

THE FEASIBILITY OF THE BASIC INCOME GRANT TO CUSHION THE EFFECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE METRO

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic further compounded the issue of unemployment, a consequence of depressed economic activity resulting from the implementation of lockdown measures by the South African government. Consequently, the country has been unable to achieve economic recovery through job creation. The present study adopted the Keynesian Theory to demonstrate how a redistributive model of creating economic stimuli can lead to an economic growth trajectory. This is achieved by encouraging people to earn an income that can facilitate their active participation in economic activities. This is in contrast to the neo-liberal macro-economic pathway of cutting expenditure but relying on the trickle-down effect of employers creating jobs, a strategy which has proven to be unsuccessful. The present study examined the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant (BIG) as an effective intervention tool against unemployment in Region 1 of Tshwane Metro in the Republic of South Africa. A qualitative and exploratory research design was adopted, incorporating a case study and focus group interviews with unemployed youth, adults, and graduates as data collection techniques. The findings of this study demonstrate that a Basic Income Grant can provide financial assistance to cushion against unemployment. Moreover, the study established that an absence of skills acquisition impeded the participants' capacity for self-sufficiency. It is incumbent upon the South African government to facilitate the development of its citizens' mindset by providing a foundation of knowledge in entrepreneurship and cultivating a culture of saving and investment. This could encourage those who benefit from the Basic Income Grant to utilise the disbursement mechanism to establish small businesses and subsequently employ other members of the community.

Keywords: Basic Income Grant, City of Tshwane Metro, culture of entrepreneurship, Keynesian model, redistributive economy.

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1. Introduction

The pervasively high unemployment rate in South Africa necessitates a conceptualisation of BIG as an effective socio-economic development tool to generate sustainable livelihood measures or strategies through social security support from the government, which can lead to self-sustainability amongst the

unemployed in poor communities. Currently, the official unemployment rate in South Africa stands at 32.1%, comprising 7.9 million unemployed citizens, including youth, graduates and adults who are supposed to be in the labour force but are unable to access job opportunities, according to indicators from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey in the fourth

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quarter of 2024 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Unemployment in the 15-64 age group in the City of Tshwane Metro comprised the following categories of citizens: unemployed 680 000, inactive 764 000 and discouraged jobseekers 80 000, which together make up 35 percent of the City of Tshwane Metro population (Statistics South Africa, 2024).

The intransigence and persistence of the South African unemployment rate, a hallmark of post-democratic South African society, necessitates a paradigm shift in the government's theoretical approach, towards a redistributive economy rather than social security and welfare services. This paradigm shift necessitates a transition in social security policies and strategies from a consumption mentality to a redistributive human capital development approach, as outlined in the National Development Plan's strategic vision for 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012). It is the position of public policy experts, civil society organisations and labour unions that the South African government should align a redistributive economy with current social security and welfare policies and measures. Examples of such measures include the Basic Income Grant (BIG) and child support grants, which encourage a distributive and human capital development perspective (Makole, Ntshangase, Maringa & Msosa, 2022; South African Human Rights Commission, 2018). A human capital developmental approach is significant in order to cushion poor citizens against unemployment and stimulate their economic participation so that they become self-sufficient and sustainable.

The official high unemployment rate of between 32.4 and 32.1 per cent from 2021 to the most recent fourth quarterly Labour Force Survey in 2023 was exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown measures, which led to social unrest in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng (Mlaba, 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2024). Olaitan, Issah and Wayi (2021) criticise the inertia of the South African government in decisively addressing the tragedy of unemployment affecting the majority of poor and unemployed citizens, despite President Ramaphosa's promise of a "New Dawn" through economic investment to create jobs and improve socio-economic conditions. There is a discrepancy between the policy stance of the governing African National Congress and that of the party with regard to social security and welfare. The African National Congress is in favour of the Basic Income Grant (BIG), which it views as a redistributive measure that would allow the unemployed and impoverished to participate in the economy (Sachs, 2022). In contrast, the other grouping of African National Congress leaders, who are supported by the Centre for Development Enterprise, adopted an antagonistic posture against BIG. This was due to the view that the socio-economic redistributive tool was

misguided and irresponsible. It was believed that this would reduce the country's creditworthiness, ability to borrow from international financial markets, and plunge the country into economic crisis (Centre for Development Enterprise, 2022). As these ideological debates persist at the macro-level, the impoverished and unemployed local citizens of Region 1 in the City of Tshwane Metro continue to grapple with destitution, starvation, and the incapacity to attain self-sufficiency, largely attributable to the inadequacy of social security intervention strategies that are designed to ameliorate the plight of the unemployed. The present study therefore analysed the feasibility of implementing a basic income grant to provide cushioning against unemployment among local community members in the City of Tshwane Metro.

2. Theoretical Background of the Keynesian Model

The Keynesian model, which emphasises economic redistribution, critiques the Neo-classical economic theory as being acquiescent to Adam Smith's Market Economy. This has major implications for socio-economic outcomes in Western European countries (Pecchi & Piga, 2010). Frank (2008) offers an interpretation of neo-classical economic theory that posits the assumption that the mitigation of unemployment can be achieved through the lowering of wage demands, thus creating conditions that facilitate the hiring of labour as the economy experiences growth. Conversely, Keynes (1936) adopted an economic analytical model conceptualised through a multiplier effect in the economy whereby redistributive conditions are created for wage-earners to spend money to stimulate economic growth through active participation in the economy, thus reducing unemployment. Crocker (2015) affirms Keynesian economic modelling by emphasising that employment and job creation opportunities should correlate with human consumption as the populace buys goods and services and actively participates in the economic activities that stimulate market demand and supply.

Piketty (2014) alludes to the importance of the Basic Income Grant as an economic stimulus or intervention tool that can provide access for the unemployed and marginalised in a society to actively participate in the economy as they buy and sell goods and are taxed to contribute to the fiscus. Chen (2021) reaffirms the Keynesian economic model that characterises the Basic Income Grant as a socio-economic intervention tool that can stimulate economic growth and offset unemployment by enhancing the government's redistributive capacity. According to the Keynesian economic model, demand should improve supply through spending rather than relying on macro-economic instruments such as taxation, which

depresses the economy, undermines job creation and reduces consumer purchasing power. The implication of the Keynesian economic model for the study is that government's reliance on economic growth through the trickle-down effect of investment to create jobs has proven to be insufficient and inadequate. This implies that South Africa needs to reassess its socio-economic growth strategy and develop intervention tools such as the Basic Income Grant that can bring many citizens into the centre of economic participation and stimulate economic growth.

3. Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Deepening Unemployment and Inequality Crisis in South Africa

Francis, Valodia and Webster (2020) describe how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequality by causing massive unemployment due to lockdown measures. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the extent of inequality in South Africa, as the current macro-economic framework created a situation in which the wealthy benefited economically, while the poor, unemployed and economically marginalised in black and coloured townships and informal settlements were excluded from the mainstream economy by numerous market forces, deepening the unemployment crisis. During the level-five lock-down, the majority of the poor in townships and informal settlements who relied on informal trade were forced to stay at home and earned no income, while the middle class were employed or earned dividends from shareholding. Rogan and Skinner (2021) stress that poverty, unemployment and inequality are characteristic features of post-apartheid South Africa, demonstrating that democratic and redistributive dividends have not yet trickled down to the poor and marginalised members of society. The World Bank (2022) has characterised South Africa as the most unequal society in the world, a state of affairs attributable to uneven socio-economic determinants, such as labour displacement and deepening inequality. This suggests that the egalitarian society that was promised in numerous governing African National Congress policy manifestos and strategies, such as the Freedom Charter and Reconstruction and Development Programme, became nothing more than empty electioneering slogans (African National Congress, 1994; African National Congress, 1997).

4. Basic Income Grant

From an international perspective, Pulkka (2017) conceptualises the Basic Income Grant (BIG) as a socio-economic stimulus that should be implemented irrespective of a means test or work requirements, with the objective of enhancing the quality of citizens'

lives in a depressed economic climate where economic growth and productivity for job creation has been demonstrated to be illusory. Ford (2015), Reed and Lensely (2016) and Santens (2016) agree with the notion that BIG for the poor and unemployed is an intervention to increase their economic participation through access to disposable cash, goods and services and engagement in sustainable livelihood activities that can lead to the establishment of a small business and the inculcation of an entrepreneurial spirit. The South African government then has the opportunity to learn from its international counterpart such as South Korea, which has transformed its economic growth trajectory by utilising the determinants of basic income policies as part of its distributive economic approach to empower its citizens towards socio-economic self-sufficiency (Baumann and Gallagher, 2013).

In the case of Namibia, which is located in closer proximity to South Africa and shares almost similar socio-economic determinants with South Africa, the basic income grant pilot project was modelled on the basis of a partnership with civil society and church organisations with a view to generating sustainable livelihoods for the unemployed in the Omitara/Otjivero settlement (Polamaki, 2010). The Namibian basic income grant's successful piloting in the Omitara/Otjivero settlement generated human development indicators such as a decrease in child malnutrition; an increase in households' incomes as family members clubbed together to start small businesses to augment the basic income grant of N\$100 per individual in a household; and reduced poverty and related crime rates (Shejvali, 2009).

5. The Basic Income Grant as a Driver of Economic Growth and Sustainability

The fundamental tenet of the policy is that the fundamental objective is to be driven by an economic growth and sustainability perspective that contributes to human development capabilities for the impoverished and unemployed as they transition from marginalisation to active economic participation through the expenditure of these monetary grants, using such grants to establish small businesses and social clubs (*stokvels*), and co-operatives that can create low-scale employment opportunities for their fellow community members (Satumba, Bayat, & Mohamed, 2017; Seekings & Matisonn, 2012). The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) adopted a strategic position of engaging with the South African government to conceptualise, design and implement the Basic Income Grant, which is to be sustained by taxing the wealthy through the creation of a wealth tax. The Congress of South African Trade

Unions (COSATU) asserts that political reconciliation should be accompanied by economic redistribution, which should serve as an indication of social solidarity by those who benefitted from apartheid and the economic dividends of democratic South Africa (Henderson & Quiggin, 2019).

Another measure that can strengthen the sustainability of the Basic Income Grant (BIG) is to arrest financial malpractices, corruption and poor economic management systems within the three government spheres and state entities in South Africa that caused economic losses of R 11, 9 billion, as identified in the annual audit report of the Auditor-General of South Africa from 2020 to 2023 (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2022). This suggests that South Africa is not a financially disadvantaged nation unable to allocate funds for the Basic Income Grant; rather, it is a country grappling with systemic challenges such as corruption and inadequate fiscal management. It is recommended that the South African government adopts prudent budgetary discipline, with a view to diverting available funds to kickstart the Basic Income Grant as an economic distributive measure. Such redistributive and transformational approaches have the potential to enhance human capital development and improve the quality of life of the economically disadvantaged and unemployed population in townships and informal settlements by increasing tax collection and creating economic opportunities for marginalised groups.

6. Methodology

A qualitative research approach using focus group interviews as a data collection tool with unemployed adults, graduates and youth in Region 1 of the Tshwane City Metro was adopted to study the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant as an effective intervention tool that can alleviate unemployment. This method allowed for thick, rich descriptive data to be generated. Sileyew (2019) defines research methodology as a path or process that a researcher follows to conduct a research study and arrive at findings. Gounder (2013) characterises the research methodology as a systematic approach to the resolution of research problems, encompassing a series of research steps and the underlying logic of each. The employment of a case study design was instrumental in the analysis of activities, events and processes within a specific social setting (Creswell, 2014). The present inquiry was conducted using an exploratory case study design, which entails a thorough description of a social phenomenon within a real-life context, rigorously exploring and analysing a scenario within a social setting (Babbie, 2011). A sample of participants was to be drawn from three distinct categories. The first category comprised six unemployed graduates.

The second category comprised six youth who were not in education or employment, constituting 30 percent of the unemployed population nationally. The third category comprised six unemployed adults who were local community members in Region 1 of the City of Tshwane Metro. These participants were to be sampled and selected to participate in focus group interviews. These interviews were to be guided by their experiences and ingenuity to explore and analyse the research phenomenon (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005). However, the study was conducted with 13 participants from 3 different focus groups based on the demographic or social profiles of the unemployed local community members. The unemployed local community members comprised unemployed graduates; youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET); and unemployed adults at Region 1 in the City of Tshwane Metro due to time and financial constraints. MacDougall and Fudge (2001) posit that the rationale for purposive sampling in focus group interviews is to select cases that can provide rich data and are theory-driven. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) expound the notion that qualitative data analysis is framed by an inductive approach, meaning that patterns, themes and categories of analysis emerge from the data itself rather than being imposed on it prior to data collection and analysis. A thematic analysis was employed, following a step-by-step process that is transparent in order to demonstrate how the researchers developed the main themes from the data transcripts of the focus group participants (Higgs, 2001). The chosen measures of study trustworthiness were credibility, which encouraged member-checking of generated themes for consistency with focus group participants' views (Neuman, 2011); informant data triangulation, which allowed comparison of generated views from different categories of focus group participants; and peer debriefing among researchers to agree on final generated themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Themes and Discussions

Based on the Results of the Focus Groups Participants

The initial segment of the findings proffers biographical profiles of the focus group participants, predicated on their social categories, age, gender, personal attributes and future plans. The second section of this study outlines the themes and discussions that were generated from the findings of various focus groups. These groups were tasked with responding to a series of questions relating to the conceptualisation of the Basic Income Grant as a feasible socio-economic tool. The tool is designed to cushion local community

members against unemployment. The types of challenges experienced by the unemployed local community members that discourage them from engaging in sustainable livelihood activities are also discussed. Finally, the section presents the lessons and ideas that were derived from the unemployed local community members. These pertain to the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant in cushioning against unemployment in Region 1 of the City of Tshwane Metro.

7.2 Demographic Profile of Focus Group Participants

In order to maintain confidentiality in accordance with research ethics, the researcher created a code for unemployed adults in the focus group as (UA), unemployed graduates as (UG) and unemployed youth as (UY). The demographic profile of the unemployed graduates ranged from 25 to 35 years of age. Four were male and two female. Their personal attributes indicate that they are active in general repairs and household maintenance, have completed undergraduate and post-graduate degrees, and are active in a community or business sense in one form

or another. The subjects of this study have expressed a desire to pursue entrepreneurial or business opportunities in the future. In addition, they have expressed a wish to engage with their communities and contribute to the socio-economic development of these communities. They do not want to just sit at home and wait for government welfare programmes, but want to use them to build their lives and businesses and contribute to the development of the country's human capital. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of unemployed graduates.

7.3 Demographic Profile of Unemployed Adults

The three unemployed adults in question were all female, with ages ranging from 45 to 50 years. The subjects of this study have previously been employed, but lost their jobs under different circumstances, especially during the period of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2021. They have accumulated professional experience in the corporate and IT sectors. Furthermore, the subjects have children, and two of them are single parents. The subjects are engaged in personal development and entrepreneurial

Table 1

Demographic profiles of unemployed graduates

Participant	Age	Gender	Personal attribute	Future plan
UG1	25	Male	Started a business in the field of general repairs and household services.	Looking for funding and networking opportunities to formalise a business.
UG2	27	Female	About to complete PhD in Chemistry.	Vision is to start a horticultural business, growing and selling plants and herbs.
UG3	35	Male	Artificial Intelligence Graduate running advertising and marketing Arts.	Want to start corporate business & create social engineered robots.
UG4	30	Male	Community radio presenter & started community development outreach program "Invest In A Child".	Aspiring author working on a book titled "Black Father" looking for permanent presenter job.
UG5	30	Male	Psychological Counselling Graduate. Having passion for music producing and writing.	Want to be introduce in Radio production and registering music publishing and record label company.
UG6	33	Female	B Comm in Insurance & Marketing Graduate. Currently studying LLB.	Aspiring writer of short stories, poetry and motivational speaker.

Table 2

Demographic profile of unemployed adults

Participant	Age	Gender	Personal attributes	Future plans
UA1	48	Female	Studying the business of a massage parlour. Single mother, two children. One of them studies at home because of the lack of transport costs.	Want to employ other people. Joined a coach programme for women.
UA2	50	Female	Was retrenched in corporate sector during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Make a living by selling perfumes and pit latrine toilets cleaners. A mother of three children	Intend to expand a business that will supply funeral parlour with flowers and aim to online business course.
UA3	45	Female	Unemployed but used to work in IT sector until late in 2021. A mother of one child.	Selling perfumes online to survive and want to be an entrepreneur. Also starting a cleaning business online to employ unemployed women for domestic work. Looking for multiple income opportunities

endeavours, including the sale of perfumes and pit-latrines cleaners, and the undertaking of coaching courses. These participants are also aspiring businesspeople who require support so that they can leverage their businesses. As illustrated in Table 2, the demographic profile of the unemployed adults is presented.

7.4 Demographic Profile of Unemployed Youth

The age range of the unemployed young people is 24-28 years. There were two women and two men. Their characteristics include being unemployed but involved in marketing, repairing cupboards and some building and painting. The female is employed part-time in a shop, while the male also volunteers as a communications officer for the SAPS in the area. Their future plans include the pursuit of productive endeavours, with a particular focus on enhancing their skills in cabinetry. They are enthusiastic about motivation and aspire to become a criminologist. In contrast, a female who is part-time employed is actively seeking full-time employment. The analysis indicates that these youth are proactively engaged in their communities rather than being passive recipients of grants. It is the contention of the present study that grants are viewed by the relevant parties as a means to

future plans. Table 3 provides a detailed description of the unemployed youth demographic.

7.5 Themes and discussions from focus groups interviews with unemployed graduates, unemployed adults and unemployed youth in Region 1 in the City of Tshwane Metro

The study does not purport to represent the views and perceptions of all local community members of Region 1 in the City of Tshwane Metro in relation to the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant to alleviate unemployment. The findings cannot be generalised, but they can be used to generate new theories and ideas and serve as a basis for future research projects that might be similar and relevant to the topic. Three themes and six sub-themes were generated to answer questions about the conceptualisation of the Basic Income Grant as a viable socio-economic tool against unemployment, the challenges faced by local citizens that discouraged them from participating in livelihood activities, and lessons and strategies on the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant as a cushion against unemployment. Three themes were generated from different focus group interviews, namely *financial assistance and disempowerment*, *lack of skills acquisitions and self-sufficiency*, and *change mindset and scaffolding*,

Table 3

Demographic profile of unemployed youth

Participant	Age	Gender	Personal attribute	Future plan
UY1	28	Female	Unemployed and studying marketing.	Desires to do something about her life.
UY2	24	Male	He is skilled in the repair of buildings, cupboards and household painting. He does not consider education to be synonymous with the development of skills. He considers himself to be a creative thinker. He considers himself to be self-employed.	To invest in his construction and repair skills to turn them into a serious business.
UY3	24	Female	She is part time employed.	She is looking for a job.
UY4	27	Male	He is currently volunteering as a communication officer at SAPS. He is an amiable and approachable individual who is always pleasant and transparent.	He is driven to make a positive impact on the community by using his skills as a motivator and criminologist to solve crime.

Table 4

Themes and sub-themes on the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant Financial assistance and disempowerment

Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
How can the Basic Income Grant be conceptualised as a feasible socio-economic intervention tool to cushion local community members against unemployment at Region 1 in the City of Tshwane Metro?	Theme 1: Financial assistance and disempowerment	1.1. Wastage of human potential 1.2 Human mindset
What types of challenges are experienced by the unemployed local community members that discourage them from engaging in sustainable livelihood activities at Region 1 in the City of Tshwane Metro?	Theme 2: Lack of skills acquisitions and self-sufficiency	1.1. Erosion of the culture of Ubuntu 1.2. Personal dehumanisation
What lessons and ideas can be derived from the unemployed local community members concerning the feasibility of the Basic Income Grant to cushion against unemployment at Region 1 of the City of Tshwane Metro?	Themes 3: Change mindset and scaffolding	1. Monetary value versus high cost of living 2. Public engagement and development

whereas the six sub-themes that aligned with these main themes were *wastage of human potential, human mindset, erosion of the culture of Ubuntu, personal dehumanisation, monetary value versus high cost of living, and public engagement and development*. Themes and discussions are supported by data findings from different focus groups interviews.

When different categories of focus groups, namely unemployed graduates, youth and adults, were asked to conceptualise the Basic Income Grant as a feasible socio-economic tool against unemployment, they saw it as both financial support and disempowerment. Their reflections were that if it can be used well, it can serve as a financial support for the unemployed by using it to increase money in their small businesses, but based on their personal experiences with other social support measures currently provided by the government, such as the Social Relief Grant, it can have a disempowering effect because it introduces an element of over-dependence. A range of factors have been identified by different categories of focus groups as contributing to the notion of financial assistance. These include survival mechanisms, assistance with basic needs, human limitations, free money, and poverty assistance. The unemployed adult focus group expressed a favourable opinion of the Basic Income Grant; however, not all focus group members in the graduate and youth categories were positive about BIG conceptualization. Some of the views from the category of unemployed adults in the focused group alluding to the positive effect of BIG were as follows:

It is an income that the government gives to the public to assist against poverty – UA2

It assists the community from previously disadvantaged backgrounds to survive, those who are not working. That is my understanding, it is a relief for the unemployed community – UA1

The arguments of the unemployed graduates and young people who outlined the disempowering effect of the Basic Income Grant stem from the fact that it can have some limitations because it can be seen as free money. Participants 6 and 4 from the focus group of unemployed graduates alluded to its limitations as follows:

For me, it's just felt like these social grants are another limitation, same as the government, they said they gave us democracy, but we have not been given economic freedom since 1995 – UG6

My understanding of the Basic Income Grant is free money. If you want free money from the South African government, then ask for it by being unemployed – UG4

On the contrary, the unemployed youth focus group category revealed that a Basic Income Grant can be a measure of assistance in meeting basic needs and assisting them to survive whilst looking for employment. Their views are captured as follows:

It is more of a permanent structure of grants than what it is now. It is something that you can get to survive – UY1

In my understanding it is a form of income that can assist you with basic needs if you are less fortunate – UY3

The analysis of the discussions with the three categories of focus groups (unemployed adults, graduates and youth) revealed differences in their conceptualisation of the Basic Income Grant. The two categories of unemployed adults and youth expressed a favourable opinion of Basic Income Grants, asserting that it could provide them with a degree of financial security, thereby helping them to meet basic needs while awaiting permanent employment. However, the graduate category warns that it should not be seen as free money that encourages people to be unemployed. The implication is that the Basic Income Grant should be carefully designed so that it is not misconstrued as free money that encourages laziness in the community.

7.6 Waste of Human Potential

Different categories of focus groups indicated that the lack of unemployment in their community is a waste of human potential, outlining factors such as lack of income, not earning, struggling to survive, lack of creativity from government and inability to provide for oneself. According to unemployed adults, the waste of human potential due to unemployment is as follows:

I was working in an engineering company and was retrenched in 2020, I do not have income at all, and is difficult to survive under current conditions – UA1

I'll say the same thing. I don't earn anything; we depend on working without doing anything – UA2

The unemployed youth identified lack of experience and inability to self-serve as the main problems affecting them and described it as a waste of human potential. They explain their unemployment situation in the following way:

Most people are staying at home because the companies are asking for 4 years of experience whereas there is no other thing to do – UY3

One member in the category of unemployed graduates also indicated that his state of unemployment denies him an opportunity to generate an income by stating that:

Not having to work denies me opportunities to generate an income – UG5

All focus group members in the three categories agreed that unemployment is a waste of human potential, as they were laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic and stopped earning an income. This makes it difficult for them to survive and affects their self-sufficiency. They see themselves as unproductive in society and the community and

expect the government to come up with measures such as a Basic Income Grant to cushion them against such a state of hopelessness.

7.7 Human Mindset

The conceptualisation of the Basic Income Grant (BIG) as a feasible socio-economic tool against unemployment is also aligned with the human mindset. All focus group categories perceive how the human mindset can either guide one to use BIG in a productive way, or a negative human mindset can lead to its abuse. A number of factors have been identified as having a significant influence on the manner in which the unemployed utilise BIG, yielding both positive and negative outcomes. These factors include investment mentality, job creation and employment opportunity, dependency, and hopelessness.

The views of different focus group members, categorised according to their status as unemployed adults, youth and graduates, relating to how BIG is influenced by the human mindset are captured as follows:

If I go to work then I have this money, it means that I will not get it anymore, therefore I rather depend on it – UY3

With that said, I think there are lots of factors into it. Like a small amount to some certain degree, it's buying groceries and other things and you do not know where to start from. It is also hopelessness that she is speaking about – UG5

While the youth category and some graduates warned that BIG could create a mentality of dependency and hopelessness due to over-reliance on it, the unemployed adult category and another graduate supported it as it could lead to an investment mentality and employment opportunities. They explain their positive view of BIG with the following comments:

We can use a Basic Income Grant to create investment and employ three extra people from that – UA3

I just believe that it should increase, because I can say let me re-invest this so that it can increase and next month make it increase again. So, the mentality that I have is that I can increase it to invest in my business – UG3

The analysis from different categories of focus groups relates to divergent mindsets about how they can use the BIG. For some participants in different categories, the phenomenon can engender a mindset of dependency and hopelessness, resulting in community members becoming solely dependent on it. Conversely, for other members in the same categories, it can engender a mindset of investment, job creation and employment opportunities for members in the communities. It is evident from the analysis of the discussions with the various focus group members that

BIG can serve different purposes depending on one's state of mind.

7.8 Lack of Skills Acquisition and Self-Sufficiency

Lack of skills acquisition and self-sufficiency were outlined as challenges faced by unemployed members of the community in Region 1 of the Tshwane Metro. Focus group members explained that as a result of the lack of skills and the inability to be self-sufficient in their local community, they experience challenges such as social stigma, drug addiction, lack of personal empathy, rejection, depression, loss of morality, inhumanity and loss of a sense of caring. Focus group members from the unemployed adult category reflected on challenges manifesting in the lack of skills acquisition and inability to be self-sufficient by noting that:

The first challenge is that as a member of the family, they do not take you seriously. They look down on you, and you become depressed – UA3

In the community, you can get involved in drugs like nyaope, especially where I am staying. Crime also goes up because people are just idling and looking for opportunities to steal smartphones, furniture and cars from their neighbours – UA3

The challenges faced by the category of unemployed adults were also highlighted in the focus group with graduates, who noted mental depression as a huge challenge. Unemployed youth 2 and 3 also mentioned these challenges in their responses:

You are sitting at home every day; you are depressed because people around you are going somewhere but you are sitting in one place – UY2

I think I agree with mental health because it is a lot of things – UY3

For unemployed graduates, the problems of unemployment are manifested in social stigma and rejection by families and other community members. Their perception of the problems was formulated as follows:

Social stigma is the way people view you, that you have failed in life as being unemployed at that point, without wanting to know about your plans in life, the type of person you are and what you think about the community – UG6

The participants encountered various challenges, including social stigma, rejection, and depression. They perceived society to be inhumane due to their lack of the necessary skills to become self-sufficient and create employment opportunities. These challenges have the effect of creating a further alienation from social networks of support, as the subjects are stigmatised and become isolated in their families. The resultant factor is a lack of social capital that they can leverage to improve their lives and acquire relevant skills that can render them self-sufficient.

7.9 Erosion of the Culture of Ubuntu

Unemployed graduates, adults and youth associate their living conditions with unemployment, interpreting this as a manifestation of the erosion of the culture of Ubuntu amongst their family members and communities. It is asserted that BIG is capable of ameliorating the following challenges that individuals face in relation to the impact of employment: personal struggles, a paucity of personal empathy, emotional exhaustion, and a decline in morality.

Their views to demonstrate how the culture of Ubuntu has been eroded from the community and family members because of being unemployed are stated as follows:

They are emotionally draining. The thing is that I ask myself what the use is, I feel so depressed in this country – UA1

It is about struggling because there is no helping hand from the family. You can even be influenced by your family to get involved in prostitution to survive – UG3

The challenges mentioned by the focus group members are a manifestation of the erosion of the Ubuntu culture as family members do not lend them a helping hand and even encourage them to engage in immoral acts such as prostitution for the sake of survival. These challenges leave most of the participants emotionally depressed. The views of most of the focus group participants show that they cannot cope with being unemployed and therefore need some form of intervention like BIG to cushion them until they can get back on their feet.

7.10 Personal Dehumanisation

Focus group members indicated that the lack of employment and support from their families and communities leads to personal dehumanisation, manifested in value judgments, inhumanity, loss of a sense of caring, lack of support, being seen as useless, anxiety and depression. All the members of the three categories of focus groups referred to how unemployment had led to personal dehumanisation in themselves, in their families and in their communities by stating that:

You become inhuman and stop caring about other people. If I see your glasses and I am unemployed, I will take your glasses, and it is fine with me. If I see that you bought a new car, I will hijack you. I don't care whether you live those are mental results. It dehumanizes a person – UY2

They look at you as if you are useless because you don't have anything. They will say don't tell me about that person – UA1&2

So, when they see you going to the mall, they think that you are crazy. You don't even have a car – UG3

Unemployment in the community of the City of Tshwane Metro in Region 1 leads to personal dehumanisation. Focus group members argued

that this undermines their humanity and that of community members, as they become inhuman and may start hijacking cars and stealing from their neighbours. This lack of a sense of caring for oneself and other members of the community leads to mental depression as people struggle to survive and will do anything to get by, even if it means hurting those they see as having "made it". Personal dehumanisation due to unemployment is a contributing factor to the high crime rate in the community.

7.11 Change Mindset and Scaffolding

When different categories of focus groups were asked to reflect on lessons and strategies that can be devised on the feasibility of a Basic Income Grant to cushion against unemployment in Region 1 of the City of Tshwane Metro, *change mindset and scaffolding* were generated as a theme. According to the alumni focus group, the factors that contributed to lessons and strategies on BIG for unemployment protection were effective use of money, cascading job creation and starting new businesses. The alumni focus group identified these factors as lessons and strategies that could contribute to the effective use of BIG for unemployment protection, noting the following:

A lot, there is so much work to be done by the government in our communities. As members of the community, we need to change how we think. If it is to be done well – UG1

As I see it, I also think it depends on how we think, I mean. If we discuss with people, they must think better about what they can do with the money they receive – UG2

You can use it to start a stokvel where you contribute money so that it can increase and assist you to buy stock and sell – UG4

From the testimonies of the unemployed graduates, BIG should be aligned with a change in mindset where members of the community and the government should develop approaches where money can be used effectively so that it can benefit the recipients to become self-reliant and self-sufficient, rather than just being used for consumption. An example of this is contributing to co-operatives such as social clubs or a township colloquially known as "stokvel", so that money can grow to help one start a business that can generate income and employ other members of the community. In this way, the effective use of BIG through contributions from community members can have a multiplier effect, leading to investment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The youth focus group linked BIG to factors such as the creation of facilities and infrastructure, assistance, personal progress, personal engagement and channels for job creation. Their perceptions of the lessons they could learn from the effective dissemination of BIG to community members were summarised as follows:

My answer is still with the facilities, there are a lot of abandoned spaces in the townships and all these buildings are empty, but we have homeless people and need spaces – UY3

The biggest lesson I am learning is that it is a go-moment for a person to start running with it – UY1

Important lessons and strategies derived from the unemployed youth about the BIG in cushioning unemployment are that it should build infrastructure and facilities in their community to encourage youth to be more active in thinking about their personal development and not to rely on the government. It should also be seen as a seed capital for the creation of new businesses.

Unemployed adults outlined factors such as empowerment, unlocking business opportunity, and building networks as lessons that accrue from the correct usage of BIG. Their views were posited as follow:

It is to empower us from where we are now to the next level – UA1

It is going to help to grow from where I am in my small business to where I want to be as I am currently hustling by selling perfumes and doing online cleaning services – UA3

I am going to use it as an ability to move around and build networks – UA2

The key lesson that unemployed adults can learn from using BIG is that it enables them to grow their small businesses and build networks of customers. As noted above, most unemployed adults have work experience prior to their redundancy during the COVID-19 pandemic and can use BIG to grow the small businesses they have started and use business networks to become self-sufficient and improve their small businesses to find customers and create jobs for others in their communities.

7.12 Monetary Value Versus High Cost of Living

When asked to suggest the amount of money that should constitute a basic income, focus group participants indicated that the monetary value should be linked to the rising high cost of living in South Africa. Some of the issues they raised as crucial to determining the monetary value of a BIG were the need for co-operative savings funds, influence, the high cost of living and family responsibilities. The adult focus group members outlined these factors as follows:

I think it should be R 2 500 and R 500 should go to the pool to form business co-operatives with other individuals, like in stokvels and social clubs. I think R 2 500 can sustain us – UA2

However, the next member had a different view by indicating the scarcity of resources in South Africa, and stated her view in this way:

I think for a start it should be R 1500 because you buy a bar of soap today after three days it is done and when you come to buy again is gone, but you have five children – UA1

From the perspective of the youth focus group, factors that need to be considered when allocating BIG are transport, a person's ambition and the impact on their life. Their perceptions of the cost of receiving BIG were captured as follows:

I am ambitious and believe that R 12000 will be adequate because life is expensive and when you go to Checkers you find apples for R40 so for me R 4000 is very little – UY3

I can say R 3000 or R 4000 so that I can pay for transport – UY1

The analysis indicates that the considerations of BIG were predominantly aligned with personal needs and ambitions, a phenomenon that can be attributed to the high cost of living in South Africa. The participants of the focus groups were asked to suggest figures for the disbursement, and the range of suggestions was from R 1500 to R 12000. This was to take cognizance of their personal needs and abilities to ensure that the money can address their living costs and open opportunities to either invest in business ventures or co-operatives and take care of their families.

7.13 Public Engagement and Development

The focus group participants identified numerous strategies that the government could develop to deliver BIG, such as infrastructure development, community engagement, job creation, skills training and grant piloting, among others. They justified their proposals as follows:

I think the government should have imbizos or public gatherings to penetrate communities because some of these things people do not know – UA2

If it comes to a push, let's say they must start by piloting it by starting with the first batch – UA3

They should also provide training in conjunction with the Basic Income. We are asking that from the government – UA1

The strategies proposed by the unemployed graduates focused on skills training and prerequisites, while the strategies of the unemployed youth echoed those of the unemployed graduates by identifying skills certificates, thought processes and the need for self-sufficiency. One of the reasons they gave for suggesting these strategies is that if people are not trained and developed and do not have the necessary skills, then despite the noble intention of BIG, it may not be used properly and may be misused like other social grants where community members can buy alcohol, drugs and do hair which they see as dealing with their state of unemployment. It was generally agreed upon by members of the focus groups that BIG could be

a necessary intervention tool to address the challenges of unemployment. However, it was cautioned that community members should undergo training or development in order to accrue benefits from the disbursement of BIG, such as job creation opportunities and building networks that can assist their current small businesses to grow.

8. Conclusions

The study analysed the feasibility of a Basic Income Grant to mitigate the effects of unemployment among local community members in the Tshwane Metro. In this study, a thematic approach was adopted to identify how focus group members use the Basic Income Grant as an intervention tool to mitigate unemployment. Three themes and six sub-themes were generated from the focus group data transcripts. Among the main findings of the study were that the Basic Income Grant can provide financial support to cushion against unemployment, but warned that its misuse can lead to disempowerment. The findings in relation to challenges revealed that a lack of skills acquisition denied participants the ability to be self-sufficient, and also outlined that the South African

government should develop people to change their mindsets by scaffolding knowledge on entrepreneurship and a culture of saving and investment that can encourage those who receive the Basic Income Grant to use the disbursement to start their own small businesses and employ other members of the community, thus having a multiplier effect. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Basic Income Grant be linked to training and development opportunities that can help the unemployed to create jobs. Furthermore, the City of Tshwane Metro should strategically implement a local economic development strategy as a constitutional mandate for local governance, with a view to capacitating and funding entrepreneurs to contribute to job creation opportunities. Furthermore, the City of Tshwane Metro should collaborate with other development institutions to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture that can lead to job creation and minimise unemployment in the Metro. The present study is subject to certain limitations; for instance, the sample size was modest, precluding the generalisation of the findings beyond the current scope. The study was also conducted in the City of Tshwane Metro, meaning that the findings cannot be applied wholesale to the local government sphere nationwide.

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