



## **Intra-Household Decision-Making Dynamics in the Use of Social Grants in the Tyutyu Village, South Africa**

**Nigel Makosa**

Department of Social Work, University of Fort Hare, South Africa  
Email: [nigelmakosa8@gmail.com](mailto:nigelmakosa8@gmail.com)

**Pius Tanga**

Department of Social Work, University of Fort Hare, South Africa  
Email: [ptanga@ufh.ac.za](mailto:ptanga@ufh.ac.za)

**Gabriel Ekobi\***

Department of Social Work, University of Fort Hare, South Africa  
Email: [gabriel.ekobi@gmail.com](mailto:gabriel.ekobi@gmail.com)/[gekobi@ufh.ac.za](mailto:gekobi@ufh.ac.za)

*\*Corresponding author*

### **Abstract**

Social grant is used as a mechanism to fight poverty and income inequality in South Africa in general and Tyutyu. However, only few research has been done on intra-household decision-making dynamics in the usage Child Support and Foster Care grants. This paper explores the intra-household decision-making dynamics in the use of Child Support and Foster Care grants in Tyutyu community. A qualitative research method was employed, and 30 participants were selected for the study. In-depth interview guide was used to collect data and analysed thematically. The themes identified are decision-making in the use of social grants, role played by beneficiaries in determining the use of grants and challenges faced when deciding in the use of these grants. It was found that beneficiaries (children) are not playing role in the decision-making in the use of these social grants. Mothers and guardians make decisions without consulting the beneficiaries. Also, challenges such as who to oversee the money was causing tension in the households. The paper concludes that children are excluded by the guardians and mothers which resulted to tension, frustration, and poor relationship within the household. Measures should be implemented to mitigate the challenges hindering intra-household decision-making and use of social grants.

**Key words:** Decision-Making, Dynamics, Intra-Household, Poverty, Social Grant, Social Security

### **Introduction**

Social grant is instrumental in improving the standard of living of the vulnerable and the poor in the world at large, and in the developing countries (Bhorat, 2021; World Bank, 2022). Since the inception of democracy, South African government has used social grants as a long-term agenda to address poverty, income inequality and to improve the wellbeing of households. Gutura and Tanga (2014) corroborate and

states that among the poverty alleviation measures adopted by the South African government, social assistance (social grants) act as a safety net for the vulnerable and the poor that are unable to provide for themselves. The number of beneficiaries of social grant has increased from about 17.2 million in 2018 to 18.6 million in March 2023 beneficiaries (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2022; Department of Social Development (DSD), 2023). These social grants are Child Support grant (CSG), Old Age grant (OAG), Foster Care grant (FCG), and Disability grant (DG) among others., The South Africa government enacted legal and policy frameworks such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the White Paper of Social Affairs to strengthen the social security systems (social grants). Section 27(1) (c) of the Constitution provides for the right to social security for every South African citizen. The South African Social Security Agency Act (SASSA) was mandated to administer and pay social grants to beneficiaries. The Social Assistance Act of 2004 regulates the social assistance payments and other relief measures associated to social security (Reddy and Sokomoni, 2008; DSD, 2023). The White Paper of Social Welfare (1997) was introduced to strengthened social security for every South African citizen.

Studies have shown that intra-household decision-making dynamics is crucial in managing social grant money because it provides the platform where the household works towards goals that all family members have in common (DSD, 2019; Bhorat, 2021). These social grants are provided within the context of a family or household in most cases where decisions must be made pertaining to allocation, distribution, and usage (World Bank, 2022). Booyesen (2014) corroborates and point that with regards to issues such as money, health, welfare and well-being, families make decisions every day. There are many decisions that are arrived at in the family and such decisions have a bearing on the welfare of everyone within that family or household. Intra-household decision-making is the negotiations that occur between members of a household to arrive at resolutions regarding the household unit, like whether to spend or save social grant money (DSD, 2019; World Bank, 2022).

Despite an increase in the coverage of social grants and well-developed social security system, poverty incidence among South Africa's households remains high (Stats SA, 2022). Besides, poverty is disproportionately dominant among subgroup of population that is vulnerable such as children and female headed households (Zimbalist, 2017; Stats SA, 2022). In addition, there is only few research done on the intra-household decision-making dynamics in the usage of social grants (Child Support and Foster Care grants) (Mitra, 2005; Zimbalist, 2017). Therefore, the paper through the larger study intends to fill this gap. Furthermore, it might provide government and other stakeholders involved with information they can use in formulating and implementing measures that might effectively improve intra-household decision-making dynamics in the usage of social grants. This paper explores the intra-household decision-making dynamics in the use of social grants (Child Support and Foster Care grants) in Tyutyu community. The unitary model which supported the study is explained in the section that follows.

### **Theoretical framework: Unitary model**

The theoretical framework that underpinned this study is the unitary model (Saelens, 2019). The rationale for using the unitary model was to demonstrate that when utilising the social grant money, households behave as single decision-makers, irrespective of the number of household members. Nepal et al. (2005) state that the unitary model assumes that a household, even if it consists of different individuals, acts as a single decision-making unit. However, this is not always the case that everyone in the household has the same preferences. Differences in preferences do exist among members of the household across members (Saelens, 2019). Household members carry out household decisions by engaging in various activities. Decisions to participate in different activities as well as who participates are the results of negotiation of role, task, and time allocation within the households. These decisions are derived from the pursuit of activities to satisfy household needs.

The household is viewed as an institution that controls everything that happens within it as a single unit, for example daily time and task allocations to household members (Nepal *et al.*, 2005). Even though the theory has enjoyed prominence in the literature, it has been increasingly criticized for the limiting and somewhat unrealistic assumptions upon which it rests, most notably the requirement that a collection of individuals reach agreement over these key decisions, either through shared preferences, which allows a consensus to be reached, or through a benevolent dictator within the household making the key decisions to which everyone else happily accedes (Nepal *et al.*, 2005; Saelens, 2019). Having discussed the theoretical underpinnings, the literature review is presented in the next section.

### Literature Review

The driving objective of social grants in any country is to ease the negative impact of inequality and poverty to promote socio-economic growth. Social grant depends on the intra-household decision-making dynamics in the use of the social grant money (Shibata *et al.*, 2020). Booysen (2013), Edmonds et al. (2002) and Shibata et al. (2020) asserts that decisions are made within the household for example on household expenditure, savings, and investment. Ashraf (2009) conducted a study on spousal control and intra-household decision-making in the Philippines. The outcomes indicate that men's decisions are not stable and are influenced by the conditions whilst women stuck to their decisions. Ashraf further state that household decisions pertaining to savings and investment hugely depends on the distribution of the decision-making power between spouses. If the power is tilted towards women there is a bigger probability of greater savings and settling debts (Ashraf, 2009; World Bank, 2022). Yong Lyn (2021) study conducted in China found that that both wives and husbands have a significant influence on joint decisions. Wives as joint decisions makers show more patience than husbands, which provides complementary evidence of misaligned time preferences between spouses.

Johannsmeier (2007) study on intra-household decision-making in terms of the use of Disability grants and Old Age Pension in the KwaZulu Natal Province (South Africa) concluded that the use of these grants is influenced by the composition of the household. Some beneficiaries of these grants are the primary decision-makers, and some are unable to make any decisions because of advanced age and the nature of their disabilities. Johannsmeier further state that decision on the use of the grant money was reached on collectively with other members of the family. This usually meant talking to family members, or giving an agreed portion of the money to another family member who would then decide what to do with that contribution (United Nations, 2020). Ambler (2011) conducted a study on the Impact of the South African Pension on Household Decision Making. The study used the 2008 South African National Income Dynamics Survey to examine how the increase in income provided by the South African pension affects decision-making in the household. The study found that eligible females 16% are primary decision-makers for expenditures. The study also found that the increase in decision-making power provides a channel through which the pension results in positive impacts for households (Duflo, 2003; Ogolla *et al.*, 2022).

South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) carried out a study on intra-household decision making in the use of social security grants. The study was mainly focusing on the grant use, improvements in the accessibility of grants and the misuse of grants. The study found that decision making concerning the use of grants mainly relies on the primary caregiver (usually a woman) decided alone or took the controlling decision on use. The women reveal that they take the ultimate decision, given that the grant is part of the overall household income, they try to consult with their children and tell their husband of the planned decisions. The study also yields that the age of the child determines whether he or she can be consulted or not. More so the study yields that there is some evidence that teenagers at times negotiate with their mothers over grant use. A few women also indicated that they consult with their mothers regarding use (SASSA, 2010; UNICEF, 2010; 2021). Even though authors such as Ashraf, Ogolla et al., and Yong Lyn contributions on intra-household decision dynamics on the use of

social grants can be commended, however, their studies focused on Disability, Old Age Pension, and impact of social grants. Ignoring Child Support and Foster Care grants. Mitra (2005) confirms that there is lack of research on intra-household distribution of grant income (Child Support and Foster Care grants).

## **Research methodology**

### **Study area**

The larger study was conducted in Tyutyu village, a small rural community situated approximately four (4) km from the King Williams Town Central Business District (CBD) in the Eastern Cape Province. King Williams Town lies on the banks of the Buffalo River, about 389 metres above the sea at the foot of the Amatola Mountains, West of East London and has road and rail connections with East London (Amathole District Municipality, 2020). The Tyutyu village was selected because many households rely on social grant for survival.

### **Research approach and design**

This study employed a qualitative research approach to obtain the desired results. Adopting a qualitative research approach provide the platform to understand human experience to reveal both the processes by which people construct meaning about their worlds and to report what those meanings are (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research approach was found useful for this study because it emphasises the importance of the social context for understanding the social world. In this case, the method helped to explore the intra-household decision-making dynamics on the use of Child Support and Foster Care grants by looking at the meanings that they gave in the context in which it appeared. In terms of research design, this paper utilised an exploratory research design owing to the fact there was little or no past information in relation to intra-household decision-making dynamics and the use of social grants. Employing the design provided the opportunity for more precise investigation of the research objective. (Creswell, 2014).

### **Sample size and sampling method**

A sample size of 30 participants were selected for this study. They comprised of 15 heads of households and 14 children in the age range 13-18 years benefiting from the Child Support and Foster Care grants in Tyutyu village. One official from the DSD also took part in the study. Purposive sampling was used in recruiting the participants. Purposive sampling as a method based entirely on the judgement of the researcher to choose samples that contain the most relevant characteristic or typical attributes of the population (Creswell, 2014). The official from the DSD was selected because the work closely with the beneficiaries of social grants.

### **Data collection and analysis**

An in-depth interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was used to collect data from the participants including the official. The interview guide was designed in such a way as to produce responses on intra-household decision-making dynamics on the use of social grants. In relation to analysis, the data obtained from the participants were transcribed and analysed thematically. Thematic analysis includes repeated reading of field notes, listening to, transcribing, and translating of recorded data from the participants. The translated data were typed, organized, sorted, and coded into meaningful units.

### **Ethical considerations**

Satisfactory measures were taken to maintain ethical standards at every phase of the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (REC-270710-028-RA level 01). Informed consent was assured by ensuring that the reasons and the contents of the study were explained to the participants prior to their participation. The process of informed consent was done to ensure that

participants have adequate understanding of what the study entails. The participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and they were at liberty to withdraw from the research process at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that the information revealed by participants during data collection will not be disclosed to others.

### Results and discussion

In this section, the results and discussion of intra-household decision-making dynamics in the use of social grants are presented. The themes identified are decision-making on the use of Child Support and Foster Care grants and the role played by beneficiaries in determining the use of social grants. Also, a theme that emerged was challenges faced when deciding on the use of grants. The findings of the study are presented according to the themes.

#### Theme 1: The role played by beneficiaries of Child Support and Foster Care grants in determining their use.

Most of the beneficiaries who participated in the study reported that they do not play a role in terms of decision-making in the usage of the Child Support and Foster Care grants. The participants had this to say in the following excerpts:

One of the participants expressed that:

*“I do not take part in decision-making pertaining to the use of the grant money, although I am the one entitled to benefit from it. In fact, I do not remember getting consulted on any single occasion ever since I started receiving the grant money when I was 13 years and now, I am 17 years old.”*

Another participant mentioned:

*“My mother sometimes asks me what I want her to do with the grant money for me, but however she has the ultimate say in deciding as whether what I want is the best for me or not. So, in other words, there is no independent decision-making for me there and in fact decision-making is my mom’s province and consulting me is just a formality”.*

Other participants said:

*“I am just 14 years old, my guardian said as a girl I am supposed to be part of any decision-making as far as the money is concern. Any informed and objective decision in the usage of the Foster Care grant comes from her. The decision to buy food, clothes, pay health care comes from her”.*

According to the participants above, they do not play any role in the decision-making in the use of these social grants although they are entitled to benefit from it. The participants went further to reveal that their guardians in the household from where they come from make decisions on behalf of them in terms of the usage of these grants. They further indicated that their mothers and other female guardians were the decision-makers on the issues of buying food and clothes. According to the guardians, female children are not part of the decision-making process of the grants which leads to discrimination. Children are excluded from the decision-making dynamics in the household because the decision makers are of the opinion that

children neither have the capacity nor the power to influence the decision-making process in the household. This is because adult children have wildly different preferences compared to their parents. Children most particular the girls are excluded from decision-making despite the benefits that come with encompassing them in the decision-making process. Some of the benefits of involving children in decision-making include that it becomes part of their growing up to the extent that they can identify problems in their lives and come up with appropriate decisions to address such problems which boosts their self-esteem and confidence. Children's participation in the decision-making will not only be good for them and their households, but also rather cultivate the culture of participation, which is crucial for development in their communities.

Being excluded from the intra-household decision-making means that children are deterred from experiencing it at a tender age, which is critical for personal and socio-economic growth. Excluding children from the decision-making on the use of social grant will make them feel they are being discriminated against and that they are unequal and are of lower social status than adults. This therefore restrains the children from grabbing available opportunities to partake in the decision-making processes particularly in the household. Not including the children in the intra-household decision-making may result in outcomes that may not be to the satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the Child Support and Foster Care grants because they have their own preferences. This finding is in line with Doss (2011) who affirm that the intra-household and resource allocation in developing countries concluded that excluding the adult children may have outcomes that may not satisfy them. However, the finding is not consistent with UNICEF (2010; 2021) study which reveal that households and communities can be labelled progressive and developed when they ensure that all their members, no matter their age are involved in decision-making and are involved in trying to shape lives of dignity for all. Also, the finding is not in consonant with the theoretical framework (unitary model) used in the study. According to the unitary model, households act as a single unit in taking decision on the use of social grants (Nepal *et al.*, 2005; Saelens, 2019). However, this not the case because the beneficiaries (children) do not play a role in the decision-making in the usage of these grants.

## Theme 2: Decision-making

All the head of the household revealed they make decisions on behalf of the beneficiaries in the use of the social grants. They make the decisions without consulting the beneficiaries (children). Below are the responses from the participants:

*"I make the decision as the mother because my daughter is immature. Besides, I do not consult anyone concerning the use of the grant money".*

*"As a mother, I make decisions on how to use the money, although sometimes I consult my mother (grandmother of the child) or elders in my family"*

*"As a guardian I make the decision because they can misuse the money since they are young. These children now days, you do not trust them".*

According to these participants, they make decision (mothers) because their daughters are not to be trusted which results to dissatisfaction of the beneficiaries'. However, according to the participants, they sometimes consult their mothers (grandmothers) or elders for good decisions. Excluding children from the decision, making process in the household has a negative impact on the relationship between the children, mothers, and female guardians. This results in lack of understanding and trust, lack of cooperation,

misconceptions, and prejudices and ignorance of each other's interests and way of doing things. Negative, preconceived ideas about the abilities of children and young people to make informed and objective decisions deter many adults from consulting with them. Decision-making in the hands of women there is a huge likelihood of having outcomes that benefits the entire household in comparison to a situation when men are in control and are the sole decision makers. The finding is consistent with SASSA's (2010) and UNICEF (2021) which state that many parents and guardians have out-dated notions, or media misinformation, that portrays young people as transient, chaotic, and unreliable. SASSA and UNICEF report further found that social grants, especially the Child Support and Foster Care Grants mainly relies on the primary caregiver (usually a woman) decided alone or took the controlling decision on use. Many primary caregivers justified responses on their sole control of the use based on their superior knowledge of the child's and household needs. In addition, Doss (2011) and Shibata et al. (2020) found that the increased role of women in decision making of social grant usage will impact positively on the development outcomes of households for example on the health and education of children and the general wellbeing of the entire household.

Some of the participants reported that although their guardians felt they were young and immature to make decisions on their own in terms of the usage of the grant money they were not happy with the fact that the money that was entitled for them was being used without them being consulted. Some went to the extremes and posited that the money was even being used without their consent. One of the participants revealed that:

*"My guardian does not consult me in the decision-making process in the usage of the grant money and I feel this is a mere pretext on the part of the guardian to abuse the grant money."*

Another participant reported:

*"I am generally not happy with the fact that my guardian makes decisions in using the grant money without also involving me the intended beneficiary in the decision-making process. How can my guardian claim that she knows what is best for me when all she does is to blow up the money in nightclubs. Alcohol is not what is best for me definitely".*

The excerpts from above indicated that they are not happy with their guardians' making decisions on their behalf on the usage of the social grants. They stated that guardians claimed the know what is best for them. According to them, it is a pretext to abuse the grant the money which leads to frustration. Decision-making process should not be dominated by any single person, but rather involve beneficiaries and guardians in the household. There is a need for the beneficiaries to be consulted when decisions are being made so that they can fully benefit from these grants, which are entitled to them. If the South African government just provides grant money and no, follow up mechanisms and programs it as good as throwing the money down the drain because the money ends up being used for the unintended purposes for instances as highlighted by the participants that some guardians end up using the money to sponsor their drinking sprees.

Hence, it is difficult to achieve the intended and long-term objectives of these grants, which are to improve the lives of the vulnerable and marginalized children, thus neglected children, as well as children

whose guardians lack the means to support them. According to De Villiers and Giesse (2008) and DSD (2023), there are chances that the rights of the children in accessing either the Child Support or Foster Care grant may be downtrodden, yet the grants are meant for them. De Villiers and Giesse and DSD further uphold that clearly many of the grant beneficiaries are not residing with either of their biological parents and many are brought up in households in which they are separate from their siblings. Thus, in this scenario, there is a likelihood that the caregiver in the family that the child is staying may use the social grants for whatever needs that may be viewed as pressing more especially in cases where the family is poor. Hence, the grant money will be used for other purposes other than the support of the child who is the intended recipient. In addition, this finding is not in line with the unitary model, which postulates that the household acts as a single decision-making unit even though it is composed of different individuals. In other words, the household is the primary decision-making unit and the decision to participate in the decision-making process is the result of the negotiation of role, task, and time allocation. These decisions are derived from the pursuit of activities to satisfy the household needs (Nepal *et al.*, 2005; Saelens, 2019). This is not the case because the children who are meant to be the beneficiaries are not consulted in the usage of these grant. However, a few participants reported that decisions in the use of these grants are made jointly. One of the participants had this to say:

*“Me, my husband and the kids jointly make decisions on the use of the money”.*

According to the data above, decisions in the use of these social grants are jointly made which improves transparency in the use of the money. Making decision together as a family lead to strong financial knowledge and skills. These skills and knowledge allow family to weigh options and informed choices for their financial situation such as deciding on how to spend and when to save. This finding is consonant with the unitary model which viewed household as a single unit, which make decision as one on the use of the social grant money which improves poverty incidence and wellbeing (Nepal *et al.*, 2005; Saelens, 2019). Also, the finding confirmed Yong Lyn (2021) study which found that in China found both wives and husbands have a significant influence on joint decisions on the use of social grants.

In addition, all the participants including the official of the DSD reported that outside the household or the family, many factors influence the decisions on the use of the social grants. Among them are the lifestyle and the prices of the goods among others. Participants reveal the following:

*“I think the only influence is the way in which other people spend the money like buying cares. However, that has not influenced my decision-making on the use of the grants”.*

The except from the participants show that besides the way that other beneficiaries influence them to spend the money, there are no other factors that influence their decisions. However, a few participants mentioned that it has not.

*“There is nothing from outside that can influence our decisions when spending the money”.*

### **THEME 3: Challenges faced when deciding on the use of grants.**

All the participants including the official from the DSD mentioned that challenges sometimes erupt in the households regarding the use of the social grants which usually results to family tensions. Participants shared their views:

*“The problem of who to oversee the money is the one that has engulfed many beneficiaries. Every month when the grant money comes through there is stress and tension in the household as family members hope that they can get a share of the money so that they can use it for their own needs”.*

*“When it comes to make decisions on the use of the grant money there is always conflict between my guardian and I as my guardian rushes to make decisions (spending on beer) without asking me what I need as the rightful person who is entitled to the money. This tension has led to a strained relationship between me and my guardian”.*

As explained by these participants there are challenges in deciding on the use of Child Support and Foster Care grants. The participants revealed the challenge of who to oversee the money was causing tension in the households. This shows that power in decision-making is a serious problem in the spending of the social grants. The participants went on to say that every month when the money is received tension and stress engulfed the household concerning decision-making on the use of the money. Conflicts, mainly emanates from the households who make decisions to use the grant money in a way the beneficiaries feel is inappropriate and unsatisfactory. Such decisions include, for instance guardians deciding to use the money for alcohol and so on. Beneficiaries of the Child Support and Foster Care grants are then affected by such decision, which leads to conflicts and tension in the family and households particularly between the guardians and the beneficiaries. Deciding on the use of the grants (Foster Care and Child Support grants) is not an easy endeavour given that the money is just entitled to an individual, but due to poverty in some households, it ends up being stretched to meet the needs of all family members which often result to conflict. The fact that the grant money is little since it is meant for the wellbeing and nourishment of one child beneficiary is a source of challenge when it comes to deciding on their use. This becomes a problem because most households where beneficiaries of either the Child Support and or the Foster Care grant reside are in most cases riddled with poverty hence, there is partial and, in most cases, rely on the social grant as a source of livelihood and survival for the entire household or family. Most of the members of families in this situation, according to the beneficiary of the grant money in this study look forward to the grant money to have their own personal and individual needs met. This becomes a source of challenges because the grant money despite being meant for the nourishment and the welfare betterment of an individual child it is also a little amount. That is guardians become torn on making decisions to satisfy the individual needs of each member of the household and the entirety of the household. This therefore culminates in challenges and tension in the household as some members may feel that their needs are not met. This finding is in line with World Bank (2022) report which reveal that who to oversee the social grants money is a big challenge facing most households. This has resulted to poor relationship and conflict within the households. However, the finding is not consistent with the unitary model, which state that the family acts as a single decision-making unit even though it is composed of different individuals (Nepal *et al.*, 2005; Saelens, 2019). This is not the case because challenges such as who oversee these grant money result to tension and poor relationship in the household.

Nevertheless, a few of the beneficiary indicated that there were no challenges of any nature in making decisions in using the grant money. One of the participants had this to say:

*“There are no challenges because my mum just buys for me what I want, and I am happy with that. In the household, it is just my mother and me. Maybe that is why we do not have any challenges”.*

### **Conclusion**

Intra-household decision-making dynamics is of paramount importance in the use of social grants (Child Support and Foster Care grants) in South Africa at large and Tyutyu community. The study shows that beneficiaries (children) are not playing any role in the decision-making in the use of these social grants although they are entitled to benefit from it. Children are excluded by the guardians and mothers because they do not have the capacity nor the power to influence the decision-making processes in the household. Mothers and guardians make decisions without consulting the beneficiaries because they considered their daughters immature and young which results to dissatisfaction. Also, challenges such as who to oversee the money was causing tension in the households. This is mainly because the preferences of the children and those of the parents or guardians are wildly different.

### **Recommendations**

The research yielded that there are cases of heads of households who are entrusted with the decision-making mandate in terms of the usage of the grant money and they end up using it for other purposes like alcohol. There is a need for outreach programmes of the SASSA to teach and educate heads of households, parents and guardians who live with beneficiaries of these grants through workshop, radio, and social workers about the essence of the grant money and what are its intended purposes. This will ensure that the grant money serves its intended purpose, and that government money is not just thrown into the drain.

Secondly, children most particularly the girls are excluded from the decision-making processes compared to boys whose opinion and contributions are valued best. Therefore, it is recommended that the girl child should be empowered as this will allow them to have a say in terms of decision-making in their households and societies in general. This can be done through education. The mothers should also be empowered through occupational training and life skills. Occupational training and life skills could enable these women to generate their own income to supplement the social grants money. This will permit them to be able to protect and care for their children and bring them up properly.

Lastly, the research has yielded that excluding the beneficiaries of the Child Support and Foster Care grants from the decision-making processes is likely to cause some challenges in the household. The study therefore recommended that guardians or parents of the beneficiaries of these grants should make it a point that they include the children in the decision-making dynamics. However, they should be an age restriction in terms of the children’s beneficiaries who can be involved in the decision-making since some of the children are too young and immature to make any meaningful decision. Therefore, the children in the age group 16 years to 18 years should be part in the decision on the use of social grants. Hence, SASSA and other stakeholders involved should make it a top priority to ensure that guardians and parents have this knowledge and understands the significance of including children in the decision-making process.

### **Research implications**

The implication of the findings is that social grants are associated with positive effects on poverty and inequality and should continue to be used as an instrument to reduce poverty incidence and inequality in households in South Africa and Tyutyu. Besides, social grants support to beneficiaries (children) most

especially females should be increased to reduce high level of female poverty and income inequality. Moreover, children aged 16 to 18 years inclusion in the decision-making processes in the use of the social grants will contribute significantly to reduce inequality. Therefore, a study of this nature might assist the government most importantly, the Department of Social Development to design effective legal and policy frameworks which will include the decision-making of the beneficiaries (children).

### Suggestions for further studies

There is need for further studies on the adequacy of the grant money to cater for the needs of households since they do not serve individuals only due to unemployment and poverty. It is also pertinent that further research also investigate how inter-generational dynamics also affects the decision-making processes. Extended family's role in decision-making in the nuclear family should also be understood because all these have an impact on social policy. Furthermore, research should be done on marriage institutions in South Africa because it is unplanned pregnancies and divorce that children end up having no one with means to support them hence they end being supported by the state via the Child Care and Foster Care grants. Also, further studies should explore the implications of disintegrated families on the psychological, academic as well as the social functioning of the children. Such studies should also investigate particularly the impacts of father absence on the wellbeing of the children on all spectrums of their functioning.

**Funding:** No direct funding was obtained by the authors to conduct this study.

**Conflict of interest:** None

**Acknowledgement:** This work was part of the master's dissertation, intra-household decision-making dynamics in the use of social grants in Tyutyu community, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

### References

- Amathole District Municipality. (2020). *Integrated Development Plan 2020/21*. Bhisno: Government Printers.
- Ashraf, N. (2009). Spousal control and intra-household decision making: an experimental study in the Philippines. *The American Economic Review*, 99(4),1245-1277.
- Bhorat, H. (2021). Wage setting and labor regulatory challenges in a middle-income country setting: The case of South Africa. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/aa863f8e-5806-58be-9f60-6206c931d6e9>.
- Booyesen, F. (2013). *Field experiments on risk, time and social preferences and intra-household decision-making: A road map*. Paper presented to the Biennial Conference of the Economic Society of South Africa (ESSA).
- Booyesen, F. (2014). The role of social grants in mitigating the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in two Free State communities. *South African Journal of Economics*, 4(73), 546-563
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- De Villiers. N. & Giese. S. (2008). *A Review of Children's Access to Employment-based Contributory Social Insurance Benefits*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.
- Department of Social Development (2019). *White Papers on Families*. Pretoria: Department of Social Development.
- Department of Social Development (2023). *Comprehensive social security*. Pretoria. Department of Social Development.
- Doss,C. (2011). *Intra-household bargaining and resource allocation in developing countries: World Development report 2012 on gender equality and development*. New York: UNDP.

- Duflo, E. (2003). *Grandmothers and Granddaughters: Old Age Pension and Intra-Household Allocation in South Africa*. NBER Working Paper 8061. Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Edmonds, E., Mammen, K. & Miller, D. (2001). *Rearranging the Family? Household Composition Responses to Large Pension Receipts*. Dartmouth: Mimeo. Hanover Publishers.
- Gutura, P. & Tanga, P.T. (2014). The Intended Consequences of the Social Assistance Grants in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (2), 659-669.
- Johannsmeier, C. (2007). *The social and economic effects of the disability grant for people with disabilities and their households- A qualitative study in KwaZulu Natal Province*. Research Report No. 74. pp. 664-775. Kwa Zulu Natal: Natal Printers.
- Mitra, S. (2005). *Disability and Social Safety Nets in Developing Countries*. Social Protection. Discussion Paper Series No.0509. Washington D.C.: Social Protection Unit: World Bank.
- Nepal, K. P., Fukuda. & Yai, T. (2005). Microeconomic models of intra-household activity time allocation. *Journal of the Eastern Asia Society for Transportation Studies*, 6(4),1637-1650
- Republic of South Africa (1996). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*. 108. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Ogolla, K., Chemuliti, J.K., Ngutu, M., Kimani, W.W., Ayona, D.N., Nyamongo, I.K. & Bukachi, S.A. (2022). Women's empowerment and intra-household gender dynamics and practices around sheep and goat production in Southeast Kenya. <http://www.file:///C:/Users/gekobi/Downloads/journal.pone.0269243.pdf>.
- Saelens, D. (2019). *Unitary or collective household decisions? A non-parametric test using detailed data on household expenditures and time use*.
- Shibata, R., Cardey, S. & Dorward, P. (2020). Gendered intra-household decision-making dynamics in agricultural innovation processes: assets, norms, and bargaining power. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jid.3497>.
- Statistics South Africa (2022). *Fact sheet: issue number 6 of 2013, a statistical summary of social grants in South Africa*. Statistical reports. [Online]. Retrieved: <http://www.sassa.gov.za/Portals/1/Documents/49fd1d45-011c-413f-8304-478e9995a25b.pdf>.
- United Nations Children's Fund (2010). *Child impact assessment: Making Children Count: Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: UNICEF.
- United Nations (2020). *Leave no one behind: A call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment*. New York: UN.
- United Nations Children Fund (2021). *Eastern and Southern Africa Social Policy*. <http://www.unicef.org>.
- World Bank (2022). *Overcoming poverty and inequality in South Africa: An assessment of drivers, constraints, and opportunities*. Geneva: WB.
- Yong Lyn, A.A. (2021). Male employment and female intra-household decision-making: a Mexican gold mining case study. *Rev Econ Household*, 19(3), 699-737.
- Zimbalist, Z. (2017). "Analysing post-apartheid poverty trends by geo-type, 1997-2012: the understated role of urbanisation and social grants", *Development Southern Africa*, 34(2), 151-167.