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Surviving on the older person's grant: the experiences of the elderly in an urban context of Kwa-thema and Tsakane in Ekurhuleni, South Africa

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2022

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/34151

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ABSTRACT

Globally the elderly population is recognized as amongst the poorest and vulnerable group. Older persons in South Africa are particularly vulnerable because of the historical inequalities of the apartheid era, that denied them good education and skills development. This led to high unemployment rates and dependency on the State Older Person's Grant. The introduction of the Older Person's Grant was one of the State's ways of reducing poverty in the elderly. There seem to be no concrete agreements in literature, with some studies indicating that the social grants have made a positive impact in the lives of their recipients, whilst others have depicted a different picture especially concerning the socio-economic realities of the elderly. Therefore, it is against this background that face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 elderly participants receiving the Older Person's Grant. Older persons who are 60 years and above, both females and males, residing in Ekurhuleni, Kwa-thema and Tsakane. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the potential participants for the study. The study was qualitative in nature and it employed a case study as a research design, and it was guided by the sustainable livelihood approach. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. The most prevalent findings emerging from the thematic analysis of the discussions is that the Older Person's Grant is the main household income for most of the participants interviewed, thus partly contributing to poverty reduction in the elderly. Though perceived to be valuable as a source of income, the findings revealed that the grant is insufficient in meeting the needs of the elderly. The researcher anticipates that this study may contribute to the growing knowledge regarding the older person's grant and its impact on the lives of the elderly.

Key words: Older Person's Grant, Older persons, Experiences, Urban context, Ekurhuleni, South Africa