

# Child Support Grant Policy and Poverty Alleviation: Is there a link in Mamelodi Township, Gauteng Province

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## Abstract

When governments around the world engage in public policy-making, quite often, the public officials and policy-makers are faced with discreet opposition from non-government organisations trade unions and civil societies. The public policymakers usually go ahead with the implementation of the suggested policy. For example, in South Africa (SA), Child Support Grant (CSG) was implemented in an attempt to alleviate poverty. This can be attributed to many factors, such as urgency in addressing the poverty gap in society and lack of interest from the members of the public in public policy-making. Based on capability and social security approach/strategy and rational approach, this study explores an outcomes-based evaluation of the CSG policy and its relationship with poverty alleviation in Mamelodi Township, Gauteng Province, SA. The empirical results indicate that there is a linkage or relationship between the reduction of poverty levels and the implementation of the CSG policy in Mamelodi Town.

**Keywords:** Child Support Grant, Mamelodi, Poverty, Outcome-based Evaluation

## Introduction

Poverty alleviation is a contentious issue in South Africa (SA) and the number of poor children who rely solely on the Child Support Grant (CSG) is disproportionately high. For instance, Shung-King, Lake, Sanders, and Hendricks (2019) revealed that more than 60% of children in SA were recipients or beneficiaries of CSG. There is evidence that child poverty in SA is widespread. This is illustrated by another revelation contained in the same study



by Shung-King et al. (2019) that found that 17,5% of poor children in SA were eligible for CSG but were not receiving the grant by the end of 2019. The child poverty situation in SA necessitated the introduction and subsequently the implementation of the Child Support Grant policy in 1998. Since its implementation, the CSG has not been evaluated.

The CSG intended to ensure that caregivers of children living in extreme poverty can access financial assistance in the form of cash transfers to supplement, rather than replace, household income. It needs to be stated for the government to keep up with the impact of its policies have on society. The authors of this study argue that failure to conduct outcome-based evaluations may result in the government blindly entering conditions of fruitless and wasteful expenditure by pumping-in resources to public policies, which do not produce desired outcomes such as poverty alleviation, or improved child health.

Further, to expedite the resolution of poverty alleviation and conduct outcome-based evaluations of public policies, the authors also argue that the solution to circumvent problematic incidents and keep abreast of recent trends in social assistance, in particular the CSG programme, this could be achieved by undertaking and conducting outcome-based evaluations on the policy by first defining the purpose and scope of the programme and collecting relevant data on the results of the implementation of the policy. This has come to be viewed as a necessary condition to promote good governance because policy evaluations are critical in governance. The State should take full responsibility for its implemented public policies through regular policy reviews and evaluations. Therefore, public policies must be evaluated to ascertain the extent to which they have met the intended goals.

The article begins by providing a conceptual analysis on the meaning of CSG and Outcome-Based Evaluation, followed by a theoretical perspective underpinning poverty and CSG. This is then followed by a literature review and methodology, which in turn is followed by a discussion of the results of the study. Conclusions and recommendations are provided in the last section of this article.

## **Conceptual Analysis: Child Support Grant, Outcome-based Evaluation**

The meaning and implementation of CSG can differ in the manner and practice in a specific country. To define CSG, one might have to have a glee in a specific country. For SA, in particular, the definition of CSG is embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996, which states “the right of all access” to appropriate social assistance from the State if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents. The concept “social assistance” is implicitly embedded in the Constitution of SA as already mentioned.



According to UNICEF (2022), from the South African viewpoint refers specifically to an income transfer provided by the government in the form of grants or financial rewards to poor households or individuals.

It can be deduced from above that the Child Support Grant term can then be attributed to the concept “social assistance” because, in UNICEF’s (2022) view, the CSG is the State’s largest social assistance programme in terms of the number of beneficiaries reached. The grant’s primary objective is to ensure that caregivers of children living in absolute poverty can access financial assistance in the form of cash transfer to supplement, rather than replace, household income. In conceptualising and understanding the CSG term from Public Administration and Management’s viewpoint, the term “Child” needs to be defined first. In the United Nations Convention on Rights of Children’s (2022) view, the term “Child” refers to any person under the Age of 18 years. On the one hand, it is imperative to define the meaning of the concept “grant” as a noun that refers to a “sum amount of money given by a government or other organisation for a particular purpose” (Oxford Languages: 2022: Online).

The CSG emanates from the public policy processes of the South African government. As a result, it is imperative to define the meaning of the outcome-based evaluation. In Hoffman’s (2017) view outcome-based evaluation refers to a “systematic way of assessing the extent to which a programme has achieved its intended results.” From the monitoring and evaluation’s perspective, it is imperative to unpack this concept “outcome-based evaluation.” The first sub-concept to be analysed is called “outcomes.” According to Collins Online Dictionary (2022), an outcome is a noun that refers to “an activity, process, or situation is the situation that exists at the end of it.” The second and final sub-concept is “evaluation.” In Patton’s (1987) argument, evaluation refers to a process that critically examines a programme. It entails collecting and evaluating and analysing information about a programme’s activities, characteristics, and outcomes. An evaluation aims to make judgements about a programme to improve effectiveness. As cited by the United States. Department of Health and Human Services (2022: Online), an outcome evaluation measures programme effects in the target population by assessing the process in the outcomes of a programme. For TSNE (2018), outcome evaluations intend to assess the effectiveness of a programme in producing change. Additionally, this type of evaluation is usually undertaken when it is important to know whether and how well the objectives of a project or programme met.



## Theoretical Analysis of Child Support Grant Policy and Poverty Alleviation Strategy

This section addresses the theoretical approaches primarily connected with public policy and poverty alleviation strategies. In public policy, there are seven (7) theoretical approaches that are connected to the public policy formulation: rational-choice theory, incremental theory, policy output analysis, political system theory, and institutionalism, group theory and elite theory. For this article, in relation to CSG, this study follows rational-choice theory (rational model), which states that the administration (the government) should adopt policies that can acquire maximum benefits at lower costs. In Nisa, Mustafa, Yaseen, Arslan and Imran's (2021) view, maximum social gains are achieved in the rational theory. Hanekom (1987) argues that "rational comprehensive model" has its roots in comprehensive decision-making and implies that policy-makers have a full range of policy options to choose from. In the context of the social assistance programme, the South African government had many options to choose to deal with socio-economic issues after 1994. For instance, the social assistance programme in SA other than the CSG, the government has introduced Old Age grant, War Veterans grant, Disability grant, Grant in Aid, care dependency and foster care grant.

In the context of poverty alleviation, there are many strategies that could be employed to deal with the scourge of poverty. There are four in general: community organisations-based micro-financing, capability, and social security, market-based, and good governance. For the purposes of analysing the relationship between CSG and poverty alleviation, capability and social security strategy are employed for this article. For Singh and Chudasama (2020), the capability approach or strategy is aimed at enhancing people's well-being and freedom of choice. Arguably, the CSG policy was developed by the government to improve children's well-being. This approach or strategy provides a framework for the evaluation and assessment of several aspects of an individual's well-being and social arrangements.

### Literature Review

This section addresses literature analysis on CSG and its relationship with poverty alleviation. Despite the importance of this subject, very few studies have explored the direct linkages between CSG and poverty alleviation. In Yalegama, Chileshe and Ma's (2016) argument, poverty alleviation programmes remain instrumental choices for any policy-makers. Ika, Diallo and Thuiller (2012) perceive that the spectacular failure rate of the World Bank's development projects was reportedly to be above 50 percent in Africa alone around the year 2000. This alarming revelation demonstrates that the need to identify specific factors critical to the success of poverty alleviation programmes is vital.



In the context of CSG policy implementation in SA, there is abundance of literature pertinent to the successes and failures of the policy. For instance, Barrientos and De Jong (2006) found that CSG had positive effects on beneficiaries and has further assisted in poverty alleviation. Grinspun (2016) asserts that not only does CSG have an impact on poverty alleviation, it also has a positive effect on children's health.

According to Naicker (2016), the CSG has received massive backing from the South African government. Hence, it receives the biggest chunk of funding in the category of social assistance as compared to other grants in the country (Shung et al., 2019). The CSG is said to be the largest cash-transfer programme or social assistance programme. In SA, it has been associated with negative stereotypes such as the misuse of the grants by caregivers (Mudzingiri, Moyana and Mbengo, 2016). However, the literature is scanty on this.

The international literature abounds with literature on poverty alleviation and its relationship with the implementation of social assistance (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2021a). Igbal and Nawaz (2020) have noted that cash-transfer programmes such as as policy instruments are effective in combatting poverty among beneficiaries. The argument is that there is a link between using cash-transfer programmes or social assistance with poverty alleviating (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2021b). However, international literature also put across debates on whether providing in-kind transfers, such as housing, were proved to be more effective than cash transfer in addressing poverty (Hessami & Uebelmesser, 2015).

Another aspect that was revealed by the international literature is that CSG is implemented in other countries around the world, although the programmes use different names such as cash-transfer programmes. Ultimately, all these somewhat resemble some kind of social assistance, as defined by UNICEF. This social assistance was implemented in Latin America, Caribbean countries, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Social assistance was also found to have halved poverty. For instance, in Brazil, Saad-fihlo (2015) found that conditional cash-transfer programmes catered to families in dire poverty.

In Argentina, DuBois (2021) discovered that each child appropriately receives R418,00 as a form of social assistance; this recognises the importance of caregivers having a stable job to care for their dependants. In Ecuador, Ponce and Curvale (2020) found that the country also implemented a social assistance programme that addressed the issue of child well-being about health and education for children between the ages of 6 to 15 years. In Mexico, Parker and Todd (2017) revealed that Progresá social assistance in that country has alleviated poverty and contributed to human capital development. In Zambia, Hunda, Natali, Seidenfield and Tembo (2016) reported that the CSG in that country caters to



children residing in specific areas typically considered extremely poor. In Ghana, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash-transfer programme focuses on children who are orphans and vulnerable.

## Methodology

In addressing the research question of whether CSG policy alleviated poverty, this study followed a mixed-method approach achieved through the use of a survey and documentary analysis. Combining these data collection methods fitted with the mixed methods approach as the survey represents an aspect of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In contrast, the document analysis represents that of the qualitative approach. Daniel and Harland (2017:116) indicate that surveys are a typical example of a mixed-method approach. Using a mixed-method approach is that the strengths of the one approach, qualitative and quantitative, can be used to make up for the weaknesses of the other (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011:12). For instance, with the quantitative research approach, the researcher is detached from the participants, which is a weakness that the qualitative research approach compensates for. Similarly, mining data collected using the qualitative research design can be time-consuming, which is a weakness of the quantitative research approach makes up for.

The population for the study was beneficiaries of the CSG who resided in Mamelodi. Mamelodi is a township situated in the City of Tshwane Municipality in the Gauteng province, SA. Mamelodi Township is demarcated into 54 sub-places. Data from the 2011 census indicated Mamelodi Township to have a population of 334 577 residents with 110 703 households (STATS SA 2011). Its area size is 45.19 km<sup>2</sup>. Out of its 54 sub-places, Mamelodi Sixteens was the study area for the research. There are 912 households in Mamelodi Sixteens with 3422 residents in an area of 0.21 km<sup>2</sup>.

Survey research participants from Mamelodi Township were selected using the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used when it is difficult to locate members of the population. With this technique, data are collected from the few members of the population that the researcher finds. Thereafter, the researcher requests those few members to refer to them to others who share similar characteristics and who in turn requested to do the same task and so on. The sample thus accumulates as each study subject directs the researcher to other study subjects (Babbie, 2008:205).

Consequently, due to the restrictions and health safety issues brought about by the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the snowball sampling method was relevant for the



study, as the researcher would have otherwise found it difficult to locate research participants at a time when physical field research restricted. Daniel and Harland (2017:49) mention that snowballing assists when finding research participants may be difficult. As stated above in this section, there are 912 households in Mamelodi Sixteens. The authors took 20% of that household number as the population. Therefore, 182 (n) households were selected. The first research participant of the snowball sample was the second author's former colleague's friend who resided in the Mamelodi Sixteens. This first research participant, who was a CSG beneficiary, was requested to complete the survey as well as refer the researcher to other CSG beneficiaries whom they knew of the same area. The authors requested the additional research participants to also refer to other CSG beneficiaries whom they knew. This was done until a sample size of 182 was reached.

However, in examining the survey responses, it was evident that 174 responses were valid and the remaining 8 were duplications. According to Daniel and Harland (2017:50), the response rate is calculated by taking the total number of respondents who completed the survey and dividing it by the desired number for completion,  $174/182*100=96\%$ . The survey, therefore, still attained a high response rate of 96%. Daniel and Harland (2017:49) state that a high response rate reduces sampling error.

Owing to COVID-19 and restrictions imposed by the SA government in response to the virus, the researcher designed a survey on Microsoft Word and thereafter exported and modified it on Google Forms to develop an online survey that would be completed by CSG beneficiaries who resided in Mamelodi Township.

The following steps specify how the online survey was administered:

- Using the snowball sampling technique assisted the researcher with obtaining contact details of the research participants before the survey was administered.
- Before any participant completed the online survey, the researcher first ensured that research participants were all setup; for instance, they were briefed about the study through the participation information letter and the consent form, which were sent to the participant as attachments on WhatsApp.
- Furthermore, the researcher had verified whether a research participant had a cellphone or computer and access to data so that they could connect to the web browser and complete the online survey.

In the case where a research participant had a cellphone or computer but did not have data, the researcher provided the required amount of data for completing the survey, which was small. The researcher could make purchases of mobile data for participants by using the funds received from the University. The data were directly loaded onto the participants' cell phone account and the researcher maintained a record of all purchases made, including date, amount, and cellphone number. Research participants were sent a

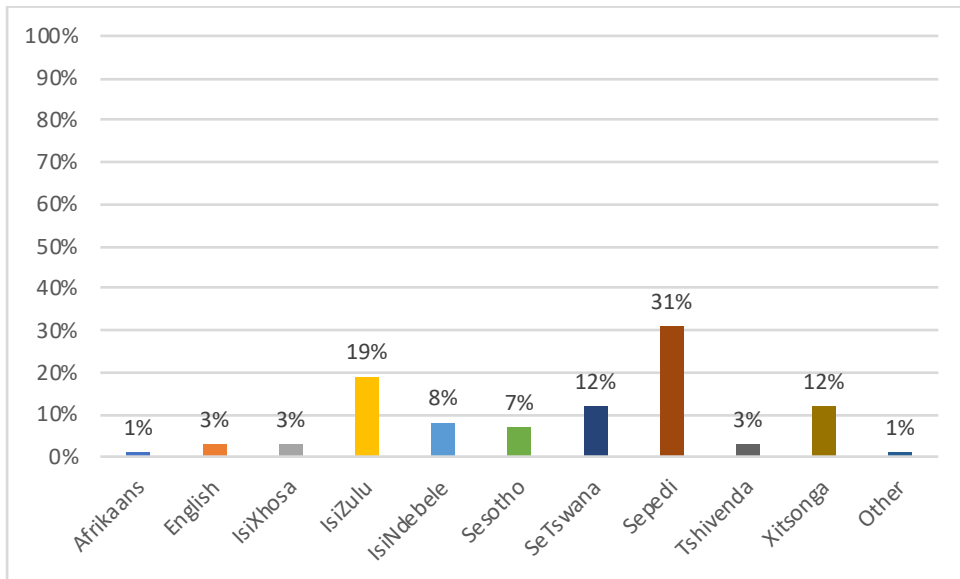


link (<https://forms.gle/w8NsYBXefVK5JNW76>) to the survey, which was available on Google Forms. The link was mostly sent through WhatsApp text by the authors. Once the research participants opened the link, they encountered the questions that needed to be responded to. The next sections discuss the empirical findings based on responses obtained from the respondents during primary data collection through survey interviews. Secondary data, such as literature and document reviews, were used to supplement the findings from the primary sources.

## Discussion

Mamelodi is a township situated on the eastern side of Tshwane (Pretoria). It is under the jurisdiction of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, in Gauteng province, in SA. The CSG is a form of social assistance programme or cash-transfer payment, which was implemented in 1998 by the South African government. The empirical results found that the CSG policy assisted in the efforts of the South African government to alleviate child poverty in Mamelodi Township, Gauteng province.

Figure 1: Household home language



Source: Mamelodi CSG survey, February 2021

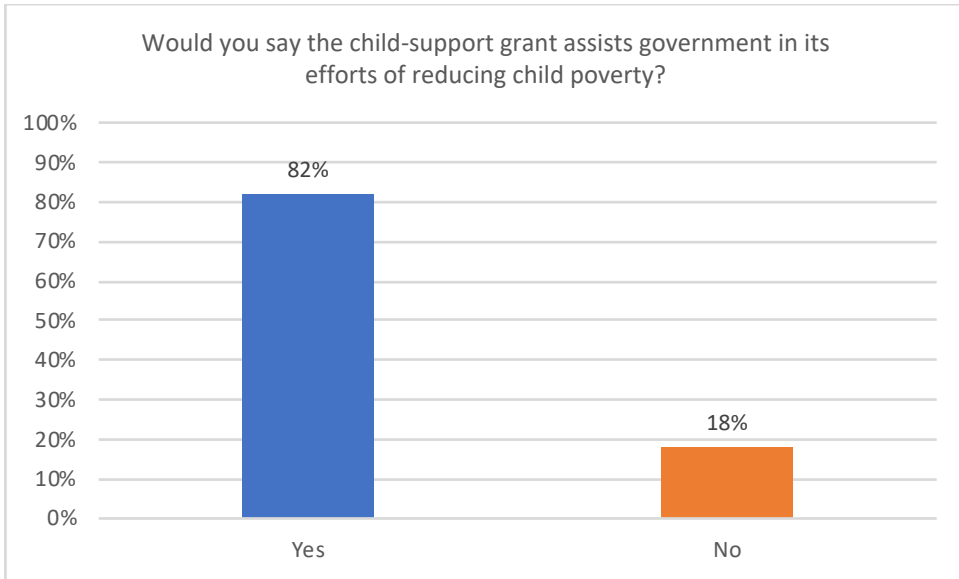
Most respondents spoke Sepedi (31%), followed by IsiZulu at 19%, then Setswana and Xitsonga, both at 12%. Eight percent of the respondents spoke IsiNdebele, followed by Sesotho at 7%, Tshivenda at 3% and English and IsiXhosa both at 3%. Only 1% of the





respondents spoke Afrikaans or another language. Figure 1 depicts the profile of the languages being spoken by households in Mamelodi Township. Figure 2 depicts the survey results of respondents who participated in the study.

**Figure 2: CSG and child poverty alleviation**



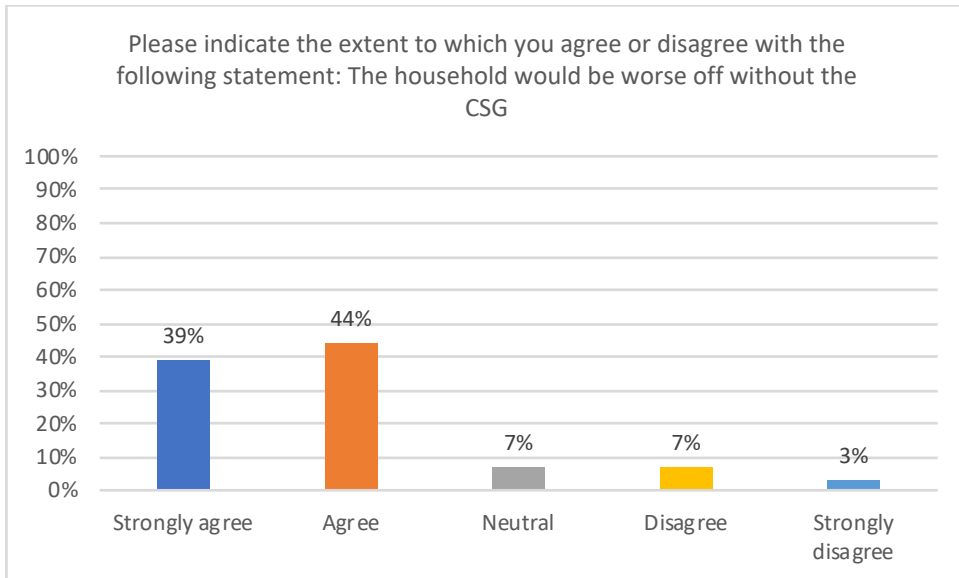
Source: Mamelodi CSG survey, February 2021

A Mamelodi community survey on CSG found that 82% of the respondents believed that the CSG assisted the government in its efforts of reducing child poverty, while 18% did not agree with this viewpoint because they considered the amount of the grant insufficient. These respondents, therefore, focused on their perceived low value of the grant rather than responding to the question of whether the amount currently received assisted in alleviating child poverty.

Furthermore, most respondents in the study indicated that they would be worse off without the provision of the CSG. Figure 2 illustrates this point.



**Figure 3: Impact of the CSG on the household**



Source: Mamelodi CSG survey, February 2021

About the statement that the household would be worse off without the CSG, the majority (44%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, followed by 39% who strongly agreed. Seven percent were neutral to the statement, while 7% disagreed and only 3% strongly disagreed.

To a certain extent, this statement was supported by the data results, which indicated that 75% of the respondents were unemployed and job-searching, thus implying that the income received in the form of the CSG was most likely the main source of income for many caregivers.

The results of the literature review on CSG and its relationship or linkages with poverty alleviating on poverty alleviation, the study found that poverty alleviation programmes such as CSG remain instrumental choices for policy-makers to improve the life society. The review of literature also revealed that CSG had positive effects on beneficiaries and has disproportionately reduced the levels of poverty internationally. In the South African context, the literature also revealed that the CSG received massive funding from the government to child poverty in communities. The literature also revealed that the CSG or something closely similar is being implemented in other countries such as Ecuador, Mexico, Zambia and Ghana.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

All public policies are developed for a specific purpose. Cloete and De Coning (2011:46) state that the purpose of public policies is to “change, regulate, improve, or preserve the conditions of society or the lifestyles of individuals.” To ascertain whether a policy has met its objectives, an evaluation must be conducted. It was indicated in the literature that evaluation could be conducted at any stage of the public policy-making process and that the evaluation could be a formative, ongoing or process, summative, or short-, medium- and long-term type of evaluation. The summative evaluation was concerned with determining whether a policy met its objectives. Thereafter, a report was generated regarding performance (outcome, output, and impact) (Cloete & De Coning, 2011:200).

The study concludes that the CSG policy meets its objective of alleviating child poverty. Redistributive policies, such as the CSG, seek to promote equality (Rinfret, Scheberle & Pautz 2018:5) and the provision of the grants reduces income inequality. Evidence demonstrates that CSG caregivers agree that the CSG assists the government in reducing child poverty, especially given that a substantial number of caregivers are unemployed. According to Cloete and De Coning (2011:200), the results arrived at a summative evaluation, both positive and negative, should be compared to the condition before the policy was implemented. In this regard, caregivers confirmed that they would be worse off without the provision of the CSG. Therefore, the existence of the policy contributed towards improving their lives. Furthermore, the funds spent by the South African government on social assistance were significant, especially compared to other developing countries. In terms of recommendations the evidence from this study illustrated that the CSG indeed alleviated child poverty. Therefore, the government should therefore continue with this social assistance programme to make it more accessible, especially to the 17.5% of eligible children currently not covered.

## Limitations of the study

The survey of CSG in Mamelodi Township was designed in English, a language that only 2.9% of the respondents indicated to be their home language. Therefore, some of the research participants experienced language-barrier issues. This was evident not only by misunderstanding a particular question that was posed but also in the manner in which some questions were responded to.

Furthermore, the CSG programme is a nationwide one from which over 12 million children across SA benefit. The researchers would have preferred to cover all geographical areas of the country. However, due to financial constraints and other lack of resources, such as human capital and time constraints, the research was limited to the Mamelodi township



in Gauteng. The views of beneficiaries are, therefore, not comprehensive, due to other areas being excluded. Thus, it might not be possible to generalise the findings of the study to other areas of SA, such as rural areas.

Finally, the prevalence of COVID-19 made it unsafe for the authors to physically collect survey data from research participants, hence the remote data collection provisions. Generally, older persons experience technology, including the internet, to be more complicated than do their young counterparts. Therefore, conducting the survey online discouraged older persons from participating. Their views might have perhaps differed from those provided by the younger participants.

### Declaration of conflict of interest

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