

The Efficacy Of Disability Grant Disbursement Mechanisms, Views Of Umgungundlovu District Staff At The South African Social Security Agency.

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ABSTRACT

This article notes significant views from disability grant policy experts regarding the strategies adopted as mechanisms for disability grant disbursement. The discourse followed here critically evaluates the challenges and inputs pertaining to structures such the disability grant policy, associated frameworks, system errors and related inefficiencies as experienced by the South African Social Security Agency of the Pietermaritzburg. Social scientists in many fields observed strengths and weaknesses of disability grant instruments, the ineffectiveness in disbursement and skills development required to enhance efficient social security service delivery, enablement and involvement of partners in various organisations. Using a qualitative approach, this theoretical article contends that the disability grant policy executers plays a significant role in cooperating with disability grant policy-makers to deliver the disability grants to beneficiaries. Even though there are many role players at the social security agency multi-level governance with varying resource needs and attentiveness, however there are still gaps in the mechanisms adopted by the government to provide disability grants of beneficiaries in South Africa. On that account, it is critical for the South African government through SASSA agencies to observe and assess the effectiveness of mechanisms used to disburse disability grants to provide rigorousness in social systems for service delivery improvement.

Key words: disbursement, disability, grants, policy, mechanisms

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INTRODUCTION

The Social Security Disability Grants (SSDG) pay beneficiaries a particular fixed amount as a social relief of distress benefit to qualifying persons living with disability for about over a year. The South African government established this strategy as a legislation measure to help support the disabled individuals gain a source of income following the lack of ability to enter labour market (Abel-Smith, 2019, ISSA, 2016). Crucial for human right consideration (ISSA, 2016) SSDG is a vital ingredient of government spending in variously meant to encourage inclusivity and prevent marginalisation by ameliorating the disabled citizen livelihoods through income gap reduction strategies (Cai & Yue, 2017).

Critical as this grant may be, the disability grant long-term plans does not appear dependable and secured as the errors in disability grant mechanisms prove the policy insufficient and unable to

accurately provide the grant to beneficiaries correctly and on time (South African Government, 2020).

SSDG in South Africa is immersed in system errors, fraud and scarcity of resources. In May 2020, the South African Government issued an article by Se-Anne Rall that reported on SASSA glitches that left thousands of grant beneficiaries stranded without cash following system technical faults. In furtherance, Paddy (2020) recounted on incidents where SASSA was alleged to have turned disability grant applicants away after they were confirmed by a medical doctor to satisfy the set requirements for getting R 1 860 monthly grant by compelling them to register for special covid-19 grant as opposed to disability grant. Meanwhile, the South African Minister of Finance pronounced that as of the early beginning of February 2020 the disability grant pay will increment from R1 695 to a considerable R 1 780 for an estimate of over a million disability

grant payees (SAnews, 2019), which is just one of the 10 other categories of social grants that pays beneficiaries per month. Convictions of disability grant fraudulent scams of about over R750 000 that was lost to associated crimes have been noticed by (Mthethwa, 2018). In a double measure, the SASSA lost about R68 million in government spending investigating cases related to fraud and devising new ways of dealing with social disability grant crimes. Reports of this nature became the justification that led the researcher to undertaking the study evaluating the effectiveness of the mechanisms used by SASSA in UMgungundlovu district under the KwaZulu-Natal province to disburse disability grants.

In furtherance, a warning has been issued by Flaherty & Tatum (2019) to the world-wide governments that the social security costs are predictably expected to surpass the total incomes of 2020 for many governments since this observation was last seen in 1982. It was imperative to assess what is obtaining in other countries who disburse disability grants, both in European and African to ascertain the impact and remedial measures they have implemented to tackle disability grant disbursement challenges. Although service delivery contexts may differ but there are many commonalities that can assist the South African government improve the disability grant service delivery sector.

Conceptualisation and theoretical framework

Institutional theory: new public governance in relation to disability grant disbursement processes

In the timely 1990s, social scientists across the globe reconceptualised institutional theory as an instruction that is inferable and basis on the customs of government intercession and how they impression the broad-ranging welfare of the public. The inceptive precision of institutional theory, given by Lawrence and Shadnam (2008), proffer the discipline as:

The ground of disbursement as a ground of policy... The object of policy studies is to liberate regulatory mechanisms from the uncertainty and excessiveness of empiric policy instruments and laid down as over basics that are placed earnestly in clear-headed principles ... Institutional theory is the exhaustive and methodical

implementation of government law. Each specific practice of government jurisprudence, is an action of policy application.

Peters (2000) advanced to the grounds of Institutional theory by pronouncing the dichotomy of public policy that demanded implementation to be applied in respect of enduring rules, culture, practices and structures set conditions for behaviour and action. The regulation of Institutional theory is also premised on the sought-after policy functions of government that account for the flexibility, suitability and survival facets of various institutions through evaluating the social behaviours in processes and practice that stem from policies, norms, and procedures (Richard, 2004).

Abstracting from the emergence and expansion of Institutional theory, Raffaelli and Glynn (2013) observes the following distinct paradigms:

1. Paradigm 1: the institutional continuity activation paradigm, 1900–1926.
2. Paradigm 2: the new public governance (NPG) paradigm, 1927–present.
3. Paradigm 3: Market Failure Paradigm, 1952–present.
4. Paradigm 4: implementation for management theory shifting paradigm, 1942–present.
5. Paradigm 5: organisational diversity paradigm, 1970–present.
6. Paradigm 6: the paradigm of governance, 1990–present.

Matsiliza (2020, 297) on paradigm 6 of governance, posits that the policy implementers in varying government administrations emphasise more on the efficiency and sustenance projected towards the entire welfare of the public, governed by participation of different role players with varying interests that operates on the subject of government establishment and policy adaptation.

Many social scientists contend that governments logically expedite disability grant policy connection with European, African and devolved business associates to set the seal on South Africans disbursement policy dialogues. Nevertheless, diverse social scientists in policy note the uniqueness of Institutional Theory as a field and as an ingenuity. Contemporary condition (Paradigm 2) tugs at the heart strings of the new public governance and has demonstrated that the

government operates in a fraud and inefficiency force field, with many controversies from various disability grant stakeholders with varying interests. Grant disbursement emerged strongly in the current democratic era, although governments are navigating towards remodelling their mechanisms that have been enlightened by new public governance.

In this topical decennium, governance is growing the policy administration prospect and has laid more emphasis towards government servicing and responsibility on its charge to satisfy the business of other partners, which contain non-government and classified sectors. In observing the responsibility of the conditions in refining policy regulatory practices, Abbo et al., (2015) distinguish that gauging of policy functioning must be feasible, practicable, perceptible and merged by shareholders beneficial to meeting goals at a set out period.

The South African administration directs policy improvement next to the rules of new public governance.

Raffaelli and Glynn (2013) argues that new public governance is unavoidable for modern governments that are prone to improve their policy redesign for service delivery improvements. Hayagreeva, Calvin and Mayer (2000) concurs that new public governance leaves hereditament of policy improvements that illustrate many of the new public governance diversification during the establishment of agencies for service delivery. The new public governance delivers enlightenment on the inclusion of private sector ethos of functionality on how to rationalise government institutions. In that fashion, the contemporary era has put forward precept for the pedagogy of effective policy implementation, which should set in motion skilful workforce through primitive and traditional customary governance policy and European philosophies and reliance as part of the policy teaching practice. The praxis of successful policy implementation has been improved meaningfully in post-apartheid South Africa. The current and former government administration brings about many policy awareness strategies that address fraud and maladministration which is meant to progress and instil policy consciousness when disability grants are disbursed.

Grounded on the view of a policy developmental position, it is important for the South African social security institutions to realise that they are charged with a responsibility of embracing available policy measures when disbursing grants, as the positive

impact of service delivery relies on the effective and efficient policy implementation. As observed by the government of the Republic of South Africa (1996), certain values of the new public governance practice encourage high standards of proficient morals that must be reinforced and upheld professionally and successfully in order to administer resources economically and for the public good. In the context of disbursement, public good must without prejudice, account for disability grant service delivery that is lawful, developmental and transparent.

Literature review

Disability grant policy: strengths versus weaknesses

The pronouncement made on the Social Assistance Act (13 of 2004) posits that citizenry are considered to be challenged with disability if they are (1) within the prescribed age (18), (2) owing to individual mental or physical disability, (3) unfit for any labour or employment placement by virtue of somewhat service which is the means needed to enable every citizenry to afford their maintenance.

Disability Grant Distribution Process

De Paoli (2018) spell out that the criteria utilised to assign disability grants is grounded on asset evaluation of applicants, means testing (evaluation of income thresholds) and the medical assessments. The distribution of disability grant is accrued with allegations of fraud and maladministration (Gabrielle, 2019). SASSA agrees that provision of disability grant is based on the medical conditions and the level of disability of that specific citizenry (de Paoli, 2017). Hanass (2018) contended that social protection mechanisms ought to be distributed justifiably in order to effectively respond to the needs of the physically challenged than just concentrating on the disability rank of the applicants.

Growing call for disability grants of South Africa

Kiregu, Murandahabi et.al, (2016) noticed that higher figures (15%) of the worldwide population are for the people living with varying forms of disability, and the figures appeared higher in Africa at a considerable

(19%). Similarly, UNESCO (2010) discovered that about 3000 million of the African continent population face significant disability challenges. Needless to say that these burgeoning numbers on the inherent challenges facing persons living with disability is not a phenomenon affecting only developing countries, howbeit a whole worldwide. Statistics SA (2011) demonstrated that there was a growing number of people living with disability in South Africa which was about 2.9 million when counting from the population of 51.8 million (5.6%) in 2011. It was discovered that a burgeoning 8.4% (n=243 600) of the KwaZulu-Natal province citizenry live with different kinds of disabilities. Armstrong and Burger (2014) noticed that the KwaZulu-Natal province had a significant number of social assistant claimants with the figures adding to 3, 761 662. Fiszbein and Schady (2015) also touched on the number of social grant beneficiaries that showed significant growth in the year 2015. On the same vein, Makundi (2009) ascribed these growing numbers altogether with substantial expenditure to impecunious policy frameworks governing social assistance and forbearing process and consciousness programmes across South Africa (Mitra, 2010).

Fraudulent activities around disbursement of disability grants

Evidence shows that policy application laydown and dishonest activities around payments of social grants has become a habitual trait at the SASSA inter-alia, Paddy (2020) reported on events where SASSA was presumed to have turned disability grant claimants away when they were confirmed by a medical doctor to satisfy the standard requirements for getting an amount of R 1 860 that is paid monthly as a grant by government convincing them to rather apply for a special covid-19 grant as against disability grant. Grey literature such as annual reports and charts talks about tireless efforts that the identical governments have uses to curb fraudulent practices. Critical as these operations are, social scientists such as Mitra (2018) still criticised the SASSA disability grant policy for creating citizenry

dependence by ignoring visible fraud and maladministration. This was also noticed by Potts (2011) who revealed that disability grants encourage citizenry to depend more on government unduly than immersing themselves with labour they are physically fit to do. Broadkin (2012) is of the opinion that it is significant to bring policy into line with practice as the gap tends to promote fraudulent events.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and data collection

This inquiry used an exploratory case design. The probe focused on gaining full understanding of the mechanisms that are used by SASSA to pay out disability grants of South Africa. Guided by the suggestion of Given (2008), which posits that the researchers are allowed to use focus groups meetings in a case design study, the researcher thereafter identified participants who are experts of social disability grant policy at the SASSA (n=10) and another from a non-profit organisation recognised as the Association of the Physically Challenged (n=5), which was also inclusive of 30 beneficiaries of disability grant. All respondents fall within the geographical locations of UMgungundlovu district. Critical for one's consideration, it is important to realise that the specified groups formed part of this multiple case design research. Purposive sampling was used to select the two groups namely: (1) beneficiaries and (2) experts following the advice (Patton, 2002), since this particular group was identified as parties that are directly affected by disability grant policy areas of operation which clearly uses specific mechanisms to satisfy this type of grant policy measures. Selecting specified respondents was aground on the fact that they share critical insights and valid perceptions in relation to disability grant policy issues. The study was concluded in a two-week period. The undertaking was in a form of interviews which was conducted in light of the 13 identified areas of UMgungundlovu district that are affected by disability grant disbursement.

Purpose

The key aim of this inquiry was to draw out perceptions by extracting empirical data from the field of participants with the intention to make a policy way forward. The data were to comprise observations, emotions, perceptions tagging along the heart strings of the topographical features and so

forth. Although this bared a possibility of being drawn as secondary data, suffice is to mention that the researcher excluded this approach following the realisation that it carries a potential to disregard certain important parts of the evidence that might not have been acquired by other social scientists in the field, which clearly would have made data not to be pertinent. Instruments included the use of qualitative questionnaires, which the aim was to gather pertinent data that addresses the objectives of the inquiry. This article only unfolds data which addressed the effectiveness of the mechanisms that are utilised by SASSA to disburse disability grants. At first, the researcher interviewed respondents individually, and thereafter used focus group meetings with the idea to bring forth more information regarding their views of the efficacy of the mechanisms that are used to distribute the disability grant. In furtherance, the researcher made a way for expert respondent suggestions in order to help improve the disability grant policy. Thematic codes were utilised to arrange and analyse extracted data, blending it with appropriate theoretical plans as the case plan emerged as suggested by Yin (2003). Matched-patterns, descriptions, structures, and duplication philosophy formed part of the study dynamics as Yin (2003) emphasised.

RESULTS

Sample features analyses –Statistical variables

Table 1 shows the factual data of all the policy expert participants, where it was observed that disability grants is typically pervaded by only the black workforce who are grant experts at (100%), while the white is 0%, coloured 0%, Indian 0% and remnant other option on the interview schedule creating another meagre 0%. The age of investigated expert respondents ranged between the age 18 to over 50. Gender demographics had a mean of 30% (n=5) males and the remaining 70% (n=10) were females.

A normal 20% of respondents were from the offices that are situated in rural areas (Impendle village) while the 80 % balance of offices were located in urban areas. The sample table of (Serekan's, 2013) allows that a sample population of 100 (n=100%) to hold interviews with a minimum number of 15 (n=10%). Since the study used a qualitative paradigm, the case of two selected organisations (SASSA & Association for the Physically Challenged) was informed by Serekan's sample table with the population sizes ranged and expected appropriate percentages placed in that order. In short, the population of 100 selected expert respondents was deduced into a total number of 15 expert respondents for interviews.

Table 1. Oddity of expert respondents

Statistical variables		N	Total sample (n=7)%
Gender			
Male		5	30%
Female		10	70%
Age			
20-29		0	0%
30-35		0	0%
36-39		3	30%
40-50		4	70%
Over 50		0	0%
Forgot		0	0%
Ethnicity			
Black		7	100%
White		0	0%
Coloured		0	0%
Indian		0	0%
Other		0	0%

The data provided by participants on table 2. agrees with the findings made by (de Paoli, 2012) which revealed that the standards utilised to allocate disability grants ought to be founded on the medical conditions and the level of disability of that specific individual. Similarly, the emphasised flaws of the DG policy accessed by this inquiry settle the results of (Baron 2017) which uncovered that the disability grant application process has inconsistencies because of indistinct guidelines. What was new with this probe was that the study brought forward several concerns of staff who stressed that they are not adequately trained, complained about the lack of the resources for employees to meet with the set goals of the DG policy, lack of communication and other gaps in the policy, which warrants for corrupt officials to manoeuvre corruption to enrich themselves with the money that is meant to pay beneficiaries. Zucker (1987) postulates a very solid dissension that can also be found in certain legislative framework sections, which says that institutions are vigorous due to the eruptive settings in which they operate.

It was important to assess the policies that are shaped and utilised by SASSA in order to create consciousness of the DG policy rules to initiators having measured the volatile state of SASSA as an institution. The investigator infused Hargrave and De Ven (2006)'s collective action model for institutional innovation to circumnavigate on experts' opinions regarding the competence of advanced DG policy strategies that are designed to meet beneficiary needs. These frameworks are important because they emphasise on institutional change and are concerned with the dialectical procedures in which supporting actors accept the contradictory views, which challenge each other and draw in political conducts with the aim to make and transform institutions. It was similarly significant that this investigation custom itself with the provisions prescribed in Section 33 (1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in order to assess the regulatory instruments that help SASSA to fight fraud and inefficiency, as the sector include enabling requirements that has precise confines for adaptable public institutions, which are legitimacy, sensibleness, bureaucratic justice and responsibility.

Table 2: Reported disability grant policy guidelines of SASSA

Disability grant policy eligibility criteria	Strengths of the policy	Weaknesses of the policy
<p>According to respondent's feedback the disability grant policy has outlined the following guidelines to be met by beneficiaries, when applying for disability grant of South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An applicant must be an SA citizen, ▪ Be a permanent resident/refugee, ▪ Must be between 18 to 59 years of age, ▪ Must submit a medical report confirming disability not older than three months at the date of application, ▪ Must not be maintained or cared for in a state institution, 	<p>The seven interviewed respondents brought forward the following as disability grant policy strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DG policy is underpinned by democratic principles supported by Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which deals with Human Rights, ▪ The policy operates under the influence of Human Rights Commission, ▪ The DG policy comprises of numerous diversified flagship campaigns aimed at supporting the needs of people living with disability, 	<p>Interviewed respondents expressed their views around the noticed disability grant weaknesses, which remarks on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of adequate policy indoctrination to existing, especially the new personnel by government, ▪ Shortage of resources to adequately implement the policy, ▪ Shortage of adequately trained staff, ▪ Shortage of facilities to accommodate the needs of the policy, ▪ Poor communication platforms, ▪ DG policy gaps which allow for rife

- Must not be in receipt of another social grant in respect of him or herself.
- The DG policy shares a direct link with various Human Rights agencies across the globe.
- maladministration by corrupt officials.

Challenges facing disbursement processes

Disability grant mechanisms: fraud and inefficiency

Table 2 demonstrates the regulatory instruments recognised by SASSA to fight fraud and inefficiency as providing by the experts.

First, the table inhibits participants' perceptions on the governing tools, showed main issues, identified resolutions and provided observations on the realized changes by means of a vertical reporting technique. The experts also drew up the SASSA branded cards as part of the anew advanced policies utilised to fight scams and inadequacy, creating share of the regulatory instruments that the government would provide from the year 2019 and foregoing.

The respondents stated that the government is using the post-offices pay points to distribute disability

grant. The SASSA policy makers maintained that this was one of the instruments active at this institution to control scams and inadequacy. The matter of agreement renewals was also mentioned as another tool to fight fraud and corruption. Apparently, the alleged hostility on dishonest contract renewals between SASSA and post-offices were at that particular time experiencing evaluation after becoming very topical on the media during the year 2018, and these issues delayed social grant payments counting disability grants. The answers of authorities detailed various issues of disability grants stemming from receiving grants in retail outlets. Their reports revealed that there is quite a number of cases whereby the beneficiaries' card were scammed, and the government was tirelessly trying address such described fraud cases in the last six years

Table 3: Efficacy of fraud and inefficiency control mechanisms

Control mechanisms	Issue	Solution	Change
SASSA Branded cards	Started	Ongoing	Under monitoring
Post-office payment	Contract glitch	Reviewed	Fraud cases reported
Retail grant pay-outs	Card scams	Reviewed	Fraud cases reported
Biometrics	Started	Afloat	Fewer cases reported
Secret pins	Reproduce	Investigation	Cloned cards reported

Fraud campaigns	Embezzlement	Arrests	Proliferating pandemic
Fraud units	Case overload	Review	Reported media crime
Awareness campaigns	Poor reception	More campaigns	Hardly any change

Table 3 shows an overwhelming majority of expert participants who perceived the biometric systems utilised by SASSA as the very mechanisms which frequently created chaos as they claimed the system often failed to scan claimant fingerprints. About half of the interviewed policy officers mentioned that the secret pins utilised by SASSA to access disability grants have been replicated fraudulently after beneficiary cards were cloned, and the Fraud and Corruption Management Crime Unit of SASSA was on a mission to bring culprits to book. Although SASSA established the Fraud Management and Crime Prevention Unit as a strategy to reduce mushrooming fraud, inefficiency and maladministration, participants mentioned that even though there is a number of fraud awareness campaigns created by government to fight the scourge, a very minimal progress has been observed.

Implications

The aim of this inquiry was to learn whether or not the South African government share common social policy problems, and if the government can benchmark on some of the successful strategies used internationally to curb fraud and corruption. The section below links the identified issues that came through empirical data and provides a way forward for the South African government in order to remedy the festival of issues that has to do with the disbursement of social disability grant permeating systems and processes with chaos and eventually leading to poor service delivery.

Integrating perceptions of policy experts with a way forward regarding mechanism efficiency

The empirical data showed that the challenges pertaining to disbursement instruments inadequacies, fraud and maladministration continues across SASSA institutions of South Africa. Albeit the government has introduced several eradicating strategies such as international treaties, policy collaborations and so forth,

there is still a lot that has to be done to fight the scourge of disability grant frauds and inefficiencies. These challenges are perpetuated by other issues including poverty, unemployment along with unclear policies whereby officials are not adequately trained to effectively implement the disability grant policy. Issues that permeate chaos were mostly the fraud, maladministration and inefficiency which is now accepted by SASSA workforce as existing habitual traits that are normal. In furtherance, employee morale, dishonesty and poor ethics were mentioned as other major challenges weakening the disbursement policy.

This paper argues that the government need to bring corrupt and incompetent officials to book instead of ignoring the issues and accepting bribes to fade issues of corruption away. This can be achieved by applying measures encapsulated in the provisions of the Criminal Procedures Act of 1997, which vividly state how the government should hold good ethics in order to deal with crimes of this nature. This study is of the view that maladministration occurs as a result of not promptly applying the 'Promotion of Administrative Act of 2000', which stands as a piece of legislation that helps public institutions to make their administration more effective. The government should work towards breaking the hold between poverty nuance and disability which perpetuate to high demand of disability grants. The disability grant will improve if the government create more job opportunities as notable most corruption is also influenced by a considerable percentage of either a workforce that is employed on contract basis or the former personnel who stole because they know SASSA systems from previous and still have access to manoeuvre corruption even after losing their jobs. Since some issues stem from the former administrative system which imposed marginalisation to the disabled, the government can rectify this by adopting the 'Promotion of Equality

and Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000', which contains the provisions that helps preserve the liberty of persons living various forms of disability. Another useful piece of legislation that can assist the government reduce the levels of fraud and inappropriate administration is the application of 'Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activity Act 12 of 2004', which helps institutions prevent and combat fraud and corruption. The government can adopt the 'Public Service Act of 1999', as it will help the SASSA institution to deal with issues pertaining to poor service delivery as a result of unreliable disbursement tools such as Harmonised Assessment Tools (HAT), corrupt identification cards, means test and the SOCPEN which in the national interface system used to distribute social grants.

Conclusion

This article studied the literature pertinent to the public sector actors in the disability grant policy and growth, providing solutions by showing in what way the public sector has customarily engaged in recreation of disability growth. Observably, self-enrichment around disability grants has become a habitual trait to corrupt officials as they are able to operate the policy to suit their unlawful interest. This makes the policy to be inclined to self-serving workforce than projecting interest towards servicing the beneficiaries of grant. Corrupt officials understand the disability grant disbursement as a get rich quick platform whereby fraud, maladministration and self-enrichment are dominating challenges that has led the government into losing millions of revenue that is intended to serve the public needs, in this regard the person living with disability. In order to improve the policy, it is important that the government introduces the language of efficiency towards corporate as well as processes as this approach will help legitimise the operations by redefining the service value chain of disability grant disbursement thereof.

The selection of disability grant beneficiaries is supposed to get guidance from specified criteria, which is lawful, corruption free, based on means of income, and is capable of addressing disability grant issues. The gist of this paper seeks to create an impression that the proneness to fraud and inefficiency stem from the fact that while the SASSA institution is responsible for huge sums of money, but it operates with petite assessment and

monitoring tools which steer corruption. Utterly, the disability grant connected occurrences and actions taken towards important challenges for the accountability approach-nonetheless, the responsibility provision and service delivery custodians tend to thrive to present the novel concepts for improving responsibility.

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