

Title

The participation of gender equity in artisanal small-scale mining in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In Zimbabwe artisanal mining is popularly known as gold panning. It is characterised by the principles of 'get-rich-easy', illegality, criminality, violence, abuse and affordable time-consuming method of extracting gold. The artisanal mining industry is a noble source of livelihoods in communities with endemics of poor agricultural conditions, hyperinflation, high unemployment and political instability. The zeal of young women and adolescents to have a decent living as well as to contribute meaningfully towards socioeconomic development has lured them to participate in risky poverty-driven artisanal mining. The phenomenological research design was used to study individuals in their natural setting. The method of data collection used for this study was interviewing which was lopsided to in-depth interview and data was analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The aim of this study was to explore the participation of young women and adolescent girls in hazardous artisanal mining activities in Kadoma area. The convenience and purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Data was collected through open ended interview questions. The research findings revealed that young women and adolescent girls participate directly and indirectly in artisanal mining. The factors which attracted young women and adolescent girls into mining are economic challenges, trading, drugs and illicit substance abuse, marital protection and many more. The study found that the participation of young women and adolescent girls exposed them to harm. Authors recommend creation of opportunities for economic empowerment for girls and young women and advocacy for effective enforcement of laws against artisanal mining.

Key words

Young women, Zimbabwe, adolescent girls, artisanal, gold, risk behaviour

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Introduction

Mining is an important engine of economic growth and poverty reduction. In many countries the mining sector is a lucrative industry for the elites. The Zimbabwe's economic fortunes has cracked down negatively and had affected the livelihoods of many people including the young women and adolescent girls. In Zimbabwe women used to spent most of their time caring for the family. In the African worldview it is the duty of the mother to make sure that the family had eat food. Women perform multiple duties in the home than men. The involvement of women in mining is an algebra to economic hardships. The immune system of artisanal mining in Zimbabwe is enveloped around hyperinflation, high unemployment, poor agricultural conditions, and political instability. Currently there is a serious hive of activities of all ages at places where precious minerals are found especially areas around Kadoma. Artisanal mining activities are illegal and has caused cultural erosion and change of behaviour among the women in Zimbabwe. Traditionally, women's rights have always been of low priority in Africa. Women have been subordinated under the auspices of deep-rooted African customs and cultural practices which compromises their fundamental rights to business. Cultural practices reflect different values and beliefs held by members of a society from generation to generation. Every community in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of them are detrimental to the enjoyment of women's rights. In Zimbabwe artisanal mining is popularly known as gold panning. Gold panning is illegal and is most prevalent to areas located around the great dyke such as Chegutu, Mhondoro-Ngezi, Kadoma, Chinhoyi, Kwekwe and many more. Gold panning is characterised by the principle of get-rich-easy, criminality, violence, abuse and cheap time-consuming method of extracting gold. The bump and risky artisanal mining used to a male dominated environment. However women are now found in their biggest numbers as a reaction to the economic demands. The fact that there are more young women and adolescent girls in artisanal than men had triggered this research.

Background

Globally, mining operations are grouped into three main categories which are the large scale, small-scale and artisanal. These mining operations have different impacts on men and women. Traditional mining activities has often been seen as a masculine environment that culturally excludes women. In the African worldview, women are not permitted to work underground since they are a representation of bad luck to mineral production especially during

their menstrual routines (Hinton, Veiga & Beinhoff, 2003). In Zimbabwe the serious controversies was contributed by the discovery of the Marange diamonds fields where the citizens rushed to extract diamond. This has enlightened women to have a chance to venture into mining and contribute towards economic development directly or indirectly. Artisanal mining industry is a noble source of livelihoods especially when there is hyperinflation and when the unemployment rate is high. In Zimbabwe unemployment is an epidemic at its unprecedented levels which needs an unexpected approach. Everyone has a role to play in uplifting the economy which is sinking in mucky waters. Mlambo (2016) points that the role played by women in artisanal mining differs from those of men with unique set of risks and opportunities. Artisanal gold mining has accelerated to so many areas such as Sanyati District mainly in Kadoma, where gold mining is tearing up the environment. Hinton et al (2003) indicates that artisanal miners employ rudimentary methods of extracting minerals under hazardous, labour-intensive, highly disorganized and illegal conditions. The artisanal mining industry is one of the vibrant micro- projects in developing countries. This was supported by Labonne (1996) who estimates that artisanal mining can cause miraculously upward economic mobility for both women and men. Sanyati is a mining district with a population growth surviving from mining and cotton farming. Agriculture has been paralysed by drought. The get-rich-easy phenomenon has triggered almost everyone to join artisanal mining directly or indirectly. Young productive women and adolescents girls were also not spared.

The Zimbabwe's economic fortunes has cracked down negatively and had affected the livelihoods of many people. The economic discord has forced people to find counter alternative strategies of surviving. Some had resorted to cross boarder trading, vending, others went to diaspora and some had ventured in artisanal mining. Illegal artisanal mining activities in the country has been ranked among the top sources of employment. The greater proportion of the Zimbabwe's population are young people, and they constitute the foundation upon which the future of the nation should be built. Unemployment and poverty is rife among the youth. Although young women and adolescent girls might not be involved in underground mining, they are still visible on the mining landscape grinding and pulverising the ore.

Mlambo (2013) observes that mining industry in Zimbabwe is a hamstrung activity comprised of risk and reckless practices to both humans and environment. There is still paucity information on why young women and adolescent girls are swarming into mining areas such as Kadoma.

The conceptions of young women and adolescence

Worldwide, there is patch information on the lives of young women and adolescent girls in artisanal mining. Dzingirayi, Mutete & Maunganidze (2020) posit that adolescence is a transitional period of rapid physical, psychological and social development characterised by positive self-image, strong sense of self-identity and high socialisation with friends, family and society as a whole. Baker et al (2000) insist that adolescence is a turbulent period of development marked by identity formation and self-definition, a period when an individual pay particular attention to peer norms and beliefs. Adolescents begin to engage in social activities in preparation for employment and relationship building which is a precursor to independent life. Due to physical and hormonal changes, adolescent girls tend to be experimental with their body which makes them to be more vulnerable sexual abuse. Dzingirayi, Mutete & Maunganidze (2020) indicates that the hormonal secretion triggers adolescent girls to behave in a certain manner which could lure the abusive lens of would-be perpetrators. The participation of young women and adolescent girls in risky artisanal mining activities to fulfil their needs and wants. OECD (2020) express that women face multiple burdens which includes overworking, face high risks of economic insecurity, and face increased risks of violence, exploitation, abuse and harassment.

The development of artisanal mining in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe artisanal mining has been practiced since time immemorial. According to Pact (2015) the upsurge in gold panning during the 1982, 1992, and 1994 was directly attributable to drought. There are factors which contributed to the populace of artisanal mining in Zimbabwe which are the deep recession of hyperinflation, high unemployment, poor agricultural conditions, and political instability. Kadoma area is located along the great dyke, a geological feature that cuts across Zimbabwe, known to contain mineral deposits. There are a wide variety of mining activities take place along the dyke, ranging from large-scale mining (Makore & Zane, 2012) to widespread artisanal mining. Due to the area's location on the mineral rich great dyke geological formation, it has always been frequented by artisanal miners in search of supplementary income

Roles for women in artisanal mining

Women carry out a wide range of activities at mining sites. According to Hinton et al (2003) artisanal mining environments around the world are diverse, dynamic and distinct since they vary from culture-to-culture, region-to-region and mine-to-

mine. At mining sites, women dig, crush, and pound rocks, wash and sort material, carry out processing such as amalgamation of gold, and transport materials. Wasserman (1999) in Hinton et al (2003) put that women often occupy “ancillary roles” in artisanal mining areas such as cooking and laundry. Women also provide services to mining areas, including catering, sales of goods, and sex work. Susapu & Crispin (2001) highlight that women are more frequently associated with transporting and processing materials, as opposed to digging. It is important to apply a gender lenses when assessing mining activities and its impact to human life. Oxfam Australia (2009) observes that mining operations are not gender neutral. Women can experience the direct and indirect consequences of mining operations in different, and often more pronounced, ways than men. In some areas women are engaged in hand sorting and blending, hence are not allowed to go underground. Some provides emotional and medical support within the mining area through providing tablets such as pain killers. Women also act as goods and service providers, including owner-operators of bars and equipment owners. Many young women and adolescent girls are brought to mining places to work in “night clubs” as prostitutes. These bars are regarded as a centre of conflict in the community, a place where men, alcohol, drugs, substances and dangerous weapons signify a dangerous mixture for women, particularly those involved in the sex trade (Hinton, Veiga & Beinhoff, 2003).

Challenges of artisanal mining

The exploration of natural resource such as extraction of gold ore is the surviving escape routes to economic challenges. The effects and impact of illegal artisanal gold mining to men are well-documented (Mujere and Isidro 2016), the focus on young women and adolescents has not been as largely documented. Zvarivadza (2018) states that artisanal mining is an illegal and unregulated activities which attracts disastrous consequences. There are a lot of challenges assorted with unregulated artisanal mining activities and these are classified as social, economic, political, environmental, and safety and health challenges. The social challenges includes, crime, prostitution and spread of HIV/AIDS, alcoholism and substance abuse, neglect of human rights, conflict and lack of security, child labour, destruction of cultural and ethical value, destruction of cultural heritage sites, gender discrimination. Illegal mining activities in the country rank among the top sources of environmental pollution and degradation in Zimbabwe. Artisanal gold panning is popular among the top causes of environmental and water pollution in Zimbabwe. Some of the other environmental challenges experienced in artisanal mining includes deforestation, pollution, soil erosion, siltation of

rivers, dust and noise production, land degradation and river diversion among others (Makore & Zane, 2012). On the economic side, there is a lot of corruption, lack of collateral security, lack of education and professionalism, short sighted planning (Sithole & Dziva, 2019). These potential economic problems emanate from a wasteful and destructive mineral resource exploitation that may occur with an ignorant lens of these challenges being unchecked. Some major political figures use their political power to benefit by buying the minerals from artisanal miners at give-away prices (Zvarivadza, 2018). Makwerere, Chinzete, & Massimo (2018) argue that in Zimbabwe artisanal miners are mostly unaware of the health effects of these chemicals. In cases where they are aware of these effects, they are just ignorant or sometimes hardpressed to irk out a living to the extent that they find it irresistible to use the chemicals.

Methods

To explore the participation of young women and adolescent girls in hazardous artisanal mining activities.

Participation and setting

This study involved young women and adolescents who are directly or indirectly involved in gold panning in Kadoma area. The researcher collected the information from a smaller group or subset of the population in such a way that the knowledge gained is a representative of the population. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. To elicit in-depth information, knowledge of the topic under study was used to choose respondents who were willing to share their experiences

Research design

This study used an interpretive phenomenological research design which is qualitative in nature. A phenomenological design was utilized for this study as it allowed the researcher to approach the phenomenon of young women and adolescent girl in mining with a fresh perspective. This design helps to gain a more in-depth understanding of the intersection of women's participation in artisanal mining which is so risk. This approach helps the researcher to obtain rich, first-hand data from the participants regarding their experience.

Data collection

The method of data collection used for this study was phenomenological interviewing, which Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989) in Muchena, Howcroft & Stroud (2018) have emphasised that it is the most powerful means of attaining an in-depth understanding of a person's experiences. The goal in phenomenological

interviewing is to obtain a first person description of some specific domain of experience, where the participant largely sets the course of the dialogue (Cope, 2011). In-depth interviews were carried out to young women who were comfortable found at mining area of Kadoma within their convenience. The respondents were invited to speak in an open manner of their coping experiences, which attracted them to join the mining activities directly or indirectly. This research used that Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse data

Results and Discussion

The research bring to light themes which were derived from responses of participants. The following themes emerged:

- Economic response
- Vending and trading
- 'Restauranting' and laundering
- Get-rich –easier
- Sex work and peer pressure
- Influence of drugs and substance
- Hiding bay for criminals
- Sponsoring mining activities and buying Gold
- Marital protection

Theme1: Economic Response

The research found out that most of the participants indicated that they had decided to venture into artisanal mining as a way to counter the economic challenges they face.

The above statement openly reveals that the main purpose which attracted women and adolescent girls is to find a source of income. It shows that it was so hard for participants to bring food on the table as well as to be able fulfil basic needs. Most respondents indicated that they don't have a defined way of getting money. They revealed that anything which can put money in their pockets is possible. Some indicated that they got money through working in alluvial gold mining in the river banks. Therefore the decision to venture into mining is for economic gains triggered by the hard economic challenges in the country. Poverty and unemployment are both endemic which has trapped young women adolescent into murky waters. The research found that young women and adolescent girls are mostly vulnerable to these economic challenges. This has triggered them to try to gain financial independence through improving their

saving habits by participating in artisanal labour intensive mining. Some other young women failed to finish school as a result of early marriages precipitated by sexual abuse, unplanned pregnancies, rape, school dropout and sexual exploitation. Lack of knowledge on the effects of chemicals and dangers of participating in risky activities was noted during the study. Most participants revealed that they were products of school dropouts due to lacking of funding. The other participant was a leader child headed family. The study noted that young women and girls often lack social support and psycho-economic backing thus why they indulge in risky behaviours.

Theme 2: Vending and trading

The participants were observed with items for selling such as cell phones, drugs, clothes, electrical gargets, food stuff among others. The participants indicated that business at the mining areas is at its peak since the miners buy their goods using foreign currents. They pointed that there is no municipal police to take the goods. The other participant indicated that she had to look for a part time job after her husband had run away from her. Trading and vending is an alternative to counter the problems the faced as young women. Most indicated that they are sustaining their life through trading. However, the mining environment has a lot of profits but due to criminality young women are exposed to violence, robbery and abuse. This caused some young women and adolescent girls to display an unexpected behaviours such as sexual-exhibition. This resonates with the theory of social learning which states that the environment can shape the behaviour and the behaviour can influence the environment. On the negative note the environment in which young women trade exposed them to healthy seeking behaviours. The unavailability or accessibility of friendly comprehensive sexual reproductive environment in artisanal mines put the life of young women in danger. In this regard menstrual hygiene tends to be compromised in environments of artisanal mining.

Theme 3: Restauranting and laundering

The miners needs food which provide them with energy. Young women venture into artisanal mining as ancillary workers so that they can of services of cook food and washing clothes. The miners they don't have time to do laundering and cooking so they pay for these services. They indicated that restaurant is a viable business in the mining area. They indicated that cook three times a day that is breakfast, lunch and super. The study found that the owners of the restaurants employ young women and adolescent girls to lure the miners to buy food at their shop. This would ultimately put the life of women in danger as a result of sexual exploitation

for business gains. Therefore the food industry is an income generating project for young women. Women are a vulnerable group, due to cultural and deep seated social norms. In some culture women and girls are seen as second class citizens with limited right to education as compared to men. Therefore venturing in come generating projects such as restaurant is a way of trying to respond to economic demands. Some become young women unwilling as a result of rape, unplanned pregnancies, school dropout among other factors. The adolescent girls are the most vulnerable key population.

Theme 4 Get-rich-easier

The study found that young women ventures into artisanal mining so that they can get rich so easier. They revealed that luck and hardworking can change the life of an individual so instantly. Some indicated that they do have references of individuals who managed to change their life as a result of artisanal mining.

This indicated that women and adolescent girls venture into artisanal mining with an expectation of get-rich easier. This means the love of money had lured them to participate into risk mining activities. These women reveals that for them to work hard they need to be induced with some drugs. One participant pointed that "*Money has no gender*". This means they are equal to their male counterparts. The activities which women do in mining put their life danger for instance the use of mercury and cyanide. This finding was in support of UN Environment (2012) agree that mercury poisoning affects the brain and the nervous, digestive and immune systems, as well as lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes, is so dangerous to pregnant women. This supposition means the participation of young women is a risk-taking behaviour. Empowerment of women in mining needs to support and education to enhance their health. The research noted that it is possible to get rich easier in artisanal mining.

Theme 5: Sex work and peer pressure

The study noted that most of young women and adolescent girl found in artisanal mining areas are directly or indirectly into sex work business. Some of the other women are used by local business to lure men in their pubs. Other participants had indicated that sex work is an affluent business because miners (*makorokoza*) they don't hesitate to pay for sex.

The above statement indicates that sex work is a social service which is popular in the mining areas. However, there is risk of STIs and HIV/AIDS infections among the adolescent girls and young women. Earlier researches had indicated that there in high HIV prevalence in mining towns like Kadoma. The use of social media conversations acted as peer influence to participate and to join the

artisanal mining. The participants noted that the stories they heard in the social media attracted them to leave their homes to participate in mining. This means media is so influential in determining the decision of an individual. One participant was bitter and showed that a friend had convinced her that life is good and there a lot of money in mining. This means some are participating in artisanal mining not by choice but through circumstances beyond their control. Poverty caused by the economic meltdown has pressed young women and adolescent girl to resort to transactional sex so as to meet the basic needs. Lack of parental guidance and laissez faire of adolescent girls since some were left alone with their parents who went to diaspora to look for jobs. Therefore the adolescent girls were succumbed to peer pressure to go into mining.

Theme 6: Influence of drugs and substance

The study found that some young participated into artisanal mining activities as an influence of drugs and substance abuse. The other participant reveals that they came into mining areas selling drugs and substances. Others joined artisanal mining looking for drugs and substances since she is addicted to drugs. In the mining areas the trading of drugs is so rampant. The trading of drugs is so common since there are no law enforcement agents. The excessive use of drugs affect health of young women. An individual's behaviour after drinking is driven by pre-existing beliefs about alcohol's effects on behaviour. Drugs and substances can lead young women to indulge in unprotected sexual activities which can expose them to diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Therefore the use of drugs in artisanal mining areas among the young women and adolescent girls endanger their psychological and physical wellbeing. In line to this Dzingirayi & Moyo (2020) support that abusing illicit drugs caused a lot of physical problems such as accidents, cancer, and disability and can lead to death.

Theme 7: Hiding bay for criminals

The research found that at artisanal mining areas individuals mainly use pseudo names. The pseudo naming hide the identity of criminals who are on the run. This means the artisanal mining places are a hiding bay for criminals since everything which is being done is illegal. Some participants hesitated to participate in the study for fear of law enforcement agents. The researcher observed that some young women had run away from their marital affairs. Most individuals both men and women hesitate to interact with strangers. However, the researcher noted that most habitual criminals are staying at places where artisanal mining is being practiced and they use pseudo names. Other women are there to identify miners who had a lot of money and then inform their syndicates to rob them. Therefore some

young women are at artisanal mining areas as criminals.

Theme 8: Sponsoring mining activities

The study noted that some women are into business of sponsoring the artisanal miners and some are licensed gold buyers. Since the activities at artisanal mining area are all illegal the miners needs to sell their produce yet they don't possess the license to sell the mineral to reputable buyers. Therefore, the buyers visited them and buy their minerals at very low price.

Theme 9: Gender based violence

Gender based violence is another factor which was noted by the research that had forced young women to participate in mining. Therefore violence is mainly caused by lack of basic needs such as food, soap and basic services. The abuse against women and adolescent girls carry regional variations, with the prevalence being higher in Africa. Women and adolescent girls are fractured in double trouble and fluid vulnerable population who are prone to abuse so as to feed themselves and the family.

Recommendations

The study recommends:

- Creation of opportunities for economic empowerment for girls and young women.
- Advocacy for effective enforcement of laws against artisanal mining.
- Setting up effective reporting system against girls and young women's abuse and to mobilise for mobile clinics in artisanal mining areas.
- Developing and adopting entrepreneurship programs such as promoting self-help savings for young women.
- Establishing a "second change principle" in educational and vocational skill development programs for girls and young women.

Conclusion

The study found that the participation of young women and adolescent girls in artisanal mining brought more harm than good. It had been noted that most women and young adolescent girls participate in artisanal mining indirectly and only a few participate directly in alluvial artisanal mining. The participation of women and adolescent girls had negative effects to their wellbeing in the long run, for instance the chemicals used in extracting gold

such as mercury is so toxic. There are direct short term effects and long term effects. The study found out that the artisanal mining is marred with all sorts of unwanted behaviours such as violence, criminality, and drug abuse. The positive part revealed that artisanal mining is a viable income generating projects which can change the life of women. The research noted that the participation of women in mining is precipitated by discorded economic rhythms, marital protection, influence of drugs and substance abuse. The research also found that the marital status of young women matters most, some become young women as a result of biopsychosocial factors such as sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape, early child marriages, and unplanned pregnancies, cultural and religious beliefs. Some factors noted are that lack of education caused women to venture into mining. Various health risk behaviours such as sexual risk behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse, social media addiction, sheering and tearing of muscles which leads to physical challenges and depression symptoms were identified. The study found that artisanal mining environments are rendezvous and hiding bays for criminals.

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