

Exploring the Extent to which Child Support Grants (CSG) Meet the Needs of the Beneficiaries in South Africa: The Case of the 2010 Study in Ntselamanzi Village, Eastern Cape Province

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KEYWORDS Dependence Syndrome. Sustainability. Hierarchy of Needs. Department of Social Development

ABSTRACT This study sought to explore the extent to which the CSG meet the needs of the beneficiaries in South Africa with a case of the 2010 study of Ntselamanzi, Eastern Cape Province. The study utilized a quantitative approach in collecting data from the participants. The findings indicated that the beneficiaries were facing challenges regarding the inability of the grant to provide clothing, food, school needs and medication. The researchers recommend the government to investigate the circumstances of these beneficiaries with the hope of adjusting the grant so that it can meet the current economic trends among other things. It is hoped that the findings from this paper will likely steer more commitment from the government towards ensuring that the CSG meets the needs of the beneficiaries and also putting in place strategies that will adequately bolster the challenges of low or no income faced by the beneficiaries' parents.

INTRODUCTION

Social security remains to be one of the acceptable and plausible means adopted by many governments of the world to economically bolster the lives of their citizens. It is by and large one of the approaches of poverty alleviation or reduction (Lombard 1991; The World Bank 2011; Nooteboom 2014; Vaughan-Whitehead 2015). In South Africa, one of the social security strategies is administration of the Child Support Grant. However, it is frightening that many children in South Africa are still exposed to the inhumane conditions of poverty, even though the country has been peddling efforts of social security for decades, but on a wider scale after the 1994 independence dispensation (Laing 2012). Historically, the CSG was introduced to replace the State Maintenance Grant (SMG) as a social safety net. The Constitution of South Africa in Section 28 (1) (c) recognizes that children have an inalienable right to "basic nutrition, shelter, basic healthcare services, and social services." Additionally, Paper 27 indicates that the child has a "right to a standard of living adequate for his/her development" (Rosa and Guthrie 2002). Pivotaly, the CSG has been instituted to provide for the basic needs of the children whose parents or guardians are unable to meet their needs due to problems such as unemployment, disability and poverty. This grant was pegged at 290 Rands from March and rose to 300 Rands in October 2013 (Kahn 2013).

However as at 2010, the grant was pegged at 250 Rands per child (Doneva 2010).

Despite these noble contributions and assistance programs that have been instituted to assist the vulnerable and the needy, many questions especially in South Africa surround the ability of these initiatives to adequately meet the basic needs for the children and therefore deliver them from the poverty whose objective the grants are supposed to achieve. The access to basic needs is a pivotal and critical right. This is well embedded in the international human rights instruments of the United Nations (United Nations undated). Realistically and apparently, the CSG in many quarters and contexts is deemed inadequate to change the lives of the beneficiaries. This is because it constitutes little money that cannot adequately meet the basic needs of the beneficiaries such as food, given the cost of living the country has sunk into (Davies 2012). It is based on these apparent inadequacies of the CSG to meet the basic needs of the beneficiaries that this paper has been formulated to empirically and contextually explore the extent to which the CSG meets the needs of the beneficiaries based on a 2010 study of Nzelamazi village, Alice Town, Eastern Cape Province.

Study Aims and Objectives

Although this paper has been derived from a broad research study pertaining to the role

and challenges associated with inability of the CSG grants to meet beneficiaries' needs, the main aim and objective is to explore the extent to which the child support grants meet the needs of the beneficiaries in South Africa.

Problem Statement

Although the government of South Africa has managed to put in place a social security system to assist the needy the vulnerable individuals through accessing and them grants such as the child support grant (CSG), there are feelers on the ground suggesting that probably the grants are not meeting the needs of the beneficiaries. This is unfortunate because South Africa is one of the few countries with economic muscle to manage one of the biggest welfare systems in the world. Information on the ground corroborated by some empirical and documented information also seems to indicate an array of challenges related to accessing these grants. Although such challenges may not be generalized and may be contextual, this justifies the need to carry out an empirical and a contextual investigation to ascertain these challenges and ultimately be in a position to validate whether accessing these grants is in any way helping in poverty reduction or alleviation. The documented results would hopefully help the government in coming up with effective ways of accessing the grants, or if the grants are not helping in poverty alleviation or reduction, possibly come up with other alternative and sustainable approaches to poverty alleviation or reduction.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to collect data from the study respondents. The quantitative approach was especially useful given that the study sought the magnitude of the perceptions of the respondents on the extent to which the CSG meet their needs (Neuman 2006). The design took the form of a mini survey.

Method of Data Collection

The quantitative data collection was made possible through the use of a self-administered questionnaires. These kinds of questionnaires

are well known for their ability to encourage honesty and openness from the respondents. The instrument, through its varied options of responses, allows the flexibility of the respondents' minds (Mitchell and Jolley 2012).

Unit of Analysis

Twenty biological parents of children who received child support grant were subjected to a questionnaire interview administered by the researchers themselves. The biological parents of these children were ideally chosen because they were the ones receiving the grants on behalf of the children and therefore were able to answer questions on the ability of the grant to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

Research Instruments

The study utilized a self-administered questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. This instrument was especially important as it enabled the researchers to be the primary instruments of data collection and also because most of the respondents were not conversant with the English language, the instrument enabled the use interpretation from the researchers who were IsiXhosa literate.

Sample Selection

The probability sampling methodology was adopted in this study to select the samples for the study. A simple random sampling technique was especially utilized to select 20 samples randomly from the four areas of Ntselamanzi community that include, Ntselamanzi Township, Emaplangeni, Ntselamanzi Administration area and Ntselamanzi Location. The simple random sampling technique was especially useful because it gave equal chances of any member of the population to be selected (Babbie 2007).

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers collected data using the self-administered questionnaire interview. The raw data from the questionnaires was analyzed using the Microsoft Excel package whereby data was first assigned into a family of codes and then presented in tables, charts and graphs for clearer meaning.

Research Domain

The data was collected in October 2010 from the Ntselamanzi community and analyzed in October 2010. This community is located in Alice Town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This province was chosen because it is considered to be one of the poorer provinces in South Africa and therefore exploration of the circumstances of the CSG beneficiaries is appropriately important in order to validate whether the intervention constituted any form of poverty alleviation. This is also further supported by statistics that indicate that seventy-eight percent of children in Eastern Cape Province are from poor households (Triegaardt 2005).

FINDINGS

Profile

Biological Parenthood

The findings from this study indicated that ninety five percent of the study were mothers to the children receiving the CSG, while five percent were fathers to the children receiving the CSG (see Table 1). These findings indicated that most of the people who were supporting these children were mothers. This is also not shocking in a country where women outnumber the males (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). In such a state of affairs, it is pertinent for the government to consider more proactive affirmative action programs that target female-headed households in order to empower them economically.

Table 1: Biological parenthood

<i>Relationship to child</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Father	1	5.0
Mother	19	95.0
Total	50	100.0

Employment Status

The findings from this study revealed that forty-five percent of the study respondents were unemployed and forty-five percent were on a contract basis, while those that were on a permanent basis constituted ten percent (see Table 2). These findings indicate that the rate of unemployment among the adults is high. The fact that some were on contract does not give con-

solation because these were permanent and pensionable. This was the case where the employing authorities were either not stable or the employees are of low skilled category. This could be also affecting the psychological and emotional stability of these people as they lacked a stable source of income. These researchers fear that if there are no interventions to improve the lives of these parents or adults, the situation may prompt and push them to engage in risky sexual and illegal economic activities such as drug and alcohol abuse, or prostitution, to supplement their income, or to reduce the state of stress. It is therefore necessary for the government to consider investing efforts towards vocational and mass training of the unemployed in South Africa, especially those that are in households where children are receiving a CSG. This could also limit and reduce the dependency of the whole family on the CSG meant for the child. Vocational and mass training could easily bolster people's spirit of entrepreneurship (Mafela 2009).

Table 2: Type of employment

<i>Type of employment</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Unemployed	9	45
Permanent	2	10
Contract	9	45
Total	20	100.0

Clothing Was Only Averagely Met

The findings from this study revealed that only fifty percent of the beneficiaries had CSG meet their clothing demands, while the rest fifty percent could not (see Table 3). Clothing forms a part of essential basic needs for children and plays an important part in their upbringing, self-confidence, interaction and protection from adverse weather conditions among other things. Therefore, its unavailability greatly jeopardizes children's social welfare.

Table 3: Extent to which clothing needs are met

<i>Clothing</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Catered for	10	50.0
Not catered for	10	50.0
Total	20	100.0

Child Support Grant Not Adequate to Meet Basic Food Needs

The study findings revealed that sixty-five percent of the beneficiaries reported that the CSG never met the food needs of the children while thirty-five percent indicated that it was catered for (see Table 4). These findings indicate that most beneficiaries faced an arduous and an uphill task to meet the food needs of the CSG beneficiary child. Since food is a basic need, it is detrimental if the grant cannot adequately meet the food needs of the child. This opens the child to other horrendous effects such as hunger and diseases. The phenomenon is also likely to affect the social, psychological and emotional growth of the child. This is also disappointing news given that South Africa is one of the countries that ratified the Millennium Development Goal to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger before the year 2015 tickles. The government needs to timeously address the issue of food security that will sustainably ensure that all in the country have adequate food.

Table 4: Extent to which food needs are met

<i>Food</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Catered for	7	35.0
Not Catered for	13	65.0
Total	20	100.0

Medication Needs Are Not Met

The findings from this study revealed that sixty percent of the beneficiaries' medical needs were not met by the grant while forty percent of the beneficiaries' medical needs were met (see Table 5). These findings revealed that most of the beneficiaries had challenges with regards to accessing medication using the CSG. The money was too little. This means that these CSG beneficiaries were vulnerable and in dire need of help. This inadequacy to afford medication posed serious challenge to the normal growth of the children. The situation threatened their future in the eventuality they fall sick. Perhaps the fact that hospitals are free may make this problem euphemistic. The challenge can be dire when some medication in the public hospitals such as the nearby Vitoria runs out of stock. This being a common phenomenon in many public hospi-

tals of South Africa, then these children fall into the category of those in great need of assistance.

Table 5: Extent to which medication needs are met

<i>Medication</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Catered for	8	40.0
Not catered for	12	60.0
Total	20	100.0

The Grant is Failing to Meet the School Needs of Children

The findings from this study revealed that sixty percent of the study respondents indicated that the CSG was not enough to meet the school of the beneficiaries while forty percent revealed that school needs were met (see Table 6). The school tools that the children needed include fees, uniform and stationery. The inability of the grant to assist most of these beneficiaries to access school needs jeopardizes the children's opportunity to do well in school as well as inability to alleviate or reduce poverty. This is because education is an empowerment tool that equips citizens with the power to liberate themselves both socially and economically. With the quality of education in South Africa reported to be one of the lowest in the world, the government needs to ensure that there is a special grant to address the school needs. This information is both shocking and perturbing considering the fact that the government is by the year 2015 expected to show progress on the Millennium Development Goal of universal access to primary education.

Table 6: Extent to which school needs are met

<i>School needs</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Catered for	8	40.0
Not catered for	12	60.0
Total	20	100.0

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study revealed that most of the biological parents were females compared to men. These findings concur with national statistics that indicate that there are more

females (52%) than males (48%) in South Africa (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). Perhaps the most worrying aspect in South Africa is the fact that poverty is increasingly affecting women more than men, leading to the increased phenomenon of feminization of poverty (Kang'ethe 2013a; Musekiwa 2013). It could therefore be timely if the government can put in place affirmative action programs targeting especially the female proportion of the population as this could bring them back into the mainstream economy (Manomano 2013). Although the study results indicated that fewer women were employed, although on a contract basis, most of the respondents were unemployed. This is not shocking in a country with a very high level of unemployment (McGrath and Human Sciences Research 2004; Hunt 2009). Other studies carried out on social grants also discovered cases of high unemployment among the recipients of the grants (Guturu 2012, 2014) as well as those carried out on recipients of other social programs such as the RDP houses (Manomano 2013, 2015). It could be appropriate if the government can consider funding the unemployed in investing in various income generating projects (IGPs) as well as access them with vocational-based training (Manomano 2013). This training could help this group develop their human capital and possibly afford them to make sustainable livelihoods (UNAIDS 2001; Kang'ethe 2015). Having these people trained in vocational domains could probably raise their entrepreneurial capacities (Mafela 2009). This is because it is apparent that African countries' capacities to generate employment are dwindling especially with increased globalization. This is because globalization favors efficient ways and forms of productivity that uses very little human resource. South African mechanization forms of farming exhibit an excellent example because only a few workers are involved in massive production of crops (Kang'ethe 2014).

The findings revealed that most of the respondents were finding the CSG failing to meet the food needs of the children under the CSG. This is also worrying given that the country's thirty percent of the population experiences food insecurity. In fact, national statistics indicate that twenty-six percent of the children in twenty percent households in the country experience hunger (Nicholson 2012). This indicates that many children face hunger and malnutrition. It should

however be noted that malnutrition is one of the primary factors leading to morbidity and mortality in the country (Rosa S and Guthrie 2002). Anecdotal evidence indicates that the CSG is inadequate to meet the food needs of the beneficiaries. This calls for a thorough examination of the circumstances of helping the children in order to establish the right amount of money that can adequately cover their needs as sentiments indicate that it is only enough for milk (Addinall 2012). Perhaps the situation is exacerbated by the possibility of the parents of the beneficiaries also sharing in the grant due to poverty. It could also be timely if the government can seriously task the recently instituted national planning commission to collaborate with South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), Department of Social Development and NGOs to come up with an appropriate food package to assist these children.

Moreover, the findings indicated that clothing was averagely met meaning that it was a challenge for some and for others it was not. Lack of clothing could have a psychological effect on children's psychosocial-emotional development. This is a need, which is very important and falls on the bottommost rung of the Maslow hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1999). It may also affect their confidence and possibly adopt a withdrawal syndrome from their peers (Nkosi and Daniels 2013). This is likely to affect their normal social and mental growth and development (Piaget 1990).

The findings revealed that the medical needs were not met by the CSG. This is rather disappointing given that access to health is also a medical human right that is enshrined in the United Nations instruments ratified even by the government of South Africa (United Nations undated; Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996). Other perceptions also indicate that although services are subsidized for those receiving the CSG at public hospitals, some public health facilities press charges ignoring the gesture that the CSG beneficiaries are vulnerable individuals being assisted by the government (UNICEF 2010). This means there is need for reviewing and crafting medical subsidies that can allow the poor, the vulnerable and the needy to access medication. The governments have the obligation to access medical services to people. People have inalienable rights to medication under the countries' constitutions (RSA 1996).

The findings also revealed that most respondents indicated that the CSG was not enough to meet the school needs. This is a disturbing piece of information since the country supports access to education as a right for all and hence it's progressive realization (Ndonga 2012). Contrastingly, the findings are supported by other perfidious information from perceptions and complaints that many children faced challenges of accessing school uniform and other educational related tools (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) 2002; Legotlo 2014). Furthermore, it is disturbing that the country faces a huge problem of dropouts because of the expensive high school education for those that would have aged beyond the threshold age of 13. Even though school fees is waived for those receiving the CSG, school needs remain a challenge for the beneficiaries. This presents a sad state of affairs and a stumbling block to the "education for all" concept. With crime and many other vices increasing in the country, the government needs to work hard to remove all the educational challenges these children face. Considering also the fact that the country is rated as one with the lowest quality of education especially at the primary level, the government needs to come up with strong turnaround strategies to fill up these apparent gaps. This is because these gaps affect these children's access to spaces in the universities, the quality of the degrees they can take and possibly the quality of their life (Kang'ethe 2013b). Perhaps the government needs to be supported by the NGOs and other educational friendly bodies in order to effectively manage the issue of education, especially at the primary level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends for research and policymaking that will unearth and analyze the dynamics and challenges pertaining to child support grant and the extent to which it can support the upbringing and wellbeing of the children who are targeted by the assistance. This paper suggests that the government may also consider employing asset-based development as a way of empowering the needy and vulnerable to be able to help and empower themselves. In doing so, it would reduce the culture of dependency and encourage self-reliance. This will also offload the heavy burden that the taxpay-

ers carry through unduly heavy taxation to meet most of the grants. This could also give the government an opportunity to unleash its efforts in other development critical areas such as employment creation opportunities, energy provision and investments for future generations. Monitoring and evaluation processes needs to be bolstered in order to ensure that these social programs focus on the people's wellbeing and not only on the program. For example, access to school uniforms as well as basic food plays a very critical role in ensuring that the country meets its targets of skill development such as the acquisition of masters and PhD degrees deemed to expedite and churn the much needed development processes.

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