

**INVESTIGATING THE ADOPTION AND USAGE OF THE SOCIAL RELIEF OF
DISTRESS (SRD) GRANT: A CASE STUDY OF THE ORANGE FARM
COMMUNITY**

**A research report submitted to the Faculty of Management, University of the
Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Sector
Monitoring and Evaluation)**

By

Mary Mbiti

Supervisor: Mr. Rekgotsofetse Chikane

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to understand the adoption rate of the SRD grant received by members of Orange Farm. Several studies about the effectiveness of some of the pre-SRD social protection grants were published (Gutura & Tanga, 2017; Waidler & Devereux, 2019). Such studies are important as they provide an idea of the usefulness of pre-existing grants to beneficiaries, which can be compared to the SRD grant. The research gap on the users' end of the new R 350 SRD grant particularly in targeted poor communities like Orange Farm, has huge negative impacts on the government's policies regarding vulnerable groups and the social protection programmes meant to ameliorate their sufferings.

This study adopted the Human Rights Framework for social protection. This study used a qualitative exploratory case study approach. The study was conducted in the Orange Farm community. Furthermore, the study used a purposive sampling method to collect data from the primary source. The primary source of data was in the form of semi-structured interviews. This study found that the 350 grant beneficiaries in Orange Farm have faced challenges with this grant, but they favour the grant to be further extended and increased as it has helped them. The beneficiaries mostly use their grant on basic needs like food and toiletries. The participants expressed that they really needed food parcels, but they were deprived of getting them. Participants also revealed that they need jobs and are interested in starting businesses, but the main problem is access to funding.

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents and little brother. I will always admire the role my parents played in my life while they were still alive, especially in encouraging me to never give up on my studies. To mom, dad, and little brother, you will forever be loved and missed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

This study investigated the adoption and usage of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in South Africa within Orange Farm. The SRD is one of the government's social protection programmes for vulnerable groups in South Africa (Torkelson, 2022). Protecting vulnerable groups in the country through the provision of social grants in the form of cash transfers is a form of social protection backed by the constitution of South Africa. Specifically, the constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to access social security, including appropriate social assistance (Pienaar, Davids, Roberts, Makoe & Hart, 2021).

South Africa is a highly unequal middle-income country in which enduring structural poverty relegates a large proportion of the population to the economic periphery (Neves, Samson, van Niekerk, Hlatshwayo & Du Toit, 2009). Poverty in South Africa is a multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond material deprivation. It involves a lack of capabilities, limited access to opportunities, and heightened vulnerability to income fluctuations and risks. Social protection measures play a crucial role in improving the well-being and livelihoods of these vulnerable groups. They enhance food security, support education and healthcare access, and reduce poverty.

Social Protection refers to direct cash transfers and other in-kind programmes such as school feeding schemes, Value Added Tax exemptions on basic foodstuffs, employment in public works programmes, or fee waivers on essential services. Social protection is often regarded as a key component of social policies. South Africa has been successful in broadening social protection programmes since 1994, with social grants reaching 17 million beneficiaries and about half of all South African households (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development, 2020). Social grants are the main government instrument to reduce poverty and inequality. It is also seen as a remedy for the long-lasting effects of the apartheid era.

Before May 2020, cash transfer programmes in South Africa were for three groups of individuals: minors under 18, elderly people over 60, and disabled citizens (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020; Cramm, Nieboer, Finkenflugel & Lorenzo, 2013; Torkelson, 2022).

However, a need arose for the government to add to this group in May 2020 because of the severe economic hardship brought to South Africans during the COVID-19 pandemic. The government of South Africa expanded the scope of the social protection programmes already in existence in the country by introducing the SRD grant to assist unemployed individuals of working age and many others who lost their jobs or businesses following measures to curtail the spread of the disease (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Given the nature of the grant, especially to its beneficiaries, many poor communities have benefited from it, including those of the Orange Farm.

This research was motivated by a gap in the literature regarding recipients' adoption and the usage of the SRD grant in the Orange Farm community. This research on the adoption and usage of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in the Orange Farm community would help the Department of Social Development (DSD) gain a better understanding of the adoption rate and, particularly, of the usage/spending patterns of those who use social protection grants in the present target township and in similar settlements in South Africa.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The government of South Africa has been giving grants to ameliorate the suffering of socially vulnerable groups for many decades (Satumba, Bayat & Mohamed, 2017). These grants include the old age pension grant, disability grant, and child support grant (Hanlon, 2010). To make informed policies about all aspects of current and future grants, especially concerning the purposes these grants aim to achieve, it is ideal for the government to continuously keep track of the adoption and usage of the grants by the beneficiaries (Plaas et al., 2009; Neves et al., 2009; Satumba et al., 2017). However, this was not the case for the current R350 SRD grant, particularly in targeted poor communities like the Orange Farm.

For instance, the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, which emerged due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, has been in existence for three years (May 2020 – March 2022) with minimal investigation on its adoption and usage (Torkelson, 2022). From when the first SRD grants were distributed in May 2020, much of the information available from the Department of Social Development (DSD) (the agency in charge of the government's social protection programmes) has been on the application process

by the target beneficiaries, its disbursement, and regulation (Mathebula, Fish & Masvaure, 2022).

Several studies about the effectiveness of some of the pre-SRD social protection grants have been published (Neves et al. 2009; Gutura & Tanga, 2017; Waidler & Devereux, 2019). These studies are important as they provide an idea of the usefulness of pre-existing grants to beneficiaries, which can be compared to the SRD grant. The research gap on the users' end of the new R350 SRD grant, particularly in targeted poor communities like the Orange Farm, harms the government's policies regarding vulnerable groups and the social protection programmes meant to ameliorate their suffering. For instance, there is still a need for evidence-based data from the users residing in this community regarding their experience with the new SRD grant (Mathebula et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the adoption and usage of SRD grants in the Orange Farm community as a case study.

The choice of Orange Farm as a case study was deliberate for specific reasons. First is its socio-economic status. Orange Farm is a township located 45 kilometres south of Johannesburg and is considered an area with extreme unemployment and poverty (City of Johannesburg, 2018). On top of the high unemployment and poverty levels, Orange Farm is dominated by informal, overcrowded, and large households (De Wet, Patel, Korth & Forrester, 2008). Orange Farm also faces other challenges such as inadequate access to basic needs, deteriorating infrastructure, crime, food insecurity, and lack of economic stimulation (City of Johannesburg, 2018).

The second reason for choosing the Orange Farm community is due to the limited literature on aspects of the government's social protection and poverty alleviation programmes in Orange Farm. For instance, although Orange Farm is a semi-rural community with a history of benefiting from social protection grants for almost three decades, such as for the elderly, disabled, and children (Letsie, 2016), there are existing research reports on how the money disbursed to target beneficiaries was used. However, for a community like Orange Farm such research is still limited (Senona, Torkelson & Zembe-Mkabile, 2021). This deprives the government of information on the extent to which the purposes of the disbursements were accomplished and how to tackle challenges that the community might have been

experiencing with any of the grants (Mathebula, et al., 2022). More significantly, it was almost impossible to find any COVID-19-related literature on Orange Farm, except for Ho (2020), who focused on applying preventative health measures like social distancing, sanitising, and wearing masks, all of which were government-enforced.

This study aimed to investigate the adoption and usage of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in the Orange Farm community in South Africa. It focused on understanding how beneficiaries used the grant to ameliorate their socio-economic challenges. The study aims to provide valuable insights into the adoption rate, spending patterns, and overall impact of the SRD grant on vulnerable individuals and households in Orange Farm, while also contributing to the broader literature on social protection programmes in disadvantaged communities. By filling the existing research gap and generating evidence-based data, this research serves as feedback to the Department of Social Development (DSD) and policymakers about the effectiveness and potential enhancements of the SRD grant and other social protection initiatives to benefit vulnerable populations in South Africa.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Aim

This project aimed to understand the adoption rate and the usage of the SRD grant received by community members of Orange Farm.

1.3.2 Objectives

The study objectives were as follows:

- To understand how individuals in this community have used the grants over the last three years.
- To better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates.
- To determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage of the SRD grant and the individuals' actual usage of it.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study's objectives were guided by the following research questions:

- How do citizens in Orange Farm perceive the benefits of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, if any?

- How do individuals in Orange Farm choose to optimise their use of the SRD grant?
- Does the use of the SRD grant by individuals match the expectations of the Department of Social Development?
- Does the adoption of the R350 SRD grant match the expectations the DSD set within a community like Orange Farm?

1.5 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

Chapter 1 provides the introduction and background of the study. It consists of the problem statement, aims and objectives of the study, and research questions of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review relevant to the study, including the exploration of concepts, social protection programmes, existing studies on the benefits of pre-COVID-19 grants, the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, the new R350 SRD grant in detail, and COVID-19 and social protection programmes in other countries. The last part of this chapter discusses the theoretical framework and its importance to the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the study, which includes techniques and methods that were used for the study.

Chapter 4 provides the presentation of research results.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the study findings.

Chapter 6 provides the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a discussion of the existing socio-economic challenges in South Africa. It is followed by a discussion of concepts, before going on to an exploration of the history, structure, and nature of South African social protection programmes and the types of pre-COVID-19 grants and their benefits and usage. The literature review further discusses the critique of the pre-existing grants. The chapter also assesses the emergence of the new SRD grant by first unpacking the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts. Secondly, the government's responses to ameliorate the sufferings of impoverished and other vulnerable citizens during social crises, particularly concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, are not peculiar to South Africa. Therefore, the review includes considering COVID-19 pandemic-related programmes from other countries within Africa and elsewhere. Lastly, this chapter provides the theoretical framework adopted for this study.

2.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has high inequality levels despite having a liberal constitution and democratic rights (Francis & Webster, 2019). South Africa is performing poorly concerning attaining Sustainable Development Goals in the following aspects: gender equality, corruption in institutions, economic inequalities, unemployment, access to healthcare, education, clean water, and electricity (Afrobarometer, 2021). Unemployment remains a problem, and unemployment rates in South Africa have been fluctuating unimpressively over the years; the unemployment rate was 29.1% in 2019, 32.5% in 2020, 35.3% in 2021, and 32.9% by the third quarter of 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). On the other hand, the expanded definition of unemployment includes discouraged work seekers, which implies that the unemployment rate is actually higher than the figures given if the discouraged work seekers are considered (Alenda-Demoutiez & Mügge, 2020). For example, the official unemployment rate was 43.1% by the third quarter of 2022 instead of 32.9% when the extended definition was applied (Statistics South Africa, 2022).

There are also noticeable disparities in unemployment where vulnerable groups like women, youth, Black people, and those with low levels of education are mainly

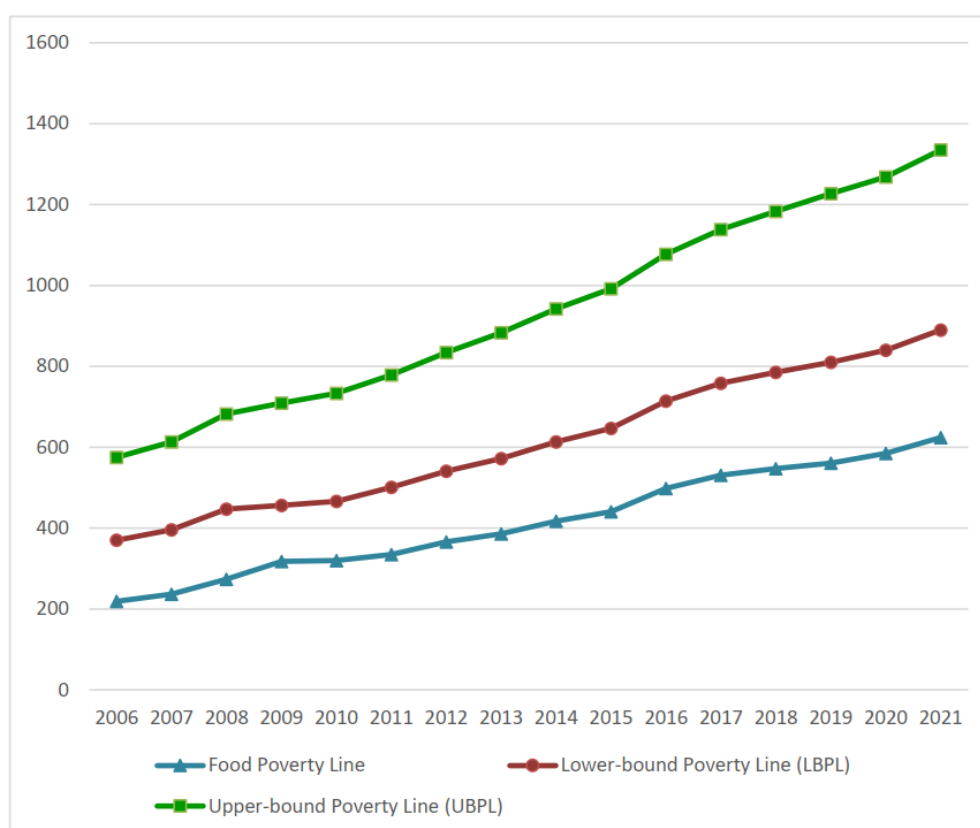
affected (Kwenda et al., 2020). In South Africa, possible causes of unemployment have been documented as follows: (1) apartheid legacy and poor education and training such that racial exclusion still exists and the education system is not providing labour market-ready skills; (2) mismatch in labour market demand and supply, as the number of unemployed Black women and young people surpasses the number of available jobs; (3) the 2008/9 global recession, as those who lost their jobs are still trying to get back to the job market; (4) the role of trade unions in demanding high salaries may cause a decline in new jobs; and (5) most importantly, a lack of interest in entrepreneurship is low especially amongst youth regardless of existing government schemes that promote entrepreneurship (Government Communications and Information Systems, 2023).

Spatial inequality is another issue of concern because most disadvantaged populations, for example, Black people, are still primarily situated in rural areas or townships, which are distant from jobs and city centres (Shifa et al., 2021). The persistence of income inequality, driven by wage inequality, is deeply rooted in the wealth and power distribution gap amongst different racial and gender groups (Francis & Webster, 2019). For instance, women earn 30% less than men, even with the same education level or experience, while the White population earns the highest income than any other race (Inequality Trends Report, 2019). Unemployment and income inequality perpetuate poverty, so poverty's severity is far from declining, especially in rural areas and townships (Gumede, 2021).

There is no doubt that South Africa has done well in providing free essential services like water, electricity, and social grants to its citizens to cut down poverty levels (Francis & Webster, 2019). However, poverty rates continued rising such that, in 2015, 20.15% of people lived below the food poverty line (Living Conditions Survey, 2014/15). The number of people living in poverty increased from 53.2% to 55.5% in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Figure 2.1 further buttresses the increasing trend of the South African poverty line pre-2015 and post-2015. Concurrently, extreme poverty, characterised by living below the 2015 Food Poverty Line of R441 per person per month, rose from 11 million in 2011 to 13.8 million in 2015. According to Statistica (2023), in 2020, about 18.2 million individuals in South Africa experienced extreme poverty, defined as living on or below the poverty line of 190 USD per day. Additional

projections showed that the number of people facing such dire circumstances would rise in the coming years. By 2025, about 18.5 million South Africans are expected to live on a maximum of 190 USD per day, signifying an ongoing trend of growing poverty levels.

Figure 2.1: Food poverty line index



Source: Statistics South Africa (2021)

A survey revealed that most South African citizens lacked access to basic needs and were impoverished (Chingwete, 2019). A poverty line distinguishes between a poor and a well-off person using the individual household income and the amount of money required by an individual to meet their basic needs (Mdluli & Dunga, 2022). Poverty lines are adjusted to correspond with inflation and living expense changes; they are also significant for “statistical reporting of poverty levels and patterns as well as the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of poverty reduction programmes and policies” (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

The food poverty line was adjusted from R 561 in 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2019) to R 624 in 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The food poverty line is currently

adjusted to R 663, with 13.8 million (25.2%) people living below the poverty line. In comparison, 29.9 million (64.2%) of Black people live below the upper-bound poverty line (Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group, 2023). The poverty lines represent varying ways of assessing financial needs; the upper-bound poverty line includes food and non-food expenses of households whose food spending aligns with the poverty line. It provides an upper limit estimate value of R 1417.00. The lower-bound poverty line adds non-food costs of households matching the food poverty line to the poverty line. It sets a minimum requirement for essential needs, which is approximately R 945.00. The food/extreme poverty line signifies the minimal amount an individual requires for necessities, mainly food (R 663.00). These measurements capture different aspects of poverty, from broader essentials to the most basic survival needs (Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group, 2023).

Evidence shows that female-headed households, large households, Black people, and those living in underdeveloped areas constitute a high percentage of poverty rates (Mdluli & Dunga, 2022). The average food basket costs R4 853.18, while the average cost of staple food (maize, sugar, and cooking oil) is R2 676.74 (Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group, 2023). The rise of fuel and essential goods prices weakened the purchasing power of consumers (Chingwete, 2019), and the impoverished population critically suffered as food prices went up (Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group (2023). Social grants to some extent can assist the poor in accessing some basic needs; however, the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group (2023) highlighted that the Child Support Grant is 44% below the average cost to afford healthy food for a child and 28% below the current food poverty line. Such statistical evidence raised curiosity in investigating the adoption and usage of the R 350 grant considering its debatable amount.

Most interestingly, some poor people are employed but are underpaid, which makes them fall into the poverty trap; such individuals are classified as the “working poor” (Mdluli & Dunga, 2022). The African population, generally African females and those living in disadvantaged areas with low education levels, are more likely to occupy underpaid or temporary jobs (Feder & Yu, 2020). Poverty causes hunger and malnutrition and is internally damaging to individuals facing it (Francis & Webster, 2019). Therefore, poor people often adopt informal survival strategies to escape the

burden of poverty, such as waste picking, street hawking and running hair salons, shoe repair, and tuck shops (2018).

Other people join “stokvels”, which are money-saving schemes made up of a certain number of people who contribute a specific amount of money at an agreed time, for each member to receive a lump sum at the end of a cycle (Maluku & Kaseke, 2014). On the other hand, some people end up borrowing money from people or “mashonisa” (local/informal money lenders) to survive, but this puts them in debt and at risk of losing their belongings to the mashonisa’s (Krige, 2019). The South African government is aware of the high unemployment, inequality, and poverty rates and has implemented various strategies to combat these social ills (World Bank, 2018). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was implemented to address socio-economic problems by providing necessities like electricity, sanitation, housing, and clean running water (Křičková, 2015).

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was introduced in 2004 to provide temporary employment and skills development opportunities for disadvantaged members of society (South African Government, 2015). Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is an equal rights policy created to allow Black people to participate in economic activities (B-BBEE Commission, 2016). In addition, South Africa has several food support programmes for low-income families in the form of food parcels, soup kitchens, or food gardens aimed to reduce hunger and food insecurity (Hendriks, 2014). South Africa also has an extensive social security programme in the form of cash transfer grants for the most vulnerable groups, such as older adults, children, and disabled people (Satumba et al., 2017). The most recent grant is the new R350 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, which was established as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic to provide income support for unemployed individuals who are not receiving any form of financial assistance (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Many government strategies exist, but these are just a few select examples.

2.3 EXPLORATION OF CONCEPTS

2.3.1 Social Assistance/Grant

Social assistance, primarily known as a social grant in South Africa, is defined as an allowance either in-kind or in cash provided by the state to the poor and vulnerable citizens (children, old people, and disabled people) through a means test (Howell, 2001). The Social Assistance Act of 2004 “provides a legislative framework for providing social assistance. The Act and its regulations set out the different types of grants payable, including social relief, and their qualifying criteria” (Department of Social Development). The primary beneficiaries of social grants are typically those considered to be part of the most marginalised segments of society, including children, elderly individuals, and persons with disabilities. A means test is commonly employed to pursue a fair and targeted aid distribution. This evaluation process assesses the financial circumstances of applicants to determine their eligibility for social grants. By scrutinising factors such as income, assets, and other pertinent aspects, the means test ensures that the assistance reaches those genuinely in need of it.

The legislative framework governing social assistance in South Africa is the Social Assistance Act of 2004. This pivotal piece of legislation is the cornerstone of the country’s commitment to providing essential support to its citizens (Conradie, 2018). Within the framework of this act, various types of grants are outlined, and each is designed to address specific needs and circumstances. The social grant is a key component of South Africa’s poverty alleviation efforts; it provides financial aid to vulnerable individuals and families. While they offer this essential support, there are drawbacks to be considered. These include potential dependency on grants, disincentives for economic activity, administrative complexities, challenges in targeting and eligibility, financial sustainability concerns, inequality and exclusion issues, perceived stigma, and reduced reliance on informal support networks.

2.3.2 Social Policy

Mkandawire (2004) contends that social policy refers to a group of economic interventions that stimulate access to and the extent of satisfactory and reliable means of support and income. Social policy is concerned with how societies across the world meet human needs for security, education, work, health, and well-being.

Social policy addresses how states and societies respond to global challenges of social, demographic, and economic change, as well as poverty, migration, and globalization. According to Baldock, Vickerstaff, & Mitton (2011), social policy has three important roles: (a) redistribution, whereby the state redistributes resources to those in need to achieve income equality and greater access to services; (b) risk management, wherein social policy plays a protective role to society by preventing the risk of harm which may either be natural (sickness, old age, childhood) or manmade (industrial injury or unemployment); and (c) social inclusion, where social policy is necessary in tackling the risks that lead to social exclusion and to prevent the development of new social problems. The policy document that informs social policy formulation and economic and administrative planning structures in South Africa is the National Development Plan 2030 (Conradie, 2018). This plan caters for all related policies that form a developmental infrastructure. Chapter eleven of the plan deals with social protection and specifies the need for a social protection floor.

2.3.3 Social Protection

Social protection represents society's responses to varying levels of risk or deprivation that people face. These responses include secure access to income, livelihood, employment, healthcare, educational services, nutrition, and shelter (Van Der Berg et al., 2022). It does not aim to meet all the needs of an individual; rather, the social protection measures are designed to lift recipients out of poverty, as they deal with both absolute deprivation and the vulnerabilities of the poorest and the need to shore up the currently non-poor in the face of economic shocks and life cycle events.

Social protection constitutes a comprehensive framework that responds to vulnerabilities that individuals and communities face within society (Waidler & Devereux, 2019). This multi-faceted approach recognises that vulnerabilities can stem from various sources and manifest in diverse forms, necessitating tailored strategies to effectively address them. Two forms of vulnerability are identified by Waidler and Devereux (2019): these are demographic and economic vulnerability. Demographic vulnerability relates to an individual's physical attributes, demographic characteristics, and changes in life cycle, while economic vulnerability relates to production, markets, and policy-setting conditions.

Social protection is an important mechanism for poverty alleviation and income redistribution in South Africa. Social assistance and welfare services target the aged, children, the youth, low-income families, people with disabilities, drug and alcohol dependents or abusers, people with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses, women, and people with special needs. Key elements of the social protection system include i) social assistance cash grants for children, the aged, and persons with disabilities; ii) access to free basic services; iii) free education in schools in poor communities; iv) free healthcare for pregnant women and children under six; and v) statutory social insurance arrangements (Van Der Byl, 2018). On the other hand, welfare services available in South Africa include government residential care services, government-subsidised residential care services (such as places of safety and children's homes, old age homes, rehabilitation centres for disabled people, and rehabilitation centres for alcohol and drug abusers) and non-residential care service centres.

2.4 THE HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

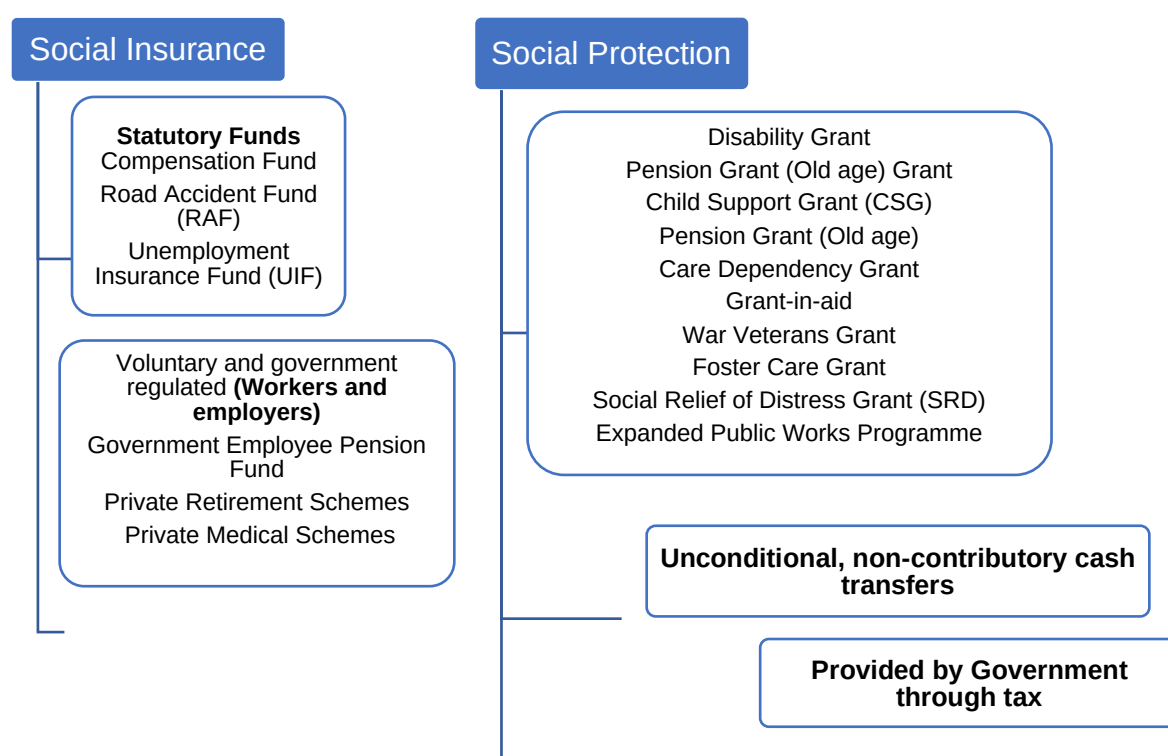
Social protection has developed in policy debates in different nations, and the government of South Africa has also been involved in universal social protection interventions which aim to reduce destitution and to expand the socio-economic well-being of poor citizens (Satumba et al., 2017). South Africa's social assistance system was established in the 1920s as a governmental response to poverty among white citizens (Woolard et al., 2010). The pensioners' grant for the elderly was introduced together with protected work to recreate a racially discriminating income hierarchy, protection schemes for poor parents, and disabled people, and the partial unemployment insurance fund, all for white citizens (Seekings, 2007).

Among these grants was the State Maintenance Grant, a social security transfer for families paid to single parents during the apartheid period. However, due to its racial preference and fiscal unsustainability, it was replaced by the Child Support Grant in 1998. It is given to primary caregivers of children in need, irrespective of their family status (Haarmann, 1998). After apartheid, all the people of South Africa were allowed to receive social assistance benefits previously reserved for White citizens (Hanlon et al., 2010). This was enshrined in the country's constitution in section 27(1) of the Bill

of Rights, stipulating that everyone has the right to have access to social security, including appropriate social assistance (Pienaar, et al., 2021).

According to Bhorat & Köhler (2020), South African social protection programmes can be divided into two classes. As presented in Figure 2.2 below, these are social insurance and social protection. The latter is of great interest because this is the category to which the SRD grant belongs. Approximately one-third (17 million) of the South African population are social grant recipients (South African Social Security Agency, 2019). A dominant way of distributing social protection grants is through cash transfer. Cash transfer programmes in South Africa include social grants for minors under 18, older adults over 60, and disabled citizens (Torkelson, 2022). Despite applauding the government for these grants, some scholars have observed that they are often given at varying quality levels. For instance, there is a high distribution of pensions for older adults (Nelson, 2010). Similarly, Cramm et al. (2013) pointed out that there is an extremely high level of social support accessible to individuals living with disabilities. However, Nelson (2010) critiqued the unfortunate low quality of other grant provisions, such as social risk grants for illness and unemployment.

Figure 2.2: Structure of the Social Protection System of South Africa



Source: Köhler & Bhorat (2020).

More than half of South African citizens residing in large households depend on the Old Age Grant and the Child Support Grant as their income source (Seekings & Nattrass, 2015). Köhler & Bhorat (2020) highlighted that the social protection system in South Africa considers older adults, young children, and people with disabilities as the main categories of people eligible for social assistance by the state. However, these are not the only socially vulnerable groups in the country. For instance, working-age unemployed individuals are often excluded from social protection. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), under the oversight of the Department of Social Development (DSD), is responsible for organising and dispensing social protection grants (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021). The agency developed an online system for grant application, assessment, approval, and disbursement to achieve this.

The platform allows beneficiaries to track their application and update information (Gronbach et al., 2022). The agency also designed a digital monitoring and evaluation system to provide the DSD with real-time data and evidence to inform planning and decision-making that is plausible, but it comes with observable challenges. For instance, the platform is reported to have faced delays in implementation (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021). On the other hand, Cwayi and Kogeda (2013) expressed that the worst demerit of the process relates to the exclusion of a mechanism that allows the government to track the usage pattern/rates of the grants. Attempts to achieve this would not be minor and the advantages would be enormous. For example, Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) observe that monitoring the utilisation of grants would afford the government a means to inform the accuracy of the formation and implementation of grants-related policies (Neves, Samson, van Niekerk, Hlatshwayo & Du Toit, 2009; Satumba et al., 2017).

Kanyamuna & Phiri (2019) argue that monitoring and evaluation is an essential tool that helps improve the performance and quality of outcomes of current and future projects, strategies, and programmes. Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) proposed a model for controlling recipients' utilisation of social grants, which is yet to be tested. The present research attempts to adapt suggestions in Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) to give evidence-based data to DSD, which the government can adopt to continuously ascertain the adoption and usage of the grants by their beneficiaries in Orange Farm and other poor

communities in South Africa. This will be done with the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant only. The following discussion below describes the types of existing social grants, which includes the amount or value of the different grants given to beneficiaries. Such a discussion stimulates an interest in knowing the benefits or usage of such grants, which leads to a curiosity of investigating the usage of the new 350 SRD grant by beneficiaries considering its questionable amount or value.

2.5 SOCIAL GRANTS

There are various studies about the benefits of pre-existing grants (precisely the old age, disability, and child support grants) conducted by different researchers. Such studies were essential for this research, as they explained how the grants benefitted the recipients. Moreover, this helped in making a comparison with the new R350 SRD grant. Social grants in South Africa have demonstrated numerous benefits, as supported by Plaas et al. (2009). These cash transfers enhance the well-being of recipients and their households and contribute to broader societal improvements. These advantages are well-documented and encompass various dimensions.

Social grants are pivotal in supporting consumption, alleviating poverty, and enhancing overall welfare. The availability of cash transfers enables recipients to meet basic needs such as food, healthcare, and education. Additionally, these grants positively impact human capital investment, as they facilitate improved nutrition and increased access to schooling for beneficiaries and their families. Moreover, social grants foster financial inclusion and empowerment. Recipients of these grants exhibit higher levels of savings, enabling them to engage more favourably with credit markets. The financial stability provided by social grant income also fulfils the need for precautionary savings, bolstering an individual's resilience to unforeseen challenges.

The significance of social grants extends beyond the individual level. It is significant in reinforcing existing informal social protection systems and social networks. These grants facilitate entry into systems of social reciprocity, which are crucial for the survival of vulnerable and marginalised populations. For instance, elderly individuals receiving state old age grants care for their grandchildren and strengthen their positions within family networks. Furthermore, social grants empower recipients to engage in livelihood-supporting activities and capitalise on opportunities. These grants introduce flexibility and resilience in capturing income-generating prospects and

mitigating shocks by providing a material basis for engagement. It enables recipients to explore alternative means of making a living and enhances existing livelihood systems.

In a broader context, social grants contribute to including marginalised household members, particularly the elderly and disabled, in systems of mutual assistance and reciprocity. The control over grant resources empowers these individuals, allowing them to participate more actively and effectively in social networks that provide essential support. Social grants in South Africa yield a wide array of benefits. From enhancing consumption and human capital investment to fostering financial empowerment and strengthening social networks, these grants contribute to poverty reduction, economic stability, and improved quality of life for recipients and their communities. The next discussion provides a brief explanation of existing social grants in South Africa.

2.5.1 TYPES OF EXISTING SOCIAL GRANTS

(a) Child Support Grant (CSG)

The child support grant intends to bridge the gap in the cost of living by assisting parents from low-income households in meeting their child's or children's basic needs. An amount of R 480 is given to the qualifying primary caregiver of a child under the age of 18 every month (Western Cape Government, 2022).

(b) Foster Care Grant

A foster care grant is intended to support foster children between the ages of 0 to 18 years under the care of their foster parents through a legal court order (Dednam, 2018). Exploitation, abuse, or deliberate neglect are different reasons that could result in a child being placed under foster care until a child unites with their natural family (Western Cape Government, 2022). The value of the grant is currently R1070 per month and is also subject to change every 6 months between April and October every year (SASSA, 2023).

(c) Care Dependency Grant

The care dependency grant is given to a primary caregiver or biological or foster parent of a severely mentally or physically disabled child to cater to their unique needs; a disabled child qualifies from birth until 18 years (Western Cape Government, 2022).

Every 6 months, in April and October, the value of the Care Dependency Grant changes, and at the moment, the amount of this grant is R 1990 per month (SASSA, 2023).

(d) Disability Grant

The disability grant is provided to meet the basic needs of people between 18 and 59 years who are confirmed to have a mental or physical disability (temporary or permanent) and are, therefore, unable to work (Dednam, 2018). The disability grant is currently R 1990 per month, and the amount of this grant changes every year (SASSA, 2023).

(e) Pension (Old age) Grant

The old age grant is awarded to older South African citizens, whereby those adults between 60 and 75 years get an amount of R 1990 per month, while those above 75 years get an amount of R 2010 per month (SASSA, 2023).

(f) Grant-in-aid

The grant-in-aid is provided to meet the basic needs of adults who are already earning a disability, old age, or war-veteran grant as an additional amount to compensate someone for taking care of them, as they are unable to take care of themselves (Dednam, 2018). The value of this grant, which is currently R 480 per month, also changes between April and October every year (SASSA, 2023). In addition, this grant is given to the beneficiary, not the person caring for the beneficiary (Dednam, 2018).

(g) War Veterans Grant

The War Veterans Grant is intended for individuals aged 60 years and above or who have a disability who have fought in the "First World War (1914-1918), The Second World War (1939-1945), or the Korean War (1950-1953)", depending on the individual's financial situation which must be below a specific level to qualify (Western Cape Government, 2022). If the qualifying veteran has passed, a lump sum or pension will be given to the survivors of the veteran (Dednam, 2018). The amount of this particular grant also changes yearly, and currently, the grant is R 2000 per month (South African Government, 2023).

2.5.2 Benefits of Existing Social Grants

2.5.2.1 The Child Support Grant

The Child Support Grant (CSG) has been mainly beneficial for immediate expenses like food, groceries, and clothes; school requirements (transport, fees, uniform, and stationery); and it allowed recipients to engage in informal saving schemes (burial schemes and stokvels) and have access to credit markets like loan sharks (Plaas et al., 2009; Zembe-Mkabile, Surender, Sanders, Jackson, & Doherty, 2015). On the other hand, Zembe-Mkabile et al. (2015) further noted that the CSG enabled some recipients to start small businesses. Moreover, some CSG money was used to pay for electricity bills, medical treatment, and children's pocket money (Khosa & Kaseke, 2017). Overall, the CSG is associated with improving the child's well-being by decreasing hunger, vulnerability, and poverty and providing greater access to education, which then contributes to the financial freedom of beneficiaries in their adult life (Neves et al., 2009; Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015; Khosa & Kaseke, 2017).

The CSG challenges were also highlighted, ranging from administrative factors, where applicants had no birth certificates or identity documents to institutional ineffectiveness, which included long queues, corrupt officials who wanted bribes to process applications, errors, and delays at administrative offices (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015). The value of the CSG has come a long way from R 180 in 2005 to R 350 in 2016 (Xaba, 2016), and in 2022, it amounted to R 480 (Western Cape Government, 2022). CSG recipients complained that the money is insufficient to cover everything, so they often resort to social support networks (relatives or friends) or seek informal work (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015).

Interestingly, various studies found that the value of the CSG is too little, especially since the beneficiaries live in larger households; therefore, an increase would be the best option (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015; Xaba, 2016; Patel & Ross, 2022). This finding aligns with recent research, which still shows that the CSG cannot cover most necessities, as it is below the food poverty line (Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group, 2023). Beneficiaries further stated that the CSG was more effective when combined with other household grants, such as multiple CSGs in one household, old age, or disability grants (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015; Khosa & Kaseke, 2017). On

the other hand, Grobbelaar & Jones (2020) argue that the CSG will be more effective if the adult optimally spends the grant solely on the child's needs.

2.5.2.2 The Old Age (Pension) Grant

One study shows that the Old Age Grant (OAG) covers the health expenses of multiple family members, including grandchildren's health and school-related expenses (Neves et al., 2009). The OAG recipients are likely to care for their grandchildren for various reasons, like the mother being deceased, working, remarried, or as a moral duty (Gutura & Tanga, 2014). Tangwe & Gutura (2013) noted that a few pensioners use the OAG for their benefit, as most of it is spent on household necessities like food, bills (electricity, rent, accounts), health, and school-related expenses. Some used their grant for transport to access medical care from a doctor, and a few used it to renovate minor house damages like a leaking roof (Gutura & Tanga, 2014). The OAG also has its challenges. For example, OAG members in larger households complained that the grant was insufficient and should be increased to cover the household's needs (Tangwe & Gutura, 2013).

Similarly, in 2018, pensioners called the national parliament to increase the pension amount, as they declared that R 1700 was not enough to survive because they depended on it to support their families (Khanyile, 2018). On the other hand, some OAG recipients noted that some older adults living with many children are doing it to gain access to the foster care grant for their benefit (Gutura & Tanga, 2014). Some OAG recipients reported cases of abuse. For instance, some families forcefully take the grant to buy what they want, while others borrow the pension money and do not pay it back or take the SASSA card to the loan shark to pay debts (Sauti, 2019).

Pensioners also face problems when collecting their grants. For instance, they must stand in queues for a long time at pay points in their fragile state, travel a long distance to collect their grant, face delays in payment due to technical and administrative issues, and sometimes are subjected to mistreatment by grant officials. They often fall prey to scammers who rob them of their grants (Mubangizi, 2014). The Older Persons Act recognises older adults as important societal members; therefore, their status, well-being, safety, and security should be respected (South African Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

2.5.2.3 The Disability Grant

Households with a Disability Grant (DG) recipient are often poor, have a high unemployment rate, are larger in size, and often have many children (Mitra, 2010). The DG has numerous benefits, such as enhancing the recipient's financial status, enabling the beneficiary to afford food and healthcare, and helping family members with a chronic illness to afford healthy food while taking medication (Knight, Hosegood & Timæus, 2013). Moreover, Gutura & Tanga (2014) found that the DG helps reduce poverty, hunger and income insecurity, and a beneficiary mentioned that he was able to use the DG to start a small poultry business. On the other hand, Neves et al. (2009) revealed that some beneficiaries saved their DG to use it for upgrading houses or funding a business and traditional ceremonies. The DG beneficiaries faced the challenge of long queues, long waiting periods, complex application and appeal processes, low coverage of the eligible populations, difficult officials, suspended or cancelled grants, and extra transport costs (Kelly, 2013).

Another issue with the DG, as noted by Knight et al. (2013), was its complex screening process, which led to an inclusion error (giving the grant to an ineligible applicant) and an exclusion error (disapproving an eligible applicant). Most interestingly, claims emerged that some beneficiaries compromised their health to continue earning the DG. However, there was no supportive evidence (Mitra, 2010; Gutura & Tanga, 2014). Although the DG benefits both genders, women appear to benefit less from it due to the extra burden women carry in caring for other family members (Goldblatt, 2009). Basson (2021) revealed that being a woman comes with extra costs such as pink tax and caregiving; this is much worse for disabled women who also use their DG for extra healthcare costs.

Maphumulo and Bhengu (2019) argued that the poor quality of free healthcare is a barrier and forces disabled women to seek expensive private healthcare which the DG must cover. This finding implies that the spending patterns of men and women on the DG differ. Equally, the same has been observed with the old age grant when an old female member receives it; it is mainly spent on caregiving and other household needs (Tangwe & Gutura, 2013). This is also true with the CSG, as females primarily receive it; it is spent on basic needs and childcare, even though a few women misuse it (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015; Khosa & Kaseke, 2017).

2.5.3 Critique of Social Grants

Social grants have been criticised as causing a dependency syndrome whereby beneficiaries become too lazy to work (Potts, 2012; Gutura & Tanga, 2014; Xaba, 2017). In line with Charles Murray's underclass theory, it is believed that poor people's behaviour makes them poor, as they are not interested in having a job; they are heavy drinkers and enjoy state benefits (Murray, McLaughlin, Muncie & Hughes, 2005). Conversely, Wilson's underclass theory states that society is faulty with persistent inequality and poverty, forcing people experiencing poverty to depend on cash transfers, and the government has not provided enough job opportunities (Wilson, 2006). As much as it cannot be denied that some people misuse social grants, Potts (2022) emphasised that state welfare is vital, as it allows people experiencing poverty to access benefits they previously did not have. For example, social grants increase poor people's economic activity through job hunting, small business establishments, and access to basic necessities (Molyneux, Jones & Samuels, 2016).

On the other hand, others strongly argued that social grants intensify fertility rates, such that teenagers and women of childbearing age deliberately get pregnant to receive the CSG, which they will use for their needs instead of the child's needs (Gutura & Tanga, 2014; Xaba, 2017). In opposition, it is noted that over 66.6% of young females report their pregnancies as unwanted because they disturb their schooling and create financial problems (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsoalo, 2009; Hoggart, 2012; Mollborn, 2017). Therefore, many reasons lead to young females falling pregnant; for example, stigma about young people having sex (lack of communication, judgemental health officials), having no power to negotiate sex (power-imbalanced relationships, transactional sex), lack of information, and inadequate access to contraceptives (Panday et al., 2009; Ramakatsa, 2020).

Evidence indicates that social grants do not promote laziness and rather that socio-economic inequalities cause dependency on grants (Xaba, 2016). It is also careless to assume that young women deliberately get pregnant to access social grants because many factors may lead to adolescent pregnancy, as stated above. Even various research findings (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015; Xaba, 2016; Patel & Ross, 2022) point out that the CSG is too small to rely on, and beneficiaries emphasised that it should be increased. Therefore, what needs to be addressed are the actual causes of high pregnancy rates instead of linking them to social grants. Potts (2012) pointed

out that state policies should focus on more than just social grants to escape poverty. However, they should also prioritise interventions that allow poor people to empower themselves. Seeing both the benefits and critiques of social grants paves the way to understanding the debate on different perspectives on social grants.

2.6 IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.6.1 Understanding the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a global crisis, initially detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Ciotti, Ciccozzi, Terrinoni, Jiang, Wang, & Bernardini, 2020). Caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, COVID-19 primarily affects the respiratory system (Yoshimoto, 2020). It quickly spread beyond China, reaching countries like the United States, Germany, Spain, and Italy, resulting in numerous fatalities, and prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a global pandemic in March 2020 (Ciotti et al., 2020). In response to the pandemic, various countries, including China, implemented various measures to curb its spread, including lockdowns, travel restrictions, and hygiene protocols (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020).

While Africa faced the COVID-19 pandemic, the continent experienced relatively lower infection and death rates than others (Bamgboye, Omiye, Afolaranmi, Davids, Tannor, Wadee, Niang, Were & Naicker, 2021). South Africa recorded a significant number of cases, making it one of the most affected countries in the Sub-Saharan region (Stiegler & Bouchard, 2020). The country enacted a stringent lockdown in March 2020, involving restrictions on leisure activities, alcohol sales, educational and religious institutions, and more. The lockdown was implemented in different alert levels, each with specific restrictions based on infection rates (South African Government, 2023).

The pandemic led to a global effort to develop vaccines, resulting in the approval of several vaccines like Pfizer, Moderna, and the Johnson and Johnson vaccination campaigns were launched worldwide, including in South Africa, where vaccines were administered to high-risk groups (Dzinamarira, Nachipo, Phiri, & Musuka, 2021). However, vaccine hesitancy and concerns over mandatory vaccination strategies sparked debates regarding individual rights, bodily integrity, and personal choice. The ongoing discourse revolves around balancing public health and individual freedoms

(King & Jones, 2022). As the world gradually emerges from the pandemic, discussions continue about the impacts of COVID-19 and the lessons learned from this unprecedented global event.

2.6.2 EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON SOCIAL DISTRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Francis, Valodia, & Webster (2020) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic escalated social distress in South Africa. This was also the case in the United States of America (USA), whereby the pandemic unmasked inequalities already troubling the country (Powell, 2021). The pandemic in the already-burdened society worsened social and economic situations. For example, in 2018, an Afrobarometer survey revealed that 63% of South Africans had no cash income; thus, this led to citizens being unable to afford and access basic needs such that 42% ran out of food, 34% could not access proper medical care, and 41% lacked adequate cooking fuel (Chingwete, 2019). Issues like hunger, food insecurity, and nutrition became significant policy matters. During the 2019 period, the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) analysis revealed that 10.1 million (17.3%) people experienced moderate food insecurity, while 4.1 million (7%) experienced severe food insecurity (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Ghana equally reported having witnessed a rise in households experiencing poverty and increased food insecurity during the pandemic (Bukari, Aning-Agyei, Kyeremeh, Essilfie, Amuquandoh, Owusu & Bukari, 2022).

The NIDS-CRAM study conducted during the lockdown in 2020 between May and June revealed that food insecurity had dramatically increased, as poor households constantly ran out of money to purchase food (Van der Berg, Patel & Bridgman, 2022). Black people have been mostly affected, and food insecurity has primarily affected women (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Larger households and those in disadvantaged areas severely experienced food insecurity, child hunger, and household hunger provided that they mainly depend on Child Support and pensioners grants (Van der Berg et al., 2022). Those affected by food insecurity had to skip meals and reduce meal sizes, and a few households, particularly female-headed ones, planted vegetables as an alternative to buying food due to low or no income for buying food (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Community Action Networks (CANs) were formed in some areas to address hunger by distributing food parcels and establishing soup kitchens (Atkins, 2021).

Another concern in South Africa was that the pandemic left several people jobless, and the unemployment levels increased by 40% among adults between February and April 2020 (Bassier, Budlender, Zizzamia, Bassier, 2020). In the case of China, many people, especially those in villages, lost their jobs and experienced wage cut-offs (Wang, Zhang, Li, Zhong, Johnstone, Zhou & Rozelle, 2021). The first wave of the NIDS-CRAM survey found that at the early stages of the crisis, women were significantly impacted by the lockdown with high job losses, leading to more unpaid work at home (Casale & Posel, 2020). Similarly, Germany faced an increase in unemployment, and women saw a decline in their bargaining power because they had to take care of children, which took most of their time. At the same time, men were negatively affected in terms of losing their income (Bauer & Weber, 2021).

Jain et al. (2020) further noted that other vulnerable groups like manual workers, poor people, Black people, and those without tertiary qualifications fell into the unemployment trap. Likewise, in the USA, disadvantaged groups like women, youth, and ethnic minorities, such as Indigenous groups, became more vulnerable, as they faced structural inequity, financial insecurity, and prejudice (Powell, 2021). There were close to 5.5 million job losses in South Africa and increased poverty rates because of low social protection coverage in April 2020 (Jain et al., 2020). Additionally, there was also no form of social protection coverage for workers who were on unpaid leave or temporarily laid off; only a few (20%) received the Temporary Employee/Employer Relief Scheme (Zizzamia, Jain, Budlender & Bassier, 2020). The most devastating situation some people faced during the lockdown was not getting paid, while others had to shut down their small businesses (DSD, 2021).

Moreover, rising unemployment during the pandemic exacerbated vulnerability and inequality, especially among the youth and adolescents living in unfavourable conditions (Mathebula et al., 2022). The Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q3: 2022 revealed that 59.6% of youth aged between 15 to 24 were unemployed and 3.5 million (34.5%) were not in employment, education, and training, while 40.5% of youth aged 25 to 34 were jobless (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The youth reported being mostly worried about financially sustaining themselves, having difficulty in attaining essential services and a halt of some delivery services, being extremely concerned about education and job prospects, being fearful of infection, and most of them stated that

they had suffered depression due to staying at home (Gittings, Toska, Medley, Cluver, Logie, Ralayo, Chen & Mbithi-Dikgole, 2021).

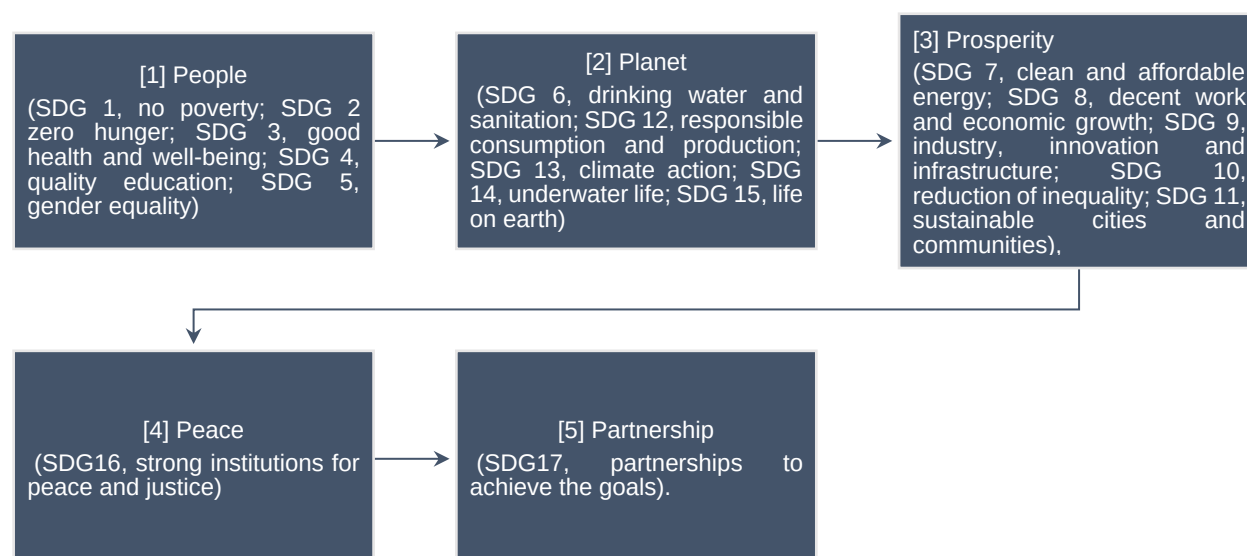
School closure resulted in learning loss and increased child hunger, primarily in households with low or no income, since these children received free meals from the school feeding schemes (Zizzamia, Jain, Budlender & Bassier, 2020). The same situation was observed in Ghana, where school closure resulted in low-income families struggling to support their kids, as they could no longer access the school feeding and capitation grant (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021). In addition, the pandemic in South Africa affected school attendance, leading to 500,000 children from rural areas and low-income families dropping out of school with the possibility of not returning (Atkins, 2021).

Online learning was seen as the most practical solution to continue learning remotely; however, it came with challenges. For example, just like in Ghana, e-learning was less practical in rural areas due to the digital divide (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021). In South Africa, digital inequalities became more apparent in rural schools and also for learners and tertiary students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Denoon-Stevens, 2023). School teachers and lecturers also need help teaching online, as some still need proper Information Communication Technology (ICT) training to use modern technology properly (Shava, 2022). The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic also affected the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (Martín-Blanco, Zamorano, Lizárraga & Molina-Moreno, 2022).

Figure 2.3 shows the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) classified into the 5 P's: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership (Martín-Blanco et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant delay in reaching some set targets for the SDGs, which align with the National Development Plan (NDP) of South Africa (Templeton, 2022). The NDP aimed to reduce inequality and poverty by 2030 by creating a non-racial and stable economy with equal access to healthcare, education, proper housing, employment, water, electricity, and social security (National Planning Commission, 2021). However, there were significant setbacks in achieving SDG 1: no poverty and SDG 2: zero hunger, as there was a rise in poverty and hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic (Van der Berg et al., 2022). Consequently, women were more

affected by the pandemic than men, which is a significant threat to attaining SDG 5: gender equality (Casale & Posel, 2020).

Figure 2.3: Summary of the Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Martín-Blanco et al. (2022)

The SDG goals are interconnected such that reducing poverty [SDG 1] also reduces hunger [SDG 2] and leads to good health and well-being [SDG 3], quality education [SDG 4], gender equality [SDG 5], clean water, and sanitation [SDG 6] and reduced inequalities [SDG 10] (Wong, 2021). Realizing such goals restores human dignity and the recognition of human rights, which is also the aim of social grants (Mathebula et al., 2022). Therefore, the social protection system must reduce levels of poverty (protective), help avoid falling into extreme poverty and vulnerability (preventive), enhance people's participation in all spheres, challenge inequities through policy change (promotive and transformative), and increase poor people's proper access to various opportunities (developmental and generative) (National Planning Information Commission, 2021).

2.6.3 SOCIAL PROTECTION DURING THE PANDEMIC IN SOUTH AFRICA

The government of South Africa quickly responded to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by adding extra amounts to the existing social protection grants (SASSA, 2021). Food distribution programmes in the form of food parcels were implemented through partnerships with different stakeholders like civil society organisations,

government departments, and the private sector (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). The new grant, named the Social Relief of Distress, emerged with its primary aim of providing increased support for non-working people, including the youth who were at the time not receiving income from any source, like a specific allowance or an insurance fund for the unemployed (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Jain et al. (2020) noted that the Social Relief of Distress grant displays ongoing targeting, as there is improved recipient coverage for those out of work and those occupying manual or informal work. It was a welcomed programme for which the government of South Africa received applause (DSD, 2021).

Other countries also responded to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through social protection measures to help individuals who were most affected. For example, according to Lu, Cai, Chen, & Liu (2020), the Chinese government adjusted its social security system by increasing cash benefits for the poor and providing temporary assistance to vulnerable groups. At the same time, the German government made cash available to disadvantaged groups like minors, single parents, and those individuals not earning much through an expansion of its existing programmes (Greer, Jarman, Falkenbach, Massard da Fonseca, Raj & King, 2022). The United States adjusted the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programme's regulations to provide temporary emergency aid to low-income families and households (Powell, 2021).

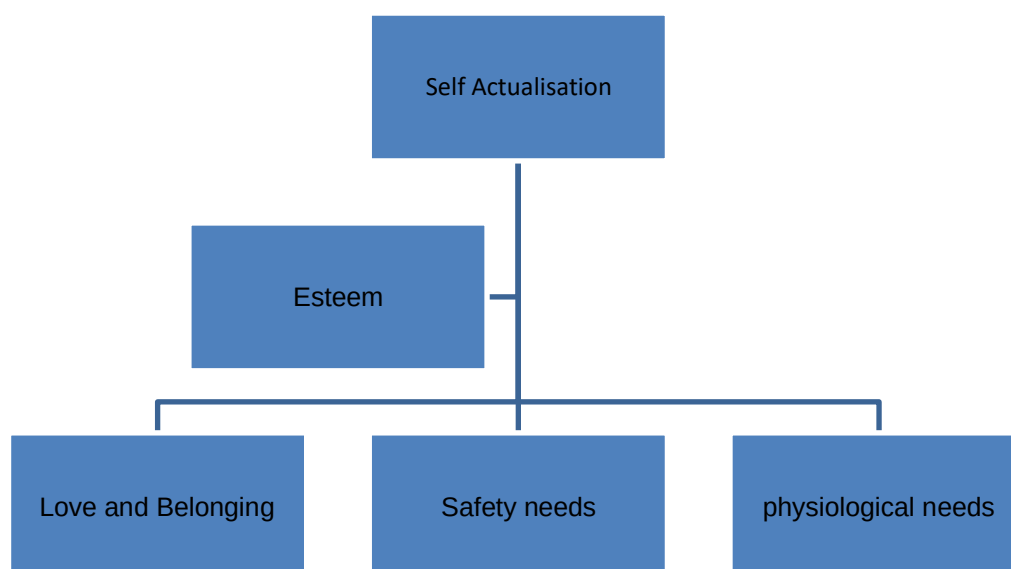
Brazil implemented the new Emergency Allowance to assist citizens not working and living in a household, earning little income, and occupying non-formal jobs (Massard da Fonseca, Bolaffi Arantes & Portella, 2021). On the other hand, Ghana implemented a new COVID-19 Alleviation Programme (CAP), which provides free essential services like electricity, water, and food parcels to people experiencing poverty and supports small businesses (Foli & Ohemeng, 2022). Most countries were committed to adjusting their social security system to provide for people experiencing poverty by implementing new social protection programmes. They focused on assisting citizens through cash transfers; Ghana focused more on providing people with free essential services instead of cash transfers. Therefore, in the context of social protection, how different governments responded to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic can be explained by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as summarised in Figure 2.4.

Abraham Maslow developed a theory known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which states that humans are motivated by five basic types of needs, as illustrated by Hopper (2020):

- Physiological (clothing, shelter, sleep, reproduction, air, water, food).
- Safety (resources, property, employment, health, personal security).
- Love (sense of connection, family, friendship).
- Esteem (status, freedom, recognition, respect, self-esteem).
- Self-actualisation (realising one's full potential).

Maslow's argument is based on the belief that before the higher needs can be satisfied, the needs at the bottom must first be satisfied, as human survival depends on them (McLeod, 2007). For example, since people's livelihoods were disrupted, physiological and safety needs became a priority during the COVID-19 pandemic (Quinn, 2020). Therefore, governments worldwide had to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to meet people's essential needs through social protection programmes (Devereux, 2021).

Figure 2.4: Summary of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: Hopper (2020).

As with previous social protection grants, the SRD 350 also attracted and reached an exciting pool of applicants. For example, Jain et al. (2020) recorded that the SRD grant

effectively reached more males than females. This can be explained by the fact that those receiving other forms of assistance did not qualify for the R350 grant (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Moreover, people in urban areas benefited more than rural inhabitants (Jain et al., 2020). Similarly, In China, many village dwellers still needed assistance from the government's relief programmes. Hence, they had to cut spending and consumption on their day-to-day needs as a coping mechanism (Wang, et al., 2021). These findings indicate that there is still a considerable gap between the urban and rural population, which perpetuates the uneven distribution of resources.

Between May to November 2020, 61.3% of applicants for the R 350 grant were between 20-34, and 37.8% were aged 35-59. The provinces that constituted the highest number of applicants were Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal (Department of Social Development, 2021). Applicants could apply online and choose a bank account, post office, or selected retail stores (Boxer, Shoprite, Checkers, U-Save) as payment methods (SASSA, 2021). They were also able to choose to receive money through the 'cash send' option; this allowed recipients to cash out their grants at ATMs of partner banks without having to be a bank customer. The government spent R24 billion in the first phase of the 350 grants and approved over 6 million applicants out of 10 million (Department of Social Development, 2021).

The COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant came into effect in May 2020 and was set to last for six months to provide support for individuals aged 18-59 who met the criteria (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020). As the period of 6 months was approaching, the recipients were left devastated; however, the grant was extended to the end of January 2021 and then the end of April 2021 (Senona, Torkelson & Zembe-Mkabile, 2021). Unions and Civil Society organisations actively called for the government to extend the 350 SRD grant (Black Sash, 2021). The grant was then further extended to March 2022, then March 2023, and at present, the grant is set to end in March 2024 (SASSA,2023). One study on the usefulness of the 350 SRD grant revealed that it prevented beneficiaries from falling into extreme hunger and poverty, enabling them to instantly meet basic needs (Senona, Torkelson & Zembe-Mkabile, 2021).

Mathebula et al. (2022), in a study of the impact of the SRD grant, found that beneficiaries used their 350 grants to look for work (transport, data, and internet café costs), buy food, afford other needs (medication, clothes, toiletries, electricity, and

shelter), maintain family nutrition, cover education cost, and buy hygiene and sanitary products. The most exciting finding is that some informal traders used the R350 to purchase stock, and unemployed individuals were allowed to contribute to the local economy, as they would use the money for transport, food, and toiletries (Mthembu, Plagerson, Alferts, Rogan, & Graham, 2022). Furthermore, some 350 grant recipients said they used their grants to start small businesses. For example, a self-employed photographer by the name of "Thando Makhubu" said he started an ice cream business in August 2020 with the 350 grant (Ramalepe, 2022). Moreover, a lady named "Jabulile" said the 350 helped her to start a nail bar and studio business in 2020 (McClean, 2023).

Irrespective of the positive benefits of the 350 grants, there were also some challenges like technical glitches; the post office was always overcrowded with beneficiaries having various complaints, uncontrollable long queues, and branches running out of money to pay beneficiaries (Senona et al., 2021). Some beneficiaries complained about payment irregularities and getting declined for different reasons, which they would dispute (SASSA, 2021). There was also an issue of fraud whereby government officials received 350 grants by submitting fabricated information and applications (Senona et al., 2021). For the Food Distribution Programme, there needed to be more coordination in delivering food parcels, which are expensive and could only reach some needy people (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020).

The R 350 means test excluded millions of people in need; hence, the grant threshold was increased to R 624, equal to the food poverty line for 2022 (Parliamentary Group, 2022). However, more than increasing the threshold alone was needed, and it raised concerns about the 350 SRD grant needing to be more to help meet the various needs of beneficiaries (Senona et al., 2021). Several civil society organisations jointly appealed for the 350 grants to be increased to at least R 585 per month, as it was insufficient to cover the rising costs of basic food supplies (Institute of Economic Justice, 2020). Similarly, the CSG was also found to be increasing at a level not equivalent to the rising food prices and inflation (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015). Mathebula et al. (2022) argued that the value of the R 350 grant should be increased to R 624 per month, equal to the food poverty line. There are continuing discussions

on implementing a Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG) for unemployed persons aged 18-59 to help improve their standard of living (Senona et al., 2021).

The basic income grant would include those previously left out of social protection measures and reduce inequality, poverty, and unemployment (Pienaar et al., 2021). Civil society organisations requested that the UBIG be approximately R 1 335 (equal to the upper-bound poverty line) to cover other necessities besides food (Mathebula et al., 2022). It is believed that since the UBIG will be non-targeted or means tested and unconditional, it will lead to greater financial independence, enhancing economic growth and business development (Marais, 2018). It was further stated that the UBIG will promote gender equality by empowering women to be independent and less exposed to gender-based violence (Osborne, 2022). National organisations recommended that the basic income grant should first be employed as a pilot study to examine its effects; however, policymakers needed to be more supportive of the proposal (Pienaar et al., 2021).

Those against the UBIG (businesses and the national treasury) argued that this grant would weaken the economy, as it will require tax increases, debt, and create a dependency culture that will leave the country bankrupt (Mahafu, 2022). Others also stated that the UBIG is very expensive and unsustainable; therefore, there should be better options to accommodate people with low incomes, like creating public employment programmes (Goldman, Bassier, Budlender, Mzankomo, Woolard & Leibbrandt, 2021). However, Prof. Alex van den Heever argued that public employment programmes employ a few people; therefore, they should not be a substitute for social grants, and it is possible to provide essential income support gradually (CNBC Africa, 2022). On the other hand, some scholars contended that the best option is to continue extending the R350 grant or make it permanent to continue sustaining poverty-stricken populations (Mathebula et al., 2022).

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.7.1 HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK (HRF) TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

This study adopted the Human Rights Framework for social protection. The HRF states that human rights can provide direction to the planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of social policies and social assistance interventions (Sepulveda-Carmona, Nyst & Hautala, 2012). This framework also entails that people are empowered to influence decisions that directly affect them, to make them more visible instead of being passive recipients (Piron, 2004). This means that citizens actively guide state activities and outcomes rather than being operated by the state, facilitating accountability to the people (Sellers, 2011). It is crucial for individuals who were previously excluded from social protection programmes to be prioritised in social policy dialogue, especially during times of distress (Sepulveda-Carmona et al., 2012). For example, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed previously excluded groups to be included in the social assistance programme through the 350 SRD grants.

Moreover, the HRF considers participation a right, where individuals and groups in a specific area are allowed to get involved in the evaluation process of a project that directly affects them (Huesca, 2003). Therefore, the fundamental participation process encourages participants to share their experiences of a specific situation to find mutual understanding and potential solutions (Blakewell, 2003). The current research focused on the participation of people from the Orange Farm community, which allowed them to contribute their experience with the SRD 350 grant, specifically on its adoption and usage. Evidence shows that cash transfers raise the living standards of people experiencing poverty and increase human development and capital. There is some evidence that cash transfers positively impact economic growth.

In South Africa, the SRD grant has encouraged citizens who are not employed to have access to some money, and its adoption rate and usage have been documented in various studies (Sepulveda-Carmona et al., 2012; Jones & Shahrokh, 2013; Mathebula et al., 2022). However, in the context of Orange Farm, the evidence on adopting and using the new SRD 350 grant needed to be revised (Mathebula et al., 2022). Moreover, when social protection beneficiaries share their experiences, it enables their voices to be heard, which makes the government take accountability and enables them to respond accordingly to the beneficiaries' needs (Sepulveda-Carmona

et al., 2012). On the other hand, a lack of evidence from the Orange Farm community members as end users of the new SRD grant created an accountability deficit. Therefore, applying the Human Rights Framework adopted in this study was helpful in including vulnerable, disadvantaged, and community members in the research that speaks to the issue that directly affects them. It enabled the voices of the targeted community members as beneficiaries to be heard, as they provided feedback that will influence future policy decisions and similar research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Socially vulnerable groups in South African communities have received social grants to help ameliorate their suffering. The most popular social grants provided by the South African government are for the elderly, disabled, and children. Research on the effectiveness and usage of these existing grants has been well documented. Despite the new SRD grant, diverse research has been conducted about its effectiveness and usage. However, a research gap was identified in adopting and using the new SRD grant in Orange Farm. Therefore, Orange Farm was chosen as a case study for this research. This study adopted a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to obtain rich insights from the targeted population in Orange Farm. This chapter starts by outlining the study area, followed by the research approach, tools, sampling, data collection procedure, and process analysis. The limitations, feasibility, and positionality also form part of this discussion, and this section concludes by providing a discussion on the ethical procedures followed by the researcher.

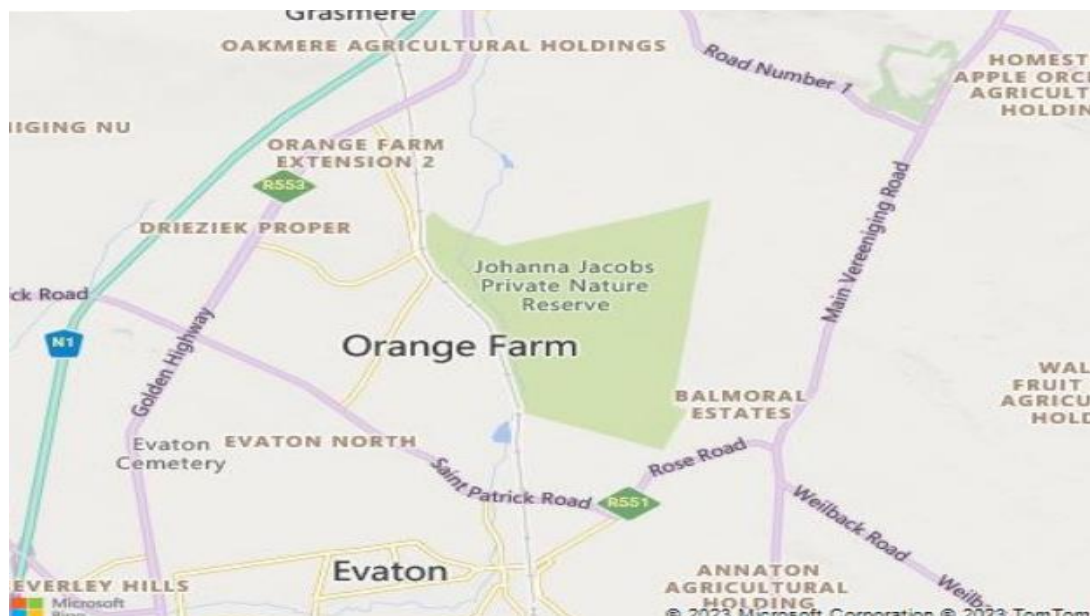
3.2 STUDY AREA

This study was conducted in the Orange Farm community located 45 kilometres south of Johannesburg in Gauteng Province, South Africa (City of Johannesburg, 2018). Orange Farm has Dutch origins, which is a contradictory name, since oranges are not grown in farms but in orchards. Moreover, the settling of people in this area dates back to 1988 and was occupied by the original residents, people from the Soweto township, and laid-off farm workers (SA Facts, 2023). The Orange Farm population is dominated by young people aged between 20 and 40 years old, and 40% of the population is under 18 years old (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2022; City of Johannesburg, 2018). Various languages are spoken in the area, but Southern seSotho and isiZulu are predominant (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2022).

Orange Farm is made up of six recognised extensions (extensions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8) with noticeable developments like electricity supply, piped water, roads, schools, a fire station, RDP housing, a police station, community centres, a local library, one large clinic, and small clinics (City of Johannesburg, 2018).

Despite the improvements, Orange Farm is still primarily considered a semi-rural area with a rise in informal dwellings (South African Government, 2023). Orange Farm is an overcrowded area with typically large households (De Wet et al., 2008). From 2018, Orange Farm was home to more than 380,000 households, and the dominant dwellings were shacks (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2022). Most households have four or more members, often led by females, and are likely to depend on a social grant (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Furthermore, regarding education attainment, 30.6% of the population aged 20 and above have a matric, 7.1% aged 20 and above have no schooling, and 3.8% aged 20 and above have a higher education. A map of Orange Farm is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Map of Orange Farm



Source: Google Maps (2023).

Moreover, this area has the highest levels of poverty and unemployment, primarily characterised by high percentages of the residents engaging more in manual labour as their occupation (City of Johannesburg, 2018). Approximately 70% of Orange Farm's residents live on less than R14.00 daily, hugely below the poverty line, exposing them to severe food insecurity (South African Government, 2023). This area is additionally characterised by low-income levels, with 62% of the employed residents earning less than R1500 per month, while 50% have no income (City of Johannesburg, 2018). Orange Farm faces other challenges, such as inadequate access to basic

needs, deteriorating infrastructure, crime, lack of economic stimulation, HIV/AIDS prevalence, and teenage pregnancy (City of Johannesburg, 2018).

Figure 3.2: Image of deteriorating Infrastructure in Orange Farm



Source: Alchetron (2022)

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted an exploratory case study approach, since this research was interested in exploring and examining the adoption rates and usage of the SRD grant by unemployed and vulnerable groups who have benefitted from the grant in the Orange Farm Community. Case studies analyse a phenomenon, generate a hypothesis, and validate a method or theory. Case studies allow for exploring and understanding complex issues (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Halperin & Heath, 2016). Using this method, the researcher can go beyond qualitative statistical results and understand the behavioural conditions from the participant's perspective. This design provides more history, context, and meaning than other approaches (Lune & Berg, 2017). Using an exploratory method allowed the researcher to understand what is happening within the context of the Orange Farm community.

This study was guided by a qualitative research approach governed by an interpretivist research paradigm. This paradigm aims to understand people's experiences and how they interpret or draw meaning from their experiences, such that the researcher relies

upon the participants' assessment of the situation being studied (Mackenzie, Knipe, Noella, 2006). This paradigm was necessary for this study, as the focus is on exploring the participant adoption and usage of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant. The paradigm enabled the researcher to pay attention to the participant's experiences and understand how each participant interpreted their experience of the SRD grant and its usage by how they answered the interview questions.

3.4 RESEARCH TOOLS AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE STUDY

This study adopted semi-structured open-ended interview questions for data gathering. Semi-structured interviews help the researcher gather in-depth information about the participants' experience regarding the phenomenon, as it allows prompting/probing questions to be asked by the researcher. These probing questions are asked based on the responses of the participants and are aimed at extracting more information suitable to address the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews also allowed all participants' experiences to be voiced and heard. In qualitative analysis, interviews allow the researcher to get to know participants better (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Semi-structured interviews are also useful in generating solutions in order to change or improve practice (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001). Irrespective of the advantages of semi-structured interviews, this method also has disadvantages. For instance, they take time to conduct, transcribe, analyse and are specific to particular individuals in the duration of the research (Adams, 2015). This implies that the findings from the Orange Farm community cannot be generalised to other areas. For this study, this method was useful in gathering rich data from the participants in Orange Farm, and participants could share their lived experiences in detail.

3.5 SAMPLING

This research study employed a purposive sampling methodology to gather primary data systematically. The purposive sampling approach was selected, as it enables the deliberate selection of respondents who meet the set inclusion criteria and are most likely to contribute pertinent information to the study (Etikan et al., 2016). To ensure a comprehensive data collection process, the researcher visited key locations, including the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in Orange Farm, the multi-purpose

centre, the Orange Farm Skills Centre, and the Boxer store where individuals often collect their R350 grants. These centres span a total of six (6) recognised extensions.

- Inclusion criteria:
 - i. Anyone receiving an SRD grant of R350
 - ii. Anyone between the ages of 18 and 59 years
 - iii. Anyone living within the Orange Farm extensions.
- Exclusion criteria:
 - i. Anyone who did not meet the set inclusion criteria
 - ii. Anyone who is receiving a grant other than the SRD.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were strictly adhered to when recruiting the participants, ensuring the recruitment of only those with the expertise and experience to contribute meaningfully to the research objectives. After obtaining consent from the managers and authorities, the researcher put up a poster that participants were required at the identified centres. In addition, the researcher also approached people directly to boost the chance of getting participants for the study. Some participants who responded to the posters preferred online interviews rather than face-to-face interviews. The sampling method was chosen with reliability and validity questions in mind.

The study ultimately included 30 respondents: an equitable distribution drawn from the various extensions of Orange Farm. In pursuit of inclusivity, the researcher endeavoured to involve interested participants from all extensions. Given safety and logistical feasibility concerns, the researcher refrained from conducting door-to-door recruitment, which was deemed potentially risky. Prioritising the security of the interviewer and the participants, this cautious approach aligned with ethical research practices.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

For this research study, the researcher intended to meet with a focus group from Orange Farm in public areas after the recruitment process. For example, meetings were held outside the library where the researcher and participants would have an in-depth conversation about their thoughts and opinions surrounding the adoption and

usage of the grant. However, due to some of the participants being unable to gather at set times, individual face-to-face interviews were resorted to instead. Also, this method was chosen because of the sensitive content regarding how individuals spend their money, which is essentially a private matter. The participants signed consent forms to ensure confidentiality before the interview commenced.

A total of thirty (30) interviews were conducted. Due to the challenges of some participants not being able to make it to the interview venue due to time or logistic constraints (especially transportation challenges, since the extensions were far apart from the interview location), infant caregiving duty, and/or work duties, only eleven (11) face-to-face interviews were successfully conducted. The remaining nineteen (19) participants were interviewed via WhatsApp to accommodate their circumstances. These adjustments were made to allow the continuation of the data gathering and to avoid further delays in arranging a convenient time and venue. This option gave participants the flexibility to be interviewed via WhatsApp voice notes. The participants were happy with this option, as they would be interviewed according to their schedule, and this consumed less data than other platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet, to name a few. Another advantage to this method was saving on travel costs and time; both the participant and researcher were safe. The SASSA official, as an extra research participant, was also interviewed face-to-face in the SASSA office in the Orange Farm branch.

Interviews were conducted on different days in a public space for face-to-face interviews. The interviews had to be done in a public space for obvious safety reasons for both parties. For the online interviews, the researcher and participants ensured they were in a quiet place with no interruptions and good network connections for the audio to be audible. A total of 30 participants (15 males and 15 females) were interviewed; the interviews lasted for 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the individual's pace and their understanding of the questions being asked. On days when there was a poor internet connection or an individual could not make it, the interview was rescheduled for a more suitable day.

The interviews were recorded with the participant's permission, and participant consent was obtained before the recording began. During interviews, tape recordings were used to get direct information, which made it easier to write participants' stories

verbatim. Recordings helped generate accurate data (Lune & Berg, 2017). Recordings allowed the researcher to maintain eye contact and listen attentively to the conversation. Recordings also ensured trustworthiness and accuracy, so participants' lived experiences were not misrepresented. At the end of the interviews, all recordings were transcribed into a text format within a few days after the interviews. To ensure the accuracy of the provided information and accurate representation of the participant's responses, the transcriptions were sent to the participants for confirmation/validation. Additionally, further information on how social grants have been studied or handled was extracted from various published reports widely available online.

3.7 PROCESS ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis was employed as the method of data analysis for this study. A thematic analysis requires the researcher's involvement and interpretation; the researcher reads the data repeatedly to fully grasp the information deep enough to extract themes, ideas, trends, and keywords that help outline the analysis (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2011). Codes are then created to represent the identified themes and applied as summary indicators for analysis (Mack et al., 2011). A thematic analysis allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. This method allows the researcher to identify meaningful patterns concerning the topic and research question being investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis is a great method due to its flexible nature regarding theory, research question, sample size and structure, data collection method, and approaches to generating meaning. It can be useful in analysing large (interviews with 60 or more respondents) and small data sets like a case study of 1 to 12 respondents (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015).

During the analysis process, the researcher addressed the specific language and the repetition of words and phrases used by each participant when talking about grant usage and how each theme was used to explain their experiences. Furthermore, document analysis was also employed for this study. Document analysis in qualitative research requires examining and interpreting data to extract meaning and gain understanding (Lune & Berg, 2017). This method was suitable for this study because

it allowed the researcher to extract data from both lived experiences and the documentation of published data related to the current research.

3.8 LIMITATIONS, FEASIBILITY, AND POSITIONALITY

This study was limited by the number of participants that were interviewed. This could have been increased, but given the time involved, limiting the study to 30 respondents allowed the researcher to pay in-depth attention to their responses. Also, this limitation could not negatively affect the research results because of the researcher's positionality. The study was structured to capture the whole of the Orange Farm. Participants were from across all sections of Orange Farm. While this does not provide a representative sample, it ensures that no part of the community was ignored. The researcher reached the participants, and a recorder was used to capture their responses. Another limitation was that some people who showed interest by responding to the poster requesting participants would drop out of the study, as it seemed as if they had expectations. Some people who showed interest (especially the old and those with reading difficulties) misunderstood the research poster and thought it was about assisting them with their R350 grant issues until the researcher explained it in their home languages. These limitations, of course, caused a bit of delay.

The positionality of this research is that it was understood that although people live in one area, they may have similar or different experiences. Therefore, it is important to research to discover people's experiences and not assume that they will automatically have the same experiences because they live in one area. It is through doing the research that the experiences will be reflected and thus useful for the research, as they are evidence based. It was worth exploring the lived experiences of the people from the Orange Farm community because it allowed them to provide original insights. If it were not for this research, the researcher would have been at risk of making assumptions about the lived experiences of the community members. These assumptions would have come from similar research conducted in various places or simply because the researcher is also from Orange Farm.

3.9 ETHICS

The researcher attended an ethics training titled Research and Applying for Ethics Clearance: Non-Medical. Ethical clearance was granted by the Wits School of Governance Human Research Ethics Committee as a requirement to satisfy the university's ethical standards for research. Therefore, the researcher was able to conduct research on all sites successfully. The researcher strictly applied the ethics contained in the Belmont Report (1978), which is respecting participants, avoiding and reducing harm if any, and treating participants equally. Most importantly, research involving humans requires extra care of participants to ensure that the researcher does not coerce participants and that their participation remains voluntary.

Participants were assured that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time. The researcher ensured not to raise questions should they withdraw their participation. Informed consent was obtained through consent forms/information sheets that outlined the research objectives, the researcher's information, and information on participation. The participants were informed first-hand that there would not be any reward in the form of money or gifts. Some participants who assumed there would be rewards were immediately released.

Furthermore, participants were not required to provide their names or any other personal information, as that invades privacy, and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) helped to distribute personal information ethically. Confidentiality was always maintained, and there was minimal risk associated with this research. No participant was harmed from when the research interviews commenced until the end. The researcher refrained from directly or indirectly convincing the participants to answer in a certain way that would suit the researcher. This was to ensure that the evidence was valid and reliable.

Validity in qualitative research indicates trustworthiness and consistency regarding activities and events associated with the phenomenon, as shown by the study results explored in the research (Golafshani, 2015). Reliability and validity increase transparency and decrease opportunities to insert researcher bias in qualitative research (Smith, 2013). For this research, there was one participant who was a representative from the Orange Farm SASSA office. This other research subject was

chosen so that the research was not one-sided; the government's perspective is acknowledged. The transcripts were given to the SASSA representative to validate the data, which ensured validity and reliability. Once interviews were transcribed, transcripts were shared with participants to verify the conversation's record and offer them a further opportunity to request that sensitive information be removed from the transcript or for their 'voice' to be deleted altogether if that is what they wanted to do. Lastly, the Wits Ethics Committee reviewed the research protocol to ensure participants were safe from unethical practices.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the qualitative approach adopted by the current research. It began by outlining the study area of the target population, followed by the research approach, research tools, sampling, and process analysis. The limitations, feasibility, and positionality were also discussed, and this study concluded by providing a discussion on the ethical procedures followed by the researcher. This study was conducted in the Orange Farm community and adopted an exploratory case study approach, since this research explores and examines the adoption rates and usage of the SRD grant by unemployed and vulnerable groups who have benefitted from the grant. The interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to pay attention to the participants' experiences and understand how each participant answered the questions they were being asked.

This study adopted semi-structured interview questions for data gathering and obtained in-depth and various perspectives from participants. This study used a purposive sampling method to collect data from the primary source, and respondents were selected in areas where people were most likely to gather during the day. Moreover, thematic and document analyses were employed as methods of data analysis for this study. These methods were suitable, as they allowed the researcher to extract data from both lived experiences and the documentation of published data related to the current research. This study was limited by the number of participants that were interviewed. However, the study was structured to capture the whole of Orange Farm. Ethical clearance was granted by the Wits School of Governance Human Research Ethics Committee, and the researcher strictly adhered to the university's required ethical standards.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the study was to understand the adoption rate and the usage of the R 350 SRD grant received by community members of Orange Farm. This research was motivated by a gap in the literature regarding recipients' adoption and the usage of the SRD grant in the Orange Farm community. This research on the adoption and usage of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in the Orange Farm community would help the Department of Social Development (DSD) gain a better understanding of the adoption rate and, particularly, usage/spending patterns of those who use social protection grants not only in the present target township but also in similar settlements in South Africa. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do citizens in Orange Farm perceive the benefits of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, if any?
2. How do individuals in Orange Farm choose to optimise their use of the SRD grant?
3. Does the use of the SRD grant by individuals match the expectations of the Department of Social Development?
4. Does the SRD grant's adoption match DSD expectations within a community like Orange Farm?

Therefore, this chapter presents the findings of the data collected from the respondents during the interview process. The sample consists of 31 respondents made up of 15 male and 15 female community members aged between 18 and 59 years and one SASSA representative aged 35 years. The respondents gave in-depth responses through semi-structured interviews and further probing questions. While the number of females is equal to that of males, this parity does not reflect a gender equality mindset. This chapter begins by providing the demographic information of the respondents and then proceeds to provide the respondents' experiences in the Orange Farm community regarding their adoption and usage of the R 350 SRD grant.

4.2 Respondent's Demographic Information

Thirty-one (31) respondents were purposefully recruited based on the outlined inclusion criteria, resulting in an equal number of 15 women, 15 men, and 1 male SASSA staff member, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Summary of Respondents' age, education level, and number of people per household

Gender	Age	Education level	No. of people per household	Codes
1. Female	18	Grade 12	3	Respondent 1
2. Female	22	Grade 9	4	Respondent 2
3. Female	22	Grade 12	2	Respondent 3
4. Female	24	Grade 12	8	Respondent 4
5. Female	26	Grade 12	8	Respondent 5
6. Female	32	Grade 11	7	Respondent 6
7. Female	34	Grade 12	4	Respondent 7
8. Female	35	Grade 12	4	Respondent 8
9. Female	36	Diploma	5	Respondent 9
10. Female	38	Grade 11	8	Respondent 10
11. Female	39	Grade 10	5	Respondent 11
12. Female	39	Grade 11 & ECD certificate	1 (lives alone)	Respondent 12
13. Female	42	Grade 12	2	Respondent 13
14. Female	54	Grade 9	4	Respondent 14
15. Female	56	Grade 11	5	Respondent 15
16. Male	20	Grade 12	8	Respondent 16
17. Male	21	Grade 12	6	Respondent 17
18. Male	22	Grade 12	4	Respondent 18

19. Male	26	Grade 10	3	Respondent 19
20. Male	27	Grade 12	4	Respondent 20
21. Male	27	Grade 12	8	Respondent 21
22. Male	28	Grade 12	6	Respondent 22
23. Male	30	Grade 10	4	Respondent 23
24. Male	30	Grade 12	4	Respondent 24
25. Male	32	Grade 11	7	Respondent 25
26. Male	38	Grade 11	9	Respondent 26
27. Male	41	Grade 12	4	Respondent 27
28. Male	45	Grade 12	6	Respondent 28
29. Male	50	Grade 11	4	Respondent 29
30. Male	55	Grade 12 and various short course certificates	4	Respondent 30
31 (?)	35	SASSA Representative	N/A	Respondent 31

4.3 Age and number of people in one household

Black Africans predominantly inhabit Orange Farm; hence, all respondents are of the same racial group. The ages of the male respondents ranged from 20 to 50 years old. Among them, seven were in their 20s, four were in their 30s, two were in their 40s, and two were in their 50s. For female respondents, ages ranged from 18 to 50 years old. Of all the female respondents, one was 18, four were in their 20s, seven were in their 30s, one was in her 40s, and two were in their 50s. In the sample, most respondents came from households with an average of 4 to 8 people, with only a few households differing from this norm.

4.4 Education level

Figure 4.1: Female Respondents' education level

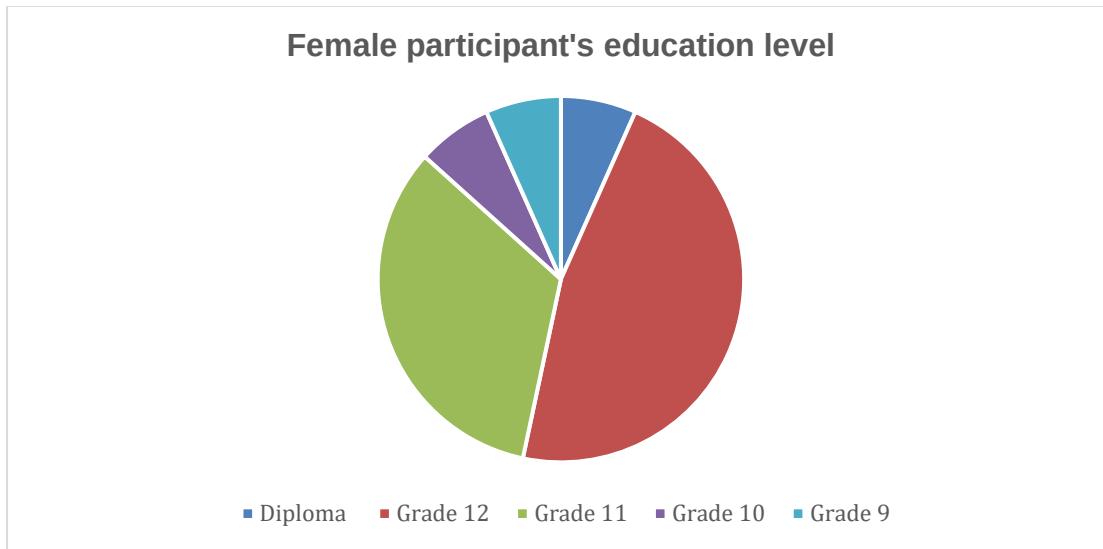
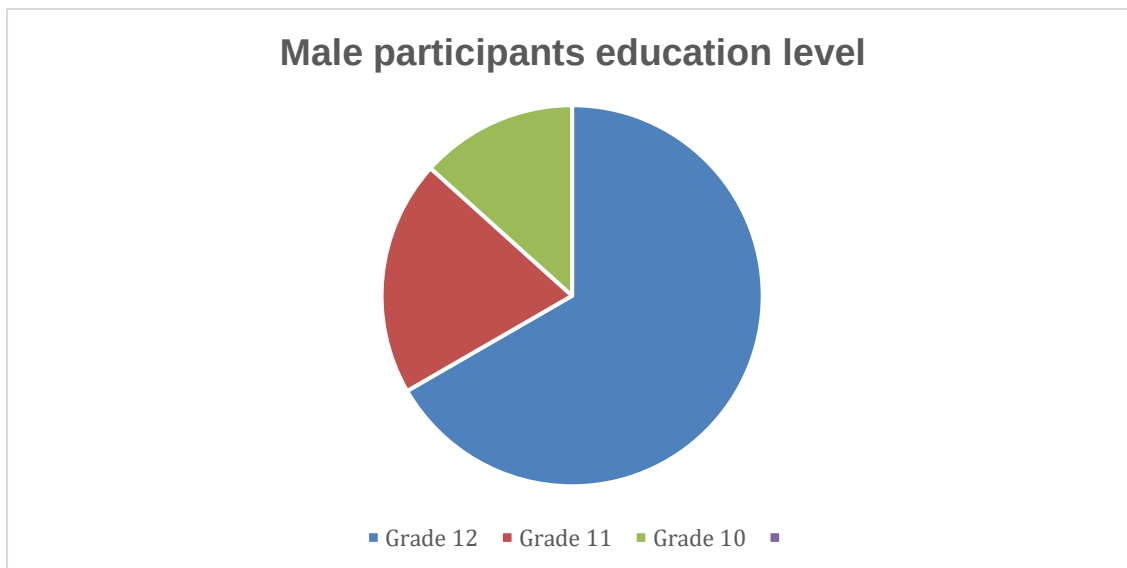


Figure 4.2: Male Respondents education level



Figures 4.1 and 4.2 display the highest education levels of the female and male respondents who were interviewed in the Orange Farm community. The majority of respondents (7 females and 10 males) have matric (grade 12) certificates. Among the men, 10 had a matric certificate and 1 acquired several short course certificates. The other level of education common among the respondents is grade 11 (4 females and 3 males). Within the group of 4 female respondents, one holds an Early Childhood ECD Certificate. A smaller number of the participants have completed grades 9 (2 females) and 10 (1 female; 2 males), while only 1 has a Diploma (female).

4.5 Employment status

Table 4.2: Respondents' employment status

Gender	Yes, have been employed	No, have never been employed
Female	10	5
Male	8	7

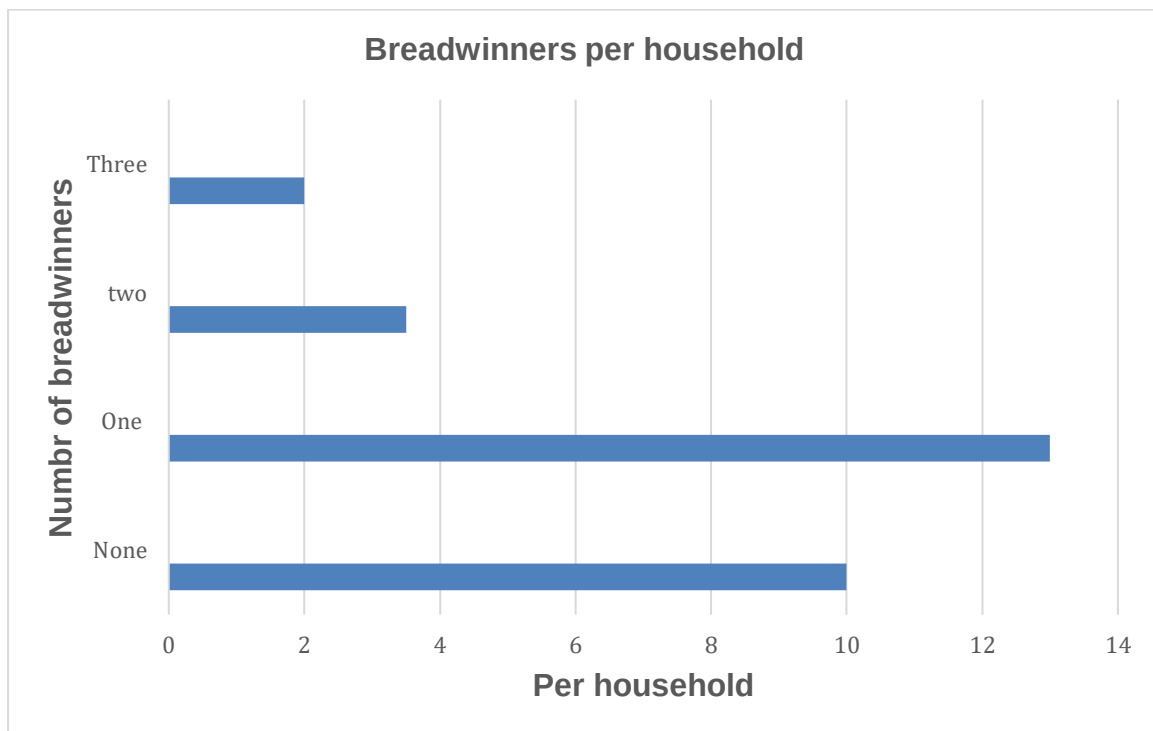
Table 4.2 provides a summary of the respondents' employment status. Each respondent was asked whether they had ever been employed. The results show that 18 people answered yes (10 females and 8 males), while 12 respondents answered no (5 females and 7 males). Furthermore, when the researcher inquired about the duration of the respondents' employment, it was discovered that most were on contract jobs for a few months or years (2 to 3 years). A few who were on long-term employment contracts (5 years or more) lost their jobs despite being promised that their contracts would be renewed.

Moreover, most respondents' previous employment was in the retail industry or manual labour. Among those who had never been employed, one respondent categorised himself as someone who had never been employed even though they had participated in a paid learnership programme. It is worth noting that all the interviewed respondents are currently unemployed and are R350 grant recipients. Only those who are unemployed with no source of additional income qualify to receive the grant in question. The purpose of the question was for the researcher to ascertain respondents' employment status prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.6 Breadwinners

In the South African context, a breadwinner is an individual who is the primary earner and solely provides the main source of income to support their family. The researcher inquired from the respondents about how many of them are the sole provider of their family or how many people financially support their household. Figure 4.3 presents a summary of the number of breadwinners per household.

Figure 4.3: Breadwinners per household



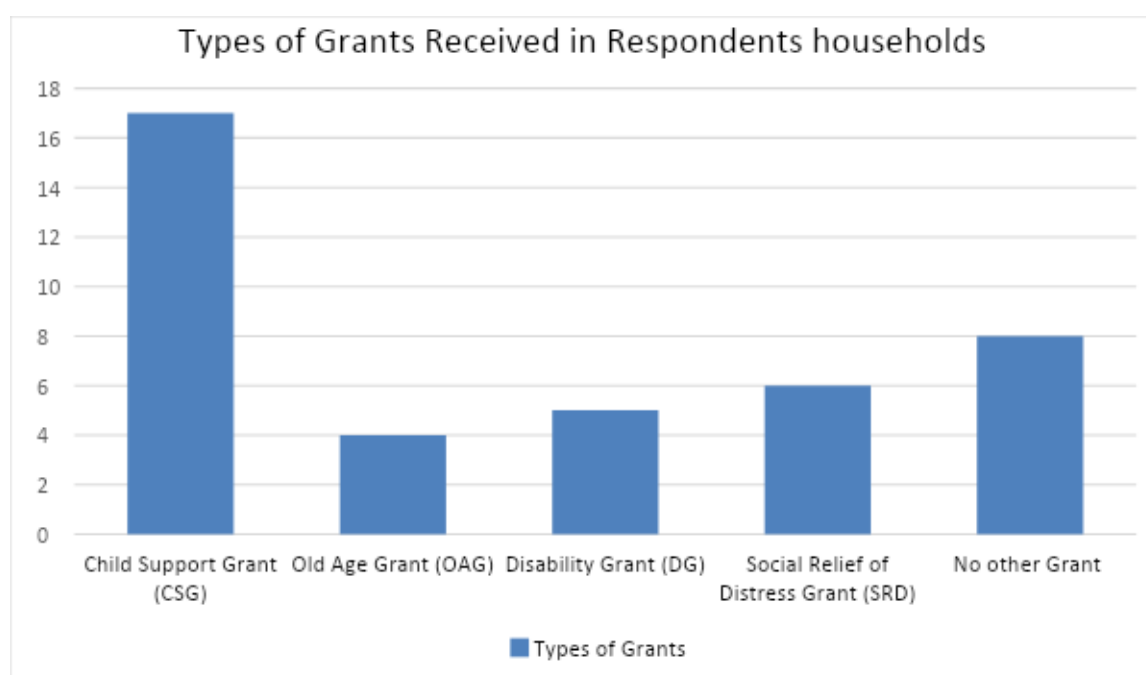
Each respondent was asked about the number of breadwinners in their household. The number of breadwinners ranges from zero to three. Most respondents come from a household with one breadwinner or none. The number of respondents from households with two or three breadwinners is very low.

4.7 Type of grant per household

Figure 4.4 presents the types of grants received in households. All the respondents were asked the question, “Besides you earning the R350 SRD grant, is there anyone receiving any type of grant?”.

Responses indicated that the CSG is most common, with most households having about 2 to 3 children on the CSG grant. Among the female respondents, 10 came from households with children receiving the CSG. Among the male participants, 7 came from households where children receive the CSG.

Figure 4.4: Types of Grants in Respondents Households



In addition, 8 respondents mentioned that they were the only grant recipient in their household, which is the R350 grant. Some respondents in this category live alone or reside with adults who are not receiving any grants. Furthermore, 4 respondents came from households where some members also received the SRD grant. The number of respondents from households receiving a disability or old age pension grant was significantly low. Lastly, it is worth noting that a household can combine two types of grants: CSG with SRD, OAG, or DG. Nonetheless, the CSG was the dominant grant amongst all the other types of grants indicated.

4.8 350 Grant Payment Method

The respondents were asked when they started to receive the 350 grant, followed by the payment method they use. Eleven respondents began receiving the grant in 2020, while 10 started in 2021, 8 in 2022, and only one respondent did not remember, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Year in which the 350 grant was first received.

Year	Number of Respondents
2020	11
2021	10
2022	8
Do not remember	1

Furthermore, respondents were asked about the payment method used, and 24 indicated that they receive their money through a bank account. Moreover, out of the 24 people who used a bank account method, 3 indicated that they previously used a post office and later switched to a bank account. Five people receive their grant at the retail shops, and only 1 person receives their grant through the post office, as indicated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Payment method

Payment method	Respondents
Bank account	24
Retail shops	5
Post office	1

Table 4.5: Summary of research objective themes and sub-themes

RO1	Themes	Sub-themes
To understand how individuals in this community have used the grants over the last three years.	Financial insecurity and grant dependency	Unemployment and income insecurities
		Food insecurity and basic needs
		Dependency on SRD Grants.
	Perceived benefit of grant	
	Adapting spending pattern	<i>Social Grants</i>
		Social support networks
		Borrowing
		Creative survival strategies
RO2 To better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates.	Declined application.	
	Delayed payments	
	Long queues	
	Wrong documentation	
	SASSA grant adoption rate perspective	
RO3 To determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage of the SRD grant and the	Food and toiletries	
	Pay off debts, school-related fees and savings	
	Job-related expenses	
		Excessive applicants

individuals' actual usage of it.	Grant administration challenge	Frustrations in grant access and processing
		Ensuring accountability to the beneficiaries.

4.9 Research Objective 1: To understand how individuals in this community have used the grants over the last three years.

The research objective explored the way the respondents utilised their SRD grant. It first examined the challenges they faced at the beginning of the pandemic and secondly how the SRD grant assisted them with these challenges.

In total, four (4) themes and two subthemes were generated to address this objective. This includes financial insecurity and grant dependency, benefits of the SRD grant, perception of the SRD grant, and adapting spending patterns.

Table 4.6: Summary of research objective on themes and sub-themes

RO1	Themes	Sub-themes
To understand how individuals in this community have used the grants over the last three years.	Financial insecurity and grant dependency	Unemployment and income insecurities
		Food insecurity and basic needs
		Dependency on SRD Grants.
	Benefit of SRD grant	
	Adapting spending pattern	<i>Social Grants</i>
		Social support networks
		Borrowing
		Creative survival strategies
	Perception on the SRD grants	Increase of the R 350 grants.
		Grant extension
		Dissatisfaction

4.9.1 Insecurities and Grant Dependency

In this theme, the researcher aimed to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the respondents residing in Orange Farm. This covers the employment rate, food

and financial insecurity, and their level of dependency on the SRD grant during the period of the pandemic and beyond. Three themes relating to insecurities and grant dependency were generated. This includes unemployment and income insecurity, food insecurity and basic needs, and dependency on SRD grants.

(a) Unemployment and income insecurity

Unemployment and income insecurity were major factors that were found to have contributed greatly to the challenges faced by the Orange Farm residents prior to the SRD grant and even during the period they received the grant. The impact of unemployment and income insecurity is made explicit in the quotations drawn from some of the respondents:

“Eyy! It was tough, very tough. Me and my mother got retrenched at work. So, financially we were struggling at home due to that” (Respondent 22).

“The situation was very hard because there was no income” (Respondent 2).

“It was a bit hard, as opportunities to find temporary jobs were no longer possible. As a person, you need to do something, but Covid-19 really left us stranded. We used to do motor mechanic[s] with some guy, but we could no longer travel to do our job” (Respondent 17)

“It was very hard. I was not prepared, so I struggled a lot. I'm not working, and I [...] money to buy basic necessities” (Respondent 14).

“I struggled with money to pay rent and buy food. I couldn't afford to buy [the] kids school uniform and pay school fees” (Respondent 26).

“At the beginning of the pandemic, I wasn't receiving any grant. I only qualified for 350 this year [2022]; there was no income. I only started getting the 350 this year [2022], I am a single parent who is renting, and I have kids” (Respondent 10).

In summary, from the quotes above, most respondents highlighted the issue of unemployment and income insecurity, stating that the high unemployment rate and difficulty in accessing jobs or job loss made the matter worse. As unemployment escalated, many households experienced income or financial insecurity.

In addition, the pandemic also affected the health and psychological well-being of some respondents or their family members due to the challenges they were already dealing with. The following quotations were drawn from some of the respondents:

“It was very bad because mum and dad are divorced and are both not working, even me. “Kamo” my junior brother is on drugs and has 2 kids that we have to look after because the mother, she's Zimbabwean - she left the kids with us. It was a struggle because even the kids don't get grant[s] because they don't have birth certificates. So, yeah, it was very bad” (Respondent 7).

“I don't even know where to start; the situation was bad and one of us here is mentally disturbed and I can't take him to the clinic because we are struggling to get money for a taxi to take him to the hospital for his treatment now. He's earning 350 only” (Respondent 5).

“It was a bit difficult to get out and buy groceries; for me staying in the house was very frustrating” (Respondent 15).

“We had no money for food or anything. I ended up in the hospital because of not eating healthy” (Respondent 21).

As noted from the quotes above, some respondents expressed that the pandemic affected their health and psychological well-being or their family members. For one respondent, their parents were going through a divorce, while their brother was struggling with drug addiction, leaving children under the care of the family. Another respondent expressed that they could not take their disabled family member to the hospital to collect medicine due to having no money for transport.

In addition, another respondent indicated that they ended up in hospital because they had no money to buy food and they were not eating healthy. Whilst only one respondent mentioned that they were only affected by the restriction on going out, this was frustrating for all respondents.

(b) Food insecurity and basic needs

The pandemic caused an increase in food prices, making it difficult for many Orange Farm residents to cope with their daily expenses. This heightened the food challenges experienced, as indicated by the respondents. It is worth noting that some households faced multiple challenges. Some of the situations were interrelated, as one issue led to another. For example, unemployment causes income insecurity, which subsequently causes food insecurity and other struggles.

The following paragraphs show each situation with a few selected quotations extracted from the responses of the participants:

“It was very bad; since COVID-19 started, it’s been hard. Prices went up and I have no job, so yeah, it has been rough” (Respondent 25).

“It was bad, as basic household items got expensive at the beginning of COVID-19, especially staples like maize meal” (Respondent 28).

“Sometimes we went to bed without eating [and] no soap for bathing”
(Respondent 9).

“I’m not working, and my children need clothes and food for the whole month but the money I’m getting is too small” (Respondent 1).

“It was hard due to having no income and I even lost my mother, and it was emotionally draining” (Respondent 23).

Financial insecurity also contributed to the difficulty in accessing other necessities like electricity, toiletries, and education-related expenses. Individuals from households without anyone receiving a grant stated that such a situation created serious hardship.

Most of the respondents also lamented about the effect of the pandemic on personal hygiene. The sentiments were shared by respondents 9 and 24. The extract below is a representation of their responses when they shared their struggles during COVID-19:

“Things were bad because I ran out of money to a point that I didn’t even have toiletries” (Respondent 24).

“I struggled with money to pay rent and buy food. I couldn’t afford to buy [the] kids school uniform and pay school fees” (Respondent 26).

“At the beginning of the pandemic before I received the R350 grants, things were hard because I had to ask someone to give me money for cosmetics” (Respondent 16).

Respondents expressed that they faced challenges in affording their personal hygiene supplies. At the same time, some could not afford to pay rent and to purchase school-related items.

(c) Dependency on SRD Grants

Another important aspect explored by this research was the level of dependency of Orange Farm residents on the SRD grant. This is made evident in their responses presented below:

“I don't even know where to start! The situation was bad.... One of us here is mentally disturbed and I can't take him to the clinic because we are struggling to get money for taxi[s] to take him to the hospital for his treatment now; he's earning 350 only” (Respondent 5).

“Yoh! It was not okay, I suffered at the beginning of the pandemic before the 350 grants. We had no money for food or anything. I ended up in the hospital because of not eating healthy” (Respondent 20).

“Before earning 350, my daughter was the one helping me with money for food, and even now, she is still assisting me with money from her children's grant, as 350 is too small” (Respondent 2).

“I'm not working, and my children need clothes and food for the whole month but the money I'm getting is too small” (Respondent 1).

“It was hard to get by; that time I felt like I was going mad. I mean I am a single mother of two while I live with my old mother who has no ID (so no pension). I am a hustler so “ama-piece” jobs were less to none. As a children's grant recipient like me, I got to hit the brick bottom but with the R500's we first got made life easy” (Respondent 4).

“At the beginning of the pandemic, I wasn't receiving any grant. I only qualified for 350 this year [2022]; there was no income. I only started getting the 350 this

year [2022]. I am a single parent who is renting, and I have kids, so things were really hard” (Respondent 3).

The responses indicated the high dependency of the residents on the SRD grant, as that was the only source of income with most of them being unemployed. Some of them expressed that they barely survived before the grant's implementation. This indicates that the grant is going a long way in assisting them with their basic needs. However, some expressed that the grant is not enough to cater for their needs and those who are single mums struggled a lot.

4.9.2 Benefits of SRD grant

Another factor crucial to this research was determining what benefits the Orange Farm residents received from the R350 SRD grant.

The following paragraphs show each situation with a few selected quotations extracted from the responses of the participants:

“To support my children to buy food and pay for school necessities” (Respondent 1).

“I use it to buy food, not even groceries for a month, it is really not enough. Even though it does help a bit, we are a family of 5 - you can just imagine when it comes to toiletries for everyone, breakfast, lunch, or lunch box food, it is too small to cover such” (Respondent 3).

The 350 grant has been very useful for purchasing food and toiletries (Respondent 8).

“I use it to buy toiletries, sugar, maize meal, particularly the food combo deals that costs R250 so that we are able to eat” (Respondent 17).

“Mostly toiletries and job-searching expenses (data, transport to submit CV” (24).

“I usually buy toiletries and any important missing household item that is needed at that time” (Respondent 27).

“Some months I use the money to buy food and cosmetics. While in some other months, I use the money for job-searching-related expenses” (Respondent 29).

According to the respondents, the benefits and relief the grant brought them during the pandemic cannot be overemphasised. They narrated that the grant to most unemployed individuals was a big relief, as it catered for some of their basic needs such as food, toiletries, children's upkeep, basic medications, job searching, and so on.

4.9.3 Adapting spending patterns

Following the experience shared by the respondents at the beginning of the pandemic, the coping strategy adopted by the individuals to mitigate the impact of the pandemic was explored. All the respondents agreed that they adapted their spending patterns. Their commonly adopted strategies were using social grants, social support networks, borrowing, and creative survival strategies. In some households, multiple strategies were adopted. For example, a combination of two or more of the strategies mentioned above were used. The various coping strategies are presented in the following sections.

(a) Social Grants

Several respondents indicated that they survived through social grants received by their family members. Moreover, although these grants were still insufficient to cover everything, at least they did help. Below are extracts of responses gathered from the respondents:

"We survived with the child grant money and that money is too small for us to get what we needed. ... We were eating from hand to mouth. My sister's child grant helped a lot" (Respondent 1).

"We depended on my grandmother's grant" (Respondent 28).

"There was no other option, we had to hang in there and rely on the disability grant" (Respondent 27).

The disability, child support, and old age grants were the grants mentioned by respondents. The child support grant was the highest among the mentioned grants utilised. This is because most households have two or more children for whom they receive a child support grant.

(b) Social support networks

Some respondents had a strong social support network that allowed them to get help from their neighbours, family, and friends. The quotations below are extracts from the respondents when asked about their survival strategies:

“Before earning 350, my daughter was the one helping me with money for food, and even now, she is still assisting me with money as 350 is too small” (Respondent 2).

“I was always asking for rice, sugar, maize-meal from my aunt” (Respondent 13).

“My cousin's job sustained us as she is the only breadwinner in the house” (Respondent 16).

“My brother's salary kept us going” (Respondent 17).

“I had to ask my siblings to buy me toiletries, I didn't have a choice” (Respondent 24).

These social networks proved invaluable in helping them navigate the challenges and negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, households with one or more breadwinners were fortunate enough, as they often supported the unemployed family members.

(c) Borrowing

Some respondents emphasised that the grant was insufficient to cater for their basic needs, and these quotations show this:

“I mean the first few months of lockdown with no other income than children's grant we took loans, so with those R500's I got to pay half of the debt. I also did piece (temporary) jobs. By piece jobs, I mean picking tins and selling them - a Black female at the age of 53 doing recycling - it was stressful” (Respondent 4).

“I borrowed money from someone” (Respondent 9).

“We decided to take my grandmother's SASSA card to borrow money knowing that when the grant comes in the person will take their money at the end of the month. We also used the grants jointly” (Respondent 11).

“I had to borrow money from “abo mashonisa” [loan sharks] (Respondent 26).

Due to the grant being insufficient to cover basic needs, respondents resorted to borrowing money from loan sharks and friends to meet their needs. Some took the social grants cards to the loan sharks, which they would then get back after they had paid the loan.

(d) Creative survival strategies

Creative survival strategies mean that respondents had to rely on themselves to survive the pandemic's harsh impacts. The extracted responses below support this point:

“We have a 5-room house and now we are only using 3 room[s] because, the other 2 room[s] we took out its roof and took it to the scrap yard; we asked for help from our neighbours” (Respondent 5).

“Unfortunately, I rented out because I didn’t afford to pay rent anymore. And for food, one of my friends is working at the school as a cook so sometimes she brings food, and at least my mum is now receiving her old age grant” (Respondent 6).

“My sister was helping me but unfortunately she passed away. So, I had to take things to the scrapyard and clean people’s yards to earn money” (Respondent 18).

“What can I say? We survive by the grace of GOD, I used to sell cigarettes and sweets” (Respondent 23).

Respondents adopted creative survival strategies to survive the pandemic's harsh impacts. For example, these were through selling, renting out, going to the scrapyard, recycling, doing people’s gardens, and cleaning people’s yards. This helped them cope better, as the money they made through these means covered up the lapses that the SRD grant did not cover.

Moreover, the following quotes illustrate additional survival strategies other than the ones already described:

“We had to live on savings” (Respondent 10).

“I was receiving UIF at that time” (Respondent 3).

“I tried everything to make ends meet; for example, I did part-time jobs”

(Respondent 19).

In addition, a few respondents had to use their savings, and some used their Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) money. In comparison, some resorted to part-time work, although it was hard to get jobs, as illustrated by the quotes above.

4.9.4 Perception of the SRD grants

(a) Increase of the R 350 grants

Respondents were asked whether they preferred the money to be further extended over several more months, increased and by how much, and why, if they favoured an increase. Respondents would either choose one answer or both and provide reasons. The researcher wanted to find out the respondents' preferences and their individual reasons based on their experience with the 350 grants. Some of the responses are quoted as follows:

“Increased, at least by 500 because 350 only buys maize meal and cooking oil. Food prices are now very expensive” (Respondent 5).

“It must be increased, it will help me pay crèche fees, buy clothes, and lunch box necessities for my child. If it could be R 800 that's all I am asking for now, I do not want too much money” (Respondent 15).

“I prefer it to be increased, at least if they could add R150 on top of the R350 so that one can balance and be able to buy combo groceries and toiletries” (Respondent 17).

“Both extended and further and increased to R 1500. Food is expensive hey, and bills are going higher and higher all the time for example water and electricity for lighting” (Respondent 24).

From the above quotes, it is clear that a majority of respondents favoured the grant being increased, as it would help a lot of poor people; the increased amounts mentioned range from R 400 to R 1500. The respondents further supported that an increase would help them cover basic necessities like groceries, toiletries, clothing,

school-related fees, and paying bills (electricity and water). The respondents' main concern was that food prices had increased, making the situation hard. Other than food prices, a few respondents mentioned that water and electricity prices had also increased. Therefore, the grant clearly does not cover basic needs as the respondents would have expected it to.

(b) Grant extension

Moreover, some respondents revealed that they would prefer the grant to be extended continuously and increased because of the issue of unemployment.

“Increase and extend but I think it must be a lifetime thing due to the unemployment rate. The grant should be R700” (Respondent 8).

“I prefer it to be extended and increased to R750 because the money is not enough and it’s hard to find a job” (Respondent 21).

“That was a hectic question but the increase should not be above a thousand rand (R1000), because once it may be above a thousand rand most people would stop working and start focusing on the grant. Plus or minus a thousand rand would be fine, maybe we would be able to afford a lot of things as some people are struggling to eat, to buy food. So other people use this money to buy food, so once they increase it, it would be much better” (Respondent 16).

Other respondents mentioned various amounts in response to the question of whether they prefer the grant to be extended continuously and increased. The results show that a majority prefer the grant to be extended continuously and increased due to the high level of unemployment. As unemployment is a major concern, respondents decry that finding a job on its own is hard. However, one respondent does agree with an increase but stated that it should not be too much, as it will create dependency.

(c) Dissatisfaction

On the perception of the SRD grant, the other theme that emerged was the dissatisfaction respondents had with the grant. This is what the respondents expressed:

“South Africa is the bread and butter of Africa. When listening to the Minister of Finance, he talks about billions if not millions but all those politicians feast themselves on our wealth when we are the ones that chose them to be at the forefront to represent and tackle human rights violations for all. How can they bring about justice if they are the ones breaking the law? What I am trying to say is that South Africa can afford to give us a mere R750. Our people, we are struggling out there” (Respondent 4).

“I would prefer the government to provide food vouchers to some of us; right now the 350 is received even by people who don't qualify for it. Like, mostly when you look at this thing between males and females, I feel like males are benefiting more from the grant especially the “Nyaope” smokers and youth under 30, majority of them depend on the 350, if you go to queues in Boxer and Shoprite for the 350 collections, it's only youth (Respondent 3)

“I am not saying all youth don't deserve the money but there are those who are addicts and the money is not doing the use it is supposed to do. And if the government does provide food vouchers, the voucher should be R800 because when you look at the food basket, the statistics say it is more than R500. So, if the basket of food we buy everyday exceeds R500, how does the government give us R350? So, it must go with time, the cost of food is expensive like when you observe: how much is cooking oil, so what is 350, how much is flour? The items we use as Black people on a daily basis, cooking oil is R100 and flour 10kg is expensive; so for me it is too small” (Respondent 11).

“The grant situation, many people use it in different ways, some of them use it on alcohol, crime, and drugs. If it were for me, I would suggest the government add food parcels because the level of crime and abuse has increased ever since people started getting the R350 grant and give the grant to those who are looking for jobs so that they can continue looking for jobs. This 350 is received on dates like the 20-something, so many people go and queue at the Boxer store to collect the money, there is too much robbery. Someone's cell phone was stolen and some people who earn the money use it to smoke, and after running out of money they go around attacking people, taking their cell phones

to go and sell them. The crime rate has increased more than before people started receiving the 350 grant” (Respondent 16).

One respondent has shown dissatisfaction with the government, indicating that they only care about their well-being and have no respect for human rights. The respondent further noted that they can afford to give people more money, but they just don't want to. Conversely, one respondent was totally against the increase of the grant and instead was in favour of food vouchers because they believe that the grant is received by people who do not deserve it, such as drug users.

Similarly, another respondent expressed that they preferred food parcels over the grant due to people using it on alcohol and increasing crime at the grant collection points. Most of the respondents criticised the issue of more male and youth recipients. Furthermore, they elaborated on why their critics state that the money is being misused. Hence, they suggested that food vouchers would be better and that the amount being given to people must match the cost of a food basket.

4.10 Research objective 2: To better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates.

This objective explored the intricacies of the SRD grant adoption rate in the Orange Farm community to serve as a monitoring tool to determine if the grant objectives are met. Delving into the experiences and challenges faced by the individuals in the community regarding the grant adoption process revealed certain patterns and dynamics that shed light on this objective. The respondents' report encompasses various aspects, including application rejection, delayed payment, skipped payment, issues with payment methods, and wrong documentation. From the account of their responses, valuable insights were gathered by the researcher that will aid the proper monitoring of the SRD grant adoption rate within the community. Also, the contributing factors to the patterns observed are noted. The common themes that emerged in this research are discussed in the following sections.

Table 4.7: Summary of research objective two themes and sub-themes

RO2	Themes
To better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates.	Declined application
	Delayed payments
	Long queues
	Wrong documentation
	SASSA Grant adoption rate perspective

4.10.1 Declined Application

Most respondents expressed that, at some point, they got rejected or declined for various reasons, as illustrated below.

“The first months, I was declined, it said I had a source of income. Then on some months I received the grant, on other months I got declined” (Respondent 14).

“Sometimes they decline it. The 350 grant was not paid for two months. I then made an appeal but still they didn't pay for those months” (Respondent 1).

The respondents stated the various reasons they got rejected or declined for the grant, such as having a source of income; some even indicated that they did not have a source of income. Moreover, there were occasions when they got rejected and they then appealed, but they were unsuccessful.

4.10.2 Delayed payments

All the respondents echoed the issue of delayed payments. The following are a few responses to illustrate the point:

“My challenge is that the money is delayed. We get the money after a long time; I don't know what is happening” (Respondent 2).

“At times it is approved but I am unable to withdraw it” (Respondent 11).

Additionally, some individuals pointed out some instances where the grant payment was completely skipped for certain months. Furthermore, the worst-case scenario was

when, despite having their grant approved, they were unsuccessful in receiving the grant when they attempted to withdraw it.

4.10.3 Long queues

Another devastating challenge was when some respondents' R 350 grant stopped for an extended period. A few respondents complained of long queues and the payment method that had to be changed.

“My R350 has been stopped for 4 months” (Respondent 7).

“At first, there were long queues because I was getting it at Pick 'n Pay but since I have a bank account, I have had no challenges” (Respondent 24).

The challenge was when they changed the payment method and long queues (Respondent 28).

Respondents faced challenges withdrawing the money at the point of payment due to the long queues they encountered at the withdrawal points. This was the case for those who used collection points like Pick' n Pay as a payment method. This was exacerbated when the payment was skipped and the residents barely survived; hence, they all trooped out when the grants were eventually paid.

4.10.4 Wrong Documentation

As reported by the respondents, one of the issues that posed a challenge was wrong documentation.

“I was struggling to get the grant at first because there was a mistake with my surname; in the system, I appeared with a different surname but I eventually got assistance” (Respondent 17).

“I do not want to lie, although I had a problem with my ID appearing as duplicate, things were smooth thereafter” (Respondent 30).

Regarding the challenge of wrong documentation, respondents found themselves in a situation where they could not find their names on the system but they later realised that their information was captured incorrectly. However, a few respondents indicated that documentation challenges were sorted out and their experience improved. The other challenges with regard to documentation, one respondent indicated that they faced an issue of an ID appearing as a duplicate but that was resolved later on.

4.10.5 SASSA Grant Adoption Rate Perspective

Continuing from the previous section, the researcher sought a balanced view of the adoption rate of the SRD grant. In pursuit of a comprehensive and balanced perspective, the SASSA official was engaged, and their views about the adoption rate within Orange Farm were gathered. This required the official to elaborate on how many males versus females and young adults versus adults are receiving this grant.

The official stated that from 18-25 years, the scale is almost balanced between males and females who earn the R 350 grants. There is a high number of males (70% of Black males) aged between 26-40 years. Even from the age of 40 upwards, males still benefit more than females. Most females are declined because the system shows that many of them have alternative sources of income, particularly those with more than one child earning the child grant. However, in some cases, some women get the 350 grants while she has 4 children who earn the child grant. This could suggest that something had not been done correctly.

4.10.6 Monitoring of the adoption rate of the 350 SRD social grants

The official was asked how the 350 SRD social grant adoption rate was monitored. The official expressed that no system is used to monitor this social grant. The system they use is the same one that applicants or beneficiaries can access. Furthermore, the official reminded the researcher that when the application system was set up, it was self-service. The only thing they do is guide the applicants regarding how to better use the system for their benefit.

4.11 Business

The researcher asked respondents if they had ever thought of starting a business, and, if so, they were asked to mention what kind of a business. This question was for the researcher to find out if people are simply relying on the 350 grant or if they are also doing something to empower themselves. A vast majority of the respondents replied that, yes, they did think of starting a business. They wanted to start businesses that were in line with their skills. The most mentioned businesses were hair salons, sales (food, fruits and vegetables, sweets, and snacks), or a tuck/spaza shop. Only a few mentioned the following: hardware, jewellery, a gaming shop, tutoring, sewing, supermarket, motor mechanic, potato supplier, selling livestock, and clothing businesses.

Three people already had businesses, and they are continuing and wish to expand. The following are a few responses to illustrate this point:

Respondent 23 stated, "Right now, I'm still selling sweets and snacks", while respondent 28 stated, "Yes, I already have a chicken business, it is only a few chickens and would like to expand my business further."

On the other hand, there is also one respondent who already has a business selling clothes, which they started a long time ago when they lost their job, a long time before the Covid-19 pandemic started. This respondent stated that although the business has existed for a long time, the 350 grant is still important to them. Their response was as follows:

"Yes, I have already started a business selling clothes. I started it the moment I lost my job but I do still need the 350 from the government" (Respondent 30).

Moreover, two respondents were very interested in starting a business using their skills obtained through professional training. For example, respondent 16 replied: *"Yes, the unemployment situation really sucks. I did a learnership on plant production, so I would like to start a business of farming based on plants. Recently, I am trying to start my own business in farming."*

Additionally, respondent 6 said, *"Yes, since I have a certificate in Early Childhood Development. I would like to open a crèche. I really love working with children hence I got this certificate."* Lastly, only 3 respondents replied, "No, they have never thought of starting a business."

4.11.1 Challenges in starting a business

The researcher further asked the respondents about the possible challenges or obstacles they might have faced in starting a business. The researcher wanted to find out if any challenges could hinder them from starting a business. This question was only applicable to those who answered "yes" to the previous question.

(a) Lack of funds

Having a lack of funds posed a threat to starting a business, as quoted in a few examples:

“I do not have money to start and do not even know how to start (business plan). So, for now, I just want to go back to school or work in retail stores like Boxer. I did try to apply, and I am still applying but my biggest wish is to go back to school” (Respondent 15).

“At home, there is no breadwinner hence I am expected to go to work and not start a business. Another thing is lack of capital and someone to believe in my vision” (Respondent 28).

Most of the respondents expressed that lacking capital was the main issue that hindered them from starting a business.

(b) Business setting (popularity of business and space)

Some of the respondents said the main challenge was the type of location they lived in, which was an obstacle. The responses were captured as follows:

“Due to maintenance and sustainability for it to function, business is linked to the environment you live in. You just don’t wake up and start a business, it depends on the environment you live in. For instance, I live in extension 1 and if I say I want to sell food like “Dikhambane” (bunny chow), how many people are selling “Dikhambane”? And if I want to sell things like “Dishabo” (relish), I myself will be depending on that business. So that business would last for 2 months or 3 months then fail because people are not working, they are not getting paid, and they won’t be buying what I sell” (Respondent 3).

“Everywhere you go you’ll find a salon. And now that times have changed, one has to go to school to learn more about hair” (Respondent 14).

“The farm idea I had would be suitable to be in the rural areas, as I saw that is where my target market is. So, it won’t work in the township, as many competitors are starting it and I also need quality work. Right now, I am still hustling to secure funding to start the business and starting a business on its own is not easy; you also need to have a proper business plan in order to secure funding” (Respondent 16).

“I do not have space to start the crèche, I also do not know how I will maintain the children when they are enrolled. I live in a very small space, so I need a bigger space to start my crèche” (Respondent 13).

“Yah! Since I already have a business, my obstacle is that it was too slow, and I didn't make much profit” (Respondent 12)

“Stock prices are higher than before” (Respondent 23).

“No, I didn't face any challenge. I was also able to build myself a house from the money I got from selling clothes” (Respondent 5).

For some respondents, the main challenge in starting a business was the type of location that they reside in. For example, the business might need a bigger space in some areas, while some businesses are too popular in the same area where the supply exceeds the demand. In turn, this opens up unnecessary competition and, eventually, the failure of the business. In addition, one respondent complained about the business being too slow for those with businesses. Another respondent was concerned about increased stock prices, and one respondent said there was no obstacle.

4.12 Research objective 3: To determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage of the SRD grant and the individuals' actual usage of it.

This objective explored the interplay between the initiation of SRD grant by the Department of Social Development (DSD), the projected usage, and the actual utilisation patterns among the Orange Farm residents. By delving into the experiences, perceived benefits, and outcomes of the grant, this exploratory study shed light on the balance between the envisaged outcomes and whether it is in alignment with the actual utilisation of the SRD grant. By this, the disparities, challenges, or proper match in usage were uncovered.

The previous section presented the different strategies adopted by the residents to allocate their received grants to solve their various problems. This includes payment of debts, rent, children or personal school fees, and job-related expenses.

Additionally, one section presented the responses around the insufficiency of the

grant, leading some recipients to resort to borrowing to augment their basic needs. However, interestingly, some respondents reported that they systematically managed the grant they received to pay off the loan they had taken. In addition, some save up from the grant to start a business or cater for necessities. Some reported using the balance after paying off their loan for groceries. These approaches showcase their resourcefulness in making good use of the grant. According to the DSD (2021) the 350 SRD grant is meant to provide assistance to poor people in order to use it on the basic needs. Expanding on the themes, the responses below shed light on the specific utilisation pattern when the question of utilisation was posed to the respondents.

Table 4.8: Summary of research objective: three themes and sub-themes

RO3	Themes
To determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage of the SRD grant and the individuals' actual usage of it	Food and toiletries
	Pay off debts, school-related fees, and saving
	Job-related expenses

4.12.1 Food and toiletries

Respondents' responses indicated that they use their grant to buy food and toiletries, as presented in the quotations.

"I use it to buy food, not even groceries for a month, it is really not enough. Even though it does help a bit, we are a family of 5; you can just imagine when it comes to toiletries for everyone, breakfast, lunch, or lunch box food, it is too small to cover such" (Respondent 3).

"I usually buy toiletries and any important missing household item that is needed at that time" (Respondent 26).

"I use it to buy toiletries and food, particularly the food combo deals that costs R250 so that we are able to eat" (Respondent 17).

"I mainly use it to buy staple food like meat and maize meal" (Respondent 28).

From the responses above, most participants expressed that they utilised their grants mainly on food and toiletries. Staple food like maize meal and meat are of importance, as mentioned above. In addition, some respondents even buy food combo deals that cost less to cover than other expenses like toiletries.

4.12.2 Pay off debts, school-related fees, and savings.

Some respondents utilised their grant to pay off debts, school-related fees, and savings. The following quotes illustrate these points:

“Mostly groceries and pay off the debts to the loan sharks with a bit that is left, and by groceries, I mean one or two plastics. These prices are extremely expensive” (Respondent 4).

“To pay rent and give my child lunch money to school” (Respondent 7).

“Mainly I buy food, and, in some months, I save a little that I can” (Respondent 14).

“To buy food. At some point, I managed to save it to lay buy clothes and buy myself a phone” (Respondent 15).

“I use it to pay for crèche fees and buy stock to sell” (Respondent 23).

The respondents expressed that they had used their grant to pay off debts and school-related fees, and, at some point, save a small portion of the money. The most interesting point is that respondents use their grant to cover these extra expenses after using it for basic necessities like food.

4.12.3 Job-related expenses

Another important theme was that the grant was utilised to cover job-related expenses. The quotes below emphasise this point:

“I use it to buy basic items like food. I am a smoker, so I also use it to buy cigarettes plus data to apply for jobs online and print CV’s” (Respondent 28).

“Most of the time, I use it on cosmetics and look for a job. I have to pay money to go to Johannesburg for the transport fee, and, yeah, the money is too small, it just helps there and there” (Respondent 16).

“Mostly toiletries and job-searching expenses like data [or] transport to submit CV” (Respondent 24).

“Some months I use the money to buy food and cosmetics. While in some other months, I use the money for job-searching-related expenses” (Respondent 29).

Respondents have also expressed that they have used their grant on job-related expenses such as data, the printing of CVs, and transport fees to physically submit their CVs. Interestingly, more male participants than female participants highlighted that they sometimes use the grant money on job-related expenses.

4.12.4 Suggestions from Respondents

The closing question asked the respondents if they had any suggestions they would like to make in relation to the government. This question was not meant to discredit the government. Instead, the researcher was looking for suggestions that could help address some of the things they were concerned about. Respondents were allowed to come up with possible solutions that may best suit their needs.

The following are examples of the suggestions made by respondents, ranging from job creation, supporting small businesses, food for the poor, government transparency, proper housing, and proper education:

(a) Job creation

“I would like the government to open job opportunities and decrease food prices at least for poor people to be able to afford basic needs” (Respondent 3).

“We need the government to be considerate of poor people’s needs and create a lot of jobs for young people” (Respondent 4).

“To give tenders and open job opportunities; we have certificates and education but no jobs” (Respondent 20).

“Government should try to create more jobs, mostly for the youth” (Respondent 22).

Respondents suggested that there should be more job opportunities for people to earn a decent living, to stop relying on grants, and to stop committing crimes. Some respondents emphasised that young people should be empowered through job creation.

(b) Support small businesses

“Youth entrepreneurship should be supported, especially in terms of funding. Since jobs are scarce, we need to empower ourselves with the skills we obtained at schools” (Respondent 16).

“Government should come to Kasi (township) and help small businesses because they are the backbone of the society” (Respondent 23).

Moreover, many respondents suggested that small businesses should be supported.

(c) Food for the Poor and Government Transparency

“My suggestion will be for the government to give all people who are in need some food and those who do not work to make sure they all sleep on a full stomach” (Respondent 7).

“I would like the government to fix its SASSA 350 system, because it has been declining a few people in my community who have no stable income for the past 3 months” (Respondent 10).

“Yes, I would like to see transparency on how things are done, like where the food parcel goes and who they reach. Also in instances where I have a problem with the 350, I must know where to go and who to go to” (Respondent 17).

A few respondents requested transparency from the government, and one respondent stated that the government should give food to the needy and those who are unemployed so that they do not go to bed hungry.

(d) Proper housing and proper education

“Government should build RDP houses for us who still do not have them and increase elderly people’s grants. Poorest people should be greatly assisted. We live in a community where we see very poor people to a point that we are better off compared to them, and those people can’t afford to put their children in crèche. So, the government must build crèches and sponsor them so that those poor people should not have to pay” (Respondent 13).

“Give us additional education and proper research must be done before approving the SRD grant; drug users for example, almost all of them get the grant. These drug users use the money on drugs and those who need the money get declined” (Respondent 14).

One respondent was focused on the government building proper housing for poor people who do not have them. This respondent further suggested that the government should build and sponsor creches, so that the poorest individuals in the community will be able to take their kids to the creche without paying. Similarly, another respondent also suggested the importance of providing additional education opportunities by the government.

4.12.5 Grant administration challenge

From the perspective of the SASSA official, it is worth noting that as much as beneficiaries struggle with the R 350 grants, the officials administering the grants also had their own challenges. On exploring this, the following themes arose.

(a) Excessive applicants.

The official stated that the major challenge encountered in administering the grant in the Orange Farm branch was dealing with excessive applications due to the influx of applications. Upon further inquiry, the researcher found that the excessive applications were caused by an influx of people who did not reside in Orange Farm. People from other areas, like Sebokeng, travel all the way to Orange Farm to get services related to the 350 grants.

(b) Frustrations in Grant Access and Processing

The researcher's investigation revealed a significant challenge the beneficiaries face after grant approval, yet they cannot withdraw it when they attempt to do so. According to the official, they often encounter agitated applicants seeking answers regarding the system's responses to their application. For instance, when they get declined, their grant is stopped, or their payments are delayed. Unfortunately, the system's response mode is beyond their control. Further, the official, at some point, explained that the situation escalated to the point where some applicants threatened to take drastic approaches such as burning down the office due to their frustration.

(c) Ensuring accountability to the beneficiaries.

Upon inquiry about how the Orange Farm SASSA branch ensures accountability towards the beneficiaries, the official expressed their proactive measures, particularly in addressing the main challenges. To address the challenges, they strive to minimise them by offering guidance and recommendations to assist the residents with the fully online and system-generated platform. For instance, beneficiaries struggling to access their grants were advised to change their initial selected payment methods. Remarkably, this approach yielded positive outcomes in reducing the complaints regarding failure to access the grant. However, the official acknowledged that despite their efforts to minimise these challenges, the process is still far from the planned smooth process envisioned at the grant programme's inception.

4.13 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SASSA AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (DSD)

The researcher asked about the relationship between the DSD and the SASSA because, at some point, the researcher went to the DSD to seek permission to conduct research with the department's officials. However, the researcher was turned away because the DSD was not the best place to obtain answers, and the researcher was referred to SASSA. When replying to this question, the SASSA official said SASSA falls under Social Development. However, SASSA focuses more on grant administration. While the Department of Social Development deals with other social issues at an advanced level, both organisations do get involved in the same assignment when necessary. In essence, SASSA distributes social assistance grants on behalf of the department and is under the supervision of the DSD (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021).

4.14 EXPECTED USAGE OF THE SRD GRANT

From the DSD's perspective, the official was asked what the expected usage of the SRD grant by beneficiaries is. The official said it is supposed to be useful for human survival, and it is the least that the government can do. This statement is in line with the DSD's projected usage of the grant, which is meant to be used for basic needs (DSD, 2021). This means that it will not eradicate long-term poverty but will try to reduce it in the short term. It has been helpful to people who have lost their jobs during

the COVID-19 pandemic. There is balance between the projected usage of the grant and the actual usage because, the respondents expressed that they use the grant particularly on immediate basic needs like food and toiletries which are first top priority. However, the official expressed that there are also cases in which some beneficiaries are abusing the money. Most interestingly, people on drugs (Nyaope users) never struggle to get the 350 grants as opposed to people who are struggling and need it the most.

4.15 FOOD PARCEL PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTED IN ORANGE FARM DURING THE PANDEMIC

The researcher asked if a food parcel programme was implemented in Orange Farm during the pandemic. The response was that there was none but there was a food voucher programme, and if a person were receiving 350 and wanted it, they would qualify for it. However, it was suddenly put on hold because of a budget shortage, which was also the case for food parcels. People live under the poverty line and in dire situations, so they constantly demand food parcels. The SASSA official said they really could not blame them because Orange Farm is a very poor community with high rates of unemployment and people are hungry.

4.16 FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE 350 GRANT OR INCREASING THE GRANT AMOUNT

The official was asked which option was better between further extending the R350 grant or increasing the grant amount. The official expressed that with the R 350 grant, it is extremely hard to screen if the person deserves it. However, with the other grants, certain criteria allow them to screen a person thoroughly. This means the grant goes to the eligible beneficiary. So, according to the official's opinion, increasing the grant would be a far better option, and most of the officials in the Orange Farm office feel the same way. The reason behind this is that with an increase, there would be a new criterion to screen those who need it the most, and it might be put to good use and contribute to job creation, like people opening their own businesses. However, with this R350, people are already too lazy to think and they have this level of entitlement; therefore, it is not ideal for it to be continuously extended.

4.17 SUGGESTIONS IN TERMS OF IMPROVING THE 350 SRD GRANT PROGRAMME.

In terms of improving the 350 SRD grant programme, the official suggested that it would be better if the budget for the 350 grant was redirected to other things like food parcels or food voucher programmes, provided that the criteria used to screen people for food parcels or vouchers is effective. Therefore, it would be easy to identify a person who deserves a voucher with an average amount of R 1200 and would use it to buy food that will sustain the beneficiary for approximately a month. The official further stated that the 350 is not doing any good but is bringing more problems. Another thing is that, in South Africa, it is very challenging to get a job, especially when one is 50 to 59 years old. Therefore, it would be ideal if there was something permanent for this age group, like a permanent unemployment grant of about R 1000 a month.

Moreover, the official explained that the system would be created in a way that it will only accept those aged 50 to 59 years old for that specific programme. Since they are the ones taking care of families, they would not misuse the money. Although there may be people within that age group who would misuse the money for drugs, alcohol, and other personal things, it would really be a small percentage. However, young people are the ones who are mostly seen misusing the 350 grants on alcohol. In closing, the government has really excluded this age group. With other grants, there have been top-ups, and even child-headed homes do benefit from the social protection. These adults are more deserving of a special grant of their own. The official emphasised that they are not denying that youth unemployment is high, but the most preferred age as seen from job descriptions disadvantaged those aged 50 to 59.

4.18 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the respondents' various perspectives concerning the R 350 SRD grant, its adoption rate, and its usage within the Orange Farm community. Many of the respondents acknowledged that the grant greatly relieved them, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, as it sorted out some of their basic needs. To address the objectives of this study, several themes and sub-themes emanated from the responses gathered from the respondents. Three (3) themes and six (6) sub-themes were generated based on the objective that addresses the adoption rate and the grant

usage. The findings based on these themes and sub-themes indicated that there were insecurities regarding their finances and food due to unemployment or job loss due to the pandemic, which strained their lives.

Furthermore, it indicated that the grant brought relief, and they mostly used it on basic needs like food, toiletries, and clothing. Some even saved part of it to pay off their debt. Also, the adaptation of the residents on their spending was also looked at, and it was interesting to see the strategies they adopted to cope. Some of the mentioned strategies used were community social groups helping one another, borrowing from each other, and repayment thereafter. Those with extra rooms rented them out and the money was used to support their household expenses. In addition, the respondents expressed their desire for the grant to be increased and/or extended because so many are dependent on it. After all, so many depend on it due to their unemployment status.

Based on the objective of dealing with the monitoring processes of the grant within the community, five (5) themes were generated, which detailed the challenges faced by the individuals from the application stage of the grant through to the payout stage. Some of the challenges narrated by the respondents were disqualification, declined or delayed payment, grant cut-off, wrong documentation, payment methods, long queues during the collection of the grant, etc. In addition, the respondent from SASSA expressed that these challenges did actually occur and stated that the administrative angle was also challenging. They indicated that the exercise is still far from the smooth process projected at the onset of the initiative.

In determining the balance between the adoption rate, actual usage, and the intended/projected objective of the grant as stipulated by the Department of Social Development (DSD), four (4) themes and three (3) sub-themes emerge. Starting from the usage presented in objective one, the grant was judiciously utilised to cater to the residents' basic needs that meet the intended use defined by DSD. Furthermore, the creative usage of the grant in areas, like paying off debt, paying children's school fees, and even saving and channelling the same to other useful ventures, was gathered as evidence.

In addition, from the grant administration perspective, issues such as difficult grant access, the influx of applications masterminded by other communities around Orange

Farm, and difficulty in accessing the actual usage from the administrators posed a serious challenge. Overall, this makes it difficult to determine and measure the outcome properly. In summary, the findings presented in this chapter shed light on the SRD grant, detailing the intricacies surrounding its adoption, usage, and challenges. The subsequent chapters present the interpretation/discussion of these findings, the conclusion, and the recommendations developed based on the gathered information.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is centred on the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, which was developed as an intervention social relief package to alleviate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic on South African citizens. This initiative was part of the universal social protection intervention for distressed individuals. As presented in the preceding chapters, universal social protection interventions aim to reduce destitution and expand the socio-economic well-being of poor citizens (Satumba et al., 2017). Approximately one-third (17 million) of the South African population are social grant recipients (South African Social Security Agency, 2019).

This chapter presents the interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 4. Discussing research findings is a process of deducing reasoning and presenting evidence from analysed research data. The in-depth and broader reasons behind the research project are unpacked through this. The study aimed to investigate the adoption rate of the South Africa Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in the Orange Farm community. The findings are based on the outlined research objectives below:

- To understand how individuals in this community have used the grants over the last three years.
- To better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates.
- To determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage of the SRD grant and the individuals' actual usage of it.

The discussion of the findings accords with the themes identified after analysing the data collected from the interviews. Before the analysis, the respondents validated the transcripts, and the quotations that emanated from the analysis are provided to support the themes. To maintain ethical standards and ensure anonymity, personal identification of information was removed, and codes (Respondents 1- 31) were assigned to all respondents to keep track of them. The presented findings were interpreted in reference to the literature review.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHY OF THE ORANGE FARM COMMUNITY

The participants interviewed were all from Orange Farm. Both males (fifteen) and females (fifteen) were interviewed, and the total number of participants was 30 with an equal number of both genders. Orange Farm largely consists of Black Africans. Therefore, all participants are of the same racial group. It is common to find that areas like Orange Farm largely consist of Black people who endure spatial inequality. For example, a majority of disadvantaged populations like Black people are still largely situated in rural areas or townships, which are distant from jobs and city centres (Shifa et al., 2021).

Moreover, the ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 50. In the sample, most participants come from households with an average of 4 to 8 people. Unsurprisingly, most participants come from households with many people because townships are typically dominated by informal, overcrowded, and large households (De Wet et al., 2008). Regarding the participants' education attainment, most participants who were interviewed have a matric, followed by those who have grades 11, 10, and 9. A few participants have completed a short course, and only one participant has a Diploma, which is a post-matric qualification. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which states that people living in disadvantaged areas are less likely to hold a post-matric qualification (Kwenda et al., 2020). However, this does not imply that these individuals do not want to pursue higher education at all. There could be different circumstances that hindered them from studying further.

5.3 IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Existing research shows that the impacts of the pandemic were felt globally as it escalated existing socio-economic issues, and this was evident in America and South Africa (Francis et al., 2020; Powell, 2021). The commonality in the level of the effect can be linked to the similar history of racial segregation shared by the two countries. In South Africa, in particular, the effects of the pandemic on the already-burdened society worsened social and economic situations. For example, in 2018, an Afrobarometer survey revealed that 63% of South Africans had no income; thus, this led to citizens being unable to afford and access basic needs such that 42% ran out of food, 34% could not access proper medical care, and 41% lacked adequate cooking fuel (Chingwete, 2019). Issues like hunger, food insecurity, and nutrition became major

policy matters during the 2019 period (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Ghana is equally reported to have witnessed a rise in household poverty and a rise in food insecurity during the pandemic (Bukari et al., 2022).

Another issue of concern in South Africa was that the pandemic left several people jobless, where the unemployment levels increased by 40% among adults between February and April 2020 (Jain et al., 2020). Similarly, this was also the case for other countries like China and Germany, where these countries saw a rise in the number of people who are unemployed due to job loss (Wang et al., 2021; Bauer & Weber, 2021). The same was found for the current research, as most respondents indicated that the situation was bad due to unemployment caused by difficulty accessing jobs or job loss. As unemployment escalated, many households were faced with income or financial insecurity. Francis & Webster (2019) noted that the persistence of income inequality, which is driven by wage inequality, is deeply rooted in the wealth and power distribution gap amongst different racial and gender groups.

For example, women still earn 30% less than men, even with the same educational qualifications while white people are less affected by income insecurity, and they earn two times more than any other race (Inequality Trends Report, 2019). Therefore, unemployment and income inequality perpetuate poverty such that the severity of poverty is far from declining, especially in rural areas and townships (Gumede, 2021). For this research, due to unemployment, when households became financially insecure, it also caused food insecurity and difficulty in accessing other basic necessities like electricity, toiletries, and education-related expenses.

Financial insecurity and health challenges exacerbated the difficulty faced by the individuals, including Orange Farm residents. Some respondents affirmed that they could not afford transportation to fetch their medicine. Additionally, one respondent ended up in hospital because they could not afford to eat healthy food. Those from households with no one receiving a grant stated that such a situation made life hard.

Moreover, participants who are single moms indicated that they had the hardest time. This confirms the previous findings of the first wave of the NIDS-CRAM survey, which found that at the early stages of the crisis, women were greatly impacted by the lockdown with high job losses, and this led women to do more unpaid work at home (Casale & Posel, 2020). Similarly, Germany had more women in their increased

unemployment list with a decline in their bargaining power due to caregiving obligations (Bauer & Weber, 2021). The Conflict Theory of Gender Inequality can better explain such circumstances faced by women. This theory states that irrespective of men and women having freedom to enjoy equal rights, the distribution of resources remains uneven between men and women (O'Neil, Wester, Heesacker & Snowden, 2017). The impacts of the pandemic have threatened the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly poverty reduction [SDG 1] and hunger [SDG 2], good health and well-being [SDG 3], quality education [SDG 4], gender equality [SDG 5], and reduced inequalities [SDG 10] (Wong, 2021). The first two SDGs are closely linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which states that needs at the bottom (physiological) should be met first because they are essential for human survival (McLeod, 2007).

5.4 ADAPTING SPENDING PATTERNS

From the contextual understanding of the social protection grants, this research delved into the specific utilisation patterns of the SRD grant among individuals within the Orange Farm community. This research sought to develop insights on the use of the grant within the past three years, from 2020 to date. The valuable findings contributed to the understanding of the beneficiaries' experiences and the impact of the grant on them. To further conceptualise these research findings, it would be proper to consider the coping strategies employed by the residents of the Orange Farm community when they were going through the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. As observed, their strategies and experiences intersect with those of other social protection grant beneficiaries.

One prominent finding worthy of note is the resilience of the people in the face of their adversity prior to and during the implementation of the SRD grant. Research by Francis and Webster (2019) has shown that prolonged unemployment and poverty have profound internal survival ramifications for individuals because of the hunger and malnutrition that come with it. As was found, people resorted to informal survival strategies to mitigate the burdens of poverty. For instance, these strategies include waste picking, street hawking, hair salons, shoe repairing, and tuck shops to name a few. Similarly, this same trend was observed in this current research. Respondents revealed that they engaged in creative and resourceful efforts to survive the time. They

resorted to selling, renting out, engaging in scrapyards operations, recycling materials, gardening, and cleaning yards. These adaptive strategies emphasised the resilience of the Orange Farm residents, as reported by the respondents. This also is proof of their capacity to rely on themselves during challenging times just as they did to weather the harsh consequences of the pandemic.

However, the research also found that some of the respondents did not engage in empowering coping mechanisms. Some individuals bowed to borrowing money from informal lenders locally called “mashonisa” or “loan sharks” (Krige, 2019). Most of them do so using their social grant card as collateral. Similarly, some turned to their friends, family, and acquaintances to borrow money. These actions stem from desperation, showing the need for comprehensive social protection programmes to tackle financial hardship.

Another factor mentioned by the respondents as one of their coping strategies that aligns with the existing studies is the leveraging of social support networks. If an individual does not meet their financial needs, they turn to their family, friends, and neighbours for assistance. A previous study by Zembe-Mkabile (2015) reported people’s reliance on social networks for help from friends, family, and neighbours. Other studies particularly reported this trend predominantly between child support grant (CSG) beneficiaries (Seekings and Nattrass, 2015). As the respondents expressed, it became obvious that this communal assistance played a vital role in their survival and helped them cope with the pandemic’s impact. On account of family members supporting the rest, notably, findings showed that families with one to two breadwinners were in a more favourable position, as the breadwinner(s) took the responsibility of taking care of the unemployed members of the family. This underscores the vital role of social support networks in restoring dignity and providing care to those in need (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

As a common practice among communities like Orange Farm, the researcher was expecting the indication of the residents forming “stokvels” to contribute money to support one another. However, the research showed that the formation of stokvels functioned as a means of providing collective financial support to the group members (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014). However, the individuals interviewed showed that they resorted to using their personal savings, Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) money,

and part-time jobs as their coping strategies. Another finding that the researcher expected was the mention of skipping meals, reducing meal sizes, and households, particularly female-headed ones, planting vegetables as an alternative to buying food due to low or no income for buying food (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Community Action Networks (CANs) were formed in some areas to address hunger by distributing food parcels and establishing soup kitchens (Atkins, 2021). For the current research, the respondents did not mention these strategies. These coping strategies, such as CANs and planting vegetables, could have already been tried out by the community members of Orange Farm as the issues of hunger and food insecurity were not caused by the pandemic, but they were rather worsened by it.

In conclusion, examining the experiences of the SRD grant beneficiaries over the past three years reveals intricacies between coping strategies, resourcefulness, and the vital role of social protection grants as well as social support networks in mitigating the impact of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable citizens of South Africa with a case study on the Orange Farm community. The presented findings in this section give insight into the intertwining nature of grant beneficiaries' experience and the actual utilisation of the grant. It also sheds light on the dynamics of social protection in South Africa.

5.5 EXAMINING ADOPTION RATES OF THE 350 SRD GRANT

The Social Relief of Distress (SRD) R 350 grant adoption rate is a critical aspect of this research object number two (2), which seeks to better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates. Understanding this, in turn, answers the question of whether the SRD grant's adoption matches the expectations of the Department of Social Development DSD. This sheds light on the extent to which eligible individuals in the Orange Farm community adopted the R 350 grant. The understanding of adoption rates offers great insight into how the individuals have embraced and accessed the grant from its inception as well as the efficacy of the grant's implementation. Based on the demographics, most recipients of the SRD grant are between 18-25 years of age, and the scale is almost balanced between males and females. Moreover, there were a high number of male (70% of Black males) recipients aged 26 years and above, but in all the age brackets that participated in this research were individuals aged 18-59 years who met the criteria (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020).

Some applicants were declined, but more female applications were declined because most of them have alternative income sources, particularly those with more than one child earning the child grant. The same has been recorded in published studies. For example, the study by Jain et al. (2020) revealed that the SRD more effectively reached males than females. Furthermore, the finding of high rates of female decline was in line with the finding of Dawson & Fouksman (2020), who explained that those receiving other forms of assistance did not qualify to receive the R350 grant. However, there are exceptions, as it was found that some female respondents are receiving the CSG for a maximum of four (4) children still receiving SRD grants. This was confirmed by the SASSA official who participated in the research; this is still confusing as the system should have easily picked that up.

More unemployed Orange Farm residents were found to have benefited from the SRD grant. Accordingly, Jain et al. (2020) observed that the Social Relief of Distress grant displays a continuous target to reach unemployed individuals and those who engage in manual or informal labour. It is, however, observed that even though a good number of unemployed individuals in the Orange Farm community benefited from the SRD grant, it could not reach everyone who needed it. This number can be related to unemployment and income inequality in South Africa, especially in townships (Gumede, 2021). Unemployment seriously brought about food insecurities, which also explained why so many people applied or depended on the grant and then expressed how it helped them solve their food problem. This adoption rate confirms what was reported by Francis & Webster (2019) that social relief grants are created to cut down poverty effects among South African citizens. An important observation was the displeasure from the female respondents who questioned why there was a higher number of male SRD grant recipients when there are more female-led households (Mdluli & Dunga, 2022).

The findings showed that applicants could apply online and they could choose a bank account, cash send, post office, or in-store (Boxer, Shoprite, Checkers, U-Save) collection as a payment method (SASSA, 2021). However, even though the online application was a success, there was a delay from when they applied to when they started receiving the grant. On this note, most participants started receiving the grant between 2020 (11), 2021 (10), and 2022 (8). However, these numbers are minimal,

signifying a good reach and aligning with the DSD's adoption expectations set for a community like Orange Farm.

A survey of the 30 respondents indicates that 24 (80%) of them were satisfied with the payment method. This group chose and received their money through their bank account because it was more convenient. Of this group, three had previously used the post office option but later changed to a bank account. 20% of the respondents used other means such as post offices and retail shops. Five respondents received their grant at the retail shops and one person received it through the post office. The satisfaction observed is a result of the convenience of receiving the grant directly into their bank account. This eliminates the need to queue at the post office or retail shops, as noted by the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (SASSA report, 2022).

This high number of beneficiaries using the banking system to receive their grant is in alignment with the 90% reported by SASSA in the year 2020/21. This is an increase from 71% of people receiving grants in South Africa via SASSA card as of March 2020 (SASSA report 2022). In summary, the exploration into the adoption rate of the SRD R 350 grant in Orange Farm reveals the programme's impact in addressing poverty and financial and food insecurities, particularly among the unemployed population. There is a serious concern around equitable access to the grant due to the gender disparity observed, with more females experiencing declines because of alternative sources of income. A majority of the grant beneficiaries adopting bank transfers shed light on the conveniences of the digital payment methods designed into the programme. While highly successful applications on the digital system were recorded, there were delays in fund disbursement and a call for attention. Overall, this current research provides great insights into the SRD's effectiveness and its role in addressing socio-economic challenges in South Africa.

5.6 BENEFITS/USAGE OF THE 350 SRD GRANT

5.6.1 Utilisation of the SRD grant

The research delved into the benefits/usage of the SRD grant by the Orange Farm residents to shed light on how they employed this financial support. Research objective three (3) aimed to determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage by individuals and the individuals' actual usage of it. An important point of note as confirmed by the SASSA official is that the primary objective of the SRD grant is to provide short-term relief assistance to unemployed individuals to help them cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic rather than serving as a long-term poverty eradication strategy. The Human Rights Framework has been useful in facilitating the participation of people from the Orange Farm community, which allowed them to contribute their experience with the SRD 350 grant, specifically on its adoption and usage. The Framework states that the fundamental participation process encourages participants to share their experiences of a specific situation to find mutual understanding and potential solutions (Blakewell, 2003).

Based on the findings of this research study, a predominant pattern emerges among Orange Farm residents' utilisation of their grant money. Most of them prioritise their basic needs, directing the grant money towards purchasing food and toiletries. On the other hand, a minority of them utilised the money for other purposes, including debt repayment, payment of rent, school, and job-related expenses. This pattern aligns with the findings reported by DSD in 2021 on the implementation and utilisation of the R 350 SRD grant (DSD, 2021). This report identified that 93.3% of the grant beneficiaries used the money to purchase food items, while 31.85% used part of it for electricity and other related expenses. Moreover, 53.11% sourced additional financial support from family members to supplement the R 350 grant for their household expenditure due to its insufficiency.

Remarkably, Mathebula et al.'s (2022) study on the impact of the SRD grant echoes these findings. Their research found that beneficiaries utilise their 350 grants for various purposes, including job-seeking expenses (transport, data, and internet café costs), food, medications, and other essential needs such as clothes, toiletries, electricity, and shelter. Also, the beneficiaries deployed part of the grant to maintain family nutrition, cover educational costs, and purchase hygiene and sanitary products.

The findings from this research report from DSD and the findings from the study of Mathebula et al. (2022) confirm the spending pattern among the Orange Farm residents, as they prioritised their basic needs through using the R350 SRD grant. It further revealed the actualisation of the short-term objective of the SRD grant to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as stipulated by the Department of Social Development (DSD).

5.6.2 Utilisation of DSD grants

The utilisation of existing grants, including the SRD grant, plays an important role in improving the living conditions of the beneficiaries, especially in meeting their immediate needs. This pattern of grant utilisation aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007), which posits that basic and physiological needs such as food, clothing, water, and shelter must be satisfied before other high-order needs can be attended to. The reports and research work on different DSD grants and the findings of this current research shed light on grant utilisation as follows.

Child Support Grant (CSG): Existing research has shown that the CSG grant beneficiaries mainly attend to expenses covering essential items such as food, groceries, clothing, and school (Neves et al., 2009; Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015). Even though the beneficiaries spend more on the essentials, some also engage in informal saving schemes and access credit markets (Neves et al., 2009).

Old Age Grant (OAG): Like every other grant, the OAG is largely directed towards household necessities, including food, utility bills, health, and school-related expenses (Tangwe & Gutura, 2013). Occasionally, some beneficiaries use their OAG grant for minor home repairs (Gutura & Tanga, 2014).

Disability Grant (DG): This grant was designed to create relief for people with disabilities, enabling them to afford essential items, such as food and the healthcare necessary to manage their health condition (Knight, Hosegood & Timæus, 2013). After meeting their basic needs, some beneficiaries apportioned part of their grant to start a small business venture (Gutura & Tanga, 2014; Neves et al., 2009).

As relayed in the various grants presented above, the grant use highlights the immediate and essential role of social grants in meeting the basic and essential needs of the grant beneficiaries. This is in alignment with the purpose of the SRD grant and

the findings of this current research showed that Orange Farm residents prioritise addressing their essential needs before contemplating other ventures such as catering for job-seeking spending, starting a business, etc.

Confirming the use of the grants for other ventures like starting a business, some respondents alluded to using a portion of the grant to start small businesses. For example, a self-employed photographer by the name of “Thando Makhubu” said he started an ice cream business in August 2020 with the 350 grant (Ramalepe, 2022). Alady named “Jabulile” said the 350 helped her to start a nail bar and studio business in 2020 (McClean, 2023). The majority of participants in Orange Farm agreed to have thought of starting a business.

Notwithstanding the desire of the individuals to diversify the use of the grant, it is worth emphasising that most respondents echoed the insufficiency of the grant for more ambitious goals like starting a business. The SRD grant, while valuable to meet the immediate needs of the people (Senona et al., 2021), is relatively small compared to other grants discussed. Existing grants are unique because they increase every year (SASSA, 2022), whereas the 350 grant is still in its infancy and is not permanent. People need money to cover basic needs. Hence, the feasibility of utilising the SRD grant for business ventures cannot be ascertained.

Moreover, high unemployment rates persist in communities such as Orange Farm for various reasons encompassing historical legacies, education and training gaps, mismatch in the labour market, and South African economic challenges (Government Communications & Information Systems, 2023). This factor confirms the challenges the beneficiaries who express interest in entrepreneurship have due to limited access to capital and the necessary education or training. By this, it is obvious that social grants are a critical source of support to the beneficiaries to address their immediate needs. However, these findings revealed the complex relationship between grants, economic empowerment, and the persistent challenges the recipients face. This suggests that the respondents have used the grant to their best ability, which answers the question of how citizens in Orange Farm chose to optimise their use of the SRD grant.

5.7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM OF the 350 SRD GRANT

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is responsible for organising and dispensing social protection grants under the oversight of the Department of Social Development (DSD) (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021). To achieve this, SASSA developed an online system for grant application, assessment, approval, and disbursement. This platform allows beneficiaries to track their application and update their information (Gronbach, Seekings & Megannon, 2022). The agency also designed a digital monitoring and evaluation system to provide real-time data and evidence to inform planning and decision-making to the DSD. This development was suggested by Kanyamuna and Phiri (2019) as an important tool to ensure the improved performance and quality delivery of grants. However, the platform has faced delays in implementation (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021).

The SASSA official from the Orange Farm branch confirmed that SASSA falls under Social Development but focuses more on grant administration. DSD on the other hand deals with other social issues at an advanced level. However, both organisations do work together when necessary. In essence, SASSA distributes social assistance grants on behalf of DSD and is under its supervision (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2021). The official also stated that no dedicated system is in place to monitor the usage of the new SRD grant. The absence of a monitoring system is received as a major flaw in the process. Hence, previous research (Neves, Samson, van Niekerk, Hlatshwayo & Du Toit, 2009; Cwayi and Kogeda, 2013; Satumba, Bayat & Mohamed, 2017) has shown that monitoring grant usage can help the government to develop more accurate policies related to grants. In agreement, Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) argue that the absence of a monitoring mechanism is disadvantageous to the grant process.

Furthermore, the official mentioned that the application system is self-service, and it is their duty to provide guidance to the applicants on how to use the system. Kanyamuna & Phiri (2019) argue that monitoring and evaluation is an important tool that helps improve the performance and quality of outcomes of current and future projects, strategies, and programmes. The Human Rights Framework supports that human rights can provide direction to the planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of social policies and social assistance interventions (Sepulveda-Carmona et al., 2012).

Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) proposed a model for controlling recipients' utilisation of social grants, which is yet to be tested. This present research is an attempt to adapt suggestions in Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) to give evidence-based data to DSD, which can be adopted by the government to continuously ascertain the adoption and usage of the grants by their beneficiaries in Orange Farm and other poor communities in South Africa.

5.8 CHALLENGES AND DISCREPANCIES IN GRANT ADOPTION

The previous sections presented the benefits of SRD, among other grants. However, it is without challenges that are either peculiar or like other social grants. In this section, we explore the various challenges faced by the R 350 SRD grant recipients and draw comparisons with other social grants. Previous research has reported common challenges associated with social grants that are experienced by the beneficiaries, including administrative hurdles, insufficient funds, pensioners' delayed payment, and grant screening.

Many applicants encountered administrative challenges during the application phase of any social grant. According to Zembe-Mkabile et al. (2015), these challenges include lacking the required identification documents, long queues at application centres, and delays in processing applications. Furthermore, they highlighted that the beneficiaries do complain about the insufficiency of the grants to cover all their needs, particularly when they have multiple financial responsibilities. Based on this, the beneficiaries often resort to borrowing from social networks to supplement the grant. Mubangizi (2014), Kelly (2013), and Knight et al. (2013) brought up the challenges associated with access to grants.

This encompasses long waiting times at payment centres/points, the need to travel long distances to the grant payment centres, mistreatment by grant officials, and susceptibility to scams. Additionally, challenges such as errors in the screening processes and low coverage among the eligible population were observed (Kelly, 2013; Knight et al., 2013). In addition to the challenges listed, there are challenges associated with the R 350 SRD grant, as identified by existing research and the current study, which are particularly noteworthy.

5.8.1 Rejection and Appeals

One of the most prevailing challenges most grant beneficiaries face is the rejection or decline of the application for various reasons. The predominant reason for the decline given by the respondents who desperately need financial support is that they have other sources of income (e.g., child support, old age, or disability grant). It is worth noting that female respondents are the most rejected from receiving the SRD grant. Unfortunately, they expressed that their appeals came back unsuccessful, leaving the beneficiaries with no financial support. This is consistent with Senona et al. (2021) who argued that when the beneficiaries' appeals process yielded no success, they were left to suffer due to lack of expected financial support. The DG beneficiaries were faced with the challenges of long queues, long waiting periods, difficult applications, and appeal processes, low coverage of the eligible population, difficult officials, suspended or cancelled grants, and extra transport costs (Kelly, 2013).

5.8.2 Payment Irregularities

Another complaint from the respondents is the problem of payment irregularities (SASSA, 2021). The R 350 grant beneficiaries commonly echoed the problem of delayed payments and occasional skipped payments. This issue disrupted the residents' financial stability and led to uncertainties about future payments, thereby adding stress and difficulty to the already challenging situation. As observed by the researcher, the delays and irregularities are due to administration lapses. Previous research by Zembe-Mkabile et al. (2015) identified similar administrative challenges, such as applicants lacking the necessary documents like birth certificates or identity documents. Furthermore, they highlighted institutional ineffectiveness, including prolonged queues (Kelly, 2013), corrupt officials who wanted bribes to process applications, and administrative office challenges resulting in errors and delays.

The findings from the previous and current research indicate that administrative challenges leading to delays and irregular payments persist and have not received proper attention. The issue of individuals not having the necessary documents to apply for the grants is a recurring issue affecting so many South African citizens with little or no education.

5.8.3 Digital System Challenge

The SRD grant was developed to be managed through a digital system, which this research gathered to have introduced new challenges. Some beneficiaries have faced technical glitches and difficulties navigating the application platform when applying for or accessing the grant. Additionally, post offices are usually overcrowded when the beneficiaries go to collect the payments. These, in a nutshell, resulted in frustration among them. Their frustration stems from their lack of control over the system responses, and not even the SASSA officials could assist as it is beyond their control.

5.8.4 Administrative Challenges

SASSA officials at the Orange Farm branch have had to deal with an influx of applications coming from applicants who do not reside in Orange Farm. They also faced the challenges of contending with agitated applicants seeking answers about their applications, declined grants, or delayed payments. The official reported threats to burn down the SASSA office due to their frustration and the emotional challenges they are dealing with.

A collective and collaborative approach is imperative to address the multifaceted challenges constructively. This approach must involve the three important parties vis a vis, the policymakers (government), grant beneficiaries, and SASSA officials. The highlighted challenges shed light on the complexities of implementing the SRD grant programme and the difficulties faced by both the beneficiaries and SASSA officials in the process. Evidently, these problems should be addressed to ensure that the grant fulfils its intended purpose of providing relief and stability to South African citizens in distress during the pandemic.

By careful analysis of the challenges as highlighted in the research, it becomes imperative that simplifying the application and payment process, along with proper education and training of citizens, is necessary. This would reduce the frustrations of the qualified individuals and the burden on the officials assisting them. Additionally, clear communication on the eligibility criteria can reduce the rejection rate and delays in the grant disbursement. Furthermore, developing a user-friendly digital infrastructure can improve the recipients' efficiency and access to the SRD grant system. Finally, capacity building on the part of the SASSA official and the provision of tools to help them manage applicants' frustration can enhance their ability to assist

the beneficiaries when needed. The Human Rights Framework was useful, as it allowed the participants to give feedback on the SRD grant. This in a way involves them in the evaluation process of a project (in this case the SRD grant) that directly affects them (Huesca, 2003).

5.9 EXTENSION AND INCREMENT OF SRD GRANT

The issue of increasing as well as extending the SRD grant was one of the factors that came up during the research. This has been a recurring concern among grant beneficiaries. This sentiment was echoed in both this research regarding SRD and existing research on social grants. The respondents/beneficiaries of the R 350 SRD overwhelmingly favoured an increase of the grant due to its insufficiency in meeting their needs considering the rising cost of living. They proposed that the increase ranged from R 400 to R 1 500. This consensus was also observed in previous research where beneficiaries advocate for increasing the social grant to match every changing cost of living (Senona et al, 2021). Similarly, the value of the Child Support Grant (CSG) was deemed insufficient, especially for beneficiaries with large households (Zembe-Mkabile et al, 2015; Xaba, 2016; Patel & Ross, 2022).

Moreover, according to Pienaar (2021), the Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG) discussion has gained traction, and the implementation could reduce inequality, poverty, and unemployment. In addition, a civil society organisation suggested setting the UBIG at an approximate amount of R 1 335 to cover the various basic needs beyond food (Mathebula et.al, 2022). Moreover, as argued by Marais (2018) and Osborne (2022), the grants are seen to enhance financial independence, stimulate economic growth, and promote gender equality by empowering women. Grant extension was not the factor that came up much and was not strongly favoured by the respondents. Those who were in favour of the extension suggested extending the duration of the R 350 SRD grant on a permanent basis. The preference might need a more comprehensive approach to be modelled, like the Universal Basic Grant (UBIG) to provide to vulnerable populations (Pienaar et. al., 2021).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a conclusion of the research study. The study aimed to investigate the adoption and usage of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in the Orange Farm community as a case study. Semi-structured interviews were useful in obtaining the key research findings, which helped achieve the study's aim and answer the research questions. This research was motivated by a gap in the literature regarding the recipients' adoption and the usage of the SRD grant in the Orange Farm community. However, this study discovered that the recipients of the SRD grant within Orange Farm used their grants for other things like paying off debts, school-related fees, job searching, etc.

The grant was mainly used to cover immediate needs, particularly food and toiletries. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous research on pre-existing grants (Old Age Grant, Child Support Grant, and Disability Grant). The study will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on the COVID-19 pandemic in disadvantaged township communities. Moreover, this study will add to existing research focusing on the adoption and usage of social grants in South Africa and beyond. The study also has limitations. The next paragraphs will discuss the limitations of the current research and provide recommendations for future research.

6.2 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

6.2.1 Limitations of the current research

Overall, a sample of thirty-one respondents (30 beneficiaries and 1 SASSA official) were recruited, and just one SASSA official is a limitation as there was no balanced view from the SASSA officials experience in administering the grant. Therefore, further research should be conducted and recruit more than one SASSA official and possibly from different departments dealing with the SRD grant.

Some of the interviews were conducted on WhatsApp due to the challenges of respondents not being able to make it to the selected interview venue for various reasons such as lack of transport fares, far distance to the venue, and an inadequate internet facility to use meeting applications (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.). This was because the research was too ambitious to ensure all parts of the community are

represented. To mitigate this, it is advisable that for future research, the researcher should limit the recruitment of participants to a manageable area considering the financial conditions of the people.

This research was conducted on a national SRD grant in the Orange Farm community. This is a limitation as the findings from one community in South Africa is not rich enough to represent the state of things on a national level.

6.2.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Further Research:

This research was based on the short-term impact of the SRD grant in line with the DSD stipulations. To understand a more holistic impact of the grant, further research should be conducted to explore the long-term socio-economic effects of the SRD grant on the beneficiaries and their communities. Assessment should be done to ascertain whether grants contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and how they influence the self-sufficiency of the beneficiaries over extended periods.

An investigation should be done to establish regional disparities in grant utilisation patterns. Furthermore, analyses should be done on how demography and local economic conditions affect the adoption rate.

Research should be conducted to ascertain the in-depth impact of SRD and/or other social grants on education, healthcare, and employment outcomes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the grants' influence on the lives of the beneficiaries.

Investigation should be conducted on the issue of grant-related fraud to understand the scope and impact of this. The research should focus on strategy development to prevent fraud.

Administration:

The grant application process should be revised and streamlined to reduce administrative bottlenecks.

Invest in developing data management systems to monitor grant utilisation, detect irregularities, and ensure effective grant allocation and disbursement.

Improvement should be made regarding grant administration to enhance transparency. Provide clear and easily accessible information about the eligibility criteria, application procedures, and timelines.

Grant Monitoring System

- Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) recommended that grants would be more effective if they were monitored through a system requiring outlets to access beneficiaries' information at the time of the purchase.
- This system would allow the beneficiary to purchase items depending on the money available and the allowed items that are recommended to be purchased.
- This system would mean that when a beneficiary purchases items that are not recommended by SASSA or if they have inadequate funds, their transaction would simply be declined.
- The beneficiary would use a card or a cell phone for the cashiers to access their SASSA information.
- This system sounds like a good idea despite not being implemented.
- However, putting terms and conditions into how beneficiaries use their grant might be viewed as a violation of human rights and that the list of goods proposed by SASSA might not be useful to every beneficiary.
- Therefore, it would be ideal if such a system would be assessed as a pilot in order to determine its effectiveness to the beneficiary. Another solution could be to allow beneficiaries to substitute the recommended essential item with another essential item.

Policy-making:

- The grant should be reviewed and adjustments made where necessary periodically to align them with the current cost of living.
- Introduce gender-sensitive policies and initiatives within the grant programmes to ensure there is no gender disparity.
- Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the beneficiaries on the responsible utilisation of the grant.
- Beneficiaries of social grants should be consulted when developing grant policies. Seeking their input on the design and implementation ensures that the grant initiative meets the real needs of people.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This study was embarked upon to establish three objectives: (1) to understand how individuals in this community have used the grants over the last three years, (2) to better understand the monitoring of specific grant adoption rates, and (3) to determine if there is a balance between the DSD's projected usage of the SRD grant and the individuals' actual usage of it. To achieve these objectives, 31 respondents, comprising 30 Orange Farm residents and one SASSA official, were interviewed.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a multitude of challenges for the Orange Farm community members and the world beyond. This serves as the backdrop against which this current research was conducted. The pandemic caused various challenges, including financial and food insecurities, health-related problems, unemployment, and persistent poverty. The Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant programme was established to aid the suffering and vulnerable citizens of South Africa.

To understand properly how individuals in the Orange Farm community used their SRD grant over the last three years, this research uncovered the intricate factors that influenced the grant utilisation pattern. The observed pattern revealed that while social protection grants are designed to provide financial support to those in need during difficult times, their utilisation is multifaceted and influenced by several key factors.

The respondents shared their experiences of the SRD grant. Among the challenges shared is the grant's inadequacy to meet all their needs, difficulties in accessing additional support, no access, or delays in receiving the grant, the ineligibility to apply due to multiple sources of income, especially for the female applicants, etc. A holistic view of these findings emphasises the need for a more comprehensive approach to social protection.

Amidst the challenges, the respondents relied on the grant for their essential needs, with a primary focus on food and toiletries, signalling the benefits they derived from it. Furthermore, there was a favourable view on extending the R 350 SRD grant among the beneficiaries. This is because the grant plays a vital role in helping them meet their basic needs, especially during a difficult time such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research aimed to understand the monitoring of specific aspects of the grant adoption rates within the Orange Farm community. The adoption rate and utilisation

were examined, and the findings shed light on the dynamics governing social grant adoption.

Recommendations were made in response to the challenges by the respondents towards the ongoing provision of grants and the budget allocation. While there was extensive support for extending and increasing the R 350 SRD grant, a recommendation suggested redirecting the budget towards food parcels and food vouchers. These suggestions were made citing ease of distribution.

The third objective of this research was to determine if there is a balance between the projected usage of the SRD grant stipulated by the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the individual's actual usage of it. The findings confirm that the discrepancies between the applicant's age bracket, gender, and actual usage were insignificant. Hence, it can be concluded that the actual use matches the projected usage.

But beyond the challenges of grant utilisation, concerns were raised about the transparency and monitoring of the grant provision. The recommendations made by Cwayi & Kogeda (2013) suggest that the respondents also echoed the monitoring system because such a system could enable the beneficiaries to make informed decisions based on their grant money.

In all, this research emphasises the intricate nature of the grant utilisation patterns, the complicated challenges faced by the beneficiaries, and the yearning and recommendations from the residents of the Orange Farm community. The findings offer valuable insight and perspectives for policymakers and researchers. It pointed out the need for comprehensive and adaptable ways of managing the social protection programmes that are aimed at addressing the evolving needs of the grant beneficiaries. Furthermore, the findings would be fundamental in ensuring transparency in the monitoring system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Orange Farm Community Interview Questions

Question 1: Demographic information

1.1 Gender:

1.2 Age:

1.3 Education level:

1.4 Have you ever been employed?

1.5 How many are you in your household including yourself?

1.6 How many people are breadwinners in your household?

1.7 Besides you earning the 350 grants, is there anyone in your household earning any type of grant (name them)?

Question 2

What was the situation like in your household at the beginning of the pandemic?

Question 3

How did you cope with the situation?

Question 4

When did you start receiving the 350 grant and which payment method do you use?

Question 5

Were there challenges you faced in receiving the 350 grants? (If so, mention them).

Question 6

What do you mainly use your 350 grant for?

Question 7

Would you prefer the 350 grant to be further extended or increased (by how much and why)?

Question 8

What is your opinion on food parcels?

Question 9

Have you ever thought of starting a business or a side hustle, if yes, what kind?

Question 10

What was an obstacle you faced in starting your business?

Question 11

Do you have any suggestions on what you want the government to do?

Appendix B:

South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Representative Interview Questions

Question 1

What is the adoption rate of the SRD grant by people living in Orange Farm?

- Males' vs females; Young adults vs adults

Question 2

How is the adoption rate of the 350 SRD social grants monitored?

Question 3

What major setbacks have mainly affected the SASSA office in the Orange Farm branch in terms of the 350 grant?

Question 4

What Challenges are mainly reported by the 350 SRD grant beneficiaries in Orange Farm?

Question 5

How does the SASSA Orange Farm branch ensure accountability to the beneficiaries?

Question 6

What is the relationship between the SASSA and the Department of Social Development?

Question 7

From the DSD's perspective what is the expected usage of the SRD grant by beneficiaries?

Question 8

Was there a food parcel programme implemented in Orange Farm during the pandemic?

Question 9

Which option is better between further extension of the 350 grant or increasing the amount of the grant in question?

Question 10

What would you suggest in terms of improving the 350 SRD programme?