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THE EFFECTIVNESS OF FEDERAL PELL GRANT PROGRAM

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FEDERAL PELL GRANT PROGRAM

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Maria DelCarmen Arias
Ashley Hernandez

May 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a systematic literature review of the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant program, a program provided by the United States government to assist low-income college students attend a higher education institution. Using literature obtained from the OneSearch database of the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) John M. Pfau Library, this study included 14 articles for analysis, out of which 12 studies utilized quantitative cross-sectional and quasi-experimental research designs. The 3 remaining studies utilized qualitative phenomenological and descriptive methodologies to further examine Pell Grant effectiveness of student access to education, academic performance along with employment outcomes among students seeking a higher educational level.

Based on a preliminary analysis of 14 articles, findings point to conflicting information about the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant program on students seeking higher education. Patterns observed in the reviewed articles suggested that the results highlighted the challenges in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant program. While some articles suggested positive outcomes for Pell Grant recipients, other articles present evidence of the program's inefficiency. Overall, findings suggested that more research should be conducted on the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grants program meeting students educational and financial needs.

DEDICATION

To my husband and children,

This journey through higher education has challenged me in ways that I never thought. Yet, through it all, the love, support, motivation, and encouragement I receive has been what allowed me to get this far in my academic career. To my husband Frank and my daughter Carmen, you both believed in me when I did not believe in myself, when I wanted to quit. Your words of encouragement, patience, and understanding kept me grounded and motivated through this process. To my children, your simple gestures of love were my motivation that helped me push forward. This dedication was to show my gratitude and appreciation for being by my side. I hope I made you all proud.

With love,

Mina

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter was to familiarize readers with poverty in the United States. Examining this social issue was essential because poverty affects approximately 34 million people in this country (USA Facts, 2023). Social workers have an ethical responsibility to raise awareness of systemic issues and social injustice and address economic inequalities to better the lives of individuals and families (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). This chapter contains four sections. The first section defines poverty in the United States. The second section described the prevalence of poverty. The third section examined the effects of poverty on individuals, families, and the community. The fourth section discussed the risk factors of poverty.

Definition

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau (2023), a family and everyone in it was considered impoverished if their income total was less than the family's poverty threshold. The poverty threshold varied, depending on the size of the family and the number of children within a family. In 2022, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$30,186 if the family had no children under 18 years old, \$30,679 if the family had one related child, \$29,678 if the family had two related children, and \$29,782 if the family had three related children. Therefore, a family of four

with three related children with an annual household income of less than \$29,782 was considered in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

Individuals and families experiencing poverty struggle to face a myriad of challenges. 35% of families in the middle-income bracket often express concerns regarding covering their expenses, while an equivalent percentage, 37%, expresses worry about affording healthcare expenses for both them and their families (The White House, 2021). This figure was expected to be higher among individuals and families living in poverty. In fact, low-income families with children are more vulnerable to experiencing chronic food insecurity compared to other families (Insolera, 2023). Such families are burdened by constant concerns about where their next meal will come from

Prevalence

Poverty rates were higher within specific subgroups. According to USAFacts (2023), 24.3% of American Indians, 19.5% of Black people, 17.1% of Hispanics, and 9.3% of Asians were classified as living in poverty in 2021 compared to 8.1% of non-Hispanic White Americans. In 2022, a staggering 24% of individuals with disabilities, which equates to 3.8 million people, found themselves living below the poverty threshold (Center of American Progress [CAP], 2022). The statistic emphasized the need for comprehensive societal support and policy measures to uplift and empower individuals with disabilities. The poverty rate for families also differs by gender. In 2022, 23.0% of single female-headed households were in poverty, whereas 11.5% of single male-

headed households were in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). This comparison displays a notable gender disparity, as households headed by females are more likely to be affected by poverty than those of males.

Effects of Poverty

The effects of poverty are wide-ranging. Children in poverty have poorer educational outcomes. Families in poverty have a higher risk of experiencing food insecurity as well as housing cost burdens and homelessness. Individuals and families are also more vulnerable to poor mental health. These effects interact and overlap, thereby deepening the challenges of living in poverty.

Education. Poverty had a considerable influence on education.

Educational outcomes are significantly influenced by family incomes, often putting children from lower-income backgrounds at a disadvantage compared to their more affluent peers, thereby negatively impacting the quality of their education. During the years 1975 and 2016, dropout rates were at a highest (66%) in comparison to other individuals from different social economical statuses (Ojjdp, 2018)

Food Security. Food insecurity happens when people struggle to access sufficient and nutritious food to meet basic human needs for themselves and their families. Food accounts for half of the household expenditure for individuals and families in poverty. According to the (PEW Research Center, 2022), households in the lower income bracket allocated less money to non-essential items like food and entertainment compared to their counterparts in the middle- and upper-

income tiers. Hence, it was not surprising that millions of individuals and families in the US, especially those experiencing poverty, are food insecure. An estimated 13% of households experienced food insecurity at one point of the year in 2022, which translates to one in eight American households (USDA, 2023). Food insecurity was more prevalent for certain subgroups in the population that are more likely to be impacted by poverty, such as Black families and single female-headed households (USA Facts, 2023). This association between poverty and food insecurity underlines one of the negative impacts of poverty.

Housing. Families experiencing poverty were most vulnerable to housing “cost burdened.” A cost burden occurs when 30% of a family’s household incomes is used toward housing. However, when families contribute more than 50% of their household income toward housing, these families were considered severely cost-burdened. In 2017, 81.2% of low-income households were cost-burdened, and 58.2% were severely cost-burdened. In contrast, 15.7% of high-income households were cost-burdened, and 2.2% were severely cost-burdened (Kimberlin, S. 2019). This disparity highlights the vulnerability of low-income households to homelessness.

Homelessness was a state where individuals or families do not have a secure and safe place to reside, typically stemming from factors like economic challenges or, in some cases, mental health issues. Poverty and homelessness are closely related, as many people who are experiencing these issues cannot afford to rent or purchase essential items. Studies show that low-income families

who have trouble affording and maintaining housing also have difficulties affording and meeting their basic needs (Social Determinants of Health, 2015). During 2022, 582,000 individuals encountered homelessness, equivalent to an estimated 18 out of every 10,000 individuals (USA Facts, 2023). In response to this issue, the United States had put in place various programs and initiatives both at the federal and state levels. HUD, for instance, administers several programs to mitigate the housing crisis and alleviate the challenges faced by those without stable shelter.

Living in poverty also increases the likelihood of families living within impoverished neighborhoods with higher crime rates. Crime was more likely to affect low-income neighborhoods in comparison to higher-income neighborhoods (Healthy People 2030, 2022). Crime in impoverished communities can be caused by a lack of education among individuals, inaccessibility to services, and unemployment.

Mental Health. Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and overall well-being. Poverty can significantly impact mental health as well as the individual's well-being as individuals facing economic hardship often experience increased stress, limited access to mental health care, and a higher likelihood of experiencing conditions such as depression and anxiety making it difficult to find employment. During 2020, 28 million people, equivalent to 8.6% of the population, lacked health insurance at some point, whereas 91.4% of the population maintained continuous health insurance coverage (United States

Census Bureau, 2021). It was important to recognize that this disparity means millions of Americans face potential financial and health-related challenges without the safety net of insurance and underestimating the urgent need for comprehensive healthcare reform to ensure universal access to essential medical services and financial security for all.

Poverty significantly impacts an individual's life causing adverse effects on their mental health due to inadequate access to health care. Major risk factors that can have lasting effects on adults experiencing poverty include Obesity, substance use, and chronic stress (Healthy People 2030, 2023)

Access to Health Insurance. Healthcare coverage was essential because of its association with poverty. In 2020, 28 million people, equivalent to 8.6% of the population, lacked health insurance at some point (United States Census Bureau, 2021). The uninsured rate among adults in poverty was almost four times higher than the national rate. Research had found that individuals without health care coverage are more likely to live in poverty. For example, nearly 40% of Californians without health insurance live in poverty compared to 18.5% of individuals with Medi-Cal and 4.2% with employer-based coverage (Danielson et al. 2023). In other words, those with health insurance are less likely to be in poverty compared with those without health insurance. Although the direction of causation cannot be established, a possible explanation for this relationship was that insurance protects families from having to pay for the excessive cost of health care.

The Causes or Risk Factors of Poverty

Poverty goes beyond the need for basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing to survive but also lacks community support, conflict, and discrimination due to many factors including age, gender, and disability (Peer, 2023). Due to the lack of having one's basic needs in addition to the support from one's community, having conflict and being discriminated against, this creates a barrier for many individuals that traps them in this cycle of poverty that does not allow individuals who live in poverty obtain their needs to the fullest potential.

Community and Neighborhood Factor. The communities and neighborhoods that individuals live in play a significant role in contributing to poverty. Between 1980 and 2018, 4800 neighborhoods in the United States were considered to have elevated levels of poverty. These neighborhoods are home to 16 million Americans (Economic Innovation Group, 2023). Individuals and families living in disadvantaged neighborhoods have limited community resources, including schools with additional educational programs, community centers with various activities, and public libraries. Having these resources within the community assists individuals with finding a purpose in life, exposing individuals to positive experiences, and making positive networking with the community.

Individuals with Disability. Having a disability increases one's risk of living in poverty. One in four individuals had some disability consisting of a physical or psychological condition (Centers for Disease and Control Prevention, 2023).

Those living with a disability are twice as likely to experience poverty than those who do not have a disability (National Disability Institute, 2023). Having a disability increases the likelihood of having to pay higher medical expenses (Frontiers in Public Health, 2023). Living with a disability also limits one's opportunities for career growth. Many times, there was a misconception that those living with a disability are not capable of doing certain roles just because the individual might be limited in doing physical work, which creates an economic barrier for this population.

Single-Parents. Compared to married individuals, single parents are at a higher risk of encountering poverty (Marripedia, 2023). More than a third (33.6%) of those living with only their mother are in poverty, while 7.9% of those who lived with both their parents are in poverty (Pew Research Center, 2018). Contributing factors include being financially responsible to meet the basic needs of their dependents, such as providing clothing, food, and shelter for their children. Oftentimes, this can be difficult, especially if there are several children to take care of. Lack of financial support from the other parent or family members can cause single parents to work long hours while still having the responsibility to cover the household expenses. This causes single parents to be more likely to experience poverty as they are unable to create savings as they are trying to keep up with their daily expenses.

Older Adults. Becoming an aging adult significantly increases the probability of experiencing poverty. About 30% of older adults had incomes

below 200% of poverty, which consists of more than 15 million older adults. This percentage increased to more than 42% in (year), representing 21 million older adults (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2018). Declining physical health, cognitive abilities, and social networking can create economic instability for aging adults, thereby increasing the possibility of becoming part of the vulnerable population (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023).

As one gets older, cognitive thinking and physical abilities begin to decline, causing a loss of employment. Yet, older adults often still have financial responsibilities. As a result of these ongoing expenses, older adults must rely on their savings to get by. Moreover, older adults often depend on others for assistance, thus causing them to be dependent on others for financial support. Dependency then results in having to rely on another individual to assist them in addressing their needs, which oftentimes requires having to pay for services, which can include caretaker, house cleaner, and gardener. If an individual continues to depend on another individual, they will continue to spend more money without having an income which eventually causes them to be forced into living in poverty.

Immigrants / Undocumented. Being an immigrant was another risk factor for poverty. Immigrants may experience challenges including low income, limited English language proficiency, acculturative stress, and financial illiteracy (Brooking, 2004). Individuals unfamiliar with the culture of the country that they immigrated to lose employment and other essential opportunities. Immigrants

often also have families back in their native homes whom they continue to support financially. Such a situation makes it challenging for immigrants to create savings or stay on track with their expenses.

Being undocumented also was a contributing factor to poverty. The poverty rate in the Us was about 12% percent, while for undocumented, the poverty rate was much higher, at 20% (Migration Policy Institute, 2023). Having an undocumented status increases the risk of poverty as many employers require their employees to have documentation. The lack of valid documents causes individuals to have to settle for jobs that pay less. Various governmental resources also require individuals to have documentation to be eligible. Being ineligible for government assistance further creates financial hardships for immigrants.

Low Educational Attainment. Low educational attainment was an effect of and a risk factor for poverty. According to the (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023), 25.2% of individuals without a high school were considered impoverished compared to 13.3% of those that had obtained a high school diplomas, 9.3% with some college, and 4.3% with a bachelor's degree. These statistics highlight the vulnerability to poverty among individuals with lower educational attainment. Educational skills, including literacy, communication, and critical thinking, are important in all aspects of life as they assist in getting one's needs met. Having these basic skills and schooling extends the opportunities for career growth. Moreover, being educationally more achieved was also associated with higher

incomes, more opportunities in life, and a healthier lifestyle (University of the People 2023)

Interventions

Reducing poverty rates among all ages and ethnicities was a complex task that required addressing inequalities in education and economic opportunities as well as implementing federal and state policies that address the unique needs of subgroups at substantial risk of poverty. One of the most robust interventions to break the cycle of poverty was through education.

The Federal Pell Grant. The Federal Pell Grant program was an educational intervention that supports individuals facing economic hardship in pursuing higher education. This federal government effort offers need-based grants to eligible undergraduate students, helping them cover tuition, fees, and related educational expenses. HEA: P.L. 89-329 or the 1965 Higher Education Act authorized the Federal Pell Grant and was the main source of federal aid for individuals seeking secondary education (Congressional Research Service, 2023). The Federal Pell program was established to enhance access to higher education for economically disadvantaged individuals who might otherwise lack the financial means to pursue higher education, aiming to reduce financial barriers and offer educational opportunities to those in need. In the 2016 academic year, 7.1 million Federal Pell Grant recipients collectively contributed to a budget of \$26.6 billion (UC Davis, 2018).

Summary

In conclusion, the issue of poverty in the United States was a complex problem affecting millions of individuals and families across the country. This chapter had explored poverty's definition, prevalence, causes, and impacts, shedding light on the significant challenges and disparities faced by various demographic groups, such as children, adults, and people of color. Interventions are needed to reduce poverty rates, with education being a crucial avenue for progress, allowing for cycles of poverty to be broken. The Federal Pell Grant covers tuition, fees, and related expenses by reducing financial barriers for disadvantaged individuals. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Pell Grant in meeting the financial needs of recipients utilizing a systematic Literature review approach.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tinto's Persistence Theory

The Federal Pell Grant was developed to allow youths in poverty to pursue higher education. This chapter aims to summarize three key facets related to the Federal Pell Grant program while focusing on Tinto's persistence theory. The concept of Tinto's theoretical model proposed by Tinto & Colleen (1973) aimed to examine the process students experience throughout their academic careers, which includes students' decision-making process on whether to continue or drop out of higher education, in other words, persistence. Tinto's theoretical model examines why students decide not to continue higher education and attempts to provide solutions to the problem. Tinto's theoretical model consists of three variables associated with the concept: Family Background, Pre-College Schooling, and Individual Attributes. The Variables were designed to gain understanding of the interactions between students and the institution which can lead to decision making regarding continuing with higher education or dropping out. This chapter summarizes three main aspects of the Federal Pell Grant program: access to higher education which includes persistence and retention, academic performance and socioeconomic outcomes.

Literature Review

Characteristics of Pell Recipients

The Federal Pell Grant Program offers financial assistance in the form of grants to postsecondary education students demonstrating financial need. Qualifying individuals are students pursuing their first bachelor's degree at an institution that participates in the federal student aid program (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2023). The program, previously known as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant program, was one of three types of federal student aid, which include loans and work-study funds.

The Federal Pell Grant program exhibits a preference for supporting younger individuals from low-income backgrounds who have recently graduated from high school. Statistics from the academic year 2011/2012 reveal that while approximately 51.4% of the students were under 23 years old, nearly 21.9% were between 24 and 29 years of age, with 26.7 % being 30 or above (Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017). Contrary to its primary focus on recent high school graduates, the program does cater to a considerable proportion of older adults seeking educational opportunities for career advancement rather than traditional undergraduate pursuits. However, despite supporting a substantial number of older students, the program's design might not fully address the diverse needs of this demographic seeking shorter-term educational paths over traditional bachelor's degrees.

During the academic year 2015/2016, over 57% of African American and 31.5% of White undergraduate students received federal Pell Grants.

Furthermore, in the same year, 22.7% of all Pell Grant students were African American (ProQuest, 2019). These statistics raise questions regarding equitable access to financial aid and the necessity for targeted support to ensure equal opportunities for all students regardless of their racial backgrounds.

Access to Higher Education

Eng & Matsudaira (2021) conducted a study that examined the Federal Pell Grant eligibility outcomes on students degree completion. The literature suggested that Pell Grant eligibility was slightly correlated with an increased probability of earning a degree within six years of seeking higher education (Eng & Matsudaira, 2021). The study suggests that financial assistance The Federal Pell Grant provides can positively impact the student's ability to reach their educational goals. Regarding completion rates, preliminary evidence suggests that Pell eligibility may raise the likelihood of graduation by around 2% to 3% for dependent students, potentially double that effect for independent students (Eng & Matsudaira, 2021). However, it was essential to continue examining how financial aid programs impact long-term educational outcomes, as many different factors can impact eligibility throughout the years.

Schudde & Scott-Clayton (2016) focused on 58 public 2-year institutions which examined a total of 147,380 first-time students. The focus of the study was based on students meeting satisfactory academic progress (SAP) requirements

aswell as explore policy's implementation within higher education. According to the study, students who remained enrolled in college after the failure to meet SAP, were still able to obtain benefits from the Pell Grant. During student's second year of the fall term, 73 % of students remained enrolled although they failed to meet the SAP received Pell Grant. An estimated amount of 60 % of students no longer attended college after failing to meet SAP. SAP may cause pushback to Pell Grant recipients due to putting them at risk of leaving college since they have less time to adjust to college demands. In comparison to students that did not qualify for the Pell Grant there was no requirement to meet SAP's requirements (Schudde & Scott-Clayton, 2016).

Academic Performance

Understanding the factors impacting Pell Grant recipients' persistence and graduation rates was essential in shaping effective support systems for their academic journey (Yang & Mao, 2021). The study's primary focus was on first-year students who enrolled in research universities in 2012, particularly examining the graduation rates among Pell Grant recipients compared to the overall cohort. Furthermore, the research aims to identify factors influencing retention and graduation rates, focusing on whether Pell Grant recipients face additional challenges compared to non-recipients. The study's findings indicated that Pell Grant recipients had a 69.07% chance of graduation. However, If the student was also a first-generation college student, the probability of graduation went down to 60.77%, particularly with a first-year GPA of 3.000 or below (Yang,

& Mao, 2021). In contrast, students without Pell Grant or first-generation status, taking specified courses and maintaining a 3.288 first-year GPA, exhibit a predicted graduation success rate of 83.0%. The comparison provided insight into the complexity of predicting Pell Grant recipients' success with factors such as GPA, first-generation, and courses taken.

Hicks et al., (2014), examined administrative data from the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV), focusing on graduation rates of Pell Grant recipients' status and "first-time" college students along with focusing on their gender, age, and ethnicity. Throughout Hick's study, it was determined that college enrollment, graduation rates, and overall revenue for colleges declined due to the various new requirements of the Federal Pell Grant which consisted of the zero expected family contribution (EFC) along with the elimination of the 10% maximum award.

According to Hick's study, in the years 1996- 2003, a total of 12,872 students attended community colleges in Virginia's rural areas and graduated within 18 semesters. 5,908 out of 12,872 or 46% of students relied on the Federal Pell Grant award and were able to graduate after 12 semesters.

Employment Attainment

The Federal Pell Grant had demonstrated several significant impacts on higher education accessibility and student outcomes, including increased enrollment rates among low-income students and improved college completion

rates. The Pell Grant had also fostered educational equity and access for underserved populations, narrowing educational disparities.

Vivian Y. Liu (2020) study explored the impact of Year-Round Pell Grants(YRP) on academic outcomes among low-income community college students, particularly analyzing the implementation between the years of 2009 and 2011 (Liu, V. 2020). The study aimed to assess how the YRP Grant influenced educational pursuits among this demographic. Notably, the Pell Grant program presents limitations, the absence of support for summer academic tuition, creating a gap in financial assistance crucial for students during the summer semester (Liu, 2020). The research focused on revealing the effects of YRP grants, indicating a correlation between increased YRP grant funding and positive outcomes.

The study's sample comprised low-income students, and analysis highlighted that for every \$1,000 increment in YRP grant funding per eligible student, there was a significant 27% surge in summer enrollment rates. Moreover, the research identified a 2.2% higher likelihood of associate degree completion, particularly benefiting adult learners aged 20 or older (Liu, 2020). These findings underscore the substantial impact of YRP grants on enrollment patterns and academic achievement among low-income students, especially adult learners seeking to complete their associate degrees.

Gap in Knowledge

Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of the Pell Grant in terms of graduation rates among recipients and the overall impact Pell Grant recipients experience in higher education. Despite these individual studies, no efforts thus far have been undertaken to systematically summarize this body of evidence. The need for a systematic review becomes evident as prior research had focused on fragment aspects of the Pell Grant. Fulfilling the gap of evidence will consist of further summarizing findings on the impact of the Pell Grant.

Study Objective

Therefore, this systematic review aims to summarize the findings on the effectiveness of the Pell Grant program. By further recognizing the impact Pell Grant had on recipients, there will be an incisive understanding of how students can attend a higher institution by receiving financial aid. Moreover, this systematic literature review aims to explore the effectiveness of the Pell Grant in meeting the educational needs of racial and ethnic minorities living in poverty.

Summary

In conclusion, chapter 2 summarized three subtopics related to the Pell Grant: the impact on academic outcomes of recipients, including educational attainment, academic success, and graduation rates and accessibility. While also focusing on Tinto's Persistence Theory which aims to examine the student's experience throughout college, which can include decision-making on thoughts

that can lead to persistence in higher education or dropping out. By conducting a detailed systematic review of both the impact and effectiveness of the Pell Grant program, a deeper understanding can be gained regarding its crucial significance for low-income students, especially considering the significant costs associated with attending higher education institutions. Therefore, achieving higher educational attainment levels would not have been possible without the Pell Grant.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The goal of the systematic literature review was to collect relevant literature on the topic of the effectiveness of the Pell Grants. The data was collected utilizing the OneSearch database of the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) John M. Pfau library. The researchers used a set of targeted keywords to examine the Pell Grant program. These keywords include, "Pell Grant."

The initial search for the term "Pell Grant" within the California State University, San Bernardino One Search library database, yielded a substantial number of related articles, totaling over 8,339. To refine the search results and ensure relevance to the study's objectives, filters were applied. Filters included specifying the resource type as articles, limiting the search to peer-reviewed journals, and selecting articles available online and open-access. Furthermore, the timeframe was restricted from 2013 to 2023, aligning with the study's focus. Refining the search resulted in 132 articles deemed relevant for further examination.

Exclusion Criteria

Articles discussing Pell Grant-related research outside the United States were excluded from this systematic literature review to maintain a focus on the

domestic context and the findings. Additionally, articles not published or available in English were excluded from the study. The decision to exclude studies not in English was to guarantee consistent language interpretation of the findings and obtain an understanding of the research outcomes across the higher education community. By establishing exclusion criteria, the systematic literature review aims to uphold the reliability of evidence regarding the impacts of Pell Grants within the United States.

Inclusion Criteria

Articles included in this systematic literature review were selected based on specific criteria. Specifically, selected articles were peer-reviewed, available online, and accessible through open-access platforms. The Articles focused on examining the impacts and effectiveness of Pell Grants from 2013 to 2023, aligning with the study's scope and objectives which examined the effectiveness of the Pell Grant program meeting educational and financial needs of students. By exploring the effectiveness, outcomes, and implications of Pell Grants, these articles provided valuable insights into the program's role in higher education accessibility and success.

Chosen Articles

After thoroughly reviewing these articles, a careful selection process identified 14 articles that met the specific criteria established for this study. These chosen articles were deemed particularly pertinent due to their alignment with the

research, thereby contributing valuable insights to examining Pell Grant effectiveness within the specified timeframe and criteria.

Among the articles identified, noteworthy contributions included studies by Liu (2020), Hicks et al. (2014), Eng & Matsudaira (2021), and Yang & Mao (2021). Other relevant articles encompassed research by Schudde & Scott-Clayton (2016) providing valuable insights into how SAP may impact Pell Grants recipients. These articles aligned with the systematic literature review objective of examining the impacts of Pell Grants within the specified timeframe.

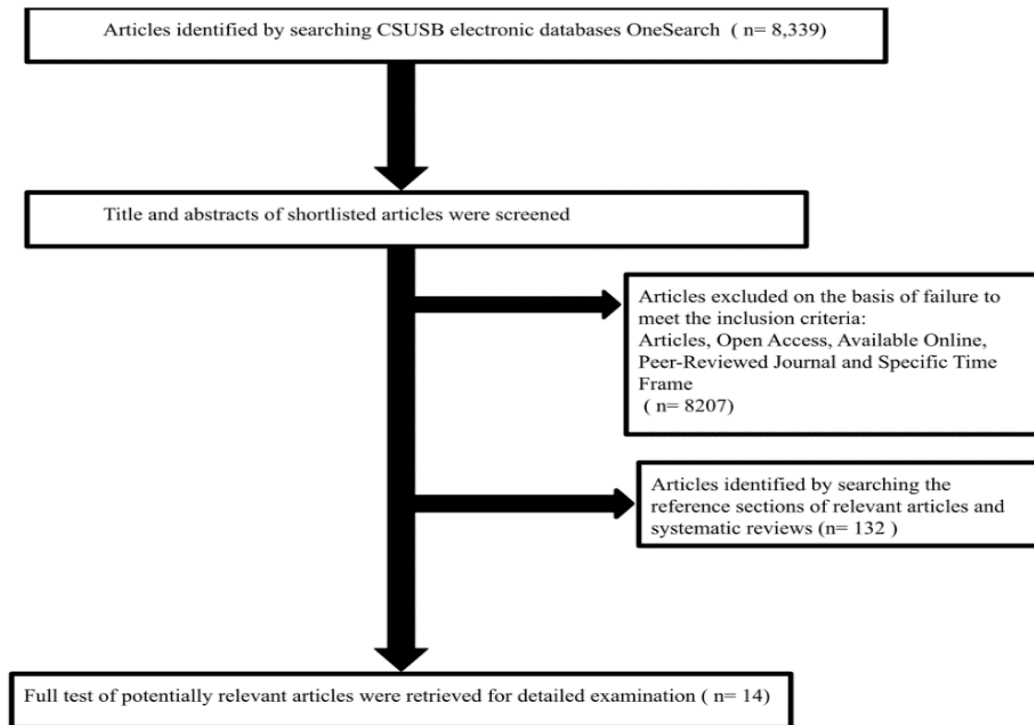


Figure 1. Flowchart of The Review Process.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The results chapter of this systematic literature review discusses the results from a comprehensive review of 14 selected articles focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of Federal Pell Grants. Among the selected articles, five studies investigated access to education, while four articles delved into academic performance. The last five studies also explored socioeconomic outcomes.

Study Designs

Table 1. Study Designs

Author	Study Design	Aim
Hicks et al. (2014)	Quantitative Quasi-experimental	The study examined the impact of the changes of the Federal Pell Grant on college enrollment and graduation rates within Virginia community colleges.
Eng & Matsudaira (2021)	Quantitative quasi-experimental	The study analyzed the impact of Federal Pell Grant eligibility on degree completion.
Yang & Mao (2021)	Quantitative data analysis- Quasi-experimental design	The study aimed to identify influencers that impacted student retention and graduation rates, as well as examine Pell Grant recipients challenges compared to non-Pell grant-recipients
Carruthers & Welch (2019)	Quantitative quasi-experimental	The study aimed to gain an understanding on student application process and responses to Pell Grants suggesting that application process impacted grant size.
Denning et al. (2019)	Quantitative quasi-experimental	The study aims to examine the Effects Pell grant eligibility for low-income college students, while also examining students' academics, and labor market outcomes.
Liu (2020)	Quantitative- Non-experimental, cross-sectional	The study aimed to assess how the YRP Grant influenced educational pursuits among this demographic. Notably, the Pell Grant program presents limitations, the absence of support for summer academic tuition, creating a gap in financial assistance crucial for students during the summer semester.
Schudde & Scott-Clayton (2016)	Quantitative Cross sectional. Non-experimental	The study focused on SAP requirements and institutional policy's within community college.

Marx & Turner (2019)	Quantitative quasi-experimental	The study aimed to examine Pell Grant impact within students' college enrollment.
Evans et al. (2017)	Quantitative Non-experimental cross-sectional	The study aimed to examine the disconnect between Pell grant eligible and (EFCs)
Park & Scott-Clayton (2018)	Quantitative quasi-experimental	Research focused on the effects of Pell Grant eligibility outcomes on college enrollment and graduation rates among first-time college students during the academic years 2011-2012.
Yang & Vang (2023)	Qualitative research design using descriptive phenomenology.	The study interviewed Mong Pell Grant recipients obtaining perspectives on the economic challenge in higher education attainment.
Davidson, C (2014)	Qualitative Descriptive policy analysis	The research focused on Pell Grant recipients affected by the termination of the YRP policy enrolled in 2- and 4-year colleges during the 2010–2011 academic school year
Athens (2018)	Quantitative-Exploratory	The study explored the relationship between online student success, engagement perception among underrepresented populations.
Andrews & Tolman (2021)	Qualitative-Descriptive	This study aimed to determine predicting factors that impact community college student academic success utilizing Pell grant and STEM classes

Within the studies examining access to education, the focus was primarily on college eligibility, persistence, and retention. Notably, three of the five studies (Athens, 2018; Evans et al. 2017; Park & Scott-Clayton, 2018;) utilized quantitative study designs, while two studies (Davidson, 2014; Yan & Vang, 2023) utilized qualitative approaches.

The four studies that investigated academic performance (Andrews & Tolman, 2021; Carruthers & Welch, 2019; Marx & Turner, 2019; Schudde & Scott-Clayton, 2016;) employed a quantitative study design. These studies utilized administrative data from various sources, spanning from federal to state levels, including IRS records, FAFSA data, and administrative data obtained from two-year institutions.

The five studies examining socioeconomic outcomes focused on graduation rates, employment, and earnings. These studies utilized quantitative

methods. However, Denning et al. (2019), Eng & Matsudaira (2021), Hicks et al. (2014), and Yang & Mao (2021) utilized a quasi-experimental utilizing state and federal administrative data. At the same time, Liu (2020) utilized a cross-sectional design.

Data Analysis

Table 2. Data Analysis

Author	Sample characteristics	Sample size	Measurements
Hicks et al. (2014)	Rates of graduation based on the Pell Grant recipient's status along with "First Time" college students, (gender- approximately 2:1 Females represent 65%) (male or female), age (24-35), and ethnicity (African American, Hispanic- 4:1 approximately 20% being minority	N=12,872 students enrolled in 14 rural VCCS obtain a degree within 18 months 5,908-(46%) received PG, 13% of those graduated within 12 semesters.	Administrative data analysis from (SCHEV)
Eng & Matsudaira (2021)	Cohorts from 2002-2010 who have dependents, those who are independents with dependents, independents without dependent, ethnicity (White), gender (male or female), mother's educational level (graduated college or not), geographical demographics, legal status, poverty percentage of students under the poverty line and unemployment rate.	29 million undergraduate students received federal financial aid assistance between 2002 and 2014.	Administrative data collection through IRS, DOE and NSLDS, FAFSA
Yang & Mao (2021)	Socioeconomic status (Pell Grant recipient or not, if they were first generation), demographics (male or female), GPA,	3251 students-. 18.8% (613) received PG. 1638- (50.38%) did not retake STEM the rest retook courses.	Descriptive statistic Anova and regression logistics (analyze administrative cohorts at a research university)
Carruthers & Welch (2019)	Pell grant recipients, four cohorts of Tennessee high school graduate Parent had a college education (yes or no), gender (female), race (white, non-Hispanic)	Six college sector full bandwidth 111,949 bandwidth restricted 28,319.	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). FAFSA,
Denning et al. (2019)	Race (White-0.45%, Hispanic-0.25%, Black-0.20%, and Asian-0.08 %), age (less than or greater than 21), gender (Male-0.43 or Female-0.57%), parent's education Parental education- Father < HS = 0.14% Mother < HS= 0.13% Father HS Diploma= 43% Mother HS Diploma= 48% Father College Degree= 26% Mother College	37,227 FTIC, 110,607 returning students.	Administrative data: (THECB) (TWC). Texas public colleges.

	Degree = 29% "first timer" in college or returning to college.		
Liu (2020)	Student's academic outcomes (GPA, credits earned, certifications within 2.5 years, diploma earned within 2.5 years), gender (male or female), race (Black Hispanic, other), single parents, age during enrollment (over the age of 19), employment (employed 1 year before college) and if students are full-time or part-time students.	4 cohorts- study design full time before 2006-7,908 .part-time before 2006-8,183. Fulltime in 2009-5,434 part-time in 2009-5,073 total of 26,598 students	National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), data from private college up through February 2012
Schudde & Scott-Clayton (2016)	3-year follow-up data to track enrollment, transfers, degree attainment - 6 cohorts- from 2002-2007, demographics age, ethnicity (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, other), sex(female)	49 colleges 2-year institutions 147,380 first-time students, 29.1% (42,835) received PG.	State admin data- descriptive statistics from state community college system (CSSC) and BPS study.
Marx & Turner (2019)	Pell grant eligible (yes or no), loan, recipients who were at community colleges A	Observations of 10,798 recipients of loans/ Pell Grant at CCA students randomly assigned before 10/15/2015.	FAFSA utilizing regression discontinuity (RD) design, regression kink (RK) design.
Evans et al. (2017)	NPSAS 4 years NPSAS 2 years parents' education level EFC Pell Grant receipt Type of aid received	NPSAS 4YR-121,200, NPSAS2 YR-66,790, WCU-58,128	NPSAS, and administrative data from a Title IV-eligible (national and institutional)
Park & Scott-Clayton (2018)	2008-2010 College students, Pell Grant recipient, gender (female 53%, 47% male), race (white 61.8 %, black- 24%, Hispanic- 7.0, Asian- 6.0% American Indian-.5 %),	Cohort by Pell Grant Eligibility in 2008-2010 (89,205 students)	administrative data from 20 community college
Yang & Vang (2023)	Self-identify Mong students. enrolled as undergraduate students at 4 years (AAPI) institution in northern California.	Seven participants (n=7) 3-male 4-female.	Interview data- based on Professional contacts on campus, screening criteria in 2016 Hour long interview.
Davidson, C (2014)	4-year students and 2-year students 2010-2011 affected by: the termination of YRP, maximum PG award, automatic zero EFC, Undergraduates, Demographics (gender -male- 32.8% or female- 67.1%), Race- Black-14.4%, Hispanic, Native American 0.4%, Asian 0.7%, White, or other)	A total of -97,356 Undergrad students (4 year- 38,274, 2 year-59,082)	Secondary data collection: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Database System (KPEDS)
Athens (2018)	Age (29% are younger than 24, 71%- older than 24), gender (male 39%, female-61%), race/ethnicity (Hispanic 2.2%, Asian 2%, African American 11%, White 79.9%) disability, Pell Grant eligibility, first-generation	Spring 2016 (4-year university-Face-to-face and Online Enrollments)15,076 students in total	Survey institutional data, DETA Research Center
Andrews & Tolman (2021)	(Demographics), Sex (female 57%, male 41.9% or unknown 1%), race (black 64%, Hispanic 1.2%, Native American- 0.4, Asian-0.5, Multiracial- 6.8, Native Hawaiian- 0.2, Unknown 1.1, White- 25.7) not), Age at enrollment- younger than 18- 2.5, 18-20 78.9, 21-24 - 9.9, 24 and above 8.8)	1,934 students enrolled in minimum of 1 corequisite course at a community college between 2015- 2018.	Archived data from Southern US community college

Access to Higher Education. Studies that examine the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant on college student's eligibility and financial aid recipients are conducted by Evans et al. (2017), Davidson (2014), and Evans et al. (2017) utilized administrative data from Title IV-eligible institutions and National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) data. Evans et al. (2017) studied three cohorts of students: 121,200 4-year NPSAS students, 66,790 2-year NPSAS students, and 58,128 WCU students. 246,118 students were examined in this study. The data accommodated a range of academic and demographic characteristics, such as Pell Grant recipients, parent's educational attainment, gender, ethnicity, and Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Davidson (2014) investigated the effects of ending the (YRP) program utilizing administrative data from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Database System (KPEDS). Davidson's (2014) research focused on Pell Grant recipients affected by the termination of the YRP policy enrolled in 2- and 4-year colleges during the 2010–2011 academic school year. Davidson's (2014), the study had a sample size of 97,356 students, with 38,274 attending 4-year institutions and 59,082 attending 2-year institutions. Davidson's (2014) sample characteristics included gender, age, and ethnicity. Davidson (2014) found that many Pell Grant recipients in 4-year institutions were female, comprising 22,315 (58.3%) and 39,659 (67.1%) in 2-year institutions.

Additionally, 28,763 (75.2%) students in 4-year institutions receiving Pell Grant were white, while 47,177 students (79.9%) were white in 4-year institutions.

Persistence and Retention. Studies that examined persistence and retention among students receiving the Federal Pell Grant were identified as Athens (2018), Park & Schott-Clayton (2018), and Yang and Vang (2023). The three studies provide a comprehensive understanding of factors that influence persistence and retention among Pell Grant recipients.

Park & Schott-Clayton (2018) focused on the impact of Pell Grant eligibility on students college enrollment as well a student's graduation rates among first-time students entering 2-year institutions during the 2011-2012 academic years, which included a sample size of 89,205 students. The study's sample characteristics included 53% female and 47% male participants and the following racial/demographic breakdown: 61.8% white, 24% African American, 7% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 0.5% American Indian. Park & Schott-Clayton (2018) measured college enrollment and graduation rates using administrative data from 20 community colleges examining the Pell Grant recipients eligibility on financial attainability.

However, Athens (2018) study sample size consisted of 15,076 students from the 2016 spring term from a 4-year university. After the review of surveys and the removal of incomplete or duplicate surveys, 643 Surveys remained. Moreover, Athens (2018) utilized a comprehensive sample of characteristics such as demographics, which included various demographics such as students

age, gender, race/ethnicity and Pell Grant eligibility face-to-face enrollment, online enrollment, and student status.

Athans (2018) study noted that 77% of respondents were female and 23% were male, with 47% falling under 24. Additionally, 36% were full-time students, while 63% were part-time. Regarding employment status, 48% were employed full-time, 21% were unemployed, 57% of participants were single, and 28% were married. Furthermore, in the study, 23% of participants identified as Hispanic, 52% as White, and 8% as African American. Moreover, 41% of respondents were Pell Grant recipients, with a % engagement rate of 73%.

Additionally, Yang and Vang (2023) examined self-identified Mong Pell Grant recipients' perspectives on socioeconomic challenges while in pursuit of higher education. Sample characteristics of the study included self-identification as Mong, enrolled as undergraduate students at four years Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) institutions within northern California fall of 2016. Through in-depth interviews, seven participants were identified, 3 male and 4 female. Yang and Vang (2023) identified that 71% of participants were second-generation while 14% were first-generation, with most students born within the US. The study focused on the intersectionality of race, class, and financial aid access, highlighting the lived experiences of marginalized student groups.

Academic Performance. Studies that examined academic performance were conducted by Schudde and Scott-Clayton (2016), Marx and Turner (2019), Carruthers and Welch (2019), and Andrews and Tolman (2021). These three

studies collectively enhance the understanding of Pell Grants' relationship with academic performance, achievement, and outcomes within postsecondary education. Schudde and Scott-Clayton (2016) study focused on SAP requirements that highlighted the efficacy of the policy in shaping student academic outcomes within two distinct datasets: the Statewide Community College System (SCCS) and the 47 national Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) database. Schudde and Scott-Clayton (2016) examined the SCCS data set of six cohorts (2002-2007) encompassing a sample size of 147,380 first-time students across 49 colleges, alongside a comparison with the (BPS) national dataset, which included 4520 students.

Schudde and Scott-Clayton's (2016) Sample characteristics such as age, ethnicity (including White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic), and gender within Pell Grant and non-Pell Grant recipients were examined. The study identified 70 % of BPS Pell Grant students and 50% of CSSC non-Pell Grant students were female. Notably, the study found that 29.1% of the SCCS sample and 69.2% of the BPS dataset received Pell Grants, highlighting the prevalence of financial aid in both contexts.

Marx and Turner (2019) The study examined loan recipients and Pell Grant eligibility, especially community college recipients. The sample size consisted of 10,798 Community College A (CCA) participants that were randomly assigned prior to 10/15/2015 and were observed for the study. Numerous

outcomes were examined in the study, including GPA, attempted credits, completed credits, degree receipt, student loans, and Pell Grant assistance.

Moreover, Andrews and Tolman (2021) The study sample 48 community colleges and consisted of 1,934 students enrolled in a minimum of one mathematics and English corequisite course between the fall 2015 and summer 2018 utilized administrative data from community colleges in the southwest. To determine how different sample characteristics affected student outcomes, Andrews and Tolman (2021) examined several factors at enrollment such as gender, race, age, Pell Grant status, first-generation, and high school GPA. 57% of the sample size were female, 41.9% were male, and 64% of the participants were Black, while 25.7% were White. Furthermore, 78.9% of the student body belonged to the 18–20 age group.

Furthermore, Carruthers and Welch (2019) utilized administrative data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), National Student Clearinghouse, and FAFSA focused on examining Pell Grant recipients across four cohorts of Tennessee high school graduates. Sample characteristics of this study included parental education, gender, and race. Carruthers and Welch (2019) had a total sample size of 111,949 and a restricted bandwidth of 28,319, students of which 49% were eligible for Pell Grant, 49% were female, and 44% were white non-Hispanic.

Social Economic Outcomes. Hicks et al. (2014) sampled 14 rural community colleges in Virginia which consisted of a total of 12,872 students. This

study's sample characteristics focused on graduation rates based on the Pell Grant recipient's characteristics, consisting of the population of the students, who identified either as male or female, and females representing 65 % of this sample size. Age wise, the students fall between 24 and 35 years. Of the sample size, 20 % were minorities (Black or Hispanic).

Yang & Mao (2021) sampled a total of 3,251 students; 18.8% of those students received Pell Grant, while 50.38% did not receive Pell Grant. The sample characteristics of this study focused on their socioeconomic status (Pell Grant recipient or not, if they were first generation), demographics (male or female), and GPA.

Denning et al. (2019) sampled 110,607 four-year students in Texas public institutions from 2008 to 2011. The sample characteristics include race 0.45% being White, 0.25% being Hispanic, 0.20% being Black, and 0.08% being Asian. Age- wise, being less than or greater than 21. Gender being male 0.43% or female consisting of 0.57%. Parent's education was that the father and mother did not hold a school diploma (0.14% for father and 0.13% for mother). The father had a high school diploma (43%), and the mother had a high school diploma (48%). Father had a college degree (26%), and mother had a college degree (29%) along with if it was the student's first time in college or if they are returning.

Studies that examine employment and earnings post-graduation are Eng & Matsudaira (2021) and Liu (2020). Eng & Matsudaira (2021) collected their

data for their study through the IRS, DOE, and NSLDS, along with FAFSA records. While Liu (2020), gathered data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) along with data from the private college, up through February 2012.

Eng & Matsudaira's (2021) sample size consists of 29 million undergraduate students who received federal financial aid assistance between the years 2002 and 2014 while focusing on the following characteristics: cohorts from 2002-2010 who have dependents, those who are independents with dependents, independents without dependent, ethnicity (white), gender (male or female), mother's educational level (graduated college or not), student's demographic characteristics (based on FAFSA zip code), legal status, percentage of students living under the poverty line and unemployment rate.

Liu (2020) sample size consisted of a total of 26,598 students throughout four cohorts. While focusing on the following characteristics: gender (male or female), race (Black, Hispanic, other), single parents, age during enrollment (if the individual was over 19), employment (before college), students are full-time or part-time students and if the student had a disability. The first full-time cohort in 2006 consisted of 7,908 students, including the following: 65% of their participants were females, 34% were Black, 3% were Hispanic, and 8% were other races. Along with 8% being a single parent, 94% being a high school graduate, 2% being disabled 57% being over 19 years old, and 73% being employed one year before college.

The part-time cohort before 2006 included 8,183 students. 70% were females, 46% were Black individuals, 3% were Hispanic, and 9% were of another race. A total of 8% were single parents, 93% graduated high school, 2% were disabled, 59% of the individuals were over the age of 19, and 77% were employed one year before college. Along with a full-time cohort in 2009, which included 5,434 students. 63% were females, 33% were Black, 4% were Hispanic, and 4% were of another race. A total of 7 % were single parents, 93% graduated high school, 1% were disabled, 66% were over the age of 19, and 67% were employed 1 year before college.

The part-time cohort in 2009 was 5,073 students. 65% were females, 48% were black, 4% were Hispanic, and 7% were of another race. A total of 6% were single parents, 91% graduated high school, 1% had a disability, 65% were over the age of 19, and 69% were employed 1 year before college.

Findings

Table 3. Findings

Author	Indicators of effectiveness	Findings
Hicks et al. (2014)	Graduation rates, college enrollment	Enrollment could affect graduation rates limiting educational opportunities for financially disadvantaged and vulnerable students in rural areas. Further research is needed to investigate employment rates and coursework.
Eng & Matsudaira (2021)	Completion rates, postcollege earnings	Increases in Pell Grants recipients results in a slight increase in the completion of degrees although results vary.
Yang & Mao (2021)	Graduation rates, GPA, and retention.	Findings suggest that various factors can affect graduation rates. First-generation students and PG recipients can negatively affect graduating. STEM courses taken can also impact a student's chances of educational attainment.
Carruthers & Welch (2019)	Enrollment, graduation rates, college outcomes	This study discovers little evidence that marginal Pell eligibility affects whether or where students enroll in college.

Denning et al. (2019)	Annual earnings, Graduation	Eligibility of the Pell Grant increases enrollment of students at CC by 3 to 9 %. Four-year college enrollment is unchanged. We discover significant increases in graduation rates and earnings for first-time enrollees at four-year colleges.
Liu (2020)	Credit earned, credential completion, and labor market outcomes, completion rate.	Findings include that every 1,000 of additional YRP grant funding, enrollment increases by 27%, graduation increases by 2.2% benefiting adults 20 and older.
Schudde & Scott-Clayton (2016)	GPA, SAP, enrollment, degree attainment, credit completion	Study results null estimate indicating a negative effect on early college persistence more research needed.
Marx & Turner (2019)	GPA, Attempted credits, Credits earned, degree receipt, student loans, Pell Grant aid.	Findings include that by providing more grant aid to students whose borrowing is limited, including the nearly one million students attending colleges that have opted out of the federal loan program. At the same time, student loans can also lead to considerable increases in attainment.
Evans et al. (2017)	Eligibility of Pell Grant and receiving Pell grant	The finding discovered that many students who appear to have eligible Expected Family Contributions (EFCs) do not receive the award.
Park & Scott-Clayton (2018)	Academic outcome, Grades, Persistence transfers/degrees completion within 3 years	Continued cuts to state funding for higher education could worsen ethnic minority student disparities, while policies favoring middle- and upper-income families may hinder progress toward educational goals.
Yang & Vang (2023)	College access, retention, and degree attainment	Findings include socioeconomic challenges on poor and working-class Mong Pell students.
Davidson, C (2014)	Eligibility (EFC)	Changes impacting Pell Grant program have limited eligibility and amount of aid for students. An increased amount of students at two-year institutions and racial minorities will be affected by the Pell Grant changes.
Athens (2018)	Engagement, retention	Findings include that the lack of connection between income and successful course completion in this study was inconsistent with the literature. 8.9% of online enrollments withdrew compared to 5.6% of face-to-face enrollment.
Andrews & Tolman (2021)	Academic success corequisite courses	Findings included: students that received Pell Grant had decreased chances of academic success in corequisite classes. Pell Grant recipients had a disadvantage in being academically successful in both corequisite.

Davidson (2014) and Evans et al. (2017) studies presented distinct findings on Pell Grant policy changes and their impact on students. Davidson (2014) found that the termination of YRP and the change of the Pell Grant policies at two-year colleges caused more students to lose their eligibility than at four-year universities, which resulted in a considerable loss of Pell Grant funds overall. Furthermore, the impact on affected students varied based on gender and race/ethnicity, which resulted in a 9.6% decrease within the total Pell Grant funds awarded in Kentucky for the 2010–2011 academic year.

Davidson (2014) identified 7,961 students affected by the termination of the YRP. Out of that sample size, 67.4% of students enrolled in 2-year institutions and 59.6% in 4-year institutions were female. Additionally, 83.9% of the affected students in 2-year institutions were white, while 72.5% were white in 4-year institutions. The termination of the YRP had a disproportionately positive impact on white students at the four-year level while negatively affecting Black and Hispanic/Latino students, as indicated by the results of the study.

In contrast, Evans et al. (2017) study found discrepancies between the total number of eligible students for the Pell Grants based on their EFCs and the students that received Pell Grants. Additionally, the study discovered non-receipt rate significantly decreased when administrative data from WCU was overlooked, suggesting that the main problem might be the omission of adjusted Pell Grant EFCs; however, many students with eligible (EFCs) did not receive Pell Grants. Furthermore, Evans et al. (2017) suggested inefficiencies in the Pell Grant award process, which underscored the complexity of the Pell Grant accessibility and the implications for students pursuing higher education.

While Davidson (2014) study focuses on the direct impact of policy changes on students, while Evans et al. (2017) study highlighted systemic issues impacting Pell Grant accessibility and the challenges ensuring eligible students received the financial aid they qualify for. Both articles collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of Pell Grant distribution and the need for a more efficient policy to support student success in higher education.

Persistence and Retention. Athens's (2016) study focused on the impact of engagement and learning community on student success and a range of factors to assess student demographics. The study utilized surveys in 4-year institutions, which collected data on student perception, engagement, and student demographic information. Athens (2016) study found that student perception of engagement in learning communities positively contributes to student retention.

Park and Scott-Clayton's (2018) study found that two-year college students that were eligible to receive the Pell Grants enroll in more courses, accrue more credits, and earn more money within the labor market, which contributed to students' overall persistence. Furthermore, the study found that students that qualified for a Pell Grant by a small margin were 4-7% more likely to enroll as full-term students, depending on the term. Furthermore, the study emphasized how crucial financial aid was in encouraging enrollment rates and success in postsecondary education, especially for students who come from low-income backgrounds.

The study by Yang & Vang (2023) found that the persistence of participants depended on Pell Grant funding to cover the tuition expenses. Furthermore, the study found participants had other forms of support, such as living with parents to attend a 4-year institution. The study highlighted the significant role that the Pell Grants played in supporting recipients' financial needs while contributing to the continuous understanding of the impact financial

aid can have on the academic persistence and success of underrepresented student populations.

Collectively, these three studies deepen the understanding of the impact financial aid had on student engagement, academic persistence, along with retention, offering insight into how to enhance access to Pell Grants for underrepresented students to become successful while pursuing higher education.

Academic Performance. Numerous studies on the efficacy of Pell Grants in influencing enrollment in college and academic success reveal nuanced insights into the interplay of financial aid, academic performance, and student outcomes. Carruthers and Welch (2019) study determined the Pell Grant had little to no substantial effect on college enrollment among Tennessee students who sought higher education and were overshadowed by more immediate factors related to families' financial ability to pay for college. Though some limited evidence within the eligibility threshold suggested that Pell eligibility may be used to influence college choice, overall, minor shifts mostly among students who were marginally eligible for the Federal Pell Grant, such as females choosing out-of-state institutions and male students choosing more selective institutions.

The studies conducted by Carruthers and Welch (2019), Schudde and Scott-Clayton (2016), and Andrews and Tolman (2021) highlighted the various aspects of financial aid and academic success among college students. Carruthers and Welch's (2019) highlighted the limited impact of Pell Grants on

college enrollment among recipients. In contrast, Schudde and Scott-Clayton's (2016) study emphasized the negative consequences faced by Pell Grant recipients failing to meet academic standards, suggesting a need for further investigation into the effects of performance standards on financial aid eligibility.

Meanwhile, Andrews and Tolman's (2021) noted the importance of high school grade point averages (GPA) in predicting academic success with Pell Grant recipients. Additionally, Marx and Turner's (2019) study suggested a reevaluation of Pell Grant distribution to enhance education and financial support for students seeking higher education while mitigating potential financial debt. These studies highlight the complexities of the Pell Grant program, urging policymakers to consider diverse factors such as eligibility criteria, academic performance, and support systems to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

Socioeconomic Outcomes. Hicks et al. (2014) highlighted that Pell Grant program can decrease in the following areas: enrollment by 7%, tuition collected for rural Virginia Community College Systems (VCCS) by 4%, and decreased graduation rates by 13%. However, the study suggests that more research was needed to analyze the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant. Hicks et al. (2014) included in their study that rates of graduation for Virginia community colleges were at 18 % for those who received Pell Grant for 12 semesters while rates of graduation were at 21% for those who were awarded for 18 semesters.

Overall, Hicks et al. (2014) concluded that Pell Grant had been effective if students can receive the assistance for a couple more semesters. Yang & Mao (2021) utilized a quantitative data analysis- a quasi-experimental design to examine how the Pell Grant affects graduation rates. The study found that a range of factors can affect the graduation rates of Pell Grant students, including whether they are first-generation and Pell Grant recipients if students took STEM courses. Yang & Mao, (2021), mention that those who receive Pell Grant have a low chance of graduating due to 55 their lack of educational attainment. Overall, this study concludes that being a Pell Grant recipient makes it more difficult for students to graduate. Denning et al. (2019), focused on examining the effects that Pell Grant had in aiding students towards completing their degrees. T

Throughout the study, it was found that Grant aids result in a significant increase in students' first-time completion of their degree along with their later earnings. Overall, Denning et al. (2019) conclude that federal aid programs result in positive effectiveness measures. While Eng & Matsudaira's (2021) focused on the effects of the Pell Grant regarding completion rates and post-college earnings. The study found that there was minimal effect on degree completion, although results may vary depending on the student's personal factors. However, the study found that the Pell Grant can lead to increases in human capital which are not reflected in obtaining the degree. While Liu (2020) focused on the causal effects of the year-round Pell Grant, focusing on the following: credit earned, impact, completion rate, and degrees earned. The study found that those who

benefited from the year-round Pell Grant were students who were 20 years or older. The study found for every 1,000 dollars of additional YRP funding, there was effectiveness in increasing enrollments by 27% along with diploma completions by 2.2%.

Overall, Hicks et al. (2014), Yang & Mao (2021), Eng & Matsudaira's (2021), Liu (2020), and Denning, et al. (2019) have results that differ. Including the fact that the Pell Grant had excellent benefits for graduation rates, the Pell Grant had minimal effect on graduation rates, although studies suggest more research needs to be done to analyze the benefit of the Federal Pell Grant program.

Summary

Overall, results within the 14 articles analyzed in this systematic literature review state that the Federal Pell Grant was effective according to the following articles: However, the Yang & Mao, (2021), Eng & Matsudaira's (2021). While Evans et al. (2017) study discovered that if students were ineligible based on estimated family contribution (EFC) this makes the Pell Grant ineffective due to students not receiving aid. Along with Schudde and Schott-Clayton (2016) reveal that satisfactory academic progress (SAP) requirements can affect 40% of recipients by losing aid if they do not meet the requirements. While Marx and Turner (2019), suggest that Pell Grant would be effective if more aid was provided for students. Overall, studies suggest that more research should be

conducted to further determine the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant program.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

As mentioned, this study used 14 articles focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant meeting educational and financial needs of students . The studies focused on the identified key findings related to access to education, academic performance, and socioeconomic outcomes. This chapter will discuss the result of the systematic literature review, implications of Pell Grant policy and practice, strengths and limitations of the study and provide suggestions for improvement.

Result of the Systematic Literature Review

This systematic literature review examines the impact of Federal Pell Grant on students, highlighting the importance of financial aid in supporting students overall educational and financial needs. Evans et al. (2017) and Davidson (2014), focused on the challenges recipients faced with the Pell Grant distribution process, which highlighted the need for further policy analysis to further support eligible recipients. Furthermore, Davidson (2014) study found that 7,961 students were negatively impacted by the termination of the YRP, in which 67.4% of students enrolled in 2-year colleges and 59.6% in 4-year institutions were female.

Schudde and Scott-Clayton (2016), Marx and Turner (2019) on the other hand,

focused on students' academic achievement. The effects of financial aid on student enrollment rates and the connection between financial aid and educational attainment were highlighted by these two studies. Schudde and Scott-Clayton (2016), found that 40% of Pell Grant recipients risked losing financial aid if they were unable to fulfill academic obligations. Furthermore, Liu (2020) and Eng & Matsudaira (2021) noted how Pell Grants affect post-graduation employment and earnings. Furthermore, Lui (2020) discovered that enrollments increased by 27% and diploma completions increased by 2.2% for every \$1,000 in additional YRP funding.

In contrast, Hicks et al. (2014), Yang & Mao (2021), suggested minimal effects on overall graduation rates of recipients receiving Pell Grant funding. Yang and Mao (2021) noted that recipients who were eligible for Pell Grant funding had a lower probability of graduating due to lack of educational attainment. However, other studies such as Denning et al. (2019) highlight the positive impact of Pell Grant on degree completion as well as future earnings suggesting a positive socio-economic outcome. Overall, the findings of the studies highlight the complexity of Pell Grant effectiveness, noting the need for further research to be conducted to gain a better understanding of the complexities of Pell Grant policies within higher education.

Implications of the Pell Grant Policy and Practice

Significant implications for policy and practice have been identified through this systematic literature review underscoring the need for more efficient policies

to support student success in higher education, particularly in terms of Pell Grant accessibility. One key implication was the need to address the effectiveness of the Pell Grant awarding process. The review found discrepancies between the number of students eligible for Pell Grants based on their Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and the number of recipients who received aid (Evans et al. 2017). Additionally, Davidson (2014) highlighted the impact of the termination of the YRP program. This implication suggests there are systematic concerns in ensuring eligible recipients obtain access to the financial aid they qualify for, affecting student retention.

Strengths and limitations

Within the review of the 14 articles, many strengths and limitations were identified in understanding the impact of the Federal Pell Grant program. A few strengths of this study were providing a thorough understanding of the impact that the federal Pell Grant program had on recipients. The study included a comprehensive coverage on eligibility, financial aid disbursement, academic performance, persistence retention, graduation rates and socioeconomic outcomes that contribute to the overall analysis of the effectiveness of the federal Pell Grant. Furthermore, the study highlights both positive and negative aspects of the Pell Grant program acknowledging its effectiveness in certain areas such as aiding degree attainment while also recognizing the policies ineffectiveness such as systemic issues with recipients' eligibility criteria and disparities among different populations.

However, limitations of the study were also identified such as the limited consideration of external factors that may impact the effectiveness of Pell Grant. External factors that may impact recipients' eligibility of Pell Grants consist of continuous change in socioeconomic conditions, educational policies, institutional practice which may impact future research on the effectiveness of Pell Grants over time. It was crucial to acknowledge both strengths and limitations; recognizing both positive and negative aspects of the Pell Grant program highlights the complexity of the policy's implications and the ongoing need for further research to enhance policy and practices.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, more research should be conducted to focus on further exploration of the federal Pell Grant program's effectiveness, especially in terms of access to higher education, academic performance, and socioeconomic outcomes. Furthermore, there was a need for in-depth analysis that investigates the impact of financial aid on the underserved along with underrepresented student populations to create effective interventions that support student's overall academic success.

Additionally, in order to make the federal Pell Grant policy application and distribution process more accessible to eligible recipients, advocacy efforts should concentrate on streamlining the policy to be more efficient. Promoting and advocating legislative changes with the goal of reforming Federal Pell Grant policy to ensure that all students, especially those from underprivileged

backgrounds, gain fair access to the federal funding. Furthermore, by offering academic support services such as academic preparation financial literacy, tutoring, and other student support programs to increase recipients' retention and persistence rates allow for students to complete the Pell Grant's educational requirements.

Conclusion

To recap, this systematic literature review consisted of 14 articles that had various perspectives of the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant program. It had been analyzed that some studies found that the Pell Grant was efficient, while others found that Pell Grant had no impact. While overall, suggested that the Pell Grant program required more research to investigate the effectiveness. The significance of the study was to enlighten other readers by providing insight on the various views of the Federal Pell Grants effectiveness based on secondary data. Along with closing a gap in research, caused by the lack of studies that failed to summarize their results in the following areas: access to higher education, academic outcomes, and social economic outcomes. By providing this systematic literature review others will be able to understand what studies have discovered based on the Pell Grant program. A strong consideration for further research is essential to understand the effects that Pell Grant has in higher education, academic performance, and socioeconomic outcomes.

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities to complete this systematic literature review were equally shared throughout chapters 1,2,3,4 and 5 between Ashley Hernandez and Maria Arias. Both researchers actively collaborate using active communication, subject knowledge, and organization to efficiently complete the analysis of the effectiveness of the Federal Pell Grant. By completing this systematic literature review, researchers demonstrated their passion towards the discussed subject: Federal Pell Grant.