



**Exploring social assistance administrative challenges at the South African Social Security  
Agency, KwaZulu-Natal**

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**Master of Commerce in Management**

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**Final dissertation**

## DECLARATION

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## **DEDICATION**

“Mgabe, Mgwijagwele, wena kaNozibula ngendoda abanye bezibula ngomalandakazi, Xam'odlumsingizane” These are my clan surnames, and this piece of work is dedicated to my family, friends, colleagues and Supervisor.

Their encouraging remarks are much appreciated and will never stop ringing in my ears. They supported me every step of the way, and I will always be grateful for everything they did to help with the research endeavour. I also dedicate this work to SASSA KwaZulu-Natal region, for providing access to the study participants.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The social assistance benefits plan in South Africa is the largest portion of the government's desperation and commitment to ease the programme to provide social assistance to eligible citizens of the nation. This study's main objective was to investigate the administrative challenges experienced by the social assistance systems at SASSA, KZN Region. The study employed qualitative research with explorative research design. The study was undertaken with ten SASSA Regional Managers in the KwaZulu-Natal Region. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants who were purposively sampled from the population. The data collected was analysed through thematic analysis. The key findings of the study indicated that there is a connection between the concept of social security and management, because it was used as an accounting tool for the services rendered under grants administration process. Secondly, most key challenges identified included fraud and corruption. Key recommendations were made as follows: there is a need to strengthen the use of technology to improve the social security administrative systems and ease access by the services users. There is a need to align the national policies, government systems and improve stakeholder involvement in addressing these interconnected issues. It is hoped that these findings and recommendations could be used for influencing policies around social security administration processes and improve citizenry participation, so that service users have a voice on the programmes implemented by the government. Furthermore, this study is an important contribution towards efforts aimed at improving service delivery within the South African Social Security Agency.

**Keywords:** Department of Social Development; Social services; SASSA, service delivery; KZN

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## **ACRONYMS**

CDG	:	Care Dependency Grant
CPS	:	Cash Paymaster Services
CSG	:	Child Support Grant
DSD	:	Department of Social Development
FCG	:	Foster Care Grant
HSSREC	:	Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee
KZN	:	KwaZulu-Natal
OAP	:	Old Age Pension
RMC	:	Records Management Centre
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
SADC	:	Southern African Development Community
SAPO	:	South African Post Office
SASSA	:	South African Social Security Agency
SOCPEN	:	Social Pension System
SRD	:	Social Relief of Distressed
TDW	:	The Document Warehouse
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fun

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The social assistance benefits plan in South Africa is the largest portion of the government's desperation and commitment to ease the programme to provide social assistance to eligible citizens of the nation. However, even though the Constitution provides for the option to advance towards social support, it only does so to that extent, and the requirements that must be satisfied before friendly help is permitted continue to benefit from the public role (Department of Social Development, 2006; Panagos, 2001:5). Social assistance can be viewed as non-contributory and pay attempted, as shown by Panagos (2001:6). It is by no means a structure supported by the state. Section 27 of the Bill of Rights, as stated in the Republic of South Africa's 1996 Constitution, indicates that " everybody has the option to approach government backed retirement including suitable social help in the event that they can't uphold themselves" (RSA Constitution). In light of these sentiments, this study sought to investigate the challenges related to accessing the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency, KwaZulu-Natal Region. This chapter therefore introduces the study and proceeds as follows: the following is provided in this chapter, the background of the study, research purpose, problem statement, research questions, research goals and objectives, significance of the study, and the dissertation structure.

### **1.2. Background to the study**

The expansion of the social security system to the most impoverished citizens of the population demonstrated to be an outstanding tool in the hands of a fledgling democracy, not just for addressing poverty, but also for broadening and deepening social inclusion of previously disadvantaged populations because of the apartheid era. Significant progress has been made in reducing poverty levels throughout the years, which is mostly attributed to the development of the social assistance programme (Koma, 2006:63).

According to Van der Berg, Louw, and du Toit (2007:9), the appointment of a well-known government marked a turning point in South Africa's history by bringing together groups that had hitherto been productively confined. Prior to the historic vote-based choices of 1994, social assistance in South Africa was seen as fragmented and uneven. According to Haarmann

(2000:10), the majority of South Africa's population obtained a separate administrative social assistant system that did not depend on full integration for most of the population. Nevertheless, the system began as an administration-overseen retirement net for primarily White people. Later, the government hired several partners, but they were less well integrated. A small portion of South Africa's population benefited from the particular retirement programme that was maintained by the government.

- In order to investigate the social system that the public authority supports and to make recommendations for how to create a more comprehensive and united government-supported social structure in opposition to this establishment of divided and devoid of bureaucratic social associate advantages, the public authority, under the sponsorship of the Department of Social Development, assigned a task gathering. The Taylor Committee was the name of the strategy task force (Department of Social Development, 2002). One particular term of reference used in the Taylor Committee review (Department of Social Development, 2002) was to assess the feasibility of the entire humanitarian aid sector, including all awards, finance sources, and methods by which they met their goals. Among the principal conclusions of the study were the following:
  - Numerous people remained financially impoverished.
  - Children under the age of seven and those who are older than seven are not eligible for child benefits.
  - The scope of incapacity provisions is limited.

In order to consolidate the Public Finance Management (Act No. 1 of 1999) and the South African Social Security Agency (Act No. 9 of 2004), SASSA was established as a public organization in 2006. One of the main goals of SASSA's establishment was to combat extortion and debasement while providing a more comprehensive and integrated government-backed social grant administration that prioritizes providing a more successful and productive government-managed social grant administration. Any lawful structure that stresses benefit movement should be adequate to handle the volume of cash benefit transportation, according to Steele (2006: 64). The social grant payment system known as SOCPEN framework, which acts as a move and payment arrangement for social grants, can efficiently convey the volume of exchanges with no discernible problems.

Even so, there were a number of pertinent issues at the time of SASSA's founding, including long waiting times at pay locations (in some cases, the elderly and fragile recipients spent the entire night before payment dates), obtuse conditions at pay locations such as the absence of a safe house, running water, or restrooms, SOCPEN accumulation, lost applications, lengthy pivot times that were not adhered to, before friendly grant applications were endorsed, broken payment machines at pay locations, late appearances by payment team members and SASSA staff at pay points, misrepresentation, and defilement. Since SASSA's founding, some methodological adjustments have been made in an effort to expand its networks and reach a wider audience in its mission to eradicate poverty's roots. Next are some of the significant developments in technique:

- The foster child's eligibility for the foster care grant may be extended until age 21 as long as they continue their education (the child was previously eligible until age 18).
- The child support grant has been extended to 18 years old (before, children could only obtain the award up to the age of 7 years old).
- Applications include alternative identification proof documents (as in the past, access to a grant required the presentation of a legitimate identity document).
- Age equality, whereby both men and women are eligible for the Old Person's Grant at the 60-year-old qualifying age (men were previously only eligible for the Old Age Grant at the 65-year-old age).

### **1.3 Research Purpose**

The purpose of the research was to investigate the administrative challenges of the social assistance at the South African Social Security Agency in KwaZulu-Natal region. The study sought to establish the challenges that are experienced by the grant administrators and help formulate proposals on how to overcome them.

### **1.4 Problem Statement**

The SASSA is the delivery arm of the Social Development Department (SDD), and its mandate is to ensure that comprehensive social security services against vulnerability and

poverty are provided within the constitutional and legislative confines of South Africa (SASSA 2019). In this view, it is clearly indicated that:

*All South African citizens have a right to benefit from the social security, as well as, if they are not able to sustain their families and own self, with suitable social assistance.* (The South African Constitution, Section 27 (1) (c) 1996:13)

In the previous years, the South African government implemented several programmes aimed at lowering inequality and poverty. For some of these programmes, different support grants are given out by the South African Social Security Agency, which was established under the Social Security Assistance Act No. 9 of 2004. This Act enables the basis for SASSA's designation as a government agency responsible for overseeing social security assistance subsidy payments.

Jehoma (2010) states that the key goals of SASSA are to ensure that there is productive and successful administration, oversight, as well as payment of different types of social security and protection grants namely child support, older persons, disability, care dependency, foster care, grant in aid, and war veteran's grant. These grants are provided in all nine provinces of South Africa. The democratic state of South Africa has been progressive and transformative in addressing inequality and poverty, post-apartheid era. Despite these efforts by the government, there has been significant challenges experienced by the Social Assistance systems at SASSA KZN Region. Literature has shown that there have been inconsistencies in the formulation of policies, resulting in SASSA registering grant beneficiaries who were ineligible on its systems (Makiwane, 2010; Mpedi, 2011; Mashaba & Saurombe, 2023). According to Khosa (2013), prospective recipients of SASSA grants are at times able to defraud the system by applying for grants at different SASSA offices if they were previously declined by the systems, and due to the unstandardized systems of the application process, the SASSA systems are not able to detect that. In addition, corruption and fraud have always been among the major concerns for the South African government, committed by syndicates of both employees and non-employees of the SASSA (Mashaba & Saurombe, 2023). Given the consideration of the challenges presented above, this study seeks to investigate the challenges associated with the administration of social assistance by the SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region.

## **1.5 Research Question**

This study's main research question is as follows: What are the administrative challenges related to accessing social assistance at SASSA, KZN Region? This is backed by the following sub-questions:

- How does the social assistance system operate in grant management?
- What are the administrative challenges related to accessing the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region?
- How are the administrative challenges in accessing the social assistance addressed at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal Region?

## **1.6 Research Goal and Objectives**

The study's main objective is to investigate the administrative challenges of accessing the social assistance systems at SASSA, KZN Region. More specifically the study seeks:

- To explore the social assistance system and its application in grant management.
- To critically analyse the administrative challenges associated with the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region.
- To establish how the administrative challenges of accessing the social assistance at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal are dealt with.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study seeks to highlight the administrative challenges of the social assistance systems at SASSA, KZN Region. It is significant in that the managers and the personnel who implement the systems might consider the findings and recommendations of the study. Section 27(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) stipulates that everyone is entitled to basic rights, including social security services, upon qualification. Similarly, the Batho Pele principles stipulates that every South African should have access to basic social rights and must be treated with fairness and courtesy. In light of this, many South African are suffering as a result of maladministration and mismanagement of social grants, allegedly by 'insiders' and their syndicates. This study seeks to establish the challenges and loopholes related to the payment of the social security grants, in an effort to suggest how the

organisation can improve the lives of the beneficiaries through effective implementation of the grants. It is therefore assumed that the study might further influence policy review and development, in terms of improving the social assistance systems from the grant administration unit at SASSA KZN.

### **1.8 Research methodology**

The methodology used in this study is the qualitative research. The methodology aims to investigate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied, it was determined to be appropriate. The explorative research design provided additional support for this. Because purposive sampling is primarily a non-random sampling technique used when the researcher only wants to include a specific targeted group of participants, that is the sampling strategy that was used. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles that SASSA Managers at the KZN Region face when trying to access social assistance systems for grant management, face to face interviews proved to be the most suitable method for this study. Additionally, a thematic data analysis approach was used to examine the information this study collected. Several ethical considerations were also met by the study, including getting ethics committee approval, protecting participant information through confidentiality and anonymity, explaining the study's goal to participants, and providing a consent form for them to sign if they agree to participate in the research.

### **1.9 Dissertation Structure**

The table below provides an overview of the study:

Table 1.9 Structure of the dissertation. Source: Author

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Scope</b>
Chapter 1: Introduction	The chapter provides the scope of the entire study. It serves to introduce key parts and aspects of the dissertation.
Chapter 2: Literature review	This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study and the literature review relating to the challenges of accessing the social assistance at South

	African Social Security Agency KwaZulu-Natal region.
Chapter 3: Research methodology	This chapter discusses the study's methodology including the research questions, objectives, population, research design, sampling strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria for sampling, data collecting, and analysis, including ethical considerations during data collection and analysis.
Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of research finding	Chapter four presents and discusses the research findings. The information gathered through the semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions represented the opinions and impressions of a subset of SASSA office managers.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations	This chapter discusses the study's conclusions and suggestions, which are reported in Chapter Four.

### **1.10 Summary of Chapter**

The background of the study has been provided in this chapter. The conceptual and contextual underpinnings of this research were presented in the chapter. There was discussion of the subject under investigation, the study's goal, its aims, and research questions. The following chapter examines the body of literature, in light of the predetermined study goals.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature related to the study, guided by the objectives of the study. As such, the chapter describes the role of SASSA in social grant management, the nature of social security in South Africa, as well as the concept of social assistance and its effectiveness in the South African context. The legislative framework guiding the administration of social assistance in South Africa is described and lastly, the theoretical perspectives are also highlighted. The chapter concludes with the summary of the chapter.

### **2.2 History of social assistance in South Africa**

#### **2.2.1 Social Assistance pre-1994**

Social assistance services were discriminatory on the grounds of disability, gender and race during the apartheid era (Joseph, 2012). The Old Age Pension (OAP) was the first grant programme, launched in 1928 and aimed at the impoverished White and Coloured people, (Samson et al., 2005). According to van Dijk and Mokgala (2014), social grants were naturally fragmented, with the Black community being excluded from benefiting. Joseph (2012) states that the OAP was subjected to a means-test, with an age criterion of 65 years and above.

In 1933, the Department of Social Welfare was founded to handle social grants (Joseph, 2012). Prior to the creation of this Department, it was clear that there were operational challenges because Black individuals continued to be denied access to social assistance schemes. Black people were not included in the Disability Grant (DG) until 1937 when it was expanded to include individuals with impairments based only on race, favouring White and Coloured people (Samson et al., 2005). For instance, Blacks were not included in the DG even under the original Blind Persons Act of 1936. According to Devereux (2001), in 1943, the OAP provided social support to 40% of the Whites, 56% of the Coloured, and as few as 4% of the Blacks. This funding was limited to the OAP for individuals with visual impairments and social relief. A means-test was also applied to the grants. Social aid, according to Joseph (2012), included money and temporary food packages intended exclusively for the White and Coloured populace. People with severe physical and mental disabilities could get DGs through the DG Act of 1968 (Dixon, 1968). Since the late 1970s,

social assistance schemes have been less racially discriminatory (Patel, 2015). Racial equality, encompassing all racial groups, expanded quickly in the 1970s. Fiscal policies provided coverage to five times as many Black individuals as White people (Triegaardt & Patel, 2005). All racial discriminatory practices in social handouts were eventually eliminated in 1992 by the Social Assistance Act, which included all races including Blacks and Indians (Woolard et al., 2010).

### **2.2.2 Social assistance after 1994**

The ANC, a newly formed anti-apartheid political party, was elected in 1994 and has as its mandate advocating for the integration of all its citizens in social assistance and fighting the apartheid-era divided system (Samson et al., 2005). A number of committees and civil society organisations were launched, and they pushed the ANC government to eliminate all types of discrimination in the provision of social assistance. The most well-known civil officials who pushed for the inclusion of Black people in social assistance programmes were the Lund Committee (1996), the Chikane Committee (1996), as well as the Taylor Committee (1999), as described below.

### **2.2.3 The Lund Committee**

When this committee was founded in 1996, its main objective was to examine the procedures and management of the State Maintenance Grant, which is currently known as the Child Support Grant (Lund, 2001). The CSG only addressed traditional nuclear families, even though there were many other types of families in the nation, including female-headed and single-headed families (Lund, 2001). This was one of the major flaws discovered by the Committee. According to Joseph (2012), White African women received the CSG, but less Black African women did. It was these kinds of gaps that required a paradigm change. Nuclear families with a limit of six children per household were only awarded R100 at the time. The Committee recommended, among other things, that the CSG provisions be expanded to additional types of families and that the grants for the Foster Care Grant (FCG) and Child Disability Grant (CDG) not be eliminated. The Committee encountered difficulties persuading the government because of the CSG's restricted fiscal expenditures. Later, the link to the grant to the primary carer and the inclusion of children over the age of 18 were added to the CSG guidelines (Kabeer, 2008). Currently, the CSG's advantages are well

acknowledged, accounting for the largest share of social assistance spending nationwide, which serves 12.7 million children (National Treasury Report, 2020).

#### **2.2.4 The Chikane Committee**

The Lund and the Chikane Committees were both founded in the same year. The task of the Chikane Committee was to examine all social grant sub-programmes, as well as the social security system as a whole. The Committee suggested that the management and administration of social assistance schemes be handled by a separate, specialised Department of Social Security (Triegaardt & Patel, 2005). The goal was to eliminate any disparities and ensure that all qualified recipients, regardless of colour, were included. After reviewing the recommendations, the administration discovered several obstacles to creating a specialised and dedicated department of social security. The primary obstacles were exorbitant expenses, constitutional complications, individual payments, and more policy modifications. The Committee also outlined additional obstacles to obtaining or receiving social subsidies, including lengthy lines at payment locations, payment delays, and a dearth of water, shelter, and/or sanitary facilities.

#### **2.2.5 The Taylor Committee**

This was the last committee to convene. The proposal for this committee was to replace the basic income award with an income-test. However, because of financial constraints, the government did not follow these recommendations (Reddy & Sokomani, 2008; Taylor, 2002). These days, a lot of money is allocated based on the income test. A task force of civil society and labour unions was also created in 2000 to examine the Social Assistance Act No. 59 of 1992, particularly regarding the DG assessments, in addition to the Taylor Committee. The task force to promote equal rights to social security, among others, included the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Ndungane, Njongokulu, the Black Sash, Zwelinzima Vavi, the General Secretary of the Labour Union Federation, and numerous others (Kidd et al., 2018).

### **2.3 The launch of SASSA**

The government passed the Social Assistance Act No. 13 of 2004 in response to the aforementioned Committees' recommendations, in order to facilitate the planning, management and distribution of social grants to all eligible citizens of the nation (van Dijk & Mokgala, 2014). Providing comprehensive social security services on behalf of the nine

provinces of South Africa is SASSA's main responsibility. Following that, SASSA is overseen and controlled by the Department of Social Development (DSD), in accordance with the Social Assistance Act No. 13 of 2004 and by the National DSD.

From grant application to grant approval, a particular procedure is followed (Sekele, 2017). The SASSA electronically records grant applications through the SOCPEN data management system. The process of submitting the necessary documentation begins with screening. After verifying that the documents are supported by affidavits, medical records, identification, or evidence of assets or income, the front-line personnel register the applicant to begin the application process. After that, where applicable, some applicants are scheduled for medical evaluations by the DG. To screen and evaluate potential beneficiaries of the DG, the SASSA employs a Disability Management Model developed by an internal physician (Kidd et al., 2018). If applicants fail to provide the necessary paperwork throughout the screening process, they are returned. The second stage that necessitates filling out the application is attesting. Documents and the form are recorded on SOCPEN. The quality assurance stage verifies that the documents presented are accurately documented on SOCPEN and comply with applicable legal frameworks. Verification concludes with an assessment of the data recorded on SOCPEN. SOCPEN decides whether to accept or reject the application.

The management and administration of social grants has presented operational issues for the SASSA since its founding and the implementation of its data management system, SOCPEN (Mitra, 2010; Sekele, 2017). These difficulties and restrictions include most application forms still being filled out by hand, misplacing or incorrectly capturing applications, failing to pay attention to details, or storing data twice (Joseph, 2012; Kidd et al., 2018; Sekele, 2017). The next section describes the type of social security that guides this study, social assistance, in light of the history of social assistance in South Africa.

#### **2.4 The role of SASSA in grant management**

The public office of the public authority established in April 2005 to provide social assistance for the Department of Social Development is known as the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). As reiterated in the previous chapter, the SASSA is the delivery arm of the Social Development Department (SDD), mandated to provide comprehensive social security

services against vulnerability and poverty. This is executed within the constitutional and legislative framework (SASSA, 2019) which stipulates that;

*All South African citizens have a right to benefit from the social security, as well as, if they are not able to sustain their families and own self, with suitable social assistance. (The South African Constitution, Section 27 (1) (c) 1996:13)*

With its Head Office in Pretoria, SSSA oversees nine regional offices: (1) Eastern Cape, (2) Free State, (3) Gauteng, (4) KwaZulu-Natal, (5) Limpopo, (6) Mpumalanga, (7) North West, (8) Northern Cape and (9) Western Cape Regions (SASSA, 2016) which are responsible for the district and local offices, as well as service and pay points, as per the province. In order to supervise federal retirement assistance in South Africa, the South African Social Security Agency (Act No. 9 of 2004) established SASSA. It oversees the establishment of SASSA, the plan, and the implementation of a social grant payment system. The Australian government-backed retirement model is taken into consideration because it significantly influenced the establishment of SASSA in South Africa. It is far from a discussion of the ruling hierarchy that manages the allocation and administration of social subsidies, much as the unique

South Africa's governmental social assistance programme is designed with the needs of families, children, and older people with impairments in consideration. Literature indicates that it was initially offered to White people in the early 20th century and gradually expanded to include all citizens. However, there was a clear racial divide in both the organization's pre-1994 policies and the award levels. According to Kaseke (2010), South Africa may have the most comprehensive social assistance systems in Southern Africa. The obligation for the management, coordination and distribution of social funds was transferred to SASSA on April 1st, 2006 (Kaseke, 2012).

## **2.5 Social Protection in South Africa**

Social protection entails the financial or consumption initiatives (either public or private) intended to shield the vulnerable from risks to their livelihood and improve the social status and rights of the marginalised (Mashaba & Saurombe, 2023; Barrientos, 2013). In this study,

the concept is used interchangeably with social security. Interventions and programmes that assist people, families and communities in preventing, reducing and overcoming risks and vulnerabilities, all count towards social protection, whose main purposes include promotion, prevention and protection. The initial goal of social protection involves safeguarding the minimal consumption thresholds of the struggling communities, protecting them from becoming more vulnerable to adverse shocks and events such as natural disasters. Social protection initiatives are reactionary measures directed at the less privileged members of society in precarious situations. Therefore, social protection is viewed as a crucial development strategy aimed at lessening the poverty and vulnerabilities of the marginalised and impoverished communities, thereby increasing their capacities, while at the same time contributing to national socio-economic development (Hagemejer & McKinnon, 2013; Mashaba & Saurombe, 2023).

The South African social security administration aims to provide cash payments to eligible beneficiaries of social grants, which are part of the broader social security domain. There are two forms of social security: social insurance and social assistance. Social assistance is a state-funded system, financed entirely from government revenue, and is means-tested, with Steyn (2023) indicating that:

*“The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is paying grants to over 26-million people...The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) spent R232-billion on social grants in 2022 - about 11% of the national budget...Social grant spending, when adjusted for inflation, has quadrupled since 1994”.*

To augment the statistics presented above, below is an illustration of social grant expenditure since its inception in 1994.

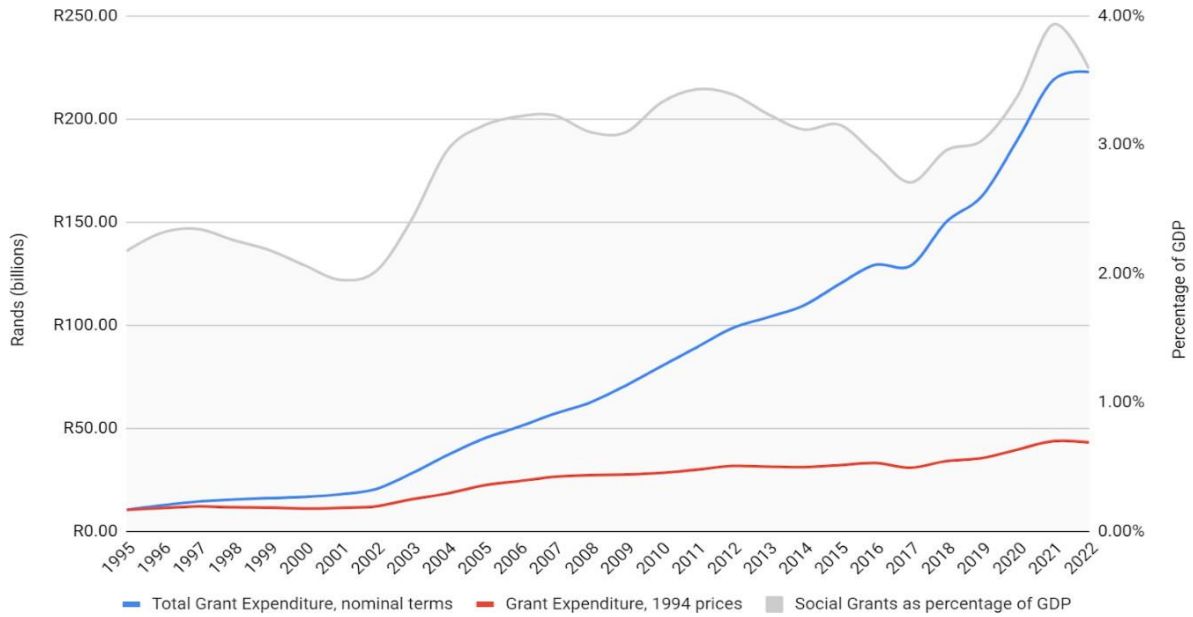


Figure 2.5 Social Grant Expenditure 1994-2023.

Source: National Treasury, Stats SA, and UCT's Centre for Social Science Research (2024)

### 2.5.1 Types of social security

The Social Assistance Act No. 13 of 2004 establishes guidelines for the management, distribution and administration of social subsidies to those who are experiencing poverty. Social assistance is therefore focused on social grants. The CSG, FCG, CDG, OAP, DG, WVG, Grant-in-Aid, and social alleviation of distress, are among the grants that make up this group (The National Treasury, 2020). The specific agency responsible for overseeing, managing, and funding social grants on a national and provincial level is SASSA Act No. 9 of 2004. The two primary administrative eligibility requirements, such as a means-test and cash transfer, apply to social grants. Cash transfers are given to qualified people who are more likely to become impoverished, in the form of cash payable (Joseph, 2012). The government uses the national tax collection system it collects to provide cash transfers (Kaseke, 2010). Cash transfers to different banking systems and payment locations are managed by SASSA. Conversely, the means-test stipulates that an assessment of the applicant's assets and income is made in order to determine whether or not the individual qualifies for a social grant. According to Taylor and Triegaardt (2018), means testing or income screening guarantees that government spending is directed towards the poor and that money is allocated appropriately.

Therefore, social grants are provided to address poverty, plan for other things like health care, and advance social development, in addition to meeting fundamental necessities. Sub-Saharan African nations like Zimbabwe oppose the establishment of social assistance programmes because they believe that social grants will lead to dependency, rather than employment engagement (Mpinda, 2014). Additionally, there is concern that social grants, along with long-term economic policies that support them, may jeopardise free healthcare and basic education services. Thus, the way South Africa administers social aid makes it stand out among other African nations.

For people of working age with disabilities of all kinds, and who are unable to care for themselves, do not have a basic income, and are not financially independent, the DG is the only social grant programme (Mitra, 2010; SASSA 2017/2018). The National Treasury Report from 2020 states that the DG's threshold was R1, 860. A medical evaluation is performed on the DG (Kidd et al., 2018), where internal physicians are employed by SASSA to carry out these evaluations. Following the completion of the assessments, the grant will be reviewed or verified. In order to be eligible for the social grants, candidates need to fulfil the following criteria, among others: be a citizen or refugee of South Africa; must be between the ages of 18 and 59; must undergo medical evaluations (where applicable); and must present documentation of prior medical records.

The government spends a lot of funds on social assistance every year- in 2022 alone, 11% of the national budget was allocated towards social protection, as indicated above. This shows how social grants are an important instrument for social assistance within the overall social protection framework, supporting second-order effects that further accelerate poverty reduction. In March 2023, SASSA (FACT SHEET: Issue no. 3 of 2023) presented a statistical summary of social grants as follows:

“There were 18 829 716 social grant recipients in March 2023 (this excludes the R350 SRD grant) ... The highest concentration of social grant recipients reside in KZN (4 191 760 recipients), followed by Gauteng (2 936 952) and the EC (2 871 998)...The lowest concentration of social grant recipients reside in the Northern Cape (526 335)...The number of social grant recipients is on an upward trend, from December 2022”.

The number of social grants recipients in KwaZulu-Natal per grant type has varied over the past five years. Here are the figures based on available data for the KwaZulu-Natal: Old Age Grant are 791 725, War Veteran's Grant are 02, Disability Grant are 222 034, Foster Care

Grant 42 120, Grant in Aid 115 503, Care Dependency Grant 41 143, and Child Support Grant 2 979 233.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that, in addition to promoting economic growth, the solutions devised by the government to deal with the economic problems brought on by the global recession must also foster the development of their own populations. This means that the government must set goals that are connected to financial resources in order to establish the conditions necessary to guarantee that the citizens have a high quality of life. Like anywhere else, the government is concurrently being restrained by the current economic climate from developing new social assistance programmes, or even from extending the current ones. Social protection and economic growth are perceived as complimentary and mutually reinforcing, since the former increases social welfare, while the latter provides resources for the underprivileged.

## **2.6 Unpacking the concept of Social Assistance in the South African context**

Social assistance entails the targeted, non-contributory form of social security aimed to provide financial or in-kind support to individuals who are unable to support themselves, with the goal of shielding the individual from social risks (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2020). The Social Support Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as modified) is the most important piece of legislation supporting this cause. The SASSA currently oversees and manages social assistance in South Africa. The Department of Social Development is responsible for the governing policies and regulations regarding the administration of social assistance in all the regional offices of SASSA in South Africa, despite the social grant payments administration being handled by SASSA.

Despite the social assistance programme being praised as one of the developing world's best examples of social protection, the general feeling among most South Africans is that there still exists aspects of exclusion, considering some current laws that only guarantee social assistance to certain groups of people who are unable to support their families or themselves, while eligibility is restricted by stern resource and income requirements (Livermore, 2011).

The fact that social assistance is targeted at vulnerable categories including the elderly, the disabled, and children, those adults who are able-bodied are not eligible for social assistance. This is a result of the false ideological presumption that those groups of individuals (19-59 years) ought to be self-sufficient as they are, or should be involved in profitable economic activities.

The rights of every individual in South Africa are guaranteed by Section 7(1) of the Bill of Rights, which also upholds the democratic principles of equality, freedom and human dignity. The fundamental ideals and nine guiding principles that should direct public administration are described in Chapter 10 of the Constitution. It is imperative to highlight that promoting an effective, economical and efficient use of resources, as well as responsiveness to public requirements are essential principles guiding this study which sought to establish the challenges associated with the administration of social assistance to the citizens. Section 27(1)(c) of Chapter 2 of the Constitution declares that “everyone has the right to access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance,” to advance the democratic right to equality. Social assistance is more focused than social security, which is an umbrella phrase. In South Africa, social security comprises income replacement and redistribution, does not offer preventive or reintegration, and is reflected in the two main forms of social insurance and social assistance, respectively. The Constitution ensures that all citizens and residents have the right to social security and social assistance. Ensuring it as a fundamental entitlement is meant to shield the beneficiaries against potential abuse and exploitation by the people in charge of managing and administering the social security programme. The Social Assistance Act’s (2004) criteria and means test are based on the Constitution’s guarantee of the right to apply for social assistance, subject to the fulfilment of specific qualifying requirements (Act 13 of 2004 as modified).

The social assistance programme of South Africa is praised for being one of the most extensive in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), since it is designed to assist the elderly, people with disabilities, as well as children from all racial backgrounds. Using a variety of tools, the comprehensive programme serves as the primary means of providing social safety to the people of South Africa (Bozalek and Hochfeld, 2016). Chapter

2, Section 27(2) of the Constitution mandates that the state “achieve the progressive realisation” of each of the Bill of Rights by taking reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available means. The Constitution mandates the state to ensure that people who are unable to sustain their families or themselves receive social assistance. The state is therefore required by this progressive realisation to create a comprehensive and practical plan or programme that outlines the methods, timing, and means by which the fundamental right to social assistance access is to be gradually implemented. The availability of resources, however, limits the right to obtain social assistance and indicates that every initiative ought to be affordable, while the state must have the resources to see it through to completion.

Social security is a crucial policy in both developed and developing nations, preventing poverty and inequalities by ensuring people maintain minimum living standards and achieving a more equitable income distribution. In South Africa, the democratic government focuses on poverty and deprivation, aiming to enable the poor, vulnerable and excluded, to secure a better life. Social welfare, including the right to basic needs like shelter, healthcare, food and income security, is a management strategy used by the government to tackle poverty. The South African Constitution (1996) provides for social assistance to people without any means, and the Bill of Rights emphasizes maintaining the quality of life for all citizens. However, a neoliberal economic paradigm may influence social security transformation in South Africa, placing responsibility on individuals and families without state support. Many studies have been conducted on the role and impact of social security systems in South Africa, but not on the challenges faced by ordinary citizens.

The system of social assistance is financed by the state (Triegaardt, 2005: 3). It is a component of a larger plan for social protection (Patel, 2011: 110). Social assistance, sometimes referred to as social grants, is a means-tested, non-contributory type of social security that is provided in the form of grants (South African Human Rights Commission, 2001). According to Kelly (2017), the means test evaluates the recipients' income and assets. Therefore, the eligibility for a grant is based on the income and assets of the beneficiaries, which must be below a specific threshold.

Efforts to lessen the level of poverty, as defined by the percentage of the population that lives below the poverty line, are referred to as poverty alleviation (Ekwuruke, 2005). To better the lives of the impoverished, strategic initiatives like the distribution of social security benefits are referred to as poverty alleviation for the purposes of this study. Reducing poverty, according to Triegaardt (2005), can only be accomplished by allocating resources to the nation's underprivileged population. The South African Constitutional human rights framework and the White Paper's approach to poverty reduction differed (Triegaardt 2005). In 1999, the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) commissioned an inter-departmental task team to review the country's social security system, due to weaknesses in social grant management, litigations, and negative press publicity. The task team identified critical gaps and recommended a comprehensive, integrated social security structure which resulted in the formation of the South African Social Security Agency.

The social assistance system has raised alarm on how it allegedly perpetuates a dependency syndrome. The apartheid regime facilitated high inequality levels which perpetuated poverty rates, particularly amongst Black Africans. The democratic government inherited a society that consisted of most of its Black citizens who were labelled as “poor” (Lund, 2008:8). The South African government committed to addressing issues of poverty and restructuring the social security system to be inclusive through the provision of cash transfers to the disadvantaged within the context of discriminatory practices by social welfare services during the apartheid period. The legislative framework for SASSA, the Constitution and Social Security Act enable the agency to function solely as an agency that oversees the effective and efficient management, administration, and payment of social grants, such that the agency is given autonomy to verify any application for social security and therefore, effects payment to respective persons.

## **2.7 Social Grants implementation and access: a service delivery perspective**

Significant advancements have been accomplished in expanding access to the CSG and fortifying social security delivery systems generally, since it was initially launched almost two decades ago. The CSG was first accessed slowly, but it quickly gained popularity and today, SASSA provides the CSG to more than 12 million people each month. Notwithstanding these advancements, problems still exist, with some eligible children still being turned away. This section seeks to assess the design and implementation of social grants

since their inception, highlighting some of the obstacles, what has been accomplished thus far, in terms of delivery, among other things.

The Department of Social Development is mandated to deliver social assistance; its role is that of macro policies for the support of citizens to realise their security rights enshrined in Section 27 (1) of the Constitution which states that everyone has the right to access social security and social assistance. The 1994 election of a new administration in South Africa led to the creation of the social grant programme which later turned out to be excessively costly because the then new government had initially overestimated the actual scope of the country's social inequality. As a result, the system did not originally fulfil its intended purpose. Despite its best efforts to lay the groundwork for social support, the outcomes were not satisfactory, leading to the system's demise and the urgent need for an intervention to stabilise and enhance the process. Over time, the governing administration addressed the shortcomings of the existing system and devised solutions to address past errors. This led to the establishment of a more fair and easily accessible system, which enabled social grants to be provided to all those in need by the late 1990s. According to Delany, Jerome and Lake (2016), the system modifications comprised both policy and administrative reforms. On that note, it is imperative to assess what has been achieved, as well as the impending challenges.

### **2.7.1 Social Assistance as a transformative experience**

Reddy and Sokomani (2008) assert that the provision of social assistance in South Africa is a transformative experience, as there has been a significant and consequential increase in the provision of social assistance for the poor, in terms of the development and as a safety net. Many promotional campaigns have been launched to raise awareness of the social grants, and these have been successful in increasing their availability. In light of this, many more people can now access the social grants, while the application process has been standardised and made much easier as it now takes less time than it did previously, resulting in reduced long queues at the SASSA offices and pay points. For instance, in comparison to the social grant system's introduction 20 years ago when fewer children were eligible for it, the Child Support Grant (CSG) has seen significant progress in the social welfare delivery system (Delany, Jerome & Lake, 2016). Despite the slow take-off, a large number of people are now accessing

the social services, with SASSA now being able to effectively distribute the Child Support Grant to more than 13 million recipients each month. It has been reported that:

“At the end of March 2023, a monthly CSG of R480 was paid to just over 13 million children aged 0 – 17 years. The value of the CSG increased to R500 per month from the beginning of April 2023, and to R510 from October 2023. From April 2024, the value of the CSG was R530 per month” (Hall, 2024).

Notwithstanding this achievement, it is impossible to overlook the challenges that continue to persist because other children are still yet to receive assistance from the Agency. Moreso, even with these significant advancements, there are still issues affecting the distribution of social assistance (Delany, Jerome, & Lake, 2016).

## **2.8 Assessing the progress in delivery and access: the challenges**

South Africa's then newly elected government took over an expensive, unequal and extremely fragmented welfare system in 1994. Although it provided a foundation for future development, the existing system was incredibly ineffective and required modifications. Making sure that everyone in need had fair access to social assistance in the late 1990s, was the main challenge requiring both administrative and policy changes. This required unifying the several departments in charge of providing social welfare services to various populations during the apartheid era and making sure there was the capacity to do so. Early on, it was known that providing social aid had challenges. A comprehensive reform of the system to increase efficacy and efficiency was suggested in the Chikane Report of 1996, which was issued by the Committee for the Restructuring of the Social Security System. This reform included the creation of a social security system that is organised nationally. The process of developing such a system was taken into consideration during the Public Service Commission's (PSC) 1998 Investigation into Social Security Services (Liebenberg & Tilley, 1998).

Social grant administration was delegated to the provinces, although this presented a number of difficulties (Taylor, 2014). Payment delays and challenges were caused by conflicting demands on provincial budgets and insufficient funding for social assistance. This resulted in variations in implementation throughout the provinces, along with a lack of standards and

restricted administrative capability. As reiterated earlier, two technical committees were formed to discuss potential changes to the social assistance laws. The Lund Committee suggested the establishment of the CSG to replace the State Maintenance Grant in 1996 after reviewing several ideas for bolstering child and family support. Similarly, the Taylor Committee of Inquiry into complete Social Security examined the shortcomings in the system overall and offered suggestions for achieving a complete social security system.

The Constitutional Court determined in 2004 that social assistance is an area that requires consistent norms and standards that apply generally throughout the Republic to be governed or coordinated for effective performance, as provincial legislation was unable to regulate it effectively. In the same year, legislation was introduced that established the foundation for a centralised national organisation to oversee social hand outs and gave social assistance a structure. Policy and law are the purview of the DSD, while management, execution and national grant payment fall under the purview of the SASSA. While the creation of SASSA and the development of norms and standards have helped to address many early delivery concerns, there are still issues that need to be addressed, such as the outsourcing of payment systems and deductions from beneficiary payments. Significant progress has been achieved in expanding the availability of social grants. The grants are well known, the application processing time has been greatly shortened, and the procedures have been harmonised. Though advances to improve the effectiveness of the payment system have brought with them new obstacles, some challenges still exist, as indicated in the following section.

### **2.8.1 Social relief of distress**

A temporary support programme for those in such extreme material need that they are unable to provide for the most basic necessities of their families is known as social relief of distress (Department of Social Development, 2010). It is a non-contributory, means-tested emergency contribution in times of crisis (South African Human Rights Commission, 2001; White Paper on Social Welfare, South Africa, 1997). Social relief is a type of short-term social aid that helps people in circumstances of temporary hardship or emergencies like floods (Patel, 2011; Kaseke, 2010). Social relief of distress is provided for a very short period in circumstances where a person finds themselves in distressed circumstances and comprises food vouchers, food parcels and cash-in-kind which were introduced in 2002 (Delany, Jehoma and Lake,

2016; Sehlabane, 2014; Wright, Noble, Ntshongwana, Neves and Barnes, 2014). It is provided monthly for a period of three months to individuals who are unable to meet the most basic needs for their families and themselves (Thomas, 2011: 7). However, although this assistance is supposed to be for a period of three months, in most cases due to monetary constraints, it is not always sustainable, in that some communities receive such services once or twice a year, or even none at all. There are numerous requirements that one should meet to qualify for the social relief of distress (Sehlabane, 2014). According to the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, individuals who qualify for social relief of distress must be South African citizens or permanent residents, be awaiting the decision on their grant application, be declared medically incapable of working by a physician, have experienced a disaster, be judged to have insufficient means of subsistence, and not be receiving any grants or maintenance.

Thus, based on the foregoing, it may be concluded that social relief of distress coverage can be maintained because it will only be necessary in the event of a disaster. However, it will be problematic in that individuals who are still unemployed or lack a reliable source of income after the social alleviation of distress period has passed are at risk of experiencing food insecurity once more (Sehlabane, 2014: 28). Having said that, food security and guaranteeing that every individual can fulfill their minimal dietary need to prevent malnutrition are not adequately addressed by South Africa's social security system (Bonti Ankomah, 2001: 11; Nkrumah, 2017). In South Africa, when COVID-19 pandemic came on the scene, the government had to move swiftly and forcefully to help the poorest citizens, whose lives and livelihoods would be disproportionately impacted. The main task involved the government having to identify these groups and offer the necessary support.

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that one of the principal achievements of the post-1994 era has been the acquisition of constitutional protections for the rights to social security and assistance for the needy. Another accomplishment was integrating fourteen different apartheid-era administrative systems and providing benefits to children (Triegaardt, 2013; Patel, 2011). Despite the achievements, there have been numerous challenges with the management and provision of social assistance in South Africa by social services, assistance programmes, and social insurance plans, which led the Department of Social Development

to launch the SASSA. However, even with SASSA onboard, the government is still reeling in a variety of challenges stemming from various corners, as noted below.

### **2.8.2 Governance issues**

Early on, the grant administration system faced many challenges and in 1996, the Chikane Committee published the Chikane Report which recommended revamping the social security programme. In addition to suggesting that the government consider creating a universally accessible, nationally coordinated social security system, the Committee also offered suggestions for improving the distribution system. The task of developing the new system was given to the Public Service Commissioner in 1998 (Delany, Jerome & Lake, 2016). The Constitutional Court ruled in 1994 that social assistance is an extremely important issue and could not be left up to the provinces to govern individually. Instead, for the social assistance system to function successfully, all social assistance laws were to be broadly applied across the entire country and the system to be governed by universal standards. In 1994, the laws establishing the foundation for social assistance were introduced for the creation of a centralised national body responsible for disbursing social assistance. Following the enactment of the laws establishing social grants, the SASSA was founded in 2006 and given managerial and administrative authority over all grant-related issues including management, administration and payment systems. As indicated above, the administration of the social grant system was initially the responsibility of each province, and despite numerous interventions, a significant number of challenges persisted, for instance, competitive demand for budgets created issues, the disparities in the provinces' budget allotments for social grants led to protracted delays and challenges in receiving grant payments. Standardised policies and procedures had to be implemented throughout the provinces as a result of these difficulties, including constrained administrative procedures, as well as a lack of uniformity among the provinces.

In light of these challenges, it was determined that additional steps were necessary to ensure the system's functionality. Two committees were established to develop improvements for the social assistance policies. Both of the committees agreed that a Child Support Grant should replace the State Maintenance Grant at the time, and they developed a number of recommendations in 1996 to help strengthen the family support and child support systems.

The Taylor Committee of Inquiry into the Comprehensive Social Security was established in 1999 to review the implemented system because, despite some advancements, it was still not ideal. The committee noted some gaps within the system and then recommended the formulation of a new comprehensive social system (Delany, Jerome & Lake, 2016).

### **2.8.3 Lack of Commitment among the administrative personnel**

Mpedi and Kuppan (2004) highlighted the vulnerability of poor people to adverse events, poor service from administrative personnel, and lack of commitment to serve. They attributed this to poor customer service skills, lack of competent staff, and high take-up rates of disability and child support grants, despite the adoption of the Batho Pele principle. The Department of Social Development's unilateral withdrawal of funding resulted in numerous judicial proceedings. In the study by Medi and Kuppan (2004) the findings revealed that having funding withdrawn without consultation and clarification is a breach of fundamental principles and rights. The department's officials require training, capacity building, and information on issues such as the basic rights enshrined in the Constitution (Mpedi & Kuppan, 2004:67).

The second most serious issue cited is service accessibility, particularly in rural parts of provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Free State, and the Northwest. Poor infrastructure causes significant barriers to service delivery. It is expensive for those who are impoverished to travel to departmental offices to apply for subsidies at pay points. Provinces with large rural areas struggle to reach grant recipients, and some provinces deal with a lack of automobiles (Van der Westhuizen & Van Zyl, 2002). These problems emphasize the social security system's managerial and administrative inadequacies (Mpedi, et al. 2004:67). The Department of Social Development adopted a variety of initiatives to strengthen the integrity, management, accountability, and effectiveness of the social grants administrative system. The Minister of Social Development and SASSA acknowledged the issues raised above, as well as others not addressed in this study. The Minister of Social Development stated in the SASSA Annual Report 2017/2018, that by implementing a zero-tolerance policy for fraud and corruption, one hundred and five employees of SASSA were suspended and forty-five were officially dismissed.

#### **2.8.4 The SASSA Payment card**

The use of the SASSA payment card for electronic payments and biometric identification has led to a gradual technical advancement in the social grant delivery and administration system. Following the system's implementation in 2012, all recipients of social grants were forced to re-register with SASSA. In addition to formal financial inclusion and enhanced convenience, many beneficiaries now get their payments electronically into bank accounts. However, this approach also raised new issues. The growth in unauthorised withdrawals from grant recipients' accounts is especially concerning. Regulation 26A of the Social Assistance Act was changed by DSD in May 2016, which stopped any deductions from child assistance (Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 Amendment). Businesses in the private sector filed legal challenges against these revised regulations. Furthermore, in 2017, SASSA assumed control of the grants payment system (Department of Social Development (2016). Despite this, the way in which social grants are implemented has not really changed that much.

#### **2.8.5 Technical glitches**

Mzekandaba (2018) raised an issue with the changeover of SASSA cards from Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) to the South African Post Office (SAPO), citing that initially, many recipients had troubles with withdrawing their monthly allowances because of persistent technical issues with their SAPO cards. Since many of the recipients completely depend on their social grants, it was indeed regrettable that they were impacted by the Post Office card issues. During that time, the beneficiaries would be urged to return home since there was no money for them when their cards stopped working. They had to travel long distances to get to the post office, something that is also technically difficult for them, especially the elderly and those with disabilities. In addition to guaranteeing the recipients that their social grants would be awarded in a timely manner, SASSA pledged to investigate this issue thoroughly.

Notwithstanding the difficulties encountered, SASSA managed to successfully transfer the payments function from CPS to the SAPO. This was in line with the third report that the Auditor General and an expert panel submitted. The panel expressed concern cautioned about SASSA's lack of accountability and clarity regarding where and how the social grants would be disbursed in April 2019. The group of experts was also tasked with determining if SASSA was qualified to provide the social grants, so it was recommended that the organisation be

reorganised. Among the shortcomings identified by the panel with regards to SASSA included the existing mechanism that is employed to deal with beneficiaries' issues when their grants are not being paid in full, the agency's reports providing no guidance on how to proceed, or at least details on how they plan to pay the social grants back then in April 2019. It was also noted that the service level agreements were not in place at the time, especially not with the SAPO, while the agreements that were in place were insufficient to guarantee the agency's safety and the prevention of money from being wasted on the beneficiaries (Pather, 2017).

### **2.8.6 Exclusion of some eligible citizens**

Several eligible children are still not yet benefiting from the Child Support Grant, even though awareness initiatives have been, and are still being executed. In 2017, around 1.8 million eligible children, (about 18% of the total), are still not receiving the Child Support Grant. The main obstacle in this regard is that most of the children do not have birth certificates, while other challenges include socio-cultural differences, the inability of carers to obtain the necessary documentation, as well as the absence of children-friendly amenities at SASSA facilities (DSD, 2017).

### **2.8.7 Corruption**

Corruption, as well as fraud, constitute two of the most serious issues in provincial social service departments (Kasiram, 2007). To comprehend the current corruption in the SASSA social assistance system, it is imperative to briefly highlight the history and understanding of the apartheid system of social grants. It is also important to note that apartheid was implemented to discriminate against certain population groups (Reddy & Sokomani, 2008). Early in 1910, there was a lot of discrimination against Black people, while the Coloured and Whites received social security benefits such as old-age pensions, childcare grants, as well as unemployment benefits. Another way in which this system discriminated against women was by limiting the Old Age Grant to White women over 60, while the Blacks and Indian women were not awarded because the grants would not support their extended families- yet the same

criterion was not used against the Whites and Coloured persons. Reddy and Sokomani (2008) regarded this as a form of corruption.

Further, Reddy and Sokomani (2008) noted that the introduction of a means-tested pension and disability grant in 1937, together with the start of social grant payments to all racial groups, resulted in the authorities changing the way the grants were administered. When the nation became a Republic in 1961, discrimination persisted, while the White pension beneficiaries outnumbered their Black counterparts (five times more Whites received pension). The state transitioned to a capitalist economy in the 1970s, and so the apartheid state gradually began to incorporate Black people into its social assistance framework. After several consultations, social assistance for Black people also began to increase (Reddy and Sokomani, 2008).

Public satisfaction with the government's overall performance, particularly in combating corruption, is a key factor in determining the public's opinion of how effective the government is (Klaaren 2020). Given the history of complex inequality in South Africa, the SASSA was founded to support postcolonialist rebuilding efforts. However, with the corruption within the organisation, this has seen the unintended consequence of exacerbating wealth and poverty disparities, impeding political and economic advancement, and generally lowering living standards (Habibov, Fan & Auchynnika, 2019).

Currently, the South African government is experiencing serious concerns about fraud and corruption committed by syndicates comprising both the agency workers themselves and non-employees. In the midst of the challenges, the government has been actively dealing with corruption behind the scenes (Klaaren 2020), with instances of some officials being successfully convicted in 2014. This is part of the ongoing efforts to crack down on dishonest workers who accumulated substantial wealth through corruption (Mpumalanga News 2014). In March 2020, eight SASSA employees were taken into custody on allegations of defrauding R2 million, the offences of which were committed in 2010 and 2011 (Kubheka, 2020). Shortly after these arrests, at the end of March 2020, South Africa was placed under complete lockdown as part of the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, in an attempt to slow the virus's spread. Many people lost their jobs and other means of income as a result of the COVID-19 harsh national lockdown status being extended (Posel, Oyenubi &

Kollamparambil 2021). Among these were the incapacitating effects of the COVID-19 infection, which made many South Africans to dependent more on SASSA support. The COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on the national budget, which in turn had an adverse effect on the SASSA's ability to obtain funding. Furthermore, at the height of the pandemic, when citizens were most in need of social assistance, the negative consequences of previous fraud and corruption added to the strain (Bhorat, Oosthuizen & Stanwix, 2020). It can be argued that the total amount of money stolen prior to the pandemic could have been adequate to mitigate the severe consequences of poverty and inequality, which were worsened by the virus.

### **2.8.8 Confusion with the means-test**

Regarding the income criterion and the means test requirements, there is some misunderstandings (SASSA and UNICEF, 2013). For instance, a survey data indicated that a group of eligible income-caregivers were deprived of social assistance because of the perception that they make too much money (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2016). Additionally, a misperception also existed among carers and some SASSA officials, regarding the eligibility of grant applications: carers who work in government are not eligible to apply for the award. Since the means test only considers at the total income of the primary carer (and spouse, if they are married), it takes into account the applicants who are employed, but whose income falls below the threshold (Budlender, Proudlock & Jamieson, 2008). Additionally, it is unclear how getting maintenance may affect eligibility, even though it is considered income (SASSA & UNICEF, 2013). Similar misunderstandings held by social workers, maintenance officers, and SASSA officials—who are occasionally a source of false information—complicate these errors (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2012).

### **2.8.9 Documentation challenges**

Problems obtaining necessary papers, such as identity documents and birth certificates, are frequently cited as a barrier, despite considerable progress (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2016). Although the application process has been made simpler, many still say they have trouble getting the necessary paperwork. This makes it impossible for qualified carers to apply or

delays their ability to get the money. The expenses and challenges associated with acquiring the required paperwork may also lead to applicants abandoning the application process. In 2008, the Social Assistance Act's regulation 11(1) was introduced, allowing applicants to seek for official paperwork from Home Affairs using alternative forms of identification. Nonetheless, only 11,000 applications using alternative documentation were submitted between 2009 and 2013 (Martin, 2014). There are a number of reasons for this, such as eligible carers' lack of knowledge and awareness, SASSA officials' worries about fraud and corruption, and their false belief that this regulation only applies to children who have never received documentation, and not to those whose documents have been lost.

There has been misunderstanding around the necessity for carers of children aged 7 to 18 to provide documentation of their school attendance and enrolling. A 2013 study on exclusions found that, even though it is not a requirement for eligibility, older children and carers mistakenly believe that children who are not enrolled in school or who do not have a school report, are not eligible for the grant. They also reported instances in which SASSA officials cancelled or suspended the benefits of children who had left school (SASSA & UNICEF, 2013). However, the grant payment should not be affected if one is unable to present a certificate of attendance or attend class. SASSA created a Plan of Action in 2014, as response to the study's results, which required the reinstatement of children whose grants had been cancelled. According to follow-up research, the majority seem to have reapplied (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2016). When a primary carer passes away, orphaned children are most vulnerable to not having the proper paperwork or losing access to the CSG. Therefore, in the event of a parent or primary caregiver's death, the Social Assistance Act provides for the temporary transfer of a CSG to an interim adult carer; nevertheless, the implementation of this provision has been restricted and the understanding of it is minimal (SASSA & UNICEF, 2013).

#### **2.8.10 Application costs**

When submitting an application for a grant, applicants are responsible for several direct expenditures. Even though application processing turnaround times have been faster, research has indicated that significant wait periods and lines still exist (Zembe-Mkabile, Surrender, Sanders, Jackson & Doherty, 2015). Some applicants have to make numerous visits, pay for

their travel expenses, and cover long distances. Even with the expansion of its fixed-services coverage and the addition of outreach initiatives like the Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programme, SASSA's offerings are still insufficient to guarantee accessibility for all vulnerable households. The South African Constitution's core value of dignity is upheld or undermined by the CSG, according to a recent study that surveyed female users of the programme about this (Wright et al 2015). The women claimed that the CSG provided them with a steady source of money to care for their children and allowed them to satisfy some of their fundamental needs, such purchasing food, clothing and schooling. However, many respondents felt that the CSG application procedure itself had a detrimental effect on their sense of dignity. Women said they felt worthless because of lengthy lines, a lack of knowledge about the requirements, confusing qualifying conditions, and rude treatment by officials (Wright et al, 2015).

In concluding this section, it can be argued that with the creation of SASSA, the initial challenges with grant distribution have largely been resolved. Much of the work has been done to keep the system functioning smoothly, even though sometimes there were still issues with the outsourcing of a payment system to actually pay the social grants because of the unrealistic deductions made to the beneficiaries' social grants by the company hired by the government to make the payments (Delany, Jerome & Lake, 2016).

Over the past 20 years, there have been notable advancements in both the provision and accessibility of the Child Support Group (CSG), which has earned the CSG recognition as an efficient model of social assistance for children across the globe. The enhanced implementation and growth of the CSG have been facilitated by the administrative reforms outlined above, the fundamental entitlement to social security, and an active civil society. But while new challenges have surfaced, several significant obstacles still stand. At the community level, communication on the requirements for grant eligibility, the means test, and the necessary supporting documents (including alternative documentation), might help to alleviate some of these persistent obstacles. It would also be advantageous to provide SASSA officials with further training to guarantee the uniform application of eligibility requirements and regulations, as well as to raise awareness of the rights of vulnerable groups to social assistance. Access and convenience for users of social grants have increased due to the expanding use of technology in grant administration and payment. Nevertheless, this has

also brought with it new issues that potentially jeopardise social security access.

## **2.9 The legislative framework for the administration of Social Assistance in South Africa**

To effectively provide social security services requires strict norms and standards, standardised methods of delivery, as well as a national policy meant for the economic, effective and efficient use of the limited resources which can be made available by the state. The various Acts clearly demand and underline that all eligible South Africans are entitled to social security, and this should be delivered fairly and equally to the beneficiaries. Examples of the legislative pieces that assist SASSA in carrying out its mandate include the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997), the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999, South African Social Security Agency Act 9 of 2004, and Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004. These legislations demand that social assistance for South African citizens be administered responsibly. The following section is dedicated to explaining these important legislations in the administration of social assistance in South Africa.

### **2.9.1 The South African Constitution (RSA, 1996)**

The 1996 South African Constitution provides social aid to those who are economically disadvantaged. Everyone's entitlement to social security and suitable help in the event that they are unable to maintain themselves and their dependents is safeguarded by Section 27 (1c) (Patel, 2011). The preservation of everyone's standard of living is emphasized in the same Constitution's Bill of Rights. The Constitution stipulates the right of every citizen to access social security, including social assistance, in the case that they are unable to provide for themselves and their dependents. In this view, the state is mandated to take reasonable legislative, as well as other measures within its available resources, to achieve the gradual realisation of these fundamental rights.

### **2.9.2 The Regulations of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 (as amended)**

The Regulations of Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 (as modified) states that a SASSA official is an individual employed by SASSA, at any level, while their responsibilities include providing South African citizens with all reasonable assistance to enable them to exercise their rights under this Act. SASSA officials are responsible for the critical role of administrative gatekeeping, which entails carefully screening candidates, for instance, in the case of those people applying for the disability grant, they are screened before being scheduled for medical evaluations.

### **2.9.3 The South African Social Security Agency Act, 2004 (Act 9 of 2004)**

The South African Social Security Agency Act provides for the establishment of the South African Social Security Agency mandated to administer the payment of social assistance and all other services and matters connected therewith (RSA, 2004). As reiterated earlier, SASSA was constituted in 2006 under the SASSA Act, 2004 (Act 9 of 2004) to oversee, manage and disburse all social grants in order to expand the scope of its coverage. The management function is carried out by nine regional offices and one Head Office, making up the 10 offices comprising the SASSA, which has a wide footprint. Numerous district, local and service offices, including those responsible for administering medical examinations and claim forms, make up each regional offices which are assigned specialised tasks. Examples of social grants awarded by SASSA include the disability grant (one of the largest social grants awarded), the child support grant, as well as the old age grant.

### **2.9.4 The Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as amended)**

According to the Constitution, the state's primary duty is to use the available financial resources to accomplish the progressive realisation of the rights listed in the Bill of Rights. In response to this, the South African government enacted the Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as modified) to meet the needs of disadvantaged populations and to give effect to Section 27 (1)(c) of the Constitution. The Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as amended) is a national framework for created for the provision of different types of social grants, the delivery of the grants by SASSA, as well as the establishment of an Inspectorate for Social Security. The Act is a post-apartheid legislation aimed at combating

poverty, marginalisation, discrimination, inequality and vulnerability, while at the same time addressing the legacy of apartheid.

Social assistance is a non-contributory type of social security that helps people who are unable to maintain themselves, this is given in either cash or in-kind support. The beneficiaries are eligible for specific benefits funded by the government, and these include special pensions, medical benefits after retirement, military pensions, injury on duty compensation, and social aid in the form of social grants, with the aim to guarantee the minimal standard of life for those members of society who are in need or living in poverty. The purpose of social assistance is to execute social protection programmes that provide benefits to older adults, adult people with disabilities, families with children, and certain categories of minors.

As a means for ending poverty, social assistance addresses both preventing and alleviating poverty. However, it is only accessible to a small percentage of those who are exposed to widespread poverty and high rates of unemployment. In some instances, social assistance has been blamed for perpetuating dependency among the citizens (Devereux, 2013: 18). The argument being put forward is that receiving social assistance prevents people from creating or reconstructing their own means of subsistence and as a result, from outgrowing their need for it- some even feel entitled to social assistance. While this may be a fair observation, it is important to remember that some forms of social assistance—such as cash transfers to elderly and permanently disabled adults clearly cannot be provided with the expectation of graduation. Given that it provides a minimal standard of living for the unemployed and excluded poor as well as those residing in impoverished rural and semi-urban areas, social assistance has been acknowledged in South Africa as a crucial strategy for reducing poverty (Triegaardt, 2012; StatsSA, 2020). One of the social protection success stories in the developing world is the South African social assistance scheme.

In South Africa, social assistance was first implemented in the 1930s mainly as a safety net for low-income White people and was gradually reformed as it expanded to include other demographic groups. Social grants, which are estimated to comprise 60% of the total income for impoverished households, are significant and occasionally their only or main source of income (StatsSA, 2020). Over time, social grants are essential in closing the income

inequality gap between South Africa's top and bottom deciles (Stats SA, 2020). Despite the social assistance being a success story, there are still those who are excluded from benefiting because the law only guarantees social aid to certain groups of people who are unable to support their families or themselves. The assistance is only available to citizens and residents of South Africa, and it is means-tested, meaning that only the most vulnerable are eligible. According to Section 5(1) of the Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as amended), any resident of the Republic of South Africa, South African citizen, or refugee may be eligible for the relevant social grant if they can demonstrate to the Director-General that they are an aged or disabled person, or a war veteran, are resident in the country at the time of the application, are South African citizens and they do comply with the prescribed conditions.

In the Southern African Development Community, poverty is the greatest threat to the realisation of human well-being and will continue to be so in the absence of a solution to the unemployment issue (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). People living in poverty are deprived of the chance to actively engage in and contribute to their own political, socio-cultural, as well as economic development. Even though welfare system abuse is a global issue, those who get social grants are most affected. The Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as modified) makes it illegal for anyone to keep, get, or receive social hand-outs while fully aware that they are not entitled to them. This is in order to discourage people from making false statements. Many applications still afford to pass through the system, even though gatekeeping was implemented to filter potential applicants for the grants to ensure that only those who qualify are awarded (SASSA, 2018c).

In addition to the above-mentioned legislative framework on social assistance in South Africa, there exist other legislative guidelines designed to guarantee the economical and proficient management of the social grants. These are described below:

### **2.9.5 The White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service of 1995**

Transforming service delivery is one of the eight transformation initiatives outlined in the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service of 1995. This was in light of the South African public service being assessed based on its effectiveness and efficiency in delivering services to the South African citizens. Two dimensions of social protection—the depth and

duration of the consequences being considered—that are closely related, are combined in the concept of cost-effectiveness of social protection. The efficiency of providing social protection, or the overall cost of transferring funds to recipients, is one aspect (the input side), while the relationship between the stated objectives and the actual results attained—including the sustainability of those results—is the other (the output side) (Devereux, 2013). This study primarily focuses on how efficiently social assistance is administered.

#### **2.9.6 The White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery of 1997 (Batho Pele principles)**

According to Shafritz et al. (2013), management occurs in a dynamic environment that necessitates that organisations develop methods to adapt to the ever-changing landscape. Public administration is situated in a political framework, which therefore highlights SASSA’s persistent efforts to enhance its framework and extend its reach to include the underrepresented groups. To expand its scope to include social aid, the Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as amended) underwent modifications over time. The increasing impact of non-contributory social security systems on poverty reduction has made it even more crucial for these programmes to be well-managed to maintain public trust and ownership (Musalem & Ortitz, 2011).

The foundational ideals guiding public service and administration are outlined in Section 193(1) of the Constitution. Public administration must abide by several principles, as stated in Chapter 10 of the Constitution and the White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery of 1997 (often referred to as the Batho Pele principles). This White Paper advocates for a radical change in the public service’s systems, practices, attitudes, and conduct, while also offering the public sector a targeted strategy to enhancing service delivery. Among the principles include, but are not limited to:

- The promotion and maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics (courtesy)
- The impartial, fair, equitable and non- biased provision of services (access)
- The utilisation of resources in an efficient, economic and effective way (value for money)
- Responding to the needs of the citizens, and encouraging them to participate in policymaking (consultation)

- Accountability, transparency and development oriented.

In view of the above, SASSA created its own customer care charter which sets out the standards to be adhered to by its employees as they strive to instil a culture of caring, as envisioned in the Batho Pele principles.

### **2.9.7 The Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999)**

The Public Finance Management (Act 1 of 1999) governs financial management at the federal and provincial levels, ensuring that all expenses, including social grants, are handled properly and economically. In the public sector, management success is measured in terms of economy, efficiency, effectiveness (3Es) and appropriateness, because there is no profit measure. According to Section 38 (1) of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999), which holds department accounting officers accountable for the effective, efficient, economical, and transparent use of the resources entrusted to their care, the 3Es are mandatory. This includes quantifiable measures such as unit costs, productivity ratios, efficiency indicators, service quality indicators, and the total number of completed transactions.

The viability of social assistance programmes is contingent upon the financial conditions under which they are administered, despite that these programmes are universally acknowledged as contributing to the elimination of poverty and inequality (Barrientos, 2013). A social assistance system funded by government revenue obtained in the form of taxes in South Africa is highlighted in the Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004 as amended). During the budget address, the Minister of Finance announces annual budgetary allocations for social grant payments, for instance, an estimate of R175 billion was allocated for the 2019–2020 fiscal year (SASSA, 2019). The National Treasury stated in the extended Budget 2024 review that social grant spending, excluding the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) grant, will rise from R217. 1 billion in 2023–2024 to R259. 3 billion in 2026–2027 (SA News, 2024). In view of these financial statistics, it goes without saying that every resource should be used as effectively and efficiently as possible, given the high demand for services and the limited resources available to meet that demand.

## **2.10 Theoretical perspectives**

### **2.10.1 Public accountability and public administration**

A key concept of this study is that of accountability and its relevance in upholding a democratic dispensation (Signé 2018; Andrews 2019; Goede 2019). This discussion thus demarcates the functional boundaries of public accountability and public administration, as they are relevant to the argument of this study. Public accountability entails “accountability in, and about, the public domain” (Bovens, Schillemans, Robert and Goodin 2014:7). According to Bovens et al. (2014), Boothe (2019) and Kaufmann, Taggart, and Bozeman (2019), public accountability necessitates knowledgeable public administrators as the accountable actor, administrative processes and procedures as the nature of the conduct, process implementation and application for the public's benefit, as the accountable forum, and consequences for the non-performance or actions of public officials as the nature of the obligation. The description provided above gives a vivid picture of the people involved in the administration of social assistance, the processes and procedures involved, as well as the expected behaviour of these stakeholders.

Administration, on the other hand, means “1 performance of executive duties: management [or] 2 the act or process of administration [or] 3 the execution of public affairs as distinguished from policy-making [or] ... 4 the term of office of an administrative officer” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2020). The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2020) further highlights that it means “to manage the operation of (... government) or the use of ... to put (something) into effect”. With the two definitions clearly defined, it can be concluded that the essence of public accountability and public administration rests with its provision of a democratic means (Bovens et al. 2014) to guarantee that how the public administrators conduct themselves should be to the benefit of the public good (Papi, Bigoni, Bracci and Deidda Gagliardo 2018). Existing theories of administration pledge to the following basic principles, most of which resonate SASSA:

- Organisations are national institutions aimed at accomplishing established objectives (Sherwin 1976; Latham 1981).

- Consistent organisational behaviour is best achieved through systems of defined rules and formal authority (Weber 1947).
- Organisational control, as well as coordination, are the factors necessary for maintaining organisations rationally (Weber 1947).
- There is always the best or most appropriate structure for any organisation, taking into consideration its objectives, external conditions, as well as the nature of its products and or services (Luthans 1985).
- Specialisation and division of labour positively influences the quality and quantity of production, especially in highly skilled jobs (Taylor, 1947).

It is evident from above, that the theories of administration bear an essential aspect of public management. Having said that, the section that follows describes the administrative management theory in detail.

### **2.10.2 The Administrative Management Theory**

Henri Fayol's (1949) administrative theory serves as the foundation for this study, as it is predicated on the idea of departmentalisation, which holds that several tasks must be completed in order for an organisation to accomplish its overall goal. The theory states that organisational management, as well as the human behavioural elements should receive greater attention. In this case, the emphasis is on the organization's management structure, as well as the degree to which its members are structured to carry out the tasks assigned to them. The administrative theory also places emphasis on increasing management effectiveness to standardise processes. Furthermore, the theory shifts to the operational level, where personnel are required to learn the changes and apply them to their daily tasks. The administrative theory thus subscribes to the top-down approach. For instance, each stakeholder, including the SASSA applicants, the officials, and others who oversee operations, all have specific roles and responsibilities which are focused on upholding national policy and guaranteeing that social assistance is provided to the qualifying citizens. While Fayol identified fourteen management principles to help managers perform better (Uzuegbu and Nnadozie, 2015), only a few are discussed because they closely relate to the effective management of social assistance by SASSA. Firstly, instead of using common sense, study the workplace and identify the most effective approach to complete particular tasks by using scientific methods.

SASSA carried out a business process mapping study, whereby every stage of the process was described and connected to certain tasks, with the goal to enhance company procedures. The process mapping provided information on the approximate time needed for a SASSA official to finish each phase of the procedure. Secondly, it is important to ensure that employees are trained to work as efficiently as possible, and that jobs are assigned to them based on their credentials, experience, as well as talents. All of SASSA's workers must undergo a skills analysis in order to match them with the abilities needed to achieve the organisational objectives (Matross, 2013). Thirdly, it is the responsibility of managers to keep a close eye on their subordinates' work, to ensure they are carrying out their responsibilities as efficiently as possible by giving them clear instructions and supervision. Lastly, supervisors and employees need to have distinct responsibilities so that managers can devote their time to planning and training, freeing up employees to do their jobs well.

Uzuegbu and Nnadozie (2015) criticised Fayol's theory for breaking down activities into small pieces and emphasising how each person can perform their unique set of steps to the best of their abilities. For instance, the four-step process (screening, attesting, quality assurance, and verification) of grant application is part of SASSA's administration of social grants. Oftentimes, this process is characterised with acts of corruption and fraud which, combating them involves the application life span being structured in such a way that each SASSA official strictly completes one task within an application cycle. This means that an application for social grants should ideally be completed by four SASSA officials (or, in rare cases, three). Therefore, modern approaches to administration require a more comprehensive examination of work systems in order to assess effectiveness and optimise production. Consequently, the excessive specialisation emphasised by Fayol (1949) is counter to the contemporary notions of what makes a stimulating and fulfilling workplace.

Even though efficiency in the management of social grants may increase, monotony and a lack of personal development could result from these repetitive responsibilities (Bergh, 2017). Thus, to strike a balance between the organisational goals of the employers and the human needs of the employees, modern management has shifted from specialisation-intensive professions to motivation-intensive jobs (Grobler, WŁrnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield, 2011; Bridgman, Cummings and Ballard, 2019). It is believed that this affects work quality, employee dedication, job satisfaction, absenteeism, as well as employee turnover. An

employees' ability to perform to a satisfactory level depends on a variety of elements, the primary one being motivation. Grobler et al. (2011) emphasises that motivation is the driving force behind behaviour, providing direction and the will to persevere in the face of challenges. When their five levels of needs are met, employees may be motivated to perform at their best, according to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs theory. Modern theories of administration have been required because of developments in the socio-political, economic and technological effects on organisational performance (Ijeoma, 2013). Many of the contemporary ideas have their roots in the conventional theories, even though the reports of contemporary theorists vary from the classical and neo-classical perspectives in terms of content and methodology.

### **2.10.3 Institutional theory**

In addition to the theories described above, the institutional theory is also relevant for this study, as evidenced in the ensuing discussion. Institutional theory brings to the fore corruption in the public sector by referring to state institutional qualities such as a preset rule of law, well-defined anticorruption systems, as well as autonomous anticorruption agencies with enforcement powers. The theory examines the processes and mechanisms influencing social conduct guidelines through numerous rules and regulations (Scott 2004). Despite the construction of an anticorruption framework, the theory puts the social context into perspective and provides a nomenclature for understanding the essence of corruption in institutions and society (Luo 2005). According to the theory, the character, design and openness of associated entities all contribute to political and institutional corruption. The theory also acknowledges that the relationship among corruption, political systems, institutions, culture, as well as gender, is extremely complex (Debski et al. 2018; Stensöta, Svensson, & Wängnerud 2015). Thompson's (1995), together with Lessig's (2018) 'institutionalist' view of political corruption is closely related to this perspective because it emphasises that, while maladministration might occur on an individual level, it can also be institutional in cases where entities are structured in ways that diverge them from their envisioned purpose. This theory is important for this study which seeks to unpack the challenges being experienced during the administration of social assistance. In the main, among the challenges being noted include corruption at both individual and institutional

level, as well as maladministration. In the context of the theory, the study seeks to investigate the processes and mechanisms involved, and how they influence the administrators of social assistance.

### **2.11 Research gap**

Many studies have investigated the issue of social grants from various perspectives. However, there are few studies on the management of social security in South Africa, and most have not provided a solution to the problem. Challenges have been alluded to, but measures to address them are not offered. There are gaps in research studies on social assistance in South Africa, particularly the management and administration of social assistance, hence this study investigates the administrative challenges of the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency, KwaZulu-Natal Region.

### **2.12 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter reviewed the literature related to the study, guided by the objectives of the study. As such, the chapter described the role of SASSA in social grant management, the nature of social security in South Africa, as well as the concept of social assistance and its effectiveness in the South African context. The legislative framework guiding the administration of social assistance in South Africa was described and lastly, the theoretical perspectives were also highlighted. In light of the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the mission and goals of the SASSA are to guarantee the delivery of comprehensive social security services that combat poverty and vulnerability, while adhering to legal and Constitutional requirements. The Department of Social Development launched the SASSA programme in response to issues with the social security system whereby it impacted on beneficiaries' ability to acquire social grants, as well as trying to address administrative challenges that impact the agency.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Every research study's technique has shown to be its vital component. It is also referred to as the "roadmap of research" since it lays out all the steps and techniques that the researcher must follow in order to conduct the study. Among the topics covered in this chapter are the main types of research methodologies, study design, research methodology, sample techniques, target population, measurements, and tools. This chapter also describes the research design, research methodology, study site, population, sampling strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria for sampling, data collecting, pilot study, data analysis, ethical considerations, as well as issues of trustworthiness of the study.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study falls within the exploratory research design, whose aim is to help researchers gain a deeper understanding of a problem that is not well defined, has not received enough attention, or is otherwise inadequately understood. Also referred to as interpretive or grounded theory research, the exploratory design aims to provide insights aimed at serving as the basis for more focused future research, instead of producing definitive findings. Similarly, this study sought to obtain a better understanding of the context, in this case, the administrative challenges experienced by the SASSA. A research study seeking to present a picture or clear understanding of the specific details of a situation, relationship or social setting is more likely to be exploratory research and it involves the researcher beginning with a well- characterized subject and afterward direct exploration to precisely portray it (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). The chosen research design was effective for this study, especially in getting a clear understanding and description about the challenges related to accessing the social assistance systems experienced by SASSA KZN Region. The risk of using the design is minimal in respect to the data collection as the participants were adults. In describing the research design underpinning this study, reference is made to Saunders et al' (2019) research onion, as depicted in Figure 3.2

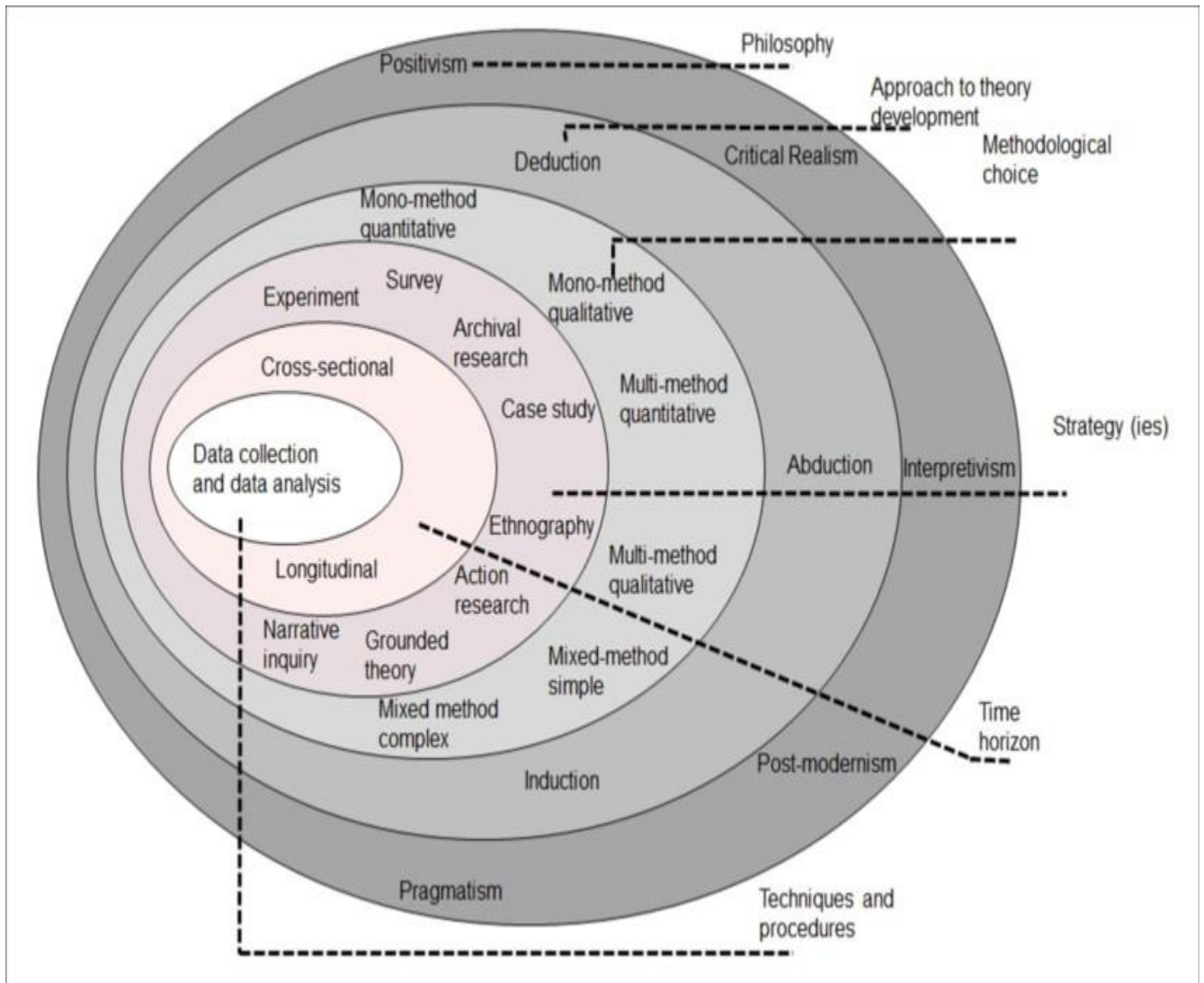


Figure 3.1 The Research Onion.

Source: Saunders et al (2019: 108)

### 3.3 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm refers to the conceptual structure upon which an investigation is based. In other words, it is a framework of assumptions and knowledge that a study's theories and procedures are based on. The main three components of a research paradigm include ontology, epistemology, and research methodology. There are three main types of paradigms, namely positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism, with each paradigm offering “differing assumptions of reality and knowledge which underpin their particular research approach which is reflected in their methodology” (Scotland, 2012: 9). This study is rooted in the

interpretive paradigm which emphasises that reality is subjective, hence, phenomena are understood from individual perspectives. According to Scotland (2012), the fundamental premise of interpretivism is relativism, meaning that reality is a social construction. Interpretivists believe that truths can be relative and therefore, human interactions can be used to investigate and develop the different worlds that exist. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) argue that interpretivism seeks to understand how individuals interpret their social environments in their natural settings, through everyday interactions with others. In order to realise this, the philosophy or paradigm adopts the qualitative research approach which aligns with research designs like the case study, phenomenology, ethnography, as well as hermeneutics. It is these characteristics of the interpretive philosophy that deems it the most appropriate for this particular study which seeks to investigate the challenges experienced by the SASSA, from the lived experiences of the employees of the organisation.

### **3.4 Research Approach**

The researcher followed the qualitative research approach to guide the study. As per Creswell (2014), qualitative research methodology entails utilizing words and open-ended inquiries as it is utilized to investigate and comprehend that people constructs their own reality and it is unique to their own individual experiences. Qualitative research is subjective and explorative in nature, and at the end of the day, subjective strategy permits people's clarifications, thoughts, and encounters to give an unmistakable comprehension of the point being scrutinized. While applying a subjective examination approach, the researcher endeavours to comprehend and permit members to introduce their activities or encounters as they connect with and experience various circumstances (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012; Saunders et al, 2019). The determination of this methodology is determined by the manner in which the investigation is expected a reasonable understanding of the challenges related to the social assistance system experienced by South African Social Security Agency KZN Region.

### **3.5 Location of the study**

The research was conducted in the KwaZulu Natal Province in South Africa. Regarding public administration, government project management, and the quality of services provided in the province, this province is among the dubious ones. Due to time and financial

limitations, the research only looked at SASSA managers in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, whom are primarily in charge of administering the social assistance programs. The SASSA KZN Regional offices from which the participants of the study were recruited from are: SASSA Ulundi District Office, Esikhaleni Local Office, Hlabisa Local Office, Louwsburg Local Office, Mondlo Local Office, Vryheid Local Office, Pongola Local Office, Reisthobe Local Office, Mahlabathini Local Office and Melmoth Local Office. The reason the participants were selected from these offices was because these offices are within the SASSA KZN Region and the managers had the necessary information pertaining to the study.

### **3.6 Population**

According to Creswell and Crewell (2018), a population is a collection of sampling units made up of people who have particular qualities that are important to the study. The sample is chosen by the researcher from a larger group. As per Creswell (2014), the research question is expected to provide guidance or an indication regarding the unit or group of people that should be the subject of the study and be included in the sample of research participants.

The focus of this study is to explore the challenges related to accessing the social assistance systems as experienced by South African Social Security Agency KwaZulu Natal Region. Therefore, in order to fulfil the aim of this study and give answers to the research question posed, the population of the study consisted of one hundred and twenty-three SASSA Managerial employees responsible for the social assistance systems and processes within the KZN region (SASSA KZN organogram, 2023).

### **3.7 Sampling and Sampling Techniques**

The researcher utilised a purposive sampling method to select research participants for this study. Kumar (2011) defines purposive sampling as a selection of units or research participants (which may be documents, people, organisation and so on) in a strategic way so that those selected individuals are relevant to the research questions. Purposive sampling technique was used as the recruitment technique for this study because the study aimed at targeting the relevant people who have rich information related to this study. The participants for this study were selected due to that they were Managers at SASSA KZN Region and the researcher assumed that they were in a position to respond to the research questions so to gather the relevant information in responding to the formulated research problem of this

study. For the purpose of this study, the researcher analysed the number of managers that the KwaZulu-Natal Province has within its SASSA offices and decided that the sample for the study must be a manageable number. Hence, the researcher sampled ten SASSA managerial employees responsible for the social assistance systems and processes. The reason for this was to reduce cost implications and also maximise on time management for completing the study. The below section discusses the sampling inclusion and exclusion criteria. Sampling inclusion criteria is a process whereby the researcher creates a criterion for the participants that will form part of the study. For this study the inclusion criteria included the following:

- SASSA Managerial employees responsible for the social assistance systems and processes.
- Have three and more years of experience.
- Aged between 25 to 59 years.

The motivation for the above inclusion criteria was due to the purposively nature of the study, therefore, anyone who did not fall within this criterion was excluded. Employees dealing with the social assistance systems were targeted because they have lived experiences in working with the social assistance systems. All SASSA employees who did not meet the above criteria were excluded from this study. The managerial level is not restricted by age; however, it is highly impossible to be a manager at the age of 25 years and below, since the minimum job requirements for managerial position is two years at assistant manager's level experience (Khan, & Kleijnen, 2018).

### **3.8 Data Collection**

The data for the present research was gathered qualitatively. Individuals, groups, or communities use qualitative data gathering to find and explain challenges they encounter or perceive in their natural environment and process in practice (Flick, 2018:17). Researchers can collect qualitative data from research participants consistently and in the situations where they occur (Gundry & Deterding, 2019:310). In this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview for gathering data. According to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) a semi-structured interview is a type of interview where the researcher makes a list of questions or specific topics to be covered during an interview and this is often referred to as

an interview guide/schedule, but the research participants have a great deal of freedom in how they respond to the questions. The semi-structured interviews involved open-ended questions intended to elicit rich views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2014:239). An interview guide/schedule was used (see addendum A) and individual interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission. The research's specific questions were primarily based upon the literature review and the research objectives. These research questions focused on addressing the research problem and they were about the challenges related to accessing the social assistance systems as experienced by the Managerial employees of SASSA KZN Region.

In preparation for data collection, the researcher followed the brief process discussed below:

The researcher first sought ethics permission from the UKZN Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). The researcher then identified the gatekeepers in order to acquire authorization to conduct the study. Creswell et al. (2018:154) state that ethical approval must be included in the final research report. Several offices of SASSA at KZN Region were sent the permission request letter notifying them of the intention to conduct the study and that was after having received the ethics approval letter. Thereafter, the researcher shared the information sheet explaining the purpose of the study to the gate keepers and he further explained this to them prior the interviews with the actual participants. Prior the data collection process, the researcher still reiterated the purpose of the study and issues consent forms for the participants to sign if they agreed to form part of the study. So basically, the process was explained to the research participants, and they voluntarily participated without being forced. One of the most common challenges experienced during the data collection were that the gatekeepers took time to respond to the request to conduct the study and furthermore, two research participants agreed to form part of the study then later declined and the researcher had to follow up the gatekeepers and recruit two more participants to ensure the study is conducted as per approved letter of ethics. The below is the rationale for using semi-structured interview guide:

- It is flexible, the significance of addressing questioners is to permit and gather important information about participant's viewpoints on their social world, which there is adaptability within the conduct of the interviews (Creswell, 2014:14). The

semi-structured interview in this instance permitted the researcher to be versatile while collecting the data because the participants were given time to respond appropriately based on their lived experiences.

- It allowed the researcher to follow-up on research participant's responses. As Creswell (2014) mentioned that the researcher may ask questions that are not included in the interview guide as he/she tries to get more of the participants' responses. Due to its flexibility, the researcher was free to encourage the participants to share more of their experiences around the phenomenon under study.
- Allowed the research participants to provide new information related to the questions being asked. As Galletta (2013) explains, the semi-structured interview addresses specific dimensions of research question while at the same time, leave space for research participants to offer new meaning to the research topic.
- It enabled the researcher to cover specific topics. The researcher was able to discover information that was also not intended for the study; however, it unfolded and helped the researcher to build on new information discovered.
- It created an opportunity for a narrative to unfold. The participants narrated their lived experiences according to their own individual understanding.
- Included open-ended questions which allowed the research participants to share more of their experiences and point of view (Galletta, 2013).
- It created a verbal interchange or face-to-face interaction with research participants, which in turn, allowed the interviewees to freely express their beliefs and views the challenges they encounter in line of their obligations.

This is because the proposed study used primary data and not secondary data. Primary data was found suitable and useful in this study. Therefore, the researcher conducted primary data collection from the South African Social Security Agency managerial employees. The data collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which represented perceptions and views of selected SASSA office manager's employees. The interviews took place in each manager's office for purposes of ensuring privacy and confidentiality.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

The instrument was tested through a pilot study, and it provided credible information that was required and expected according to the responses of the participants selected for the pilot study. The participants who were used to test the instrument met the inclusion criterion and were not used for the actual research study.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

The analysis of data is a process of inspecting, transforming, and modelling data, with the main objective of selecting useful information and suggesting conclusions (Yegidis, Weinbach & Myers 2018). Creswell et al. endorse this point of view. (2018) who note that data analysis is a process of transforming information gathered into research findings. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. This study employed the thematic analysis process adopted from Yegidis et.al. (2018). Steps in thematic analysis followed included:

- Converting the recorded data into transcripts,
- Reading through the transcribed data to unearth underlying meanings,
- Further categories similar topics or central issues by identifying emerging themes,
- Code the emerging themes, further initiate a preliminary analysis by reviewing and checking if the emerging themes correspond with the extracts coded, and
- Assess the emerging themes in comparison with what exists in literature and theory.
- The final step would be writing the report with the final analysed data representing the phenomenon under study (Brink, van der Walt, and van Rensburg, 2018; Yegidis, Weinbach and Myers, 2018).

The researcher conducted the below process to practically analyse the data collected from the research participants:

The researcher listened to each interview recording and familiarized himself with the data set to identify relevant information. They identified preliminary codes, which are features of the data that appear exciting and meaningful, and worked systematically through the dataset. Then, theme generation began, combining codes to form themes or sub-themes. The

researcher reviewed the themes and revised or removed some to improve interpretation. He further presented a detailed analysis of the thematic framework, providing theme names and clear definitions. The researcher then transformed the analysis into an interpretable piece of writing using vivid examples related to the themes, research question, and literature.

In order to understand and interpret the data useful for the aim of resolving the research topic, data is often analysed. According to Williman (2011), data analysis can be done for a variety of objectives, including measuring, evaluating relationships, evaluating hypotheses, developing concepts and theories, exploring, and explaining. In order to provide a compelling argument for a particular issue, Williman (2011: 86) notes that data analysis can be done to identify trends, monitor development, and repeat results. Data analysis, according to Yegidis et al. (2018), is the process of evaluating data by using logical and analytical tools by looking at each individual segment of the given data. Data analysis, according to Williman (2011), is the process of examining and altering data with the aim of learning new things about relevant knowledge and assisting in decision-making.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher received ethics clearance approval from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the University of KwaZulu Natal, the protocol has been granted full approval to collect data by interviewing ten SASSA Managerial employees.

The researcher distributed written consent forms to potential research participants in order to get their consent before beginning the data collection process. Additionally, the research participants received an explanation of all the procedures used in this study as well as its goal. Furthermore, the interview's recorded cassettes were stored on a computer that had a password that was synchronized. To protect the participants, the researcher explained to them their right to privacy (Strydom, 2011:119). Additionally, the participants were told that they could opt out of the interviews at any moment if they so desired. Keep Information Private was highly assured to the research participants and the researcher did not expose the participants' identity, because their original names were not used, as pseudonyms were used to keep them confidential and anonymised. The final research report revealed no real names of the participants.

### **3.12 Trustworthiness of the study**

Data trustworthiness in qualitative research, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and reliability. The importance of the researcher's results in capturing the real world as perceived is referred to as credibility by the participants in the study (Flick, 2018). The researcher's efforts in this study increased credibility by characterising the environment, target population, and engaging with relevant literature. Dependability, which is similar to dependability in quantitative research (De Vos et al., 2011), was improved by having the researcher administer all interview schedules, facilitate all semi-structured interviews, and also follow well-outlined stages in data analysis. According to De Vos et al. (2011), it is necessary to inquire whether the findings of the research have been corroborated by other individuals. To improve confirmability, the researcher used correspondence checking, as advised by Flick (2018) in which the researcher's supervisor will review the classification of topics. Finally, establishing a detailed description of the data acquired will improve transferability.

### **3.13 Summary of Chapter**

In conclusion, Chapter Three unpacked the research methodology adopted by this study, which is qualitative. The methodology was found to be suitable because it is intended to explore an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. This was further supported by the explorative research design. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling because it is mainly a non-random sampling technique used when the researcher only wants to include specific targeted group of participants. For the study, face to face interviews were the most appropriate method because the researcher wanted to gather in-depth understanding of the challenges related to accessing the social assistance systems as experienced by SASSA Managers at KZN Region in the grants management processes. Furthermore, a thematic data analysis method was adopted to analyse the data gathered by this study. The study also complied with several ethical considerations such as acquiring ethics approval from the ethics committee and protecting the information of the participants through confidentiality, anonymity and informing the participants about the purpose of the study and lastly, by sharing a consent form with them to sign if they agree to form part of the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The third chapter described the research design and methodology used in this study. The chapter covered in detail, the purpose, secondary objectives, research questions, sampling and sample techniques and procedures, pretesting the research tool, data gathering, and analysis. It also highlighted the difficulties that the researcher had when gathering data. According to the selection criteria stated above, the researcher interviewed ten participants. Data acquired from the ten participants was examined from July to September 2023, and the following Chapter, which contains a discussion of the findings, was written up concurrently daily until it concluded. This current chapter presents the analysis, interpretation, and research findings of the gathered data from different SASSA offices in KZN, in order to explore the challenges related to accessing the social assistance at KwaZulu-Natal region.

### **4.2 Response Rate**

Response rate is the number of participants in percentage, who have agreed voluntarily and formed part of the study in order to respond to the research questions set. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 281) opine that when a qualitative study is conducted, and all participants respond completely to the research questions, that is considered a rich and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. As per the sampled 10 participants, all of them responded positively to the research questions. These outcomes or results of the response are presented below: Gender, age, nature of the office, and concept of social assistance in connection with management, challenges in social assistance system at SASSA KZN region and how the administrative challenges are addressed at SASSA KZN region.

### **4.3 Respondents' Age**

Respondents were requested to show their age group. The ages were classified according to age group from (26-40), (41-50) and (51-60), so that the respondents would not find it uncomfortable to disclose their age. The results are presented in figure below:

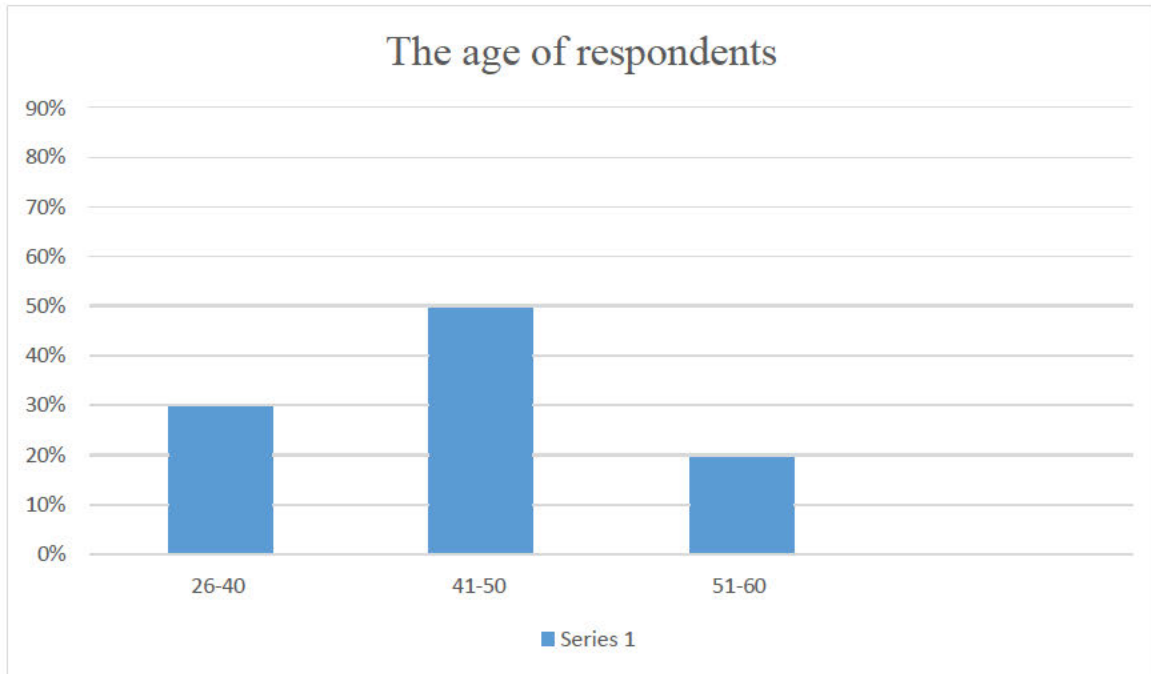


Figure 4.2 Age.

Source: Author

Figure 3 Shows that the 30% of participants are between the age of 26 years and 40 years of age. The 50% was between the age of 41 and 50 years and the 20% between the age of 51 year and 60 years of age.

#### 4.4 Respondents' Gender

The researcher wanted to establish the respondent's gender. The researcher believed that social assistance programmes are both managed by different genders and also wanted to ensure that managers from both genders were given same opportunities to participate in the study.

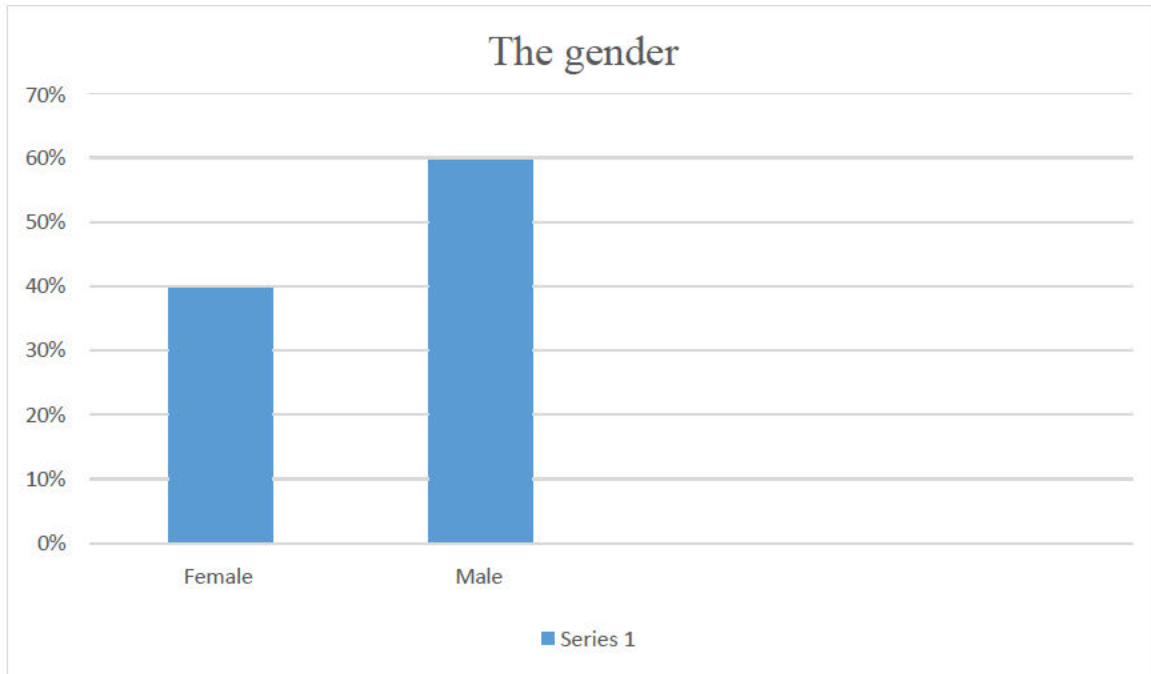


Figure 3.4 Gender.

Source: Author

Figure 4 indicates that the 40% of respondents were females and the 60% of respondents were males.

#### 4.5 Presentation and discussion of Empirical Findings

The findings emanating from this study are presented below in a categorized format, discussing all the themes derived from the process of data analysis.

The presentation of the empirical research findings is presented according to the research objectives outlined in the first chapter. Below are the themes that emerged during the data analysis process.

Table 4.5 Research Objectives and Questions.

Source: Author

Research objectives	Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
To explore the social assistance system and	How does the social assistance system	The role of social assistance in	Management as the accountability tool

its application in grant management.	operate in grant management?	grants management	
			Social assistance is a democratic process.
			Synergy between welfare system, social security, and management
To critically analyse the administrative challenges associated with the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region.	What are the administrative challenges related to accessing the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region?	Challenges related to accessing the social assistance	Lack of technology use
			Corruption and fraud
			Disjuncture of government systems and programmes
			Human and Physical resource issues
To establish how the administrative challenges of accessing	How are the administrative challenges in	Suggested solutions in addressing	Technology introduction and strengthening

the social assistance at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal are dealt with.	accessing the social assistance addressed at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal Region?	SASSA KZN Regional administrative challenges.	
			Administrative management and Strengthening reporting protocol
			Strengthening constructive collaboration between National Policies and local context

#### **4.6 Research Objective 1:**

*To explore the social assistance system and its application in grant management*

The research question under this theme intended to acquire information on how the SASSA employees understand the connection between the concept of social security and management. Below are the main issues that emerged in this regard.

##### **4.6.1 Management as the accountability tool**

The participants of the study mentioned that:

*“It goes hand in hand since management oversees and monitor business processes to ensure customer satisfaction.” (P5)*

*“In the social assistance system management is accountable for everything whether is good or bad the system is designed like that way. Management takes all responsibility of transactions on the system per locality.” (P2)*

*“According to my understanding the concept social assistance system in connection with management is aimed at ensuring that all South African citizens and permanent residents as defined by Section 27 1(c) of the South African Constitution do have access social security assistance by ensuring that all policies, regulations, and prescripts are adhered to. Management must ensure that the social assistance system is to develop new methodologies are implemented as times changes. This is evident by the new Business Process Re-engineering that is currently underway or piloted in the social assistance system.” (P6)*

#### **4.6.2 Social assistance is a democratic process**

Furthermore, some participant shared similar sentiments, as follows:

*“Social Assistance is government approach established with an aim to address socio economics and as means to address poverty alleviation.” (P1)*

*“Management ensure the smooth sailing of the Government programmes that provides minimum level of the income support to vulnerable societies as per section 27 (c) of the constitution of Republic of South Africa.” (P7)*

#### **4.6.3 Synergy among welfare system, social security and management**

Another participant highlighted:

*“Social welfare programmes in SASSA KwaZulu-Natal include cash assistance which is distributed by the South African Social Security Agency on behalf of the Department of Social development of South Africa. Section 27(1) (C) of the Constitution provides every person in South Africa with “the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance.” (P5)*

*“Social assistance refers to the cash or kind befits availed by South African government vulnerable but qualifying groups in the quest to alleviate poverty. The main driver is the means test which ensures that recipients do not have income above the set limit.” (P3)*

*“This has to do with the way management have to oversee both operations and adherence to relevant prescripts relating to provision of social grants to deserving customers. Management has the duty to execute all generic management functions like planning, organizing, leading, coordinating and controlling all social assistance activities, projects, and programmes.” (P10)*

The research findings, according to the sentiments shared above, indicate that most of the participants cited that the concept of social assistance from the management’s perspectives is to ensure overall management of units or sections from their offices. Five of the participants mentioned that the concept of social assistance is mainly to ensure implementation of operational plan, others mentioned that it is (social assistance) and involves proper management of stakeholder, whereas all agreed that poverty alleviation is one of the major issues that needs to be addressed by SASSA, through exploiting social assistance as a management tool. On the other side, one participant cited that management also needs do systematic analysis, while two others cited that the concept of social assistance is to ensure smooth sailing of government programmes that provide minimum level of the income support to valuable societies as per Section 27(1) (c) of the Constitution of RSA.

This statement was further unpacked by three of the participants who noted that the purpose of the Social Assistance Act is to make available the social grants already referred to, and it provides the mechanisms for this, and for incidental matters. Under Section 36 of the Constitution, there are limitations, so the Social Assistance the Act establishes a social assistance inspectorate, sets procedures for providing social assistance to individuals, and addresses issues related to. Whereas Participant 4 strongly argued that it is the duty of every management to understand poverty alleviation strategy in terms of social assistance. The management process is to conduct planning, organizing, leading, and controlling of resources of the organization, in order to attain the set organization’s objectives effectively and efficiently. There are levels of management, starting from the strategic management top level, which is head office, tactical management middle level which is regional/provincial office and operational management lower level, which is district office and local offices, where most of the work is done physically at local office level. Social assistance ensures that poverty alleviation is fully functional by providing administration for different grant types that can assist the community to put food on the table. Participant 9 also shared that there are several

key grants in South Africa which are given serious attention in terms of grants disbursement and management, and they are older persons grant which is processed under the Older Persons Act No 13 of 2006 which is in a process to be amended which is service under social assistance. There is also a child support grant in different categories which is under Children's Act No 38 of 2005, which is serviced under social assistance. There is also disability grant aspect of managing the section is to ensure that the office is compliant with the Disability Management Policy Section 9(b) that a person is eligible for disability grant owing to a physical or mental disability, unfit to obtain by virtue of any service and Review procedures and regulation 27. There is also Regulation 9(b) under the care dependency grant which allows the grant to be reviewed at any stage.

A study by Caulfield (2014) and Harnam (2017) found that indeed, there is a connection between the concept of social assistance and its use in grant management especially when the grants are being disbursed to the recipients. In comparison to the three participants who mentioned a mouthful, this study further reveals that in line with social assistance system, which is the core of SASSA, there are four units that are ordinarily managed and according to Participant 2 and 5 they include:

A) Operations management -which entails the actual value chain in terms of processing grants applications until benefits are paid out to qualifying customers. The grants in question are the child support grant, care dependency grant, disability grant, foster care grant, old age grant, war veteran, social relief of distress and grant In-Aid.

B) Payments Management - which strictly deals with management of stakeholders in terms of the service level agreements that exist currently. The service providers are mainly the commercial banks, the South African post office, and the community leaders where community infrastructure is being utilized.

C) Beneficiary Management Unit - mainly ensures that the system of processing grants applications is intact and that discrepancies are detected and rectified timeously. It also encompasses monitoring and ensuring that the integrity of data at SASS's disposal remains intact. The unit also ensures that the quality of the files produced is acceptable.

D) Customer Care Unit – whereby the management of customer care involves always ensuring customer satisfaction. This involves resolution of customer queries and disputes

with certain timeframes, consistently. The unit also integrating services with other government departments through outreach programmes and Sukuma Sakhe (Wake up and build) initiatives. This is in coherence with literature review.

Overall, the findings presented above echo the theoretical assumptions underpinning this study, that of public accountability, as well as the administrative theory. As reiterated earlier in this study, public accountability entails “accountability in, and about, the public domain” (Bovens, Schillemans, Robert and Goodin 2014:7). The concept of public accountability necessitates knowledgeable public administrators as the accountable actor, administrative processes and procedures as the nature of the conduct, process implementation and application for the public's benefit, as the accountable forum, and consequences for the non-performance or actions of public officials as the nature of the obligation. The description provided above gives a vivid picture of the people involved in the administration of social assistance, the processes and procedures involved, as well as the expected behaviour of these stakeholders, as described by the participants of the study. In addition, the administrative management theory emphasises the organization’s management structure, as well as the degree to which its members are structured to carry out the tasks assigned to them. The administrative theory also places emphasis on increasing management effectiveness to standardise processes, echoing the sentiments shared by P10 that “This has to do with the way management have to oversee both operations and adherence to relevant prescripts relating to provision of social grants to deserving customers. Management has the duty to execute all generic management functions like planning, organizing, leading, coordinating and controlling all social assistance activities, projects, and programmes.” In the case of this study, the SASSA officials and others who oversee operations, all have specific roles and responsibilities which are focused on upholding national policy and guaranteeing that social assistance is provided to the qualifying citizens.

#### **4.7 Research Objective 2:**

*To critically analyse the administrative challenges associated with the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region*

The research question under objective two was to acquire information on the challenges related to accessing the social assistance at SASSA KZN Region and there were quite a few challenges highlighted by the research participants as follows:

#### **4.7.1 Lack of technology use**

The participants highlighted the following:

*“SASSA system is still behind the time since services are not met with forth industrial revolution e.g. long queues are still existing in SASSA offices and some offices are still experiencing the client’s sleepover of social grant beneficiary.” (P7)*

*“Social assistance system is behind in terms of accessibility due to Lack of system (data) interface with other departments is still a concern. There are time delay in terms of stopping fraudulent grants especially on the payment side. Lack of blocking (blacklisting) fraudsters from re-entering the system”.*  
(P2)

#### **4.7.2 Corruption and fraud**

Other participants added:

*“From my own experience there are lot of challenges which I will list, firstly there is fraud and corruption in the system whereby there are officials who sell beneficiary information and get grants on their behalf whereas they do not exist physically. There are also issues with the security around SASSA cards as they are easily corned. No alternative energy back up in the systems we use. There are no guiding services specification which requires Grade C instead of Grade A (Firearm) protection. Many issues around risk management not properly implemented and nepotism and political influence in position of power I think are what derails the progress of SASSA being recognized as a key grants management entity. There are also human capacity challenges such as Poor management skills. Development and poor staff development and change management.” (P10)*

*“There are quite a number of challenges in the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu Natal Region which includes among others the fraudulent activities that are practiced by grant applicants whereby some are using fraudulent documents such as Identity Documents and birth certificates that are not authentic. These fraudulent documents are obtained from some officials within the Department of Home Affairs who have access to the birth register. The system takes a long time to verify applications because it is not connected to the Department of Home Affairs for document verification. Too much paperwork that has to be completed by officials manually and that is printed from the system once the application is completed on the system is also time consuming and has been identified as a challenge in the system. Poor network in most SASSA offices in the KwaZulu Natal Regions is also a major system challenge.” (P3)*

*“It is difficult for SASSA officials to verify if all documents that are brought forward by social grants applicants as these documents looks legitimate therefore these applicants’ access social grants for which they do not qualify. One of the major challenges in the social assistance system are the loopholes that have been identified by officials such as the system that does not indicate where and when the beneficiary money was withdrawn but that can only be reflected on the SAPO system who are currently having a contract with SASSA to administer payment.” (P4)*

*“The main challenge is fraud and corruption due to the high unemployment rate most communities have found the social assistance system to their only option to fight poverty. The employed as well due to the high demand of basic needs as the interest rate keep on hiking some people also been involved in the fraudulent social grant through processing / receiving fraudulent social grant. Another, challenge is the inconsistency across Regions Nationally there is no uniform.” (P7)*

*“The challenges that are in the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region are as follow: There are thousands of beneficiaries that are found on Persal who are working under government that are no longer qualifying for the grant in terms of the means test thresh hold in line with social assistance. The Socpen system that SASSA is using is a challenge as it cannot pick up beneficiaries who are working at the private sector not under government who are not qualifying. The SASSA card that is issued by the post office is a challenge as it is easily accessible in terms of fraud and corruption. The disability grant is a challenge as many clients are claiming to be disable but they are normally sick, and they forge the medical history. Child Headed Household is a challenge as there can be no appointment of primary care giver.” (P9)*

#### **4.7.3 Disjuncture of government systems and programmes**

Participant 1 and 4 added:

*“The most key challenges are that SASSA system of processing applications has not been completely integrated with other government databases which makes if susceptible to fraud and corruption activities. When comparing SASSA systems with those of other departments dealing directly with the public like SARS and Department of Home Affairs, SASSA is far behind in terms of changes happening in a digital space. To mention a few, SASSA is still unable to notify clients on progress of their applications through SMS. The queuing system is also outdated, and environment is far from being paperless.” (P1)*

*“Lack of oversight by the Minister of Social Development is also a challenge because as a leader if you don’t touch based with the ground, they pick up a lot of gaps and use against the system.” (P4)*

#### **4.7.4 Human and physical resources issues**

Another participant mentioned:

*“One of the challenges in the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region is the shortage of recourses e.g., Human Capital. Most of the*

*offices are short-staffed, which makes it difficult to assist all clients visiting offices on daily basis. Long ques at SASSA offices, sleepovers and transport cost due to that some of our offices are not in central areas which makes it difficult for some client to access our offices. Some of our offices are not user friendly and people who are in wheelchairs are unable to access our offices (buildings). The other challenge is fraud. People are able to manipulate our system to access grants fraudulently using fraudulent documents like Fraudulent Identity document and birth certificates. Open space pays points where our beneficiaries are exposed in cold/ hot weather.” (P6)*

Based on the above findings, the participants were asked about the challenges related to accessing the social assistance system of SASSA. Participant 3, 7 and 10 strongly indicated that fraud and corruption are key challenges, and they are conducted by both citizens and SASSA officials, whereby there is no compliance with the fourth industrial revolution, system down time, system interface with other departments, access of grants after death of beneficiaries, lack of stakeholder involvement, SOCPEN system gaps, resistance to change, and systematic issues with SASSA gold cards. So, fraud and corruption appear to be some of the dire challenges that bring the reputation of SASSA into disrepute. These findings, according to the participants, further indicate that fraud and corruption, system interface with other departments and SOCPEN gaps, are daily challenges with the social assistance system. Most of the participants stated that system down time and compliance to fourth industrial revolution is another major challenge. Three of the participant agreed that resistance to change is also a challenge within the administration of social assistance, and few of respondents mentioned that the SASSA gold cards pose another challenge in beneficiaries from receiving their payments especially through banks and it was further unpacked that this is as a result of lack of stakeholder involvement, which results in a challenge when it comes to enquiring about beneficiaries’ payments because SASSA cannot access the bank statement to view when and where the money was withdrawn.

One of the respondents stated that in some instances, after the grant beneficiaries have died, their family members can still access the deceased funds, mainly because their death certificates would not have been registered with SASSA. This kind of scenario talks to the lack of synergy between government departments and systems. For instance, SASSA systems

should be linked with the Home Affairs, so that as soon as a beneficiary is registered as deceased, then automatically, the SASSA systems can block the card used for accessing grants. This creates a continual cycle of defrauding the state by relatives of the deceased beneficiary.

In contrast to Participant 3, 7 and 10, Participant 6 highlighted that there is a shortage of resources and human capacity which derails improvement of the services. As a result of this, there is lack of technology use because most local offices, especially in rural areas, they do not have computers to access the systems used in well-established areas. Government systems and policies lack alignment, which was also a key finding, especially looking at the National Policies and local context. It was further presented by Participants 2, and 7, that due to lack of technology use by SASSA officers, there is a disjuncture of government systems and programmes, which negatively affects the process of policy advancement to cater and address the root causes of these challenges and bring order into the administration of grants. These findings are affirmed by this study, as per the literature review conducted and further found more challenges such as lack of technology use by SASSA. Again, Participant 4 also raised concerns that there is lack of oversight by the Minister of Social Development, hence in most SASSA offices, the *laissez-faire* management approach is implemented and there is no accountability. It is also good to note that this study did not find that SASSA creates dependency of beneficiaries as indicated in the literature review, but rather the lack of oversight by the Department of Social Development Minister.

A study conducted by Jehoma (2010) indicated that the government's lack of political will to strengthen administrative support to local offices, especially where there is lack of resources, causes many of the challenges highlighted in these findings. On the other hand, Mpedi and Kuppan (2004) argued that the lack of accessibility of SASSA offices, especially in rural areas, is also another problem because beneficiaries cannot access the services and, due to the lack of skilled employees, the service turnaround is very poor, hence, most people are not able to access the services. This further excoriates these challenges and renders the vulnerable groups voiceless.

The findings of the study resonate with other studies, especially the mention of corruption and fraud overdoing the administration of social assistance. It was noted that currently, the

South African government is experiencing serious concerns about fraud and corruption committed by syndicates comprising both the agency workers themselves and non-employees, despite being actively dealing with corruption behind the scenes (Klaaren 2020), with instances of some officials being successfully convicted.

In terms of the SASSA personnel, literature also indicated challenges with lack of commitment among the administrative personnel. Mpedi and Kuppan (2004) highlighted the vulnerability of poor people to adverse events, poor service from administrative personnel, and lack of commitment to serve. They attributed this to poor customer service skills, lack of competent staff, and high take-up rates of disability and child support grants, despite the adoption of the Batho Pele principle.

### **4.8 Research Objective 3**

*To establish how the administrative challenges of accessing the social assistance at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal are dealt with*

The last objective of this study was to sought remedies or solutions to the administrative challenges at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal Region. The below are the unique utterances of the research participants:

#### **4.8.1 Technology introduction and strengthening**

*“SASSA has now introduced BPR project, where the clients can access online services and kiosk services is currently underway which will benefit applicants for quicker services and spending lesser waiting time.” (P1)*

*“SASSA has introduced Biometric system to eliminate fraud. Online application has been introduced to address the challenge of long queues. Fraud awareness is done to ensure that officials and public is aware of the consequences that be faced with when they involved in fraudulent activities. SASSA is encouraging beneficiaries to change to their personal bank account to address the challenge of open space pay point.” (P3)*

*“The challenges have been addressed by improving the logging in process as it was changed from logging in using passwords to biometric system which prevented unauthorized access by other officials where user ID were stolen*

*easily in order to perform fraudulent activities. Another administrative challenge was addressed by enhancing interface with other systems like DHA, COGTA, Department of Employment and Labour to mention the few, whereby if an ID number of an applicant is entered on SASSA system it detects if the applicant is having an income from one of the systems linked with SASSA system.” (P4)*

*“Lastly, the provision of generators and network support in some servers in some offices which are mainly affected by power failure has improved administrative challenges in the SASSA KwaZulu Natal Region.” (P7)*

*“There is a need by all relevant stakeholders to come forward and review their means of income under Regulation 27 and Public financial Management Act no 1 of 1999. The Business Process Re-engineering system introduced by SASSA needs to be linked with different stakeholders such as Department of Home Affairs, South African Revenue Services, Banks, Department of Health, Department of Labour, Department of Social Development, South African Police Services and COGTA for ease of verifying and addressing authenticity of grant applicants and process update in terms of their application status.” (P9)*

#### **4.8.2 Administrative management strengthening**

It was mentioned that:

*“SASSA KwaZulu-Natal Region has appointed Administrative Manager per District which assist in resolving challenges per District. All KZN offices have administrative clerks which deals with administrative work.” (P2)*

*“Administrative challenges are address through Performance Management Development System (PMDS) under the Human Capital Management (HCM) unit its where the performance of staff is monitored, and any deviations thereof are dealt with following the disciplinary procedure.” (P8)*

#### **4.8.3 Strengthening reporting protocol**

It was further highlighted that solutions are implemented in levels of the specific SASSA office:

*“There are done by in four levels of reporting Local Office, District Office, Regional Office, Head Office it depends on nature of administrative.” (P1)*

#### **4.8.4 Strengthening synergy between national policies and local context**

Other participants mentioned:

*“SASSA KwaZulu Natal region is a national entity. This means that the administration thereof largely rests with the National government. This has a negative impact at times as KwaZulu Natal’s unique challenges may not receive deserved attention in view of the single policy approach of the national office. The situation is also not helped by the fact that Kwazulu-Natal has the largest number of beneficiaries than other provinces.” (P10)*

*“There has been a renewed sense of urgency to address administrative challenges since the appointment of the new REM. However, as it happens in many organizations, there remains a danger that there could be ‘old guards’ who may want to protect their territories and continue to enjoy their comfort zones and resist the change philosophy of the new REM. Secondly there is a general feeling amongst employees that the employment equity policies are not properly monitored and this gave rise to the over-representation of particular genders at different levels of the organization. This fact ends up demotivating those who may be in the over-represented category since it takes longer to affirm the under-represented categories.” (P6)*

From the above research findings, most of the participants agreed to use staff biometrics to minimise fraudulent activities within SASSA, and also use the business process re-engineering (BPR) to minimise paperwork at SASSA, by moving to digitalization. They further argued that there is a strong need to use the system enhancement to print award letters/outcomes in all languages for all applicants to understand the content of their

application's outcome, the system must minimize the number of pages for each application printed to create physical files and also use the method of payment in order to limit the number of SASSA/SAPO cards which will have to be replaced, as directed by the Reserve Bank. This study confirmed that there is a gap in terms of integrated government systems because the business process re-engineering (BPR) is still to be linked with other key Departments to ensure that the applicant's documents are verified on the spot during the grants application processes. This raises a concern of neglecting the operations of SASSA, although it is recommended by one of the participants as a solution to strengthen and address the challenges.

Participants 1, 3, and 4 agreed that the network service provider must be migrated from Telkom to MTN 5G to improve the connectivity. Six of them further highlighted that using the online grant application system to minimise long queues from SASSA offices is key. Whilst 4 participants shared that it is key to strengthen the use of beneficiary's biometric enrolment to minimise the registration of child support grant with fraudulent birth certificate and it could help in addressing issues of fraud and corruption. Furthermore, according to Participants 6 and 10, the abovementioned findings would help with alignment of national policies, programmes, and interventions across government. Participant 3 further mentioned that the key solutions to the challenges presented in objective two can be addressed by following the following sequential solutions: firstly through, introduction and strengthening of risk management, training, and development of labour staff, introducing risks and mitigation plans e.g., whistle blowing privacy and protection, tracking device on SASSA computers e.g., PCs and laptops, procurement of generators to offices. Migration LAN network to MTN 5G network, Establishment of employment equity committee and lastly, training all staff members on Human Capital Development and Transformation. The researcher completely agrees with Participant 3, regarding the proposed solutions. However, one key thing that is missing in all their arguments is to ensure that government is willing to end corruption from its root causes to improve the grants management processes. So, if there are no governments South Africa may still continue experiencing these challenges. However, that alone is not enough, as highlighted by Participant 3, that processes of protocol and reporting also need strengthening because with the current system, SASSA officers report haphazardly without a clear reporting protocol.

In line with the findings of this study, Koma (2006) also indicated that there is a need to address challenges timely. This study findings are in alignment with the recommendations by Triegaardt (2013), that the KwaZulu-Natal SASSA Regional offices are implementing a comprehensive strategy to improve administrative efficiency and effectiveness of social security programmes.

As reiterated in the findings pertaining to this objective, this includes implementing modern information technology systems, enhancing staff training, fostering stakeholder collaboration, optimizing processes, conducting capacity assessments, allocating resources, launching public awareness campaigns, implementing quality assurance mechanisms, and engaging with local communities. The organization is also implementing mobile applications and online platforms for easier communication and application processes. Regular evaluation and adaptation of these strategies are crucial for ongoing success. The strategy includes a comprehensive capacity assessment, resource allocation, public awareness campaigns, quality assurance mechanisms, and community engagement.

By implementing these solutions, SASSA can enhance its administrative efficiency and overall effectiveness in the KwaZulu-Natal Region. Given the recommendations to addressing the challenges experienced by SASSA, in terms of grants management, this process needs to be allowed further analysis at two levels: one being considering how policy development is impacted by these challenges and draw the connection between policy development and direct implementation of policies through programmes such as social assistance programmes by SASSA. Literature further supports that the use of technology is apparent in addressing these challenges and transforming the access of welfare services through the social assistance programmes.

#### **4.9. Summary of Chapter**

This chapter provided the findings' presentation and discussion arising from the research objectives. The challenges related to accessing the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency KwaZulu-Natal Region were discovered and discussed. The chapter also discussed views of the SASSA KwaZulu -Natal Regional Managers about the connection of the concept social security and its use in grants management, further to that were the

challenges related to accessing social assistance system and lastly, they provided recommendations on how to improve and address these challenges, as per objectives for this research. An overview of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This is the final chapter of the study, discussing the main significant findings, recommendations, and conclusions of the study, which were drawn from the presentation of data in the Chapter 4. This chapter engages the findings, addressing the three overall objectives of the study, against the literature review consulted. Remedies and recommendations, areas for further research on the study, are also suggested. The study investigated the challenges related to accessing the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency KwaZulu Natal Region.

### **5.2 Summary of main Findings**

Objective 1: To explore the social assistance system and its application in grant management.

The findings revealed that SASSA employees have a comprehensive understanding of their organisation and about the services which should be rendered by the organisation. They have presented a well-orchestrated understanding of the management responsibilities and are also knowledgeable about the systems which are being utilised in their organisation. In short, SASSA employees presented their entity's organogram, together with an understanding of the policies which govern their organisation, they have a clear understanding of the South African Constitution and its mandate, with regards to SASSA. They shared similar views on the issues such as the South African constitution which provides each South African access to social security- an initiative meant for people who are unable to support themselves and their dependants. The participants revealed their understanding of social assistance as the government's approach being implemented to address socio-economic and an initiative to address poverty alleviation.

Objective 2: To critically analyse the administrative challenges associated with the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region

The participants outlined their various experiences and challenges encountered by SASSA in the KZN. Experiences and challenges which have been revealed by participants constitutes SASSA's outdated system which cannot keep up with the Fourth industrial revolution

requirements, SASSA beneficiaries are obliged to physically go to the branch to check the status of their application, it is impossible to give them an update about the status of their applications through the system or through sending them messages on their phones. Some of the outstanding challenges at SASSA include corruption amongst officials and beneficiaries, and the system cannot detect any suspicious corrupt activities because most of the documents are printed out and processed physically by filling in forms.

SASSA systems are not integrated with other government databases, which could assist in being able to detect fraudulent activities such as people using fraudulent identity documents. There are precautionary measures for risk management, and nepotism is one of the challenges which seems to be detrimental at SASSA, because people are not hired on merit, but based on whom they are related to. People still must stand in long queues in the open air, regardless of the weather conditions, because that is the only alternative to access SASSA. This is even worse for people with disabilities, as SASSA buildings do not accommodate them. People who were previously employed in the public sector struggle to apply for SASSA grants because they still have the Persal number. The KwaZulu-Natal regional SASSA offices struggle with poor network, especially due to loadshedding, and the offices do not have backup generators as an alternative, should there be loadshedding.

Objective 3: To establish how the administrative challenges of accessing the social assistance at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal are dealt with.

In trying to improve the system, SASSA introduced projects such as BPR which enables clients to access online services, thus improving the service and time which the clients used to wait in long queues. It was suggested by this study that the introduction of the Administrative Manager in each district will be implemented, which will eventually improve staff performance, since the manager will be always in the district. In terms of monitoring the risks, the participants revealed that a risk management task team will be introduced to specifically monitor and manage risks that might hinder the level and the speed of service delivery. Since the SASSA KZN Region has been struggling with backup generators which will assist during the times of load shedding, new generators will be procured for each district, as per requirement.

It was further suggested by this study that security needs improved in the systems, wherein participants will no longer make use of use ID, but will use biometric system which reduces the number of cases where one's password could be stolen and used in corrupt activities. Beneficiaries will now be able to apply online and they will be able to register and upload all their application documents online without physically going to the SASSA regional offices, this initiative comes as the relief to both beneficiaries and officials. The introduction of generators will overcome the network challenge when there is loadshedding. SASSA encountered an influx of fraud cases, such as beneficiaries using fake ID's, to reduce an increase in fraudulent cases, SASSA will introduce a new system which Business Process Re-engineering that will link SASSA with other various entities such as the Department of Home affairs, the Department of Labour, Department of Social Development, South African Police Services and COGTA.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

In assessing the connection between social assistance and use in grants management, this study concludes that SASSA KZN lacked strategic and operations management skills as it had not been properly managed. This was revealed by the participants who mentioned that at some of the offices had no proper integration of management and implementation of the operational plan. This study further discovered that the management is not being used as an accountability tool over government services to ensure smooth implementation of government programmes. According to the findings of this study, it appeared that in some local SASSA offices, the management did not fully comprehend what management entails, in connection with social welfare services, specifically the social assistance programmes. It is against this objective that there is indeed a connection between management and social security, despite the challenges, because at least some social assistance programmes are being implemented as per the mandate derived from the South African Constitution. This study further revealed that it can be concluded that the grants management processes, especially the social security programmes, do experience severe challenges in the KwaZulu-Natal Region. This study concludes that fraud and corruption are the main key challenges faced by SASSA KZN. This is because this study highlighted that there are issues in terms of using technology

to verify documentation of grant applicants and this leads to officers overworked as a result of lack of human capacity and resources, especially in rural areas. It can further be concluded that SASSA KZN does not comply with the fourth industrial revolution because they always experience systems downfalls, lack of system interface with other key departments, and this is key because the lack of linkage between SASSA systems and other departments like banks exacerbates the fraud and corruption, because there is no proper verification of documents of the applicants. For instance, SASSA beneficiaries who use banking cards to receive their grants are not able to get immediate help in cases of fraud happening in their accounts, as SASSA cannot access banking systems to track what happened to their grants. In addition to this, some families still access grants of their deceased family members, due to lack of linkage of SASSA systems with Home Affairs. This is also observed as a resistance to change within the administration of social assistance which destroys the pillar of accessing social assistance services by beneficiaries. As referenced from the findings, for instance, this study concludes that the *laissez-faire* approach is being used in some of the SASSA KwaZulu-Natal offices, which results in challenges of having no managers allocated for each district office. Even when officials require manager's intervention, it will take longer to relay the message, since there is no managers placed in all the offices. It appeared that SASSA as an entity struggled to bring about good service delivery, but rather had a lot of challenges which came across as stumbling blocks and made it difficult for the organization to manage an extensive number of clients who attempt to reach out to SASSA daily. Innovation within the system and integrating it with other entities such the Department of Home affairs and the Department of home Social Development came as a remedy to manage the situation. Lastly, this study concludes that the lack of oversight by the Minister of Social Development and governments will in addressing these challenges is the major role player in causing more damage to the already inflicted SASSA systems.

Based on objective 3, this study concludes that strengthening and advocating for the use of technology can address the issues of fraud and corruption, because the business process re-engineering (BPR) system will help minimise access to confidential information by other officials on the system. Furthermore, it would help SASSA to comply with the fourth industrial revolution and digitization. This study further concludes that, especially in rural areas, there is a need to use known language preferences to communicate application

outcomes to beneficiaries, as compared to using English only as the medium of communication. This study further concludes that SASSA KZN needs to migrate its internet connection to a better service provider such as MTN 5G, as per findings. It is concluded that the use of technology can equip SASSA to address the challenges pointed out in this study, through encouraging government departments to collaborate and create a linkage in its systems, as this will allow beneficiaries that are literate to be able to access SASSA service through the internet, where they can apply and register online without physically going to the branch. SASSA will be functional, even during loadshedding since there would be an introduction of generators as backup and the network challenges will be the thing of the past.

## **5.4 Implications for SASSA KZN**

Based on the findings generated in the study, the following are recommendations:

### **5.4.1 SASSA Managerial Recommendations**

The researcher recommends that strong bonds and interrelationships between SASSA and other entities such as the Department of Home Affairs, Department of Employment and Labour, Department of Social Development, and South African Police Services, should be a pre-requisite for managers. Furthermore, engagements and partnerships with the private sector will play a significant role, as it will assist and enable SASSA to be able to detect beneficiaries from the private sector and be able to identify their employment status. It should also be the managers' responsibility to revise the policies in consultation with the end users of services, and, if there is a need implement new policies, which will incorporate collaborations between SASSA and other entities, as this will be meant to improve their service delivery and take into cognisance the challenges that come with the introduction of 4<sup>th</sup> IR, therefore virtual policies are required. It is also recommended that the Minister of Social Development establish a unit within Social Development that would oversee SASSA services, which will be chaired by her for oversight purposes. This means she must be able to visit SASSA offices all around KwaZulu Natal physically and assess the state of SASSA offices, versus human capacity and resources. It is recommended that SASSA officials, from the subordinates to the management, be introduced to a form of supervision framework which

would help them to hold each other accountable for the services they provided to the KwaZulu-Natal communities. There is a need to strengthen the interpersonal relationships between managers and subordinate officials, as this will create a conducive environment between them. Lastly, it is recommended that there is a need for establishing a platform for officials to inform the management about the entity's challenges should be created because they are the ones who are working on the ground, and they know what the challenges are, and how they can be solved.

### **5.5 Recommendations for future studies**

This study investigated the challenges related to accessing the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency KwaZulu-Natal Region, and mainly based on a small sample located in the region. It is recommended that in future, studies be broadened to other regions and include non-managerial officials of SASSA, as this will eventually bring about a holistic understanding of the experiences and challenges encountered by SASSA and its officials.

There is a need to conduct a study that would develop a framework that generates a system which would enable officials to work remotely, as a way to catch up with requirements that come up with the fourth industrial revolution, and managers from various district offices could hold virtual interviews.

From the study, it transpired that there is an increase in the number of fraudulent cases, which included cases pertaining people who work in the private sector and the system cannot detect that they are employed, therefore, collaboration and integration between SASSA and the private sector is required, for the betterment of the organization. There is a need for future studies to look at integrating government systems, policies, and programmes, so to design guidelines that would support a multi-sectoral approach in addressing fraud and corruption. A study proposed will likely give larger trends and results in terms of how the different categories of people in society views the administration of SASSA grants and perhaps develop a multisectoral system through the Delphi system.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet.

Dear Participant,

My name is **Mabutho Tshaba** (Student no. **217059197**). I am a master's candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: **Exploring social assistance administrative challenges at the South African Social Security Agency, KwaZulu-Natal**. The aim of the study is to investigate the South African Social Security Agency system challenges in KwaZulu-Natal. Expose the challenges that are experienced by the grant administrators and help formulate proposals on how to overcome them. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about (15 minutes).
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Management, IT and Governance, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg.

Email : [217059197@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:217059197@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

Cell : [REDACTED]

My supervisor is Dr MC Madondo who is located at the School of Management, IT and Governance, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email [madondom@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:madondom@ukzn.ac.za) Phone number: +2733 260 6441

My co-supervisor is Dr Thea van der Westhuizen who is located at the School of Management, IT and Governance, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email [vanderwesthuizent@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:vanderwesthuizent@ukzn.ac.za) Phone number: +2733 260 6441.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za) Phone number +2731 260 3587/4557/8350.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**Appendix B: Consent Form**

I ..... (*Full names of participant*) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**  
**DATE**

.....

.....

## Appendix C: Research Interview guide

### Biographical Details: (Circle)

#### Section A

1. Gender?

Male		Female	
------	--	--------	--

2. What is your age?

18 - 25	26 - 40	41- 50	51 - 60	61 – above
---------	---------	--------	---------	------------

3. Total number of employees?

1 - 10	11 - 20	21 – 200	201 and more
--------	---------	----------	--------------

4. What is the nature of your office?

Local Office	District Office	Regional Office	Head Office
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#### Interview Guide

1. How does the social assistance system operate in grant management?
2. What are the administrative challenges related to accessing the social assistance system at SASSA, KwaZulu-Natal Region?
3. How are the administrative challenges in accessing the social assistance addressed at SASSA KwaZulu-Natal Region?

## Appendix D: Ethics Approval letter



05 March 2025

**Mabutho Tshaba (217059197)**  
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear M Tshaba,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00005004/2022

**Project title:** An investigation into the challenges of the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency KwaZulu-Natal Region

**Amended title:** Exploring social assistance administrative challenges at the South African Social Security Agency, KwaZulu-Natal

**Degree:** Masters

### Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 05 March 2025 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully








.....  
**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587

Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

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**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## Appendix E: Editing certificate

### **EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE**

8 January 2024

#### **Re: LANGUAGE EDITING STATEMENT**

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, hereby confirm that I have edited a **Dissertation** titled:

**An investigation into the challenges of the social assistance at South African Social Security Agency, KwaZulu-Natal Region**

by

**Mabutho Tshaba**



**Hatikanganwi Mapudzi**

Associate Member

Membership number: MAP002

Membership year: March 2023 to February 2024

██████████  
██████████

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[www.editors.org.za](http://www.editors.org.za)



Postgrad Certificate (Higher Education); PhD (Communication); M.A (Journalism & Media Studies); Postgrad Dip (Media Management); B. Soc Scie (Hons, Communication); B. Applied Comm. Management.

**Senior Lecturer; Chartered Public Relations Practitioner; Freelance Editor**

## Appendix F : Turnitin Report

### Research Report

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