sector?
- How could SASSETA support SMMEs in the safety and security sector?

⁹ Maluleke, L.A., 2013. *Challenges faced by SEDA in providing training and mentoring support services to SMME's* (Doctoral dissertation).

¹⁰ Department of Higher Education and Training., 2018. National Skills Development Plan (NSDP). *Government Gazette*. (Vol. 630, no. 41332). Available at: [http://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/12%20January%202018%20THE%20NATIONAL%20SKILLS%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%20\(NSDP\).pdf](http://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/12%20January%202018%20THE%20NATIONAL%20SKILLS%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%20(NSDP).pdf)

¹¹ SEDA. 2020. SMME Quarterly Update 3rd Quarter 2019.

<http://www.seda.org.za/Publications/Publications/SMME%20Quarterly%202019-Q3.pdf>

1.5 Research objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMMEs in the safety and security sector in relations to skills development.
- To investigate the skills needs for SMMEs in the safety and security sector.
- To examine SASSETAs support to SMME's in the safety and security sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section consists of key concepts, legislative and policy framework as they relate to skills development for SMMEs in the context of South Africa.. The section will further discuss the importance of SMMEs, skills development in the SMME sector, including the challenges encountered by these enterprises. In addition, this sector entails the effects of COVID-19 on the South African economy and SMMEs.

2.1 Key concepts

2.1.1 SMMEs

There is no single definition for the term SMMEs or SMEs. However, in South Africa, SMMEs are defined by the number of employees in these establishments as illustrated in the table below:

Table 1: Description of SMMEs in terms of number of employees¹²

Number of Employees	Category of SMME
1 - 5 employees	Micro enterprises
6 - 20 employees	Very small enterprises
51 - 200	Medium enterprises

Besides the categorisation of SMMEs depicted in Table 1, small businesses could also range from medium-sized enterprises and more established businesses with more than 100 employees, or micro-businesses owned and managed by a single individual¹³.

Literature on SMMEs points out several spin-offs of SMMEs in the economy. Firstly, it is posited that small businesses stimulates innovation and competition in the economy. Secondly, this category of enterprises is said to contribute towards poverty alleviation¹⁴. However, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) have a different categorisation of enterprises based on the number of employees in enterprises as illustrated in Table 2.

¹² Seseni, L. and Mbohwa, C., 2017. Occupational Health and Safety of furniture manufacturing SMMEs in Soweto, South Africa.

¹³ Kalitanyi, V.2019. Enterprise propellers (EP) and identity of SMMEs, informal business and cooperatives in Gauteng province of South Africa. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Œconomica*, 15(1).

¹⁴ Ibid

Table 2: DHET's categorisation of companies in terms of number of employees¹⁵

Number of Employees	Size of company
0 – 49 employees	Small companies
50 – 149 employees	Medium companies
150+ employees	Large companies

For the purpose of the current study, it is essential to discover the skills needs of SMMEs and implementing skills development interventions to address the same.

2.1.2 Skills

A skill is an ability to do something well which can be learnt and developed¹⁶. Skills consist of technical orientated skills, generic skills (verbal, numerical, planning and communication skills) Technical skills refer to the ability to perform a particular task acquired through general education, training or work experience¹⁷.

2.2 Legislative and Policy Framework

2.2.1 National Skills Development Plan (NSDP)

The National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) is established to equip South Africans with adequate and-quality skills that contribute towards economic growth, employment creation and social development¹⁸. Outcome 6 of the NSDP seeks to support skills development for entrepreneurship and cooperative development. However, the NSDP 2030 reveals that there is a challenge of inculcating a culture and spirit of entrepreneurship and self-employment with the help of developing skills and competencies for young people including aspiring entrepreneurs¹⁹. SETAs identify in their skills planning research, established and emergent cooperatives and their skills needs. SETAs through their skills planning research, identify skills needs of small and emerging enterprises. SETAs need to identify skills needs for SMME's SETAs is to effectively contribute towards the realisation of the outcomes as laid out in the NSDP, throughout their functions is to focus on building the relationships with workplaces and

¹⁵ DHET. 2020. Service Level Agreement with SASSETA for 2020/21 Financial Year.

¹⁶ Cimatti, B., 2016. Definition, development, assessment of soft skills and their role for the quality of organizations and enterprises. *International Journal for quality research*, 10(1).

¹⁷ Green, F., 2011. *What is Skill?: An Inter-Disciplinary Synthesis*. Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies [Institute of Education, University of London].

¹⁸ Department of Higher Education and Training., 2019. National Skills Development Plan (NSDP). *Government Gazette*. (Vol. 630, no. 41332). Available at: [http://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/12%20January%202018%20THE%20NATIONAL%20SKILLS%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%20\(NSDP\).pdf](http://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/12%20January%202018%20THE%20NATIONAL%20SKILLS%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%20(NSDP).pdf)

¹⁹ *ibid*

education and training institutions (DHET). Engaging workplaces to enable them to provide increasingly relevant data on the skills of their existing workforce as well as projected skills needs.

2.3 The importance of Skills training for SMMEs

Failure of most SMMEs is caused by a lack of skills for SMME owners. SMME training programmes play a significant role in reducing the failure rate of SMMEs²⁰. Furthermore, research studies found that business owners need to participate in training programmes has helped improve entrepreneurial skills and contributed to the survival of these businesses²¹. Hence, there is a need for the continuous development and improvement of business skills in the SMME arena that is suitable enough for the sustainability of SMME's.

Small business owners may not have the finances to invest in improving their skills and education, however the other problem is that numerous business owners do not see the importance in upgrading their skills²². Some SMME owners usually provide less training initiatives for their staff caused by the perception that training costs are high²³.

Another challenge is related to the implementation and availability of training initiatives. Employers may not remain in business due to training costs for their staff ²⁴. Customising training programmes can be very expensive, however, more rewarding when their staff is equipped with the relevant training that meets their current specific needs²⁵. It also argued that small businesses lose their competitive advantage when they have no training to operate the small business compared to their staff to skills development opportunities²⁶.

The SMME sector is diverse therefore, there is a need for diverse training programmes and these training programmes should include owner/managers of SMMEs as well as their

²⁰ Maluleke, L.A., 2013. *Challenges faced by SEDA in providing training and mentoring support services to SMME's* (Doctoral dissertation).

²¹ Maluleke, L.A., 2013. *Challenges faced by SEDA in providing training and mentoring support services to SMME's* (Doctoral dissertation).

²² Fourie, C., 2020. *The development of a small business owner competency model* (Doctoral dissertation).

²³ Rabie, C., Cant, M.C. and Wiid, J.A., 2016. Training and development in SMEs: South Africa's key to survival and success?. *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)*, 32(4), pp.1009-1024.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Mathane, M. and Chiloane-Tsoka, G.E., 2020. Perceptions of SMMEs on the effectiveness of training programs. *Journal of Business*, 4(1), pp.9-25.

²⁶ Sitharam, S. and Hoque, M., 2016. Factors affecting the performance of small and medium enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Problems and perspectives in Management*, 14(2-2), pp.277-288.

employees²⁷. In contrast, some researchers have discovered that SMMEs themselves do not see the importance of training or emphasis on training²⁸.

2.4 Challenges faced by SMMEs in South Africa

2.4.1 Lack of skills

For entrepreneurs to successfully start and grow their businesses, they require certain skills that can be developed through education and training programmes. South African SMMEs are inhibited by factors such as poor marketing skills, lack of marketing research skills, poor analysis of the market, failure to understand and forecast future customer trends and needs and inability to prepare marketing plans²⁹. Without these skills, the enterprise will eventually fail³⁰.

Moreover, managerial competencies have a positive influence on the performance of SMMEs. Managerial experience, education, knowledge, and start-up experience are used to measure managerial competencies³¹. Managers often lack experience, training for management of their businesses hence, the lack of management skills which results in poor management actions taken by small business owners³².

The challenge for developing skills in SMMEs should be addressed in order to achieve the desired objectives of the enterprises. Skills development provides an opportunity for individuals or groups to achieve a set of skills needed in the workplace³³. Training needs to close the gap between what the employees already know and what the job requires. The businesses performance also relies on investing in people through education and training. There is a shortage of research within the small businesses sector pertaining to education, training and skills that cannot be undermined³⁴.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Dladla, L. and Mutambara, E., 2018. The Impact of Training and Support Interventions on Small Businesses in the Expanded Public Works Programme—Pretoria Region. *Social Sciences*, 7(12), p.248.

²⁹ Maziriri, E.T. and Chinomona, E., 2016. Modeling the influence of relationship marketing, green marketing and innovative marketing on the business performance of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs). *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies*, 8(3 (J)), pp.127-139.

³⁰ Nieman, G. & Niewenhuizen, C., 2014. *Entrepreneurship A South African Perspective*. Third ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

³¹ Sitharam, S. and Hoque, M., 2016. Factors affecting the performance of small and medium enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Problems and perspectives in Management*, 14(2-2), pp.277-288.

³² Mxunyelwa & Vallabh. 2017. Skills as impediment to small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs), Eastern Cape, South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 6(4), pp.1-8.

³³ Mathane, M. and Chiloane-Tsoka, G.E., 2020. Perceptions of SMMEs on the effectiveness of training programs. *Journal of Business*, 4(1), pp.9-25.

³⁴ Mxunyelwa, S. and Vallabh, D., 2017. Skills as impediment to small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs), Eastern Cape, South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 6(4), pp.1-8.

2.4.2 Lack of technology

The growth and expansion of small businesses can be limited by the lack of technology and develop new business ideas. This technology can help improve the performance of the enterprise and increase the production because they currently have low production capacity³⁵. Most SMMEs are not up to date with their technology hence, limited access to technology development partly because they lack the relevant information and continue to hold onto poor and obsolete technologies³⁶.

Many small businesses are not even taking advantage of long-established technologies. In a changing environment, business owners, managers and entrepreneurs should focus on new business models and new approaches for sustainability of their companies³⁷. Moreover, the rise of automation is going to require individuals to adopt new skills, both information technology (IT) and non-IT related, to remain employable³⁸. This indicates the need for reskilling or upskilling of individuals.

It has been argued that the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) and knowledge-based economy that mainly depends on innovation, creation and adopting new technologies by having strong IT infrastructure³⁹. SMMEs experience several challenges in the context of 4IR; it is advanced applications and technologies, lack of a digital strategy including poor data security⁴⁰. SMMEs should identify the existing gaps which entails skills required to harness the opportunities offered by the digital revolution are of vital importance.

2.5 The effect of COVID-19 on South African economy and SMMEs

The pandemic has not only affected the global health condition, but it has also affected the global economy. The South African economy has been estimated that 75% of SMMEs will

³⁵ Seseni, L. and Mbohwa, C., 2017. Occupational Health and Safety of Furniture Manufacturing SMMEs in Soweto, South Africa.

³⁶ Moos, M. and Sambo, W., 2018. An exploratory study of challenges faced by small automotive businesses in townships: the case of Garankuwa, South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 15(1), pp.467-494.

³⁷ Francu, C.C. and Grosu, R.M., 2020, December. Transforming the Organization... Towards Resilient Businesses within the 4th Industrial Revolution. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics and Social Sciences* (pp. 236-244). Sciendo.

³⁸ Corfe, S., 2018. 4IR in the Workplace: Ensuring employers and employees benefit. *The Social Market Foundation*.

³⁹ Alqam, H. and Saqib, M., 2020. An Exploratory Study and Impact of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) on SMEs in the Middle East. *International Journal of Integrated Engineering*, 12(7), pp.121-127.

⁴⁰ Blose, S. and Okeke-Uzodike, O.E., 2020. Pre-fourth industrial revolution: challenges for small, medium and micro enterprises in a transforming economy. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 17(Special-Edition-1), pp.67-90.

close and 400,000 jobs could be lost from a micro and macroeconomic perspective⁴¹. The tourism sector fell by about 80% and the situation further worsened when the nationwide lockdown was enforced⁴². In addition, construction, restaurants, hotels, transportation, and laundry services declined due to COVID-19⁴³. Most manufacturing companies had closed impacting the supply chain industry. Most stores and essential services have closed, and major projects intended to boost infrastructure and industrial development have been impacted⁴⁴. In the safety and security sector, the event security business collapsed due to the cancellation of festivals, concerts and other cultural events is without precedent and other sports events⁴⁵. SMMEs are still vulnerable to the pandemic, they are critically dependent on debt, especially bank loans for financing⁴⁶. Businesses that are currently funded by the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA) can apply for a moratorium on loan repayments if they have been negatively impacted by the pandemic⁴⁷. There is a suggestion that there should be an alternative action to maintain a stable economy by providing more loans and grants for their economy to survive⁴⁸.

However, inactive business owners are likely to permanently close their businesses. Even temporary closures caused by the pandemic is challenging because they reveal income losses to business owners during the lockdown. This disruption led to the permanent shutdown of many small businesses, unable to bear the financial losses and disruptions caused by the pandemic. Cash flow dried up for all sectors due to a lack of economic activities⁴⁹. The

⁴¹ Kholopane, P. and Lehohla, T., 2020. The Impact of Covid-19 on the Level of Productivity and Industrial Development in South Africa. *The Thinker*, 84(2), pp.76-80.

⁴² Ozili, P.K., 2020. COVID-19 in Africa: socioeconomic impact, policy response and opportunities. *Policy Response and Opportunities (April 13, 2020)*.

⁴³ Fairlie, R.W., 2020. The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Business Owners: The First Three Months after Social-Distancing Restrictions. CESifo Working Paper No. 8581, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3703459>

⁴⁴ Kholopane, P. and Lehohla, T., 2020. The Impact of Covid-19 on the Level of Productivity and Industrial Development in South Africa. *The Thinker*, 84(2), pp.76-80.

⁴⁵ Spinelli, A. and Pellino, G., 2020. COVID-19 pandemic: perspectives on an unfolding crisis. *Journal of British Surgery*, 107(7), pp.785-787.

⁴⁶ Gourinchas, P.O., Kalemli-Özcan, Ş., Penciakova, V. and Sander, N., 2020. *Covid-19 and SME failures* (No. w27877). National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁴⁷ Torrington, C., Borros, G., Gwele, S., Rutsch, K., Anderson, R., Essa, Z., Pillay, N. and Dila, G., 2020. COVID-19: The Impact on Small Businesses and Gaps in Current Solutions: The Case for Better Solutions to Support Entrepreneurs in Townships. <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/THE-IMPACT-OF-COVID-19-ON-MICRO-SMALL-BUSINESS-IN-DEVELOPING-COMMUNITIES.pdf>

⁴⁸ Karunathilake, K., 2020. Positive and negative impacts of COVID-19, an analysis with special reference to challenges on the supply chain in South Asian countries. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, pp.1-14.

⁴⁹ Kaushik, M., 2020. Post COVID-19 World-A Paradigm Shift at Workplace. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Meenakshi_Pandey8/publication/343903306_Post_COVID-19_World-A_Paradigm_Shift_at_Workplace/links/5f472066a6fdcc14c5cadfd3/Post-COVID-19-World-A-Paradigm-Shift-at-Workplace.pdf

extensive movement control involving the shutting down of local, national, and international business entities are also affected world economy⁵⁰.

The need for social distancing gave rise to the concept of working from home. Some workers may be able to work remotely, while others are dismissed either temporarily or permanently. The productivity of employees working remotely during the lockdown caused individuals to learn to adapt in new environments⁵¹. This differs for every organization, which is based on what skills is needed, which roles are most important, how much collaboration is required and where offices are located, among other factors. On the contrary, some challenges stem from employers that typically do not support a geographically workforce⁵². Managers and supervisors may be ill-equipped to manage staff remotely⁵³.

The researcher discovered that few studies have been published other authors and SETAs, particularly in skills development. There is a need to do more research on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected skills within SMME's in the safety and security sector amongst other sectors. This study is significant to understand the skills needed by small businesses, the intervenes they require to contribute to the growth and sustainability during the pandemic.

⁵⁰ Omar, A.R.C., Ishak, S. and Jusoh, M.A., 2020. The impact of Covid-19 Movement Control Order on SMEs' businesses and survival strategies. *Geografia-Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 16(2).

⁵¹ Gourinchas, P.O., Kalemli-Özcan, Ş., Penciakova, V. and Sander, N., 2020. *Covid-19 and SME failures* (No. w27877). National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁵² Kaushik, M., 2020. Post COVID-19 World-A Paradigm Shift at Workplace. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Meenakshi_Pandey8/publication/343903306_Post_COVID-19_World-A_Paradigm_Shift_at_Workplace/links/5f472066a6fdcc14c5cadfd3/Post-COVID-19-World-A-Paradigm-Shift-at-Workplace.pdf

⁵³ Ibid

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology that was employed to answer the research questions. Subsequently, attention will be paid on the research design, sampling strategy, data collection, data analysis as well as the limitations of the study

3.1. Research design

The current study employed mixed method research. The concept “mixed methods” refers to an emergent research methodology that advances the systematic integration (or mixing) of quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. The basic premise of this research methodology is that the integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data as compared to separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.⁵⁴

Quantitative research usually involves systematic and empirical investigation of phenomena through statistics and mathematics and the processing of numerical data⁵⁵. The research used this secondary information for this research design. Secondary data is used when you want the previously collected information to inform your current research⁵⁶.

In contrast, qualitative research depends on words rather than numbers, and can be generally described as research the findings of which are not produced by means of quantification⁵⁷ The qualitative research sought to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects⁵⁸. The main task in interviewing was to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. This study followed a qualitative approach to provide an in depth understanding and insight into the challenges facing SMMEs. Furthermore, the qualitative approach allowed participants to share their actual feelings and personal experience regarding the impact of the COVID 19 on their businesses, the skills needs and how SASSETA can support their enterprise.

⁵⁴ Jennifer Wisdom, J. and John W Creswell, J.W, 2013, Mixed Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis While Studying Patient-Centered Medical Home Models, <http://pcmh.ahrq.gov>.

⁵⁵ Basias, N. and Pollalis, Y., 2018. Quantitative and qualitative research in business & technology: Justifying a suitable research methodology. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 7, pp.91-105.

⁵⁷ Ragab, M.A. and Arisha, A., 2018. Research methodology in business: A starter’s guide. *Management and Organizational Studies*, 5(1), pp.1-14.

⁵⁸ Malambe, L., 2016. *Exploring skills development within the interface of public and private sectors* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town).

3.2 Sampling strategy

A purposive sampling method was selected for this study. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to gain from the respondents their unique characteristics or their experience, attitudes, or perceptions⁵⁹. Purposive sampling was convenient for quantitative methods since the researcher had to specifically used secondary data.

Table 3: Sample size of the study

Subsector	Target	Actual
Legal subsector	10 SMMEs	3 SMMEs
Private security	10 SMMEs	7 SMMEs
Total	20 SMMEs	10 SMMEs

Table 3 depicts that out of the initially planned 20 SMMEs (i.e., 10 per subsector), the researcher was only in the position to interview 10 respondents (i.e., 3 in the legal subsector and 7 in the private security subsector) due to inaccessibility of participants, especially those from the legal subsector. The reasons advanced for the non-availability of respondents was that they were working remotely, and their workload could not make it possible for them to participate in the study. This matter is further discussed under limitations of this study in section 3.5 below.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Secondary quantitative data

Secondary quantitative data was collected for the purpose of the current study. The researcher relied on SASSETA's 2020/21 Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) for small and medium companies. A WSP is a training plan developed by the employer indicating their strategic skills interventions to be implemented⁶⁰. Furthermore, the WSP include scarce (Hard-To-Fill-Vacancies) and critical (Top-up) skills in the sector, as well as skills development interventions to be implemented by the employers to address the identified skills gaps⁶¹. The use of this

⁵⁹ AlKhateeb, M. 2018. Using Skype as a Qualitative Interview Medium within the Context of Saudi Arabia. The Qualitative Report, 23(10), 2253-2260. Available online: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss10/1>

⁶⁰ SASSETA, 2020. Sector Skills Plan 2020/2021. Available online: <https://www.sasseta.org.za/download/101/sector-skill-plan/10720/2021-2022-final-ssp-1.pdf>

⁶¹ Ibid

data enabled the researcher to investigate the skills needs of SMMEs in the safety and security sector by examining their skills gaps and training priorities.

3.3.2 Qualitative data

The researcher also conducted telephonic semi-structured interviews to collect primary data for the study. The purpose of resorting to telephonic interviews was to observe COVID-19 lockdown regulations (i.e., social distancing) by prioritising the health of both the researcher and participants. This type of interviews useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences and pursue in-depth information around the topic⁶².

Although participants were given an option between zoom and telephonic interviews All interviews were conducted telephonically because it was convenient for respondents to manage their time and to avoid internet connectivity issues.

Using semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding the effects of COVID-19 has on SMMEs in the safety and security sector. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity for the participants to express the challenges they encountered, including their skills needs and the type of assistance that they need require from SASSETA.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Analysis of WSP data

The researcher processed the large numerical (2020/21) WSP) data then arranged scarce skills and the training interventions planned by employers as well as the critical skills and lists of training priorities specified by small and medium companies with an aid of charts and table.

3.4.1 Analysis of qualitative data

Data collected was arranged through content analysis to organize the qualitative data. Content analysis is defined to classify data into the same categories, words, phrases and the like share the same meaning⁶³. Content analysis is also used to identify patterns in recorded communication. All raw data from this study was written out and organised with content analysis technique based on responses from participants in SMME in relations to what the

⁶² Moser, A. and Korstjens, I., 2018. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), pp.9-18.

⁶³ Lekhanya, L. M. (2010). The Use of Marketing Strategies by Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises in Rural KwaZulu-Natal. Doctor of Technology in marketing dissertation. Durban. Durban University of Technology.

study intends to achieve. The researcher, coded transcribed into issues related to the research objectives.

3.5 Limitations of the study

The researcher encountered challenges experienced during the data collection process. Network during interviews was also a challenge. The researcher and participants had issues hearing each other during phone calls particularly those who were working remotely as a result, this affected the quality of data collected because some interviews were cut short. Furthermore, the researcher was not able have access to other participants on their office numbers who were possibility working from home.

Some of the potential participants showed no interest to participate due to their workloads. The national lockdown played a significant role since companies are still trying to recover the time and revenue hence, most participants from the legal subsector excused themselves while others lacked interest. Likewise, others requested interview questions to be emailed however, the researcher did not receive any response. The researcher did follow up calls, there was still no response. As a result, this contributed to a limited sampling and participation. This pandemic gives us raise to new challenges in collecting data which indicates adopting other approaches that can be used to effectively collect data for future studies.

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

this section presents and discusses the findings from the SASSETA's 2020/2021WSP data for SMMEs (small and medium companies) and data from semi-structured interviews. The section is demarcated into presentation of findings of the study,

4.1 Presentation of the findings of the study

The findings of the current study will be presented according to the following themes as guided by the research questions:

- Priority Occupations List for SMMEs in the safety and security sector
- Training priorities
- Positive and negative effect of COVID-19 pandemic on SMME's.
- Skills development interventions implemented by SMMEs during the COVID-19 era.
- Skills development interventions required by SMME's.
- SASSETA's role in supporting SMME's.
- Views on business operations during the COVID-19 era.

4.2 Priority Occupations List for SMMEs in the safety and security sector

Table 4: SMME's Priority Occupations List for SMMEs

OFO Code	Name of Occupation	Reason for the scarcity skills	Estimated Number	Number of qualified persons exported into RSA	Name of learning programme to be undertaken to address the scarce skills
2019-261101	Attorney	Relative scarcity due to the geographic location, replacement demand; and equity considerations.	38	0	Candidate Attorney (Work Integrated learning)
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	15	0	LLB (Bursary)
2019-261101	Attorney	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	1	0	Qualification in Forensic Investigation
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	1	0	Qualification in law and/or competition law
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	1	0	Business Management Skills Programme; Law Amendment Skills Programme

2019-341101	Conveyancer	Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	13	0	Conveyancing (Skills Programme/Learnership)
2019-261103	Patent Attorney	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	1	0	BSc Honours (Biotechnology) & BSc Mechanical Engineering
2019-334201	Legal Secretary	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	1	0	Labour Law Training (Skills Programme)
"		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	6	0	Legal Secretary Diploma
2019-341102	Legal Executive	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	1	0	Candidate Attorney (WIL)
2019-331301	Bookkeeper	Absolute scarcity due to migration	2	0	BCom (Bursary)
2019-341103	Paralegal	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	30	0	Paralegal course
2019-541401	Security Officer	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	50	0	Advanced Driving Training (Skills Programme)
		Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	15	0	CCTV Surveillance and Body Language Skills
		Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	20	0	Basic Computer Literacy (Skills Programme)

		Relative scarcity due to the geographic location; and due to replacement demand	772	772	Security General Practices
		Relative scarcity due to the geographic location; and due to replacement demand	60	0	PSIRA Grades
		Relative scarcity due to the geographic location; and due to replacement demand	15	0	Riot Control Practice (Skills Programme)
		Relative scarcity due to the geographic location; and due to replacement demand	75	0	Firearm Training (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	10	0	Skills Programmes 1 - 3
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	10	0	Managing and Securing Cargo (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	10	0	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	10	0	Port Security / National Key Point (Skills Programme)

			10		Security General Practice (Learnership)
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	10	0	Equestrian skills program
		Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	20	0	National Certificate: Dog Handling (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	39	50	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	20	0	Computer Literacy
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	10	0	Supervision (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	10	5 000	Explain the requirements for safeguarding a National Key Point (Unit Standard 246693)
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	52	0	Specialist Security Practices (Skills Programme)

		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	7	0	Occupational Health and Safety (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to migration	10	0	Security General Practice (Learnership)
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	1010	0	Security General Practice (Learnership)
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	80	0	Specialist Security Officer (Skills Programme)
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	110	0	Reaction Officer (Skills Programme)
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	340	0	Crowd Control (Skills Programme); VIP Protection
		Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	300	0	GSO Security Practice (Learnership)
		Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	10	0	Security Officer Training (Not Specified)
		Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	65	0	PSIRA Grades

		Other	20	0	Vehicle Tracking (Skills Programme)
		Other	20	10	Security General Practice (Learnership)
		Other	20	0	Interact with Customers (Skills Programme)
		Other	20	0	Basic Fire Fighting (Skills Programme)
		Other	20	0	National Certificate: General Security Practices
		Other	56	0	Interacting with Customers [Customer Relations] (Skills Programme)
2019-541404	Close Protector	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	25	0	NC: Close Protection Officer
2019-341109	Private Investigator	Other	5	0	Not specified
2019-541402	Alarm Security Surveillance Monitor	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	22	0	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)
		Relative scarcity due to the geographic location	21	0	PSIRA Grades

		Relative scarcity due to the geographic location	3	0	Surveillance Monitoring (Skills Programme)
		Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	4	0	Further Education and Training Certificate: Electronic Security Installation Practices
		Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	15	0	CCTV Surveillance
2019-242402	Occupational Instructor	Relative scarcity due to the geographic location	2	0	Supervise Shooting Exercises (range Officer); Supervise Firearm Training (Firearm Instructor) (Skills Programmes)
2019-121201	Human Resource Manager	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	1	0	Apply knowledge of statistics and probability to critically interrogate and effectively communicate findings on life related problems
2019-121904	Contract Manager	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	502	100	General Management Qualification

2019-143904	Security Services Manager	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	20	0	Coach a team member in order to enhance individual performance in work environment (Unit Standard 113909)
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	2	0	Specialised Tactical Operations Officer Training
		Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	10	0	Risk Assessment course
2019-121101	Finance Manager	Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	2	0	Basic Budgeting
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	3	0	Management Accounting Course
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	2	1	N6 Financial Management
2019-121901	Corporate General Manager	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	20	0	Coach a team member in order to enhance individual performance in work environment (Unit Standard 113909)

		Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	20	0	Higher Certificate in Management, Leadership and Management, Project Management
		Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	2	0	Corporate Governance
2019-121204	Recruitment Manager	Other	1	0	Certificate/Diploma in Training & Development
2019-133102	ICT Project Manager	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	1	0	Project Management Training
2019-112101	Director (Enterprise / Organisation)	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	2	0	Practice Management Training
2019-133105	Information Technology Manager	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	1	0	CISCO Certified Systems Associates
2019-311401	Electronic Engineering Technician	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	50	0	National Certificate: Electronic Installations (NQF4)
2019-235101 -	Education or Training Advisor	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	20	0	Facilitate learning using various methodologies
2019-242403 -	Assessment Practitioner	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	10	0	Conduct outcomes-based assessment

2019-432101 -	Stock Clerk / Officer	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	40	0	Double Checker programme
2019-352102 -	Camera Operator (Film, Television or Video)	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	40	0	Basic CCTV/ Control Room Operator
2019-522201 -	Retail Supervisor	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	40	0	Retail Security Loss Prevention Programme
2019-251101 -	ICT Systems Analyst	Other	1	0	New ICT certification
2019-334102 -	Office Administrator	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	2	0	paralegal
2019-325705 -	Safety Inspector	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	5	0	Disciplinary Procedures
2019-672104 -	Electronic Equipment Mechanician	Other	1	0	Further Education and training certificate: Electronic Security Installation Practices
2019-242401	Training and Development Professional	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	4	0	Assessor Development Programme
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	5	0	Training Management (Skills Programme)

2019-431101	Accounts Clerk	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	2	0	Accounting Course
2019-121101	Finance Manager	Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	2	0	Basic Budgeting
		Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	2	0	Microsoft Office and Pastel Accounting Course
2019-242403	Assessment Practitioner	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	10	0	Conduct Outcome-Based Assessment
2019-226302	Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHE&Q) Practitioner	Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	4	1	SHE&Q Practitioner training
2019-311401	Electronic Engineering Technician	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	50	100	SAQCC Cabler & Installer Training
2019-431202	Securities Services Administrative Officer	Other	1	0	Easy-Roster Training
2019-541906	Security Consultant	Relative scarcity due to the equity considerations	5	0	Management Qualification
		Other	25	0	NC: Specialist Security Practices
2019-134916	Non-Manufacturing Operations Foreman	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	10	0	Further Education and Training Certificate:

					Specialist Security Practices NQF 4
			15	0	Operations Management practices, Customer Care, HR & IR Management
2019-351201	ICT Communications Assistant	Absolute scarcity due to a new and emerging occupation	5	0	Electronic Security Practices, Electronic Installation Security practices
2019-122101	Sales and Marketing Manager	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	2	0	Sales and Marketing Qualification
2019-672205	Telecommunications Technician	Other	5	0	PSIRA Grade C and Technical qualifications
2019-541402	Alarm Security Surveillance Monitor	Other	5	0	PSIRA Grade C and Control room Operator, Firearm Competency, computer literate (Microsoft office and other related security systems)

2019-311401	Electronic Engineering Technician	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	4	0	Alarm Installations
2019-252901	ICT Security Specialist	Absolute scarcity due to technological changes	2	0	Network Technician
2019-242210	Business Administrator	Absolute scarcity due to growth/expansion	2	0	Bachelor of Business Administration
2019-516402	Animal Trainer	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	10	0	NC: Dog Handlers
2019-541902	Emergency Service and Rescue Official	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	10	0	Firearm Training (Skills Programme)
2019-541906	Security Consultant	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	2	0	SAIDSA Sales Course
2019-672104	Electronic Equipment Mechanician	Relative scarcity due to the replacement demand	4	0	SAIDSA Technical Training

Source: SASSETA's 2022/21 WSP data

Table 4 illustrates the OFO (Organising Framework for Occupations, names of occupations that have been flagged as “Hard-To-Fill” (scarce skills), reason(s) for the scarcity, and the planned skills development intervention to address the skills gaps. The Table also illustrates that the scarcity includes different major groups of the OFO Code such as Managers, Professionals and Technicians, among other. Moreover, there seem to be a relatively high demand for need for Security officers and attorneys due to a variety of reasons (as outlined in Table 4 above). It has also been established that there are numerous skills development interventions planned for Security officer and these include PSIRA Grades and SASSETA Learnerships, among others. In addition, it has been established that some of the private security companies have already or are planning to make use of immigrants to fill vacancies. Where Table 4 depicts a comprehensive list of Priority Occupations of the SMMEs in the sector, Table 5 below illustrates the top 15 Priority Occupations based on quantities required.

Table 5: Top 15 Priority Occupations

No	OFO Code	Name of Occupation	Estimated Number	Number of qualified persons exported into RSA	Name of learning programme to be undertaken to address the scarce skills
1	2019-541401	Security Officer	1782	772	Security General Practice (Learnership)
			340	0	Crowd Control (Skills Programme); VIP Protection
			300	0	GSO SECURITY PRACTICE (Learnership)
			110	0	Reaction Officer (Skills Programme)
			167	0	Specialist Security Officer (Skills Programme)
			75	0	Firearm Training (Skills Programme)
			125	0	PSIRA Grades
			56	0	Interacting with Customers [Customer Relations] (Skills Programme)
			10	0	Managing and Securing Cargo (Skills Programme)
			10	0	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)

			10	0	Port Security / National Key Point (Skills Programme)
			10	0	Equestrian skills program
			10	0	Supervision (Skills Programme)
2	2019-121904	Contract Manager	502	100	General Management Qualification
3	2019-311401	Electronic Engineering Technician	50	0	National Certificate: Electronic Installations (NQF4)
4	2019-311401	Electronic Engineering Technician	50	100	SAQCC Cabler & Installer Training
5	2019-432101 -	Stock Clerk / Officer	40	0	Double Checker programme
6	2019-352102 -	Camera Operator (Film, Television or Video)	40	0	Basic CCTV/ Control Room Operator
7	2019-522201 -	Retail Supervisor	40	0	Retail Security Loss Prevention Programme
			39	50	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)
8	2019-261101	Attorney	38	0	Candidate Attorney (Work Integrated learning)

9	2019-341103	Paralegal	30	0	Paralegal course
10	2019-541404	Close Protector	25	0	NC: Close Protection Officer
11	2019-541402	Alarm Security Surveillance Monitor	22	0	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)
			21	0	PSIRA Grades
			20	0	Basic Computer Literacy (Skills Programme)
			20	0	National Certificate: Dog Handling (Skills Programme)
			20	0	Computer Literacy
			20	0	Vehicle Tracking (Skills Programme)
			20	10	Security General Practice (Learnership)
			20	0	Interact with Customers (Skills Programme)
			20	0	Basic Fire Fighting (Skills Programme)
			20	0	National Certificate: General Security Practices
12	2019-143904	Security Services Manager	20	0	Coach a team member in order to enhance individual performance in work environment (Unit Standard 113909)
13	2019-121901	Corporate General Manager	20	0	Coach a team member in order to enhance individual performance in work environment (Unit Standard 113909)

			20	0	Higher Certificate in Management, Leadership and Management, Project Management
14	2019-235101 -	Education or Training Advisor	20	0	Facilitate learning using various methodologies
			15	0	LLB (Bursary)
			15	0	CCTV Surveillance and Body Language Skills
			15	0	Riot Control Practice (Skills Programme)
			15	0	CCTV Surveillance
			15	0	Operations Management practices, Customer Care, HR & IR Management
15	2019-341101	Conveyancer	13	0	Conveyancing (Skills Programme/Learnership)
			10	0	Managing and Securing Cargo (Skills Programme)
			10	0	Control Room Operator (Skills Programme)
			10	0	Port Security / National Key Point (Skills Programme)
			10	0	Equestrian skills program

			10	0	Supervision (Skills Programme)
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Table 5 illustrates that the SMME are by far in need of Security Officers. Moreover, the enterprises are a need of is a plethora of Security officer related training intervention. The table also shows that the enterprises need managers and professionals.

4.4 Training priorities

Table 5 illustrates a list of training priorities of small companies in the sector.

Table 5: Training priorities (Small Companies)

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
Site Induction	U-Track (GPS)	Access Control	Client Liaison	Generic Management
Covid 19 training	Customer Care	Parameter Patrol	Dog Handler	

Source: SASSETA WSP data 2020/2021

Table 5 illustrates that top on the list of training priority interventions of SMMEs is Site-Inductions and COVID-19 Training followed by U-Track (GPS) as well as Customer Care training, while Generic Management training appears last.

4.5 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMME's

4.6 Skills development interventions SMME's implement during the COVID-19 era

Different types of training were implemented by different SMME's. Findings of this study reveals that all trainings were conducted online because of the lockdown. Respondents conveyed that training was either done on WhatsApp or via zoom. Some SMME's in private security subsector said they had training for their employees which entailed the use of Microsoft office, CCTV training, operation system, and technology.

Other companies implemented training regarding COVID-19 safety measures, first aid training. Nonetheless, most SMME's expressed there were no skills development intervention implemented thus far because there was no need. Another participant mentioned that *"In most cases we do inhouse training, we train our own staff. Hence, we have not done or outsourced our training."*

Participants in the legal subsector also conducted trainings online. The types of training conducted were tax compliance, software development including COVID-19 safety measures. They conveyed how convenient having online training has been beneficial as well. *"Online training has saved us time and very cost effective in terms of traveling and booking costs."* On the other hand, one candidate mentioned, "we usually employ individuals who are already skilled. However, we had sent one employee for a legal writing course before the lockdown happened."

4.7 Skills development interventions SMME's need

Some participants expressed the following skills need:

"Time management skills are needed by our staff members. Since they are working from home, most people become lazy and cannot manage their time well. Acquiring this skill may be achieved by project management training."

"Interpersonal/ soft skills, communication skills and Customer service skills. This can help improves our employees when communicating with clients."

"SDF training is needed. Accessor and moderator training to be specific."

On the other hand, others mentioned that they have not identified any new skills they need so far plus they employ candidates who already have the skill set they require.

“There have not been any new developments so, we currently do not need any new skills to be acquired at the moment.”

“We do not need any skills training intervention. As mentioned, we hire people who are already skilled.”

4.8 SASSETA’s role in supporting SMME’s.

“We would like to get discretionary grants from the SETA...Also encourage stakeholders to contribute towards skills development levies. Clients keep me in business which benefits everyone in business”.

“We are registered with the SETA and would like assistance in training our employees. Some staff need training in customer care and communication skills”.

Most participants just stated that they do not necessarily need any skills training assisting from SASSETA. One respondent said that, *“We do not need any support from SASSETA, as mentioned we insource our training”*-Director, Aim training academy. On the other hand, she mentioned that *“At the moment we do not need anything. I will be able to confirm the types of training we need at the beginning of January 2021.”*

4.9 Views on business operations during the COVID-19 era

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, there has never been a more pressing need for organisations to rethink and reconfigure their businesses. There needs to be approaches in supporting businesses which will help them to stabilise in the new environment. Participants had different opinions and expressed their concerns doing business during this COVID-19 era as follows:

“Social distancing will be our new norm, observing government regulations by wearing masks and scanning our staff and clients. We have our consultations with our clients in our personal offices to minimise personal contact from others.”

“Tax relieve will be an issue because of how this pandemic has influenced our finances. We really need tax breaks from the government to help our businesses recover.”

“Well on the first month of lockdown it had a huge impact on our organisation, but we were able to adjust even after coming back from home. Now onwards, our operations will not be negatively impacted.”

“Most things will have to be done electronically and conduct zoom meetings unless when doing site visits. Working with corporate companies to observe COVID-19 regulations especially when doing site visits.”

“All operations will continue as normal in our company while observing COVID-19 regulations. However, if the country can be put back on lockdown, it will result in shutting our building which will affect our business operations financially causing the business to shut down.”

“Companies need to allocate tasks and responsibilities to their firm’s activities effectively. SMMEs’ sustainability depends on innovation capabilities, financial resources, networking and technology which must be invested more during this pandemic.”

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Recommendations

A representative sample size is necessary to produce credible results. Noting that study had a limitation in terms of the number of participants particularly the legal sub-sector there is a need to conduct a follow up study to solicit inputs from more participants.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has provided an overview in understanding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on skills development for SMME's in the safety and security sector. Findings of this study reveal that the pandemic had positive and negative effects. Furthermore, this study discovered that time management working from home and interpersonal skills when dealing with clients were the mostly essential for SSME's. SASSETA should continue to support SMMEs in the sectors, as well as track the impact of skills development interventions funded by the SETA for this category of companies

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