

# Barriers of sharing tacit knowledge: A case of Gauteng agricultural SMMEs, South Africa.

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**Abstract-** this study looks at the barriers that affect the sharing of tacit knowledge within the organization. This study adopted a quantitative approach where 47 agricultural SMMEs were given questionnaires to fill out. This study discovered that organizations fail to share knowledge due to the lack of management involvement, greater distance. However, participants indicated that they understand that knowledge management is the responsibility of everyone in the organization. This study recommends that management must be highly involved in what employees are doing and give their subordinates sufficient time to share their know and receive it. A replication of this study in other sectors must be done.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management, SMMEs, Tacit Knowledge

## I. INTRODUCTION

Employment in South Africa has decreased by 2.2%. Consequently unemployment rose to 26.7%, which made it higher by 2.2% from the 2015 rate. However, employment by agricultural sector increased by 16 000. Meanwhile, employment was lowered by 15 000 by this sector as compared to other quarters in the previous years [11].

[10] discovered that the income from agriculture has increased from R192 162 in 2013 to R212 998 in 2014. The total growth rate of agriculture is 10.8%. Within the agricultural sector, animals and animal products contribution is the major contributor and it amounts to R92 291 million, then followed by crop farming with R45 190 million and lastly the horticultural crops contribute R45 114 million.

However, this sector has been suffering since it has been affected by drought. About 6.5% of production has declined in the beginning of the first quarter due to the drop of production of crops and horticultural products. From its total contribution to the GDP it has also dropped by 0.1 [11]. SMMEs in the Agricultural sector are defined as any business that makes less than R7.5 Million per annum.

Over the past decades, a lot has been reviewed about the importance of Knowledge Management within organizations. Knowledge Management has been used as a strategy that improves the competitiveness of the organization [6]. Furthermore, it is discussed that the effectiveness of managing knowledge contributes to the success of the organization [8]. Knowledge Management has been acknowledged for contributing in the economic growth [5].

**Knowledge Management has studied interesting topics such as: ???**

**Problem statement**

Some of the employees are resistant to sharing knowledge with their co-employees within SMMEs. This makes the organization to suffer if knowledge rich employees not pitching at work, die, and retire of even leaving them for their competitors.

### **The aim of the study**

The purpose of this study is to look at barriers to sharing tacit know within agricultural SMMEs.

This research will look at the knowledge management within SMMEs. The literature about barriers of sharing knowledge will be reviewed, the method for data collection and analysis will be discussed, findings will be discussed and recommendations and further studies shall be included in this study.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Knowledge Management**

Martensson, 2000, defines knowledge management as the intellectual capital that can be used to help grow the organization. This intellectual capital is distinguished into two parts, namely: the strategy and measurement. Knowledge can also be transferred through individuals and also by organizations [12].

### **Types of Knowledge**

#### ***Tacit knowledge***

Is defined as that knowledge that is held within an individual. This knowledge can be accumulated through experiences that the person went through, through talent and through learning. Not all of this knowledge is important. Some of it is of paramount importance while another it is not. Sharing of this type of knowledge is challenging especially if the sharer and the receiver are in different geographically areas [8].

#### ***Elicit knowledge***

This is the knowledge that can be saved within cabinets, libraries, shelves of the organization. This type of knowledge is stored within the organization. Transferring of this knowledge is quite easy as it requires one to read the files [4].

For the purpose of this study, this research will focus mainly of tacit knowledge.

#### ***Barriers of Knowledge sharing***

Employees do not share their knowledge because they are afraid they will lose control and ownership of their knowledge. Therefore, they would like to have a competitive advantage over other employees [3]. If management is not supporting their staff and not giving them direction, this can serve as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Distance as well play a negative role in knowledge sharing [2].

### **Knowledge transfer**

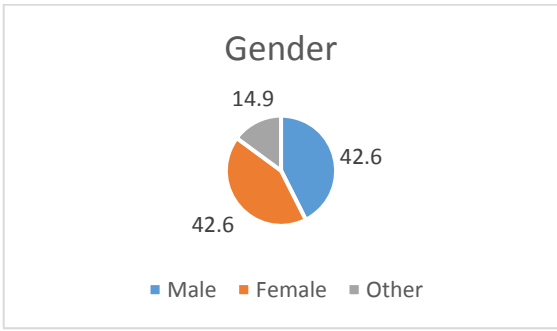
Knowledge transfer is influenced by the values, personality, culture and experiences of the individual who is knowledge rich. Most importantly the sharing of knowledge is highly affected by the receiver of the knowledge [1]. However, knowledge sharing is not expensive but rather time consuming and difficult [9].

## **III. RESEARCH METHODS**

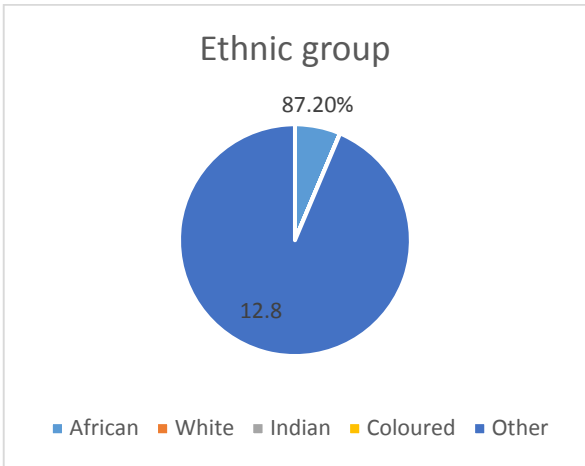
This study adopted a quantitative approach whereby 47 SMMEs were given online questionnaires (google forms) to fill out. The responses were automatically analysed. The SMMEs that were given these questionnaire were given during the business and computer lessons that are conducted every Friday at the University of Johannesburg.

This project is tailor made for SMMEs that have signed up with Enactus University of Johannesburg. The questionnaire had two sections, Section A covered the biographical information of the participant and Section B was the main questions. Section B had 5 options (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree). Participant was only allowed to make one selection.

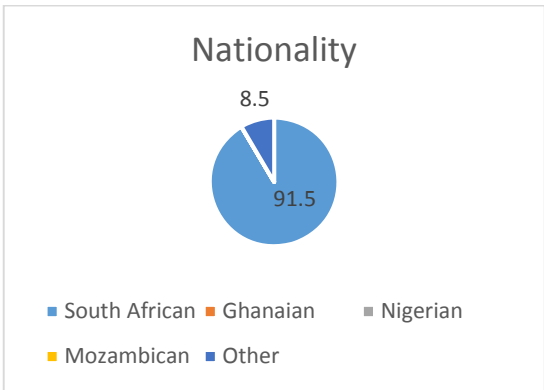
## **IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**



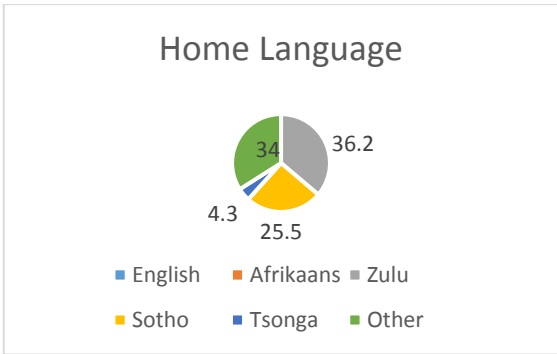
With regards to gender, 42.6% is reported to be males and another 42.6% is females. The remaining is for those who did not want to disclose if they were either male or female. It seems like there is a balance between genders with regards to urban farming in Gauteng Province.



87.2% has been discovered that it is African, followed by 12.8% who classified themselves as other. Participants were dominated by Africans. This might have been like this because Soweto is dominated by Africans.

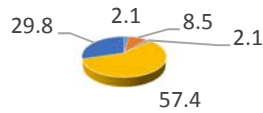


With regards to nationality, 91.5% have classified themselves as South Africans, while 8.5% have classified themselves as other. In elaboration they stated that they are from Zimbabwe and Lesotho. Most of the foreign nationals venture into other industries.



36.2% speak isiZulu, followed by 34% who said their home language is other, 25.5% speak Sotho and the remaining 4.3% speak Xitsonga. This is clear that there is diversity within the organizations.

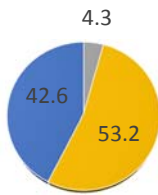
### Members uses language they are comfortable



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

57% indicated that they agree that they use the language they understand the most. While 29.8% responded that they strongly agree that they also use the language they are comfortable. The remaining were neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

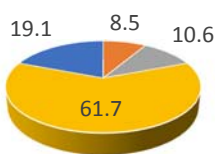
### Sharing knowledge is everyone's responsibility



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Respondents perceive knowledge sharing as follows: 42.6% strongly agree while 53.2% states that they agree, 4.3% are just neutral. Clearly they understand that knowledge sharing is very important in the organization.

### Regular meetings are held so that all members may give feedback



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

With regards to regular meetings that are held in the organization with the intention of giving feedback on everything that members did. 61.7% indicated that they agree that they have regular meetings while 19.1% states that they strongly agree. 8.5% disagree and 10.6% are neutral.

## V. DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

[5], discussed that tacit knowledge should be extracted from employees and be documented. All the employees' experiences should be documented so that the knowledge should remain within the organization.

The employees who are receiving must also have a good attitudes towards the individual who is knowledge rich. This will make the relationship between the sharer and the receiver of the knowledge.

Management must emphasize the importance of sharing knowledge within the organization. They must also make sure that teams functions properly. They must offer a helping hand when they are needed.

Constant feedback meeting must be made within the organization. This will make all employees. They must also communicate as this will make knowledge sharing effective. [7], discussed that employees should be allowed to communicate within the organization. They should constantly communicate with each other. This will make them to share as much knowledge as they can. Distance also play a vital role in the success of knowledge sharing. Employees should not be apart from each other.

This study is limited to agricultural SMMEs that are based in Gauteng, under the city of Johannesburg municipality.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Agricultural SMMEs must be aware of the barriers of knowledge transfer. If they know they will be able to overcome them. This study has discovered that there must be effective communication within members of the SMMEs. It was found that more than half of members of the SMMEs think that knowledge sharing is everyone's concern. As this study was limited to only agricultural SMMEs, a replication study in other sectors must be done. This will help us find out if other sectors see things the same with agricultural SMMEs.

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