

Figure 2. Failure to comply with the OHS ACT

### 3.3. Procedure

Unstructured interviews and observations will be used in constructing a case study. The questionnaires will be analysed using SPSS and the reliability of the study will be checked with Cronbach Alpha for standardized items which in this study is .865 which shows that the instrument is reliable.

## 4. Case study

The studied furniture manufacturing SMMEs are based in Soweto, Gauteng Province. They are found in the residential areas and some are located in the business parks or industrial parks (Orlando Industrial Park and Pennyville Industrial Park).

With regards to the labour in these enterprises, the industry is male dominated. In most of these enterprises, there was only male in them, while other only had a few female representatives of less than 20% of the total labour force of these enterprises. Moreover, the female employees were not operating machinery or cutting cupboards or anything of that nature but they were carrying cupboards while some were polishing them. When asked why they do not have enough females in the enterprises they emphasized that it is a male industry. It was only one enterprise that had a female who occupied a senior position in the enterprise and she was a manager and a co-owner of the enterprise. The lady is a foreigner, she and her husband are from Zimbabwe.

While observing if they were complying with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, it was shocking to see people not having proper safety working gear while they were operating very dangerous machines. They are exposed to dangers. They could lose arms anytime should mistakes occur. Some of the employees who were operating cutting machinery were not wearing safety gloves. Some of them were not even wearing face mask some were not wearing safety boots. As the author was entering some of the enterprises he was welcomed by dust made out of cutting of cupboards but without face mask being worn by anyone in the enterprise. Shockingly, even the owner was not wearing it. The dust was too much to a point that the owner had to dust off the questionnaire because it was also filled with dust made out in the enterprise. In cases where employees had the uniform, they were wearing a different uniform but while working for the same organization. This can mean that employees come with their own uniform from home and it is not offered by their enterprise. Adding on that, the uniform was not even branded with their enterprise's uniform.

The studied employees were not happy with the conditions they were working in. They stated that there is nothing they would do because they need the job. They further stated that it is difficult to get employed in this country if you are a foreigner or if you are not educated. If they raise their concerns about safety in the workplace they will lose their jobs and they emphasized that employers do not care about them or their health and safety. Their employers had an attitude of that says *"were are the bosses around here if you are not happy with the conditions you go elsewhere"*.

One manager said that owners do not care because they know that these employees will do nothing because they employ illiterate people and illegal foreigners. They know for a fact that if they report it they will be returned to their countries of origin. Foreigners that were employed there were from Lesotho, Zimbabwe and some were from Mozambique. But most of the people who were from Mozambique were owners of the enterprises in the townships that are located in Freedom Park, Pimville (townships in Soweto). These Mozambique owned enterprise did not employ local people or rather South Africans. The next figure illustrates the educational background of the representatives of the enterprise that were studied.

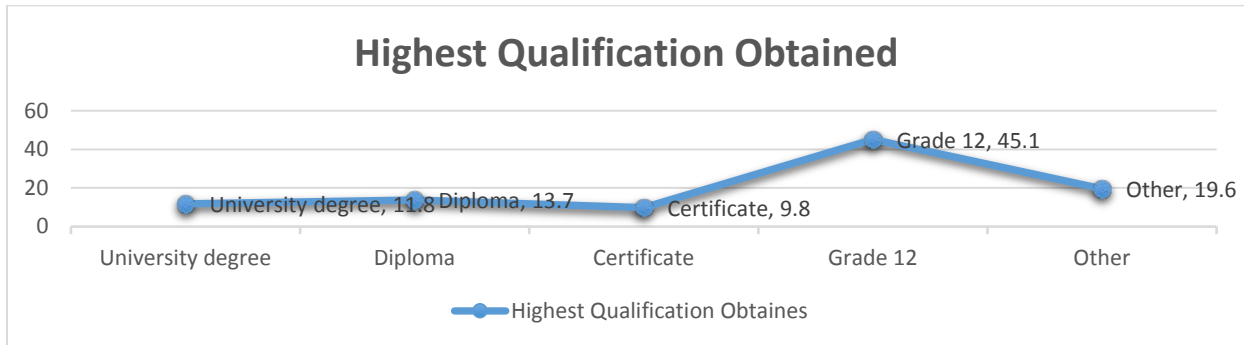


Figure 3. Highest Qualification Obtained

Only 11.8% of the owners had a university degree, while 13.7% hold a diploma and 45.1% have grade 12. While observing the interior of the enterprise, the researcher did not see any certificate of competence provided by the chief inspector of the Occupational Health and Safety representing the Department of Labour on the walls of their premises; and there were no fire extinguishers or anything that shows that should there be fire which routes should they use. There were no evacuation routes, alarm or anything that will guarantee employees that they are safe in the enterprise.

## 5. Limitations and Implications

This study solely focused on furniture manufacturing SMMEs that are based in Soweto region in Gauteng province South Africa. These SMMEs manufacture household carpentry related goods and office goods. These goods are not delivered to customers place but customers come with their own transport. Generalizing findings of this study will be a bit a challenge as industries differ because every industry or sector has its own different challenges that they encounter. Moreover, this study did not have a section or questions of Occupational Health and Safety in the questionnaire. It was asked after seeing the same ignorance of Occupational Health and Safety.

## 6. Discussions and Recommendations

### 6.1. Discussions

#### 6.1.1. *Certificate of competence*

The case study shows that there was no visibility of the certificate of competence in the enterprise buildings. The buildings only have the production place and no place for administration. The researcher and other people were assisted by the door of the production place.

#### 6.1.2. *Staffing*

These enterprises employ vulnerable people, people who do not have proper documentation to be in the country and illiterate people because they know that they do not have a choice at all but they only want to work and earn a salary so that they support their dependents. It is against the law to employ people and not inform the department of labour about the new recruits. The employed people must get benefits such as Unemployment Insurance Fund should they lose their jobs, Compensation Fund should they get injured at the workplace, medical aid cover and much more. This in the enterprises will not be possible ever since they employ people with no South African approved documents. Furthermore, it will make South African citizens resort to xenophobic attacks.

### **6.1.3. Proper working gear**

It is evident in the case study that the people at these furniture manufacturing SMMEs do not have the proper and safe working clothing that they wear to protect themselves from the hazards and getting illnesses from the workplace. In addition, some who had the face mask did not wear them on the face to cover the nose and mouth but they were on the forehead. There were no fire extinguishers in place, should there be fire, the enterprise will lose everything and people will be harmed.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

### **6.2.1. Certificate of competence**

These furniture manufacturing SMMEs must comply with the safety regulations. They must make sure that they have fire extinguishers in place should there be fire. They must abide by all the regulation. They must know their duties and those of their employees, train them, apply for the certificate of competence then plug it on their walls to show that they know and abide by the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993.

### **6.2.2. Proper working gear**

Failing to wear protective gear can result in employees getting illnesses and exposed to hazards. Employees must ensure that they buy a full uniform (protective gear) that their employee can use when they are working.

### **6.2.3. Staffing**

These SMMEs must ensure that they employ locals and internationals with passports and work permits. This will also prevent unnecessary xenophobic attacks. Their staff needs to be trained about health and safety in the workplace.

### **6.2.4. Government intervention**

The government through the department of labour must train these SMMEs about the importance of complying with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993. They must also visit these SMMEs and check if they are doing the right things or not. The visits should be without the knowledge of the enterprise.

## **7. Conclusions**

It is clear that the studied furniture manufacturing SMMEs do not comply with the Occupational Health And Safety Act 85 of 1993 because in their business there were no certificates of competence as issued by the chief inspector of the Occupational Health and Safety under the Department of Labour in South Africa. Employees are exposed to lots and lots of hazards in the workplace but they continue working because they have no any other option because they are either illiterate or they are illegal foreigners. The purpose of the study was to review the OHS Act 85 of 1993 and that was done in this study and to investigate if the studied SMMEs comply with this Act. However, it should be noted that these SMMEs have limited finance and have other challenges. It is very important to employ local residents with skills and are literate so that they can read documents regarding Occupational Health and Safety. They need to employ legal foreigners who have proper documentation. Further study will look at why these SMMEs ignore to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

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## **Biography**

**Mr. Lawrance Seseni** is a University of Johannesburg student. Currently doing a Masters of Technology degree in Operations Management. His master's study is on Quality Management within SMMEs. In 2014 he was appointed as an academic tutor for Entrepreneurship to National Diploma students who were doing their second year of study. In 2016 he was appointed as an assistant lecturer for first-year students for the first semester only (5 months), his role was to lecture Entrepreneurship to first year National Diploma students in Small Business Management. He is now serving as a board of director with a portfolio of co-secretary of the IBASA YC (Institution of Business Advisers South Africa Youth Charter). He is also serving as a Strategic Adviser for Projects in the student organization called ENACTU University of Johannesburg. He served at Enactus University of Johannesburg since 2012 holding different portfolios. His research interests are on Knowledge sharing in SMMEs, service and product quality within SMMEs.