



Governance of Social Protection Programmes for Poverty Alleviation in Botswana

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Abstract

This review article explores the governance of social protection programs (SPPs) in alleviating poverty in Botswana, using stakeholder theory as a framework. It highlights that the governance of SPPs is an under-researched aspect of Botswana's social policy. Utilising an exploratory case study design and document analysis, the study examines governance strategies and the effectiveness of SPPs in combatting poverty and inequality. Findings indicate that while vulnerable groups benefit from SPPs, wealth distribution remains unequal, marginalising certain communities. Key governance strategies include stakeholder engagement, public awareness, and monitoring from the Department of Social Development. Challenges such as inadequate coordination among various government structures and capacity limitations for social workers are noted. The study calls for increased government transparency in social protection measures to address structural inequalities and empower citizens, contributing valuable insights for improving SPPs in Botswana and other emerging economies.

Keywords: governance; social protection programmes; vulnerability; poverty alleviation; middle-income economies; Botswana

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Introduction

Governments are at the centre of providing public goods and services and ensuring the welfare of citizens through various safety net programs. In Africa, the role of social welfare in advancing social economic development should not be underestimated as citizens rely on the government to sustain their livelihoods and attain a better living standard. Governance entails the administrative structures used to manage and direct the affairs of institutions (Shava & Mubangizi, 2019). Governance is a term used in many disciplines such as economics, administration, business and social science. United Nations Human Rights Office of the Commission (2024, p.1) states that governance refers to “all processes of governing, the institutions, processes and practices through which issues of common concern are decided upon and regulated”. In support of the view above, Shava & Thakhathi (2016) explain that governance involves the management processes designed to meet and address the stakeholders’ interests and performance objectives. The UNDP (1997) states that governance refers to using economic, political and administrative power to control a country’s affairs at all levels. Furthermore, it includes the systems, processes and institutions allowing persons and groups to express their views, exercise their rights, fulfil their obligations and resolve disagreements. In this study, governance refers to methods/strategies that the government uses to plan, carry out and oversee social protection programmes.

Good governance is central to successfully implementing social protection programmes in middle-income economies. Good governance has a strong relationship with human rights, forming into the following categories: democratic institutions, public service delivery, rule of law, and control of corruption (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024). Good governance reforms advance human rights as they enable the state to fulfil its obligation to provide public goods necessary for protecting human rights including the right to social assistance and social security. Devereux & White (2010) point out that the government’s provision of social protection programmes is a statutory entitlement because it must provide social security to the vulnerable population.

The concept of social protection is widely used in addressing issues of poverty and marginalization through the promotion of enhancing human rights. The International Labor Organization (2019) defined social protection as a collection of policies and activities implemented by the government or private sector which are aimed at reducing and preventing vulnerability and poverty throughout the life cycle of citizens. To address inequalities and mitigate vulnerability, the Government of Botswana has implemented various social protection programmes that played a vital role in fulfilling the needs of citizens since independence in 1966. A study conducted on social protection in Botswana by Molokwane & Lukamba (2018) revealed the need to uphold accountability and transparency systems that are culturally sensitive to policy instruments and guarantee equitable welfare provision among vulnerable groups. Similarly, a study conducted in Zimbabwe on NGO welfare provisions augmented these notions stating that upholding transparency and accountability in welfare provisions is critical not only to the funders but the general citizens who are recipients of the aid (Shava & Mubangizi, 2019).

The African continent has been categorized as a developing continent by various authors (Patel, Plagerson & Chinyoka 2023; Bothale & Molokwane, 2019). An emerging economy is defined as a developing nation that is characterized by comparatively fast economic growth as well as a rapid expansion of trade and investment flows. In other words, the emerging economy does not have all the attributes of a developed economy (Gordon & Munichiello, 2022). Characteristics of developed markets may include high per capita income, liquid equity and debt markets, accessibility by foreign investors, and a dependable regulatory system (Duttagupta & Pazarbasioglu, 2021). For the past few decades, some countries such as Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia have managed to transition to emerging economies (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2023). This study explored the governance of social protection programmes for poverty alleviation in middle-income economies, with a special focus on Botswana.

Whilst the Government of Botswana is striving to curb the poverty gap between the rich and the poor through the provision of various social protection programmes and services, their efforts were put to the test by the COVID-19- pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on people's lives and threatened many countries' economic stability through the lockdown measures implemented by governments to halt the spread of this infectious disease (Murenje & Porter, 2020). Following the announcement of the first confirmed case in March 2020, Botswana saw a continuous rise in infected people (Siamisang, Kebabiretse & Smith-Lawrence, 2022). To control the spreading of the pandemic, the government put in place several restrictions such as limiting travel to and from the nation, creating a national task force, social distancing, and others (Siamisang et al., 2022). This was vital for decreasing the number of infections but had devastating consequences for the economy and the livelihoods of people.

Nature of poverty in Botswana and other middle-income countries

The Botswana Government has, since independence, pursued poverty reduction as one of its development strategies. The desire to reduce poverty has been expressed in several policy documents, including but not limited to National Development Plans (NDPs), Vision 2036, and National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NSPR) (Ntseane & Solo, 2023). Furthermore, the government of Botswana has implemented various strategies such as encouraging widespread economic growth by introducing financial incentives for generating revenue, income-generating projects for empowerment, investing in public goods and infrastructure to enhance human development, providing social protection to alleviate poverty and enhance human development (Seleka et al., 2007). This shows government efforts in alleviating poverty and vulnerability in Botswana.

As a middle-income country, Botswana's estimated gross domestic product will be 21.94 USD billion by the end of 2024 (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2023). This wealth is being created from the vast natural mineral resources such as diamonds and a vibrant eco-tourism sector

(Statistics Botswana, 2024). This massive wealth is currently being used to fund social protection programmes. Despite this country's significant progress during the last decades, contemporary social development issues such as poverty, unemployment, substance abuse by youth, and gender-based violence continue to rise. In a similar study done in Middle Eastern and North African countries, it was reported that these countries have strong economies but they are also battling with poverty and inequalities (Raquel, 2019). This leads to an inquiry into the governance of social protection programmes to have an in-depth understanding of factors that are perpetuating poverty. In support of the above findings, Hickey, Ivers, Ninoz-zarura & Seeking (2020) state that political interference and cadre deployments increase the levels of corruption and mismanagement of resources, Therefore, the intended beneficiaries (vulnerable groups) fail to get access to social welfare services which increases their vulnerability to poverty.

Many individuals and households are experiencing poverty which is hindering their attainment of holistic well-being. Statistics Botswana (2021) reported that poverty is more concentrated in rural areas at 32.9% than in urban areas at 8.5%. Ngubane, Mndebele & Kaseeram (2023) stated that in South Africa poverty is more infested in the rural provinces such as Limpopo and Eastern Cape and it's concentrated among female-headed households. Furthermore, a study done in Zimbabwe revealed that resource scarcity and dependence on donor aid have weakened the social protection programmes that seek to address the needs of the poverty-stricken people (Mupedziswa, 2018). The limited employment opportunities worsen the situation of vulnerable and marginalized communities. Hence there is a mutual friendship between poverty and unemployment. In this study, poverty is the dependent variable and unemployment becomes an explanatory variable.

Bhatia & Bhabha (2017) state that poverty refers to a situation whereby individual/s are denied choices or opportunities in life which leads to a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, and not having access to credit

(Kharazishvill et al., 2020). Furthermore, it means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities (Mupedziswa, 2018). In this study, poverty refers to a lack of opportunities or access to basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and social protection services and programmes. World Bank (2023) has estimated that 14.3 per cent of impoverished people around the globe live on USD 2.15 per day, and inequalities and unemployment at an estimated 25.4 per cent are persisting and affecting the vulnerable population groups. This means, cuts across both developing and upper-middle-income countries.

Social protection as a fundamental human right

The government of Botswana upholds people's rights and freedoms. According to Molokwane & Lukamba (2018), one of the Vision 2016 pillars entitled: compassionate, just a Caring Nation stipulates that the government seeks to eradicate poverty and provides safety nets to all vulnerable individuals. This shows the government's commitment to improving the well-being of its citizens by upholding their rights by providing social protection. Therefore, the government emphasises the necessity of social protection which has embraced a social registry during the Eleventh National Development Plan (NDP11) (Magombeyi, Odhiambo & Halsall, 2017). As a democratic country, Botswana upholds the rule of law. The government has adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and incorporated it in Chapter 2: Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual of the Constitution of Botswana (Government of Botswana, 2024a). Like many other emerging economies, the government of Botswana seeks to treat everyone in society equally with respect and dignity (Devereux & White, 2010). A study done by Osabohien (2020) adds that African eat al. governments are the principal duty bearers, hence they should ensure that social welfare programmes and services should be grounded on the rights of people. By so doing, they will be responding to their needs and this will minimise inequalities and vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, the government 2018 established the National Social Protection Framework, and its vision was to establish a comprehensive and well-

coordinated social protection system that is efficient, effective and sustainable (Government of Botswana, 2019). This was achieved by the provision of social protection programmes and services through the three levels of government namely National (Central), District (local authorities) and Village levels (village authorities) (Ntsean & Solo, 2007, 2023). The Department of Social Protection is the primary implementer of social protection programmes and it works together with the Department of Local Government Finance and Procurement and Community Development. This concurs with studies done by Irele (2019): and Schade, Lia & Pick (2019) who denote that in Nigeria and Namibia, their governments have formulated a ministry solemnly responsible for the provision of welfare services and under each they are various departments responsible for ensuring that all the needs in domains of well-being (economic, social, physical and mental health and environmental) are met. This shows that alleviating poverty and vulnerabilities is a matter of serious concern in all countries worldwide.

The provision of social protection is paramount to state and non-state actors. The non-state -actors include private organisations, community-based organizations and humanitarian organizations which include non-governmental organizations, and international organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund, the Red Cross, the World Food Programme etc (Gunhidzirai & Tanga, 2020). In contrast, the Ukraine, government solemnly depends on internal mechanisms to fund social welfare services. This shows that, although countries may be grouped in the same category as middle-income countries, others still need external support from donors while others rely on domestic government revenue. This shows that their levels of poverty and inequities are different. Drawing from the assertion above, governments and local and international organisations are making a vital collaborative effort to alleviate poverty and vulnerability.

Nature of social protection programmes in Botswana

Devereux & White (2010a) state that social protection is a collection of national policies and tools that seeks to protect people from social exclusion and deprivation, especially during times of insufficient income,

powerlessness and failure to work by offering them income social assistance in the form of income and facilitating access to goods and services to vulnerable groups on at least minimally acceptable levels. Countries in the global South have largely relied on informal social assistance to alleviate poverty and deprivation, especially before independence from their colonial masters (Gunhidzirai, 2023; Devereux 2010b). These studies revealed that informal social assistance plays a vital role in solving societal issues which are affecting the poor, marginalized and vulnerable members of society in Africa.

The Department of Social Protection under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, coordinating and implementing social protection programmes for citizens as a way of minimizing poverty and vulnerabilities amongst the disadvantaged population (UNICEF, 2019). These programmes are as follows: World War 2 veterans' allowance, remote area development programme, orphan care programme, community home-based care, disability grant, needy students, refugees and unaccompanied children, primary and secondary school feeding programs, destitute persons programme, remote area and development programme, vulnerable groups feeding, old age pension scheme and Ipelegeng (Maundeni & Mupedziswa, 2017). A study done in South Africa reported that the Department of Social Development offers cash transfers, social assistance and social insurance programmes to cater for the needs of vulnerable groups (Plageron et al., 2019). Drawing from the above discussions, it shows that both countries sought to uplift the lives of the poor, marginalized and vulnerable members of the society.

There is limited research done on social protection in Botswana. Scholars such as Maundeni & Mupedziswa, 2017: Teslius, Marques, Lookedi, Braithwaule, Sharma & Ntseana, 2013 and Seleka, Siphambe, Ntseane, Mbere, Kerapeletswe & Sharp, 2007) have done various studies on social protection in Botswana. However, they focused more on the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection programmes in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in Botswana. Hence less is known about governance including monitoring and evaluation challenges in the quest to implement

social protection programmes. In this study, the author dealt with the gap by exploring the effectiveness of these programmes as well as governance issues in alleviating poverty in Botswana.

This study

Poverty has remained a major social ill in Botswana a middle-income country. UNICEF (2023) reported that 13.5% of people are living in extreme poverty in Botswana. This is over four times higher than the predicted Botswana gross domestic product per capita and comparing it with other middle-income countries across the gross. In the past, the government of Botswana has enacted various policies such as the National Development Plan 1-10, Vision 2016 and 2036 to re-address issues of poverty and unemployment amongst the vulnerable people (Ntseana & Solo, 2023). This has led to the provision of various social protection programmes in Botswana. However, despite such tremendous efforts, poverty is still increasing in Botswana.

The prevalence of poverty has implications for the future of the Botswana people and the recent Vision 2036 in which the government envision that this country would be ranked amongst the most developed/ highly industrialised in the world. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the governance of social protection programmes in alleviating poverty. This study is imperative because the authors intended to explore how the social protection programmes are formulated and implemented as this will provide information on what could be perpetuating poverty in Botswana.

This study has implications for social work practice because the findings will be useful to social workers and community development officers as they will be able to tailor-made social welfare interventions that seek to address the needs of each vulnerable group. Furthermore, this study will contribute to policy as the findings will be used to review or revise existing policies so that they respond to the needs of vulnerable populations. Lastly, this study will contribute to research on social protection as there is a literature gap since there are no studies done in Botswana that sought to explore the governance

of social protection programmes. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What governance strategies were adopted by the government of Botswana to ensure social protection programmes were responsive to the citizens' needs?
2. What are the challenges being faced by the government in the implementation of social protection programmes in Botswana?
3. How effective are social protection programmes in alleviating poverty in Botswana?
4. How effective are the governance structures in the implementation of social protection programmes in Botswana?

The stakeholder theory

The stakeholder theory was developed by Edward Freeman in 1984, he aimed to improve the efficiency of organizational management and uphold business ethics to address values in managing an organisation (Freeman, 1984). This theory is grounded in the ideologies of capitalism that emphasise a two-way relationship between an organisation/business and its employees, investors, suppliers and clients (Jones, 1995). The stakeholder theory is of the view that organisations are mandated to add value not only to their shareholders but also to stakeholders. Freeman et al., (2010) state that stakeholder theory is embodied in economic theorization, whereby it emphasises the study of economic behaviour through models and assumptions. The traditional capitalists are of the view that market competition should be a catalyst of social welfare, and the proponents of stakeholders argue for cooperation relationships amongst stakeholders to balance their interests (Freeman & Philip, 2002). Drawing from traditional economic theorizing, which assumes that human behaviour is centred on self-interest, this story stipulates that is more complex than that hence one of its tenets is cooperation.

The second tenet states that strategic management's responsibility is to manage social relationships through building fair relationships with stakeholders who play a significant role in value creation (Clement, 2005). The stakeholder theory incorporates both economic and social dimensions and morals as value creation, managing relationships and fairness are key

drivers to an organisation's success (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This shows that stakeholder theory is more concerned with normative ethics. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of stakeholders and the importance of them into account because they affect an organisation's growth and profitability (Aaltonen et al., 2008). Therefore, all parties are viewed as equal stakeholders.

The stakeholder theory fits into this study because, in the Botswana context, the formulation and implementation of social protection programmes is done by various stakeholders. There should be a relationship among the stakeholders because it influences the effectiveness of social protection programmes in alleviating poverty and minimising vulnerabilities. This is of significance because poverty is multi-dimensional, hence it requires a multi-sectoral approach where all stakeholders are involved and feel the ownership of the programmes. Furthermore, national policies such as Vision 2036 and National Development Plan 11 require proper coordination and planning amongst all stakeholders. Lastly understanding the effectiveness of social protection programmes in poverty alleviation requires an in-depth understanding of the roles each stakeholder played so that researchers or policymakers may be able to see where the gap or loophole existed that prohibited the programmes implemented to address the needs of the vulnerable population.

Methodology

A qualitative approach underpinned this study because the researchers intended to explore various government strategies or methods deployed in the design and implementation of social protection programmes in Botswana. The research relied primarily on secondary data. Creswell & Clark (2018) define secondary data as involving the use of existing data gathered from government gazettes, historical documents, books and peer-reviewed articles on a new line of inquiry or a different angle on the initial query. The secondary data was applied to this study because the researcher intended to access large data sets from different stakeholders such as government agencies, BOCONGO and professional informants such as social workers

just to mention a few, who are involved in the formulation and implementation of social protection programmes in Botswana. Lastly, gathering primary data was going to be expensive as this study is not funded, therefore secondary data was convenient for the researchers.

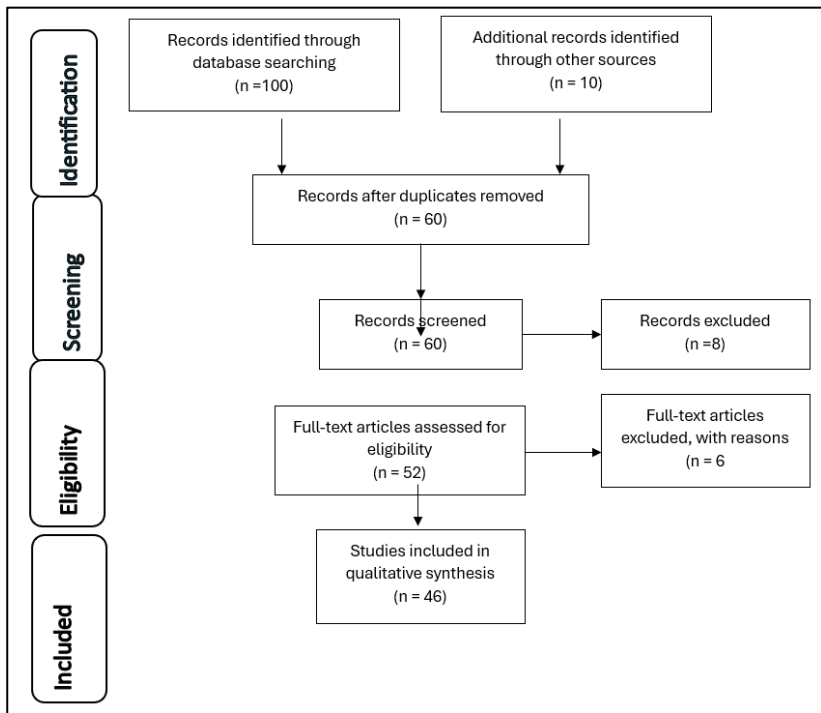
In gathering the data, the researchers made use of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analysis (PRISMA). PRISMA is defined as a diagram that presents the flow of information in a meta-analysis or systematic review which is developed to improve the transparency and quality of reporting in qualitative studies (Mayo-Wilson, Li, Fusco & Dickerson, 2018). PRISMA applied to this study because it enhances transparency of the process done by the researchers in identifying, screening, inclusion and exclusion of the secondary data used in this study. Furthermore, PRISMA enhances methodological quality as the researchers can maintain an organised record of the document selection process which is important in assessing the credibility and dependability of the findings.

The researchers used the following searches social protection programmes, poverty alleviation, social safety nets and governance of social protection to gather massive information vital to upholding the credibility. This paper collected expansive secondary data from academic sources that were less than 10 years older as a way of upholding credibility and authenticating the discussion of the findings. The inclusion strategy adopted in this study included reading all peer-reviewed and non-reviewed articles, government data sets, reports from international organisations and books which were in full text and published in English. Any document that did not provide information that sought to respond to the research questions of this study was excluded. Below is the PRISMA diagram used in the selection of secondary documents used in this study.

Figure 1 shows that the researchers gathered 100 records identified from databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar and Scopus and 10 from other sources such as websites and online. From the records gathered, 60 were excluded because they were duplicates. Furthermore, 60 records were screened, and 8 were excluded. Only 52 full-text articles were assessed for

eligibility, and 6 were excluded for reasons. For this study, only 46 full-text articles were employed by the researchers. This included reports from Statistics Botswana (7), peer-reviewed articles consisting of (15), books (7) and (17) reports from International Organisations (UNICEF, ILO, OHCHR, World Bank, UN-Botswana, UNICEF, UNCTD, UNDP, FAO and UNCA) that write extensively on social protection in Botswana.

Figure 1: Prisma flow diagram



(Source: Mayo-Wilson et al., 2018)

The findings were presented in the form of themes derived from the research questions of this study. The data gathered was also triangulated with data obtained from other middle-income countries. This analytic approach

enabled an understanding of the similarities and differences between the strategies used by the government for social protection programmes that intend to alleviate poverty.

Creswell & Creswell (2017) state that credibility refers to the magnitude at which data collected and analysed is trustworthy. In this study, the researchers adopted multiple sources in data collection which included the use of peer-reviewed articles, reports from international organisations affiliated with the United Nations and government statistical data sets. The advantage of using this method is that it is embodied by the principle of complementary. Dependability is defined as the stability of the findings over time (Leedy & Omrod, 2013). In this study, the researchers adopted peer examination. The researchers discussed how data was gathered, analysed and represented to a colleague in the Department of Social Work who is experienced in qualitative studies. The ethical principle of honesty was upheld in the reporting of findings from documents. This supports Neuman's (2014) observation that results should be presented in their original context and should not be manipulated or altered in any way because it is unethical. In support of reinforcement, Leedy & Omrod (2013) state that unexpected results should be reported honestly even if they raise questions about the methodology or design of the study.

Findings

Social protection programmes in Botswana

The socioeconomic challenges facing the citizens of Botswana have led to the development and implementation of various social protection programmes. Those social protection programmes are espoused in the National Social Protection Framework and coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development across other government sectors. The Table below shows the number of beneficiaries of social protection programmes in Botswana.

Table 1: Beneficiaries of social protection programmes in Botswana

Social Protection Programmes	Number of Beneficiaries
Old age pension	137 773
Disability Cash Transfer	9329
World War 2 Veteran	877
Destitute Programme	68 712
Need pupils	24 422
Children need care	3 608
Destitute person	40 682
Destitute housing cumulatively	2991
Community home-based care	907
Orphan care programme	18 337

(Source: Botswana Daily News, 2023)

The findings above are consistent with those of Schade, La & Pick (2019) on Namibia, which has an economy similar to that of Botswana and a comprehensive social protection programme. It offers various cash transfer programmes, social insurance and social assistance programmes to its vulnerable groups. Furthermore, a study done in South Africa denoted that, their government has implemented various social protection programmes from birth to death to minimise vulnerabilities and social exclusion of other citizens (Plageron et al., 2019). This shows that both countries seek to alleviate multiple deprivations and vulnerabilities affecting the most marginalized and vulnerable in society. The findings are also supported by the stakeholder theory which reveals that its tenet of social and moral

dimension seeks to ensure that the needs of their stakeholders which also include citizens are met. This shows that the provision of social protection programmes is vital in the alleviation of poverty and minimization of vulnerabilities. Therefore, all stakeholders need to critically analyse the designs and the process of implementing social protection programmes as poverty manifests itself in different dimensions

Strategies in the design and implementation of social protection programmes

The government of Botswana has adopted various governance strategies in the design and implementation of social protection programmes. This is vital because it allows all stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process and it gives a sense of ownership to the beneficiaries. The section below explains some of the strategies used by the government to ensure that social protection programmes respond to the needs of vulnerable groups.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement plays a vital role in the governance of social protection programmes. The government of Botswana embarks on active involvement and engagement of various stakeholders such as various government departments such as the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Basic Education, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES), service providers, Botswana Council of non-government organisations, key informants such as traditional leaders teachers and social workers, DEBSWANA, private companies and community members at grass root level in the design and formulation of social welfare policies (Ntseane & Solo, 2023). This process of involving stakeholders in policy formulation is also done by other governments of emerging countries such as Ukraine and Nigeria (Kharazishvili et al., 2020; Irele, 2019). It should be noted that involving various stakeholders is vital as they contribute their knowledge, viewpoints and resources to make sure the planning initiatives are cooperative, inclusive and sensitive to community needs. Jones (1995) is of the view, that there must be a two-way relationship between an organisation/business and its stakeholders. The above findings are

corroborated by the stakeholder theory which emphasises the involvement of all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of organisational goals.

Public Awareness

Public awareness plays a significant role in the governance of social protection programmes across the globe. Tamale (2020) defines public awareness as an initiative that intends to educate or draw the attention of the people through poster contests, social media, public meeting gatherings, and broadcasts on national or community radio stations or television. A study by Devereux (2010) reported that Southern African countries such as Eswatini, Kenya, South Africa, and Botswana, to name but a few, have embarked on various social protection public awareness campaigns to gather diverse perspectives of stakeholders (Gunhidzirai, 2020). Osabohien et al. (2020) stated that public awareness contributes to the attainment of social policy change and motivates vulnerable people to act by holding the government accountable as the principal duty bearer whose main responsibility is to uphold the rights of people in society. This shows that public awareness is crucial in the formulation and implementation of social protection programmes as it incorporates the concerns of both stakeholders. This shows that the stakeholder theory applies to this study because it emphasises the involvement of people from the grassroots level in decision-making.

Frameworks and institutions that govern social protection programmes in Botswana

Governments develop and enforce laws and regulations that govern social protection programs. They establish dedicated institutions or departments responsible for overseeing and administering these programs. These institutions ensure compliance with legal requirements, coordinate program implementation, and manage the delivery of benefits and services. This study reports how social protection programmes are governed by laws and regulations that are created and implemented by the government of Botswana.

Vision 2036

The government of Botswana implemented Vision 2036, which is a transformation agenda to meet the goals and aspirations of Botswana's people. This framework was launched in 2016 to provide the country's roadmap for the next 20 years. In achieving this, it is grounded by four pillars: sustainable economic growth, human and social development, sustainable environment, and governance peace and security (Statistics Botswana, 2021). The government of Botswana is funding various social and economic programmes to ensure that they achieve economic growth and development simultaneously. Drawing from the assertion above, this shows the government's effort to transform the country into a highly industrialized economy and address social development issues such as poverty and unemployment.

National Development Plan II (NDP II)

NDP 11 is themed Inclusive Growth for the Realisation of Sustainable Employment Creation and Poverty Reduction (Government of Botswana, 2019). This is grounded on the following 6 broad-based national priorities: developing diversified sources of economic growth, human capital development, social development, sustainable use of natural resources, consolidation of good governance and strengthening national security, and implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system (United Nations, 2017). In achieving the above-mentioned national priorities, the government of Botswana has implemented and financed various social protection programmes. Similar findings are drawn from the Republic of South Africa, where the government has implemented the National Development Plan 2030, which is a government plan to eliminate poverty and inequalities (Patel et al., 2023). This shows the enormous efforts being made by the government of Botswana in alleviating poverty amongst vulnerable groups.

Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development oversees social protection programme execution, guarantees adherence to legal

requirements, and oversees benefits and service delivery (Botlhale & Molokwane, 2019). Under this ministry, the Department of Social Development and the Department of Community Development is responsible for the provision of social protection programmes and services to the vulnerable population in Botswana. The findings above correspond to those by Gunhidzirai, Makoni & Tanga (2017), who also found that in South Africa the provision of social protection programmes and services is done by the Department of Social Development. This shows that governments of upper-middle-income countries seek to ensure that past imbalances are addressed, and poverty should be alleviated for members of society to live a dignified life.

Department of Social Development's monitoring and evaluation mechanism

The government of Botswana has established monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the performance and impact of social protection programs. The findings revealed that the National Monitoring and Evaluation System is responsible for the achievement of the National Development Agenda, Vision 2036 hence it is vital to monitor government social protection programmes and ensure accountability in the execution of all social assistance and economic empowerment programmes in Botswana (Kepaletswe-Monthe, 2017). This is achieved through designating social workers, community development and other sectoral extension officials stationed at the extension area level offices in each town and village to assist beneficiaries of the programmes. Furthermore, the Department of Social Protection Officials often make supervision excursions to the districts to meet with beneficiaries and field workers. This allows them to assess the level of implementation and provide recommendations for how to address concerns that are brought to the attention of the Council Secretary's Office and the District Commissioner who is the central government's representative at the district level.

It should be noted that not all social protection programmes have monitoring and evaluation tools to measure their effectiveness in addressing the needs of

vulnerable groups. A study done by Seleka et al., (2007) revealed that in the Francistown City Council, a Family Care Model was developed to oversee and assess the Community Home Based Care and Orphan Care programmes and ensure that they integrate well into the family-focused support system. This tool is vital because it gathers information, calculates results and carries out routine evaluations to guarantee the efficacy, efficiency and responsibilities of these two social protection programmes (Seleka et al, 2007). This shows the importance of family who are expected to show unconditional love and support to members who are going through different transitions and trajectories in life.

On the cash transfer programmes, officials are involved in providing reports to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Health and Welfare Committees of the various District and Urban Councils on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis (UNDP, 2020). Similar findings were obtained from studies done in Mauritania and Gabon, which reported that progress reports, consultative meetings at different levels of management, district support visits and beneficiaries' assessments are strategies used to monitor social protection programmes in their countries (Iram, 2017). The above monitoring strategies are vital as they help to assess whether the intended beneficiaries are receiving the grants in time and to see if there are gaps or difficulties in the implementation process. On the Destitute programme, the government is also providing food hampers to food-deprived families (Maundeni & Mupedziswa, 2017). The Village Development Committee members are responsible for signing invoices as a way of showing that the right food ration has been provided to registered beneficiaries and that the food basket is of high quality as part of the monitoring strategy. Providing those in need with nutritious foods shows that the government values the physical well-being of the people.

Financing and Resource Allocation

Botswana has increased financial resources and spending on social protection programmes as a way of alleviating poverty and vulnerability. The findings revealed that the government has designed a budget for the execution of the

programmes, identifying the funding sources (such as taxes and outside grants) and making sure the resources are sufficient and sustainable to achieve the goals of the programmes. In support of the above, Magombeyi et al., (2017) reported that the government of Botswana contributes a generous amount to the provision of social protection programmes which are coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. In the 2019/2020 budget, it was reported that social protection spending was distributed as follows: 53% was allocated to social assistance programmes; Scholarships and sponsorship constituted 18%; Social insurance was 26%; and others were 3% (Government of Botswana, 2019). The findings are in line with those of Statistics South Africa (2022) which revealed that South Africa's budget for social protection increased from R286 billion to R370 billion. This shows the government's effort to alleviate societal risks to individuals and families.

Effectiveness of social protection programmes in alleviating poverty

Social protection programmes have significantly reduced poverty and inequality in Botswana. The findings revealed that social protection programmes have successfully aided vulnerable populations, ensuring their basic needs are met. The provision of education, cash-transfer programmes, and healthcare services has contributed to the overall well-being of the citizens (Makhema, 2015). The above findings are in line with Patel, et al., (2023) who state that social assistance programmes have played a pivotal role in improving the lives of the vulnerable and marginalized in many African countries. It is estimated that 387,503 households out of 666,429 are recipients of government social protection programmes to alleviate poverty (Statistics Botswana, 2021). This shows that many vulnerable households are receiving various forms of support in the form of cash or in-kind support from the government.

Furthermore, the government is committed to reducing social and economic risks facing citizens. The Government of Botswana (2024) stated that the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development received P9.48 billion

for the 2024/2025 financial year which is an increase of 15.3% from the 2023/2024 financial year. This funding intends to support local authority-level projects that will enhance the achievement of social and economic development. This shows the commitment of government to creating an inclusive society that provides opportunities and meets the needs of all citizens.

Challenges faced in the implementation of social protection programmes

High levels of poverty and vulnerability

Many Sub-Saharan African countries are experiencing high poverty levels, and Botswana is no exception. Statistics Botswana, (2021) reported that 20.84% of the population experiences different forms of poverty. This population group does not have access to necessities which are vital for the attainment of holistic well-being. Similarly, Statistics South Africa, (2023) stated that 18.2 million people are living in dire poverty at less than 1.90 USD per day. Hickey et al., (2020) pointed out that, African countries have vast resources but mismanagement and corruption have led to a sharp decline in economic development. This shows that economic growth does not automatically lead to economic development. Magombeyi et al., (2017) revealed that Botswana is experiencing poverty due to an increase in the number of people affected/infected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and a lack of economic diversity as it only relies on diamonds, tourism, and animal husbandry. This became a financial burden to the government as many people need social assistance in the form of cash or in-kind transfers to alleviate poverty and minimize vulnerability. The stakeholder theory applies to this study because poverty is multi-dimensional and requires a multi-sectoral approach. Therefore, all stakeholders need to be involved in the formulation phase so that their views/thoughts are incorporated into the programmes.

Fragmentation of social protection programmes

The social and economic risks facing citizens are multidimensional, and this creates fragmentation and overlapping challenges in the provision of social

protection services and programmes for governments in developing countries. The findings revealed that social protection programmes and services are being coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the implementation is being done by various government ministries and departments (Government of Botswana, 2024b). Furthermore, there are approximately thirty overlapping programmes run by several departments in Botswana. This shows that the entire delivery of social protection is disorganized, fragmented, and poorly tailored to the needs of vulnerable and low-income households. This means, that while some are benefiting from government assistance, many vulnerable groups are being excluded because the social protection programmes are fragmented. For example, the refugees and unaccompanied children do not benefit from other programmes such as cash transfers. In contrast, the Department of Social Development in South Africa and the Social Security Commission in Namibia have been mandated by their governments to effectively oversee the coordination and implementation of social programmes and services (Ntseane & Solo, 2023). This helps them to easily monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes in addressing the needs of vulnerable people as all social protection programmes are being run by a single entity.

Maundeni & Mupedziswa (2017), argue that some social assistance programmes are targeting individuals instead of families. Therefore, many beneficiaries and their dependents are still in dire poverty because the social welfare support received is not adequate to address the plight facing the entire household. Gunhidzirai & Tanga (2020) contend that gaps in Zimbabwe's social protection system also exclude other individuals who need social assistance. Although the social protection programmes intend to alleviate and minimize poverty and vulnerability, the findings above clearly revealed that they are based on a therapeutic rather than a preventative strategy. The findings contradict the stakeholder theory, this is evidenced by the continuous increase of poverty despite government provision of social protection programmes to the vulnerable population.

Rapid urbanisation

A considerable body of research exists to explain the impact of rapid urbanisation on poverty in African urban metropolitans (Arndt, Davies & Thurlow 2018). Similarly, Botswana has experienced rapid urbanisation due to rural-urban migration because rural dwellers are facing the evils of climate change which is affecting their livelihoods and this drives them to migrate to urban and urban areas in search of job opportunities and better standards of living (United Nations-Habitat, 2024). This is supported by the Government of Botswana (2024a) who reported that rural-to-urban migration has increased the number of urban dwellers by up to 72.22%. The findings resonate with Shava & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022) who reported that in South Africa most rural residents were migrating to the cities of Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria and Cape Town in search of access to better public goods and opportunities. Such haphazard migration has resulted in a critical lack of public goods and services, high unemployment, urban sprawl, and urban poverty. Chiguvi (2022) states that urban migration has aggravated urban poverty because most migrants do not have the labour market skills needed. Furthermore, this increases the numbers of urban vulnerable people and it accelerates the demands of the social safety nets to cushion poverty and deprivation.

Implications

Botswana has been able to reach a significant proportion of needy citizens. However, it is possible to refocus social protection programmes to ensure they reach the neediest. For example, old age pensions in Botswana can be refined to target the most vulnerable population groups who do not have access to labour pensions. Also, tertiary funding could be refined to target more deserving students from needy families with low incomes. Currently, both middle- and high-income households have access to tertiary education grants or scholarships.

Currently, Botswana's economy is overly dependent on diamonds, tourism and beef sectors which may engender a sustainable social protection funding model. There is a need to diversify the country's approaches to funding

sources and ensure the long-term financial sustainability of its social protection initiatives. Botswana can learn from other African countries to strengthen inter-agency collaboration and streamline administrative processes to improve programme delivery. Fragmentation of services has led to double-dipping which can be avoided through the establishment of a single provider of social protection services. It has long been suggested by researchers and civil society stakeholders that the Ministry of Social Development bring together all social protection programmes under one roof and improve delivery.

There is a need for Botswana to engage in evidence-based approaches to the design and implementation of social protection programmes. Governments can invest in robust data collection and analysis systems to enhance the effectiveness of their policies. By drawing on these lessons, Botswana can further strengthen its governance of social protection programmes and continue to improve the well-being of its citizens, while also serving as a model for other countries in the region.

Conclusion

The study's overall objective is to explore the governance of social protection programmes for poverty alleviation in middle-income economies in Africa, particularly in Botswana. Botswana has performed relatively well in the provision of social protection services to the poor and other citizens who continue to benefit from universal education and health programmes. Botswana's success in this area may be attributed to several factors including strong political will, rapid economic growth since the 1980s, innovative funding mechanisms, and to some extent community participation in social policy formulation and implementation. Botswana has achieved significant improvements in poverty reduction, healthcare access, and education. Be that as it may, this article/paper maintains that Botswana may also learn from other emerging economies in Africa such as South Africa, Namibia, Seychelles and Mauritania on ways of enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of its social protection systems. These economies often face similar challenges such as limited fiscal resources, fragmented institutional

frameworks, and diverse socioeconomic contexts. The findings revealed there is poor coordination in the provision of social protection in Botswana. The authors suggest that further research needs to be conducted on the institutions that coordinate social protection. This is imperative because they need to work together and it will be easy for government to monitor and evaluate the social protection programmes. Furthermore, many studies on social protection in Botswana were done qualitatively, henceforth the authors suggest that further research needs to be done quantitatively. This is important as a survey question will gather massive data from various stakeholders such as BOCONGO, government ministries and departments, civil society and professional informants such as social workers just to mention a few. This will allow for the generation of statistics which is useful in the evaluation of each social protection programme in alleviating poverty.

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