

Research Note

Work patterns and gender reproduction in the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry in Ghana: Implications for social welfare policy

Koomson E. Work patterns and gender reproduction in the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry in Ghana: Implications for social welfare policy

Although women have access to work in the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry in Ghana, gender inequities persist. This study analyzed these persistent gender differences, taking into consideration implications for social welfare policies. Based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork, the study examined how work organization in Talensi mining activities affects the values and meanings that influence gender roles. A purposive sampling technique and ethnographic methods, including audio-taped and semi-structured interviews and storytelling, were used as tools to collect and analyze the data. Findings show that normative values, symbolic representations, and meaning-making influence gender roles and practices, which reproduce gender inequities. This study contributes to an understanding of the fundamental issues underlying persistent gender inequities in the Talensi mines that lead to a lack of improvement in women's lives.

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Introduction

Even though scholars have addressed gender inequities in global discussions, little attention has been paid to gender reproduction.¹ In 2006, the African Union's commitment to gender equality, with the support of United Nations agencies, led to the development of gender policies that would improve human and people's rights on the continent, Governments in Africa have enacted policies for reducing gender inequality based on the 2009 Report of the African Union Gender Policy.² The intent of these policies is to offer empowerment opportunities to women, guarantee protection against rape and violence, and ensure

women's participation in public and economic spheres through the identification and establishment of interventions focused on gender.

The recent increase in mining activities in sub-Saharan Africa, including the establishment of a small-scale gold-mining industry in the Talensi district in Ghana, has attracted men and women. Banchirigah (2008) pointed to the numerous income-earning activities the small-scale mining industry provides to both local women and men, making the industry a vibrant employer. In 1999, the International Labor Organization (Jennings, 1999) reported that there were approximately 13 million small-scale miners, of which 4 million were women; that estimate has increased to 20–30 million miners. In addition, small-scale mining supports workers equal to five times the number of miners (IIED, 2013). Eftimie et al. (2012) estimated that women make up 10–50% of small-scale miners in Asia and Latin America, but over 50% in Africa. McQuilken and Hilson (2016) found that in Ghana the small-scale mining industry employs about one million workers and supports 4.5 million more, with women

¹ Later in this article, the concept of gender reproduction is operationalized.

² The African Union Gender Policy defines gender (in)equity as the "(Un)fairness and (in)justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between men and women" (2009, p. 28). Salamati and Naji (2016) argue that inequity is not the same as inequality and that inequality may be unavoidable because of genetic differences of social and economic conditions, or be a result of personal lifestyle. Inequity, on the other hand, refers to disparities that are unnecessary and avoidable.

constituting about 50% of the labor force. Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff (2003) found a range of activities for women, including panning, carrying ore, and washing gravel from riverbeds. Nevertheless, the industry has been perceived as being male-dominated; consequently, most research and policies have concentrated on men's jobs, while the contributions of women have been "marginalized" and often overlooked (Hilson, 2003; Hinton et al., 2003). The purpose of this study was to provide an empirical examination into work patterns, gender inequities, and gender reproduction in the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry in Ghana.

The Ghanaian government has made some effort to reduce gender inequities. A major endeavor was the development of an institutional framework that led in 2001 to the establishment of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), with a mandate to promote gender-responsive policies. Through the Ministry, the government has developed a comprehensive legal and policy framework for gender equity, including the 2006 Domestic Violence Act, the 2015 Gender Policy, and the 2016 Affirmative Action/Gender Equality Bill. According to Nana Oye Lithur, a former Minister of the MoGCSP, the Ministry's specific activities include the distribution of free school uniforms and free exercise books for girls, skill training for young women, and free prenatal services for pregnant women (Ghana News Agency, 2017). In addition, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an initiative that serves as a guiding framework for addressing extreme poverty in the world, promotes gender equality by encouraging an increase in the number of women employed in non-agricultural sectors, combating poverty, and improving women's health. Unfortunately, these efforts have not adequately addressed inequities for women in the workplace, including the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry.

The existence of gender-specific jobs, the alleged perception of women as making "marginal" contributions to the industry, and the lack of support for women's activities in the small-scale mining industry limits women's ability to realize the full benefits of employment in the mining industry. Small-scale mining industries encourage gender-specific activities, a process that in the Talensi mine means women perform aboveground work while the more lucrative underground work goes to men. In the Talensi mine, women's disproportionate access to the benefits of the industry is influenced by the social organization of the society that normalizes gender ideologies and values and persistently reproduces gender inequities as shown in Figure 1.

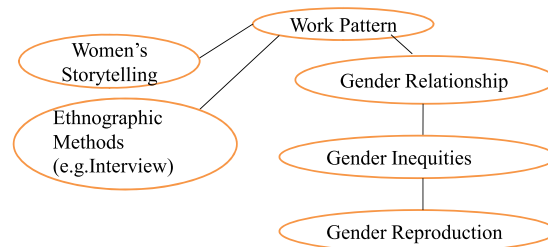


Figure 1. A graphic representation of the conceptual framework for gender reproduction.

Gender reproduction

Scholars view gender reproduction as a by-product of social reproduction rooted in human socialization. Historically, social reproduction was based on efforts to maintain life on a daily basis, such as the provision of food for immediate consumption, socialization of children, and care for elders (Laslett & Brenner, 1989). The emphasis on class distinctions by Marxist theorists in explaining the concept of social reproduction led some feminist scholars to challenge this concept (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Linstead & Pullen, 2006; Poggio, 2006). For instance, some have argued that societal reproduction involves not only class distinctions, but also the perpetuation of gender as a fluid and dynamic process. This approach to understanding gender emphasizes that gender involves an interrelated process of "doing" and "undoing" gender, and that the theory of "undoing" gender can best be understood by understanding "doing" gender (Butler, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Broch-Due, Rudie, and Bleie (1993) examined the gendered practices and the use of tools as well as the influence of the values and ideals of the Talensi society. West and Zimmerman (1987) uncovered an unquestioned binary system that maps gender differently onto men and women. In an organization, the binary system has an important and lasting effect on work (Kelan, 2010). Gender practices and the symbols that signify them become stable and normalized, as the binary practice continues (Broch-Due et al., 1993). The normalization of gender is closely linked to how people enact and exhibit "doing-gender" practices in everyday situations (Linstead & Pullen, 2006). Once embedded in the norms of an organization, doing gender becomes the everyday practice and is thereby unquestioned (Kelan, 2010). Mkhwanazi (2014), whose empirical work has focused on teenage girls in South Africa, examined the relationship between social reproduction and gender to uncover the process of reproducing gender in African societies. Mkhwanazi refers to reproducing gender as when a society uses its values and ideals to uphold practices that affect men and women differently.

In this article, gender reproduction has been operationalized based on the definition of gender and social reproduction. The African Union (2009, p. 26) defines gender as the “social and cultural differences between men and women, boys and girls that offer them a value, unequal opportunities and chances in life,” whereas social reproduction indicates the perpetuation of entire social systems (Laslett & Brenner, 1989). Gender reproduction has been operationalized here as the perpetuation of inequities in an organization that are socially and culturally produced from values and ideas about male–female differences, power, and inequality to structure the differences.

In the Talensi district, values have been constructed based on patrilineal practices, which produce gender-specific work patterns in gold production. The persistence of gender-specific work patterns produces a longstanding normalization of the division of gender roles that fosters gender inequities, leading to gender reproduction.

Gender work patterns

According to Browne (2000), gender work patterns are the result of an enduring legacy of patriarchal value systems. For instance, Browne argued that traditionally men have been responsible for providing the material sustenance of the household and women for the care of the household such as preparing the meals and washing clothes. As women began to be employed outside the home, household patriarchal ideologies entered the workplace creating a division of work by gender.

Other scholars have argued that work patterns are typically defended as reflecting women’s lack of social capital, including education, which limits them to doing only certain kinds of jobs (Blau & Kahn, 2000). However, Browne (2000) noted that even after disparities in education, skills, and other characteristics are controlled, patriarchal values influence gender roles in the workplace. The present study investigated gender practices in the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry. Although previous studies have shown that gendered practices and the use of symbols are closely linked to the ideological and value systems of the society, such studies have not fully integrated an understanding of the interrelationships between work patterns and gender reproduction. The present study provides an understanding of how gendered practices and the specification of tools by gender reproduce inequality. This study’s findings can be used to determine policies and interventions for women in the small-scale mining industry and other organizations.

Methods

The study’s setting comprised four small-scale gold-mining communities – Kejetia, Obuasi, Accra, and Tarkwa – in the Talensi district of the Upper East region in Ghana, within the Guinea Savannah zone (Benneh, Agyapong, & Allotey, 1990). The District was characterized by infrequent rainfall and is considered a resource-poor region. Apart from subsistence farming, small-scale gold mining constituted one of the few employment areas available to residents. In Talensi gold-mining activities, women of early adulthood to the mid-50s engaged in mining work.

This study used ethnographic research methods to acquire insights into work patterns and gender reproduction in the Talensi mine. The popularity of ethnography lies in the fact that it is a style of research rather than a single method (Becker & Bryman, 2004). Specifically, this study used mixed methods, including participant observation, voice-recorded semi-structured interviews, extensive field notes, and immersion in women’s work as miners. In addition, much of the data were collected through discussions and conversations with the miners. However, the isolated use of ethnographic methods such as semi-structured interviews or participant observation risks producing decontextualized knowledge (Briggs, 1986).

This study used purposive sampling to recruit participants. According to Bernard (2011), purposive sampling, like other non-probability methods, enables the researcher to identify and describe social and cultural phenomena and is thus an appropriate method for studies that explore shared “cultural facts.” Bernard (2011) explained cultural facts as shared norms and changes in them. This in-depth study explored Talensi miners’ shared experiences, opportunities, and the challenges of their work.

During fieldwork, conducted from September 2014 to September 2015, the author interviewed study participants, usually at the site where women converged to look for work; interviews were conducted using a voice recorder while the women waited for work, and new participants were recruited. Before conducting interviews, the author explained the purpose of the study, assured participants of confidentiality, and administered informed consent forms with thumb-print signatures. Altogether, 40 women and 8 men were interviewed. The women’s discussions and conversations about their work and life, interspersed with questions that probed for clarification, constituted a major source of information for this article. The interviews lasted approximately 1 hour each while the informal discussions and conversations lasted several hours.

Storytelling was used as a research tool to understand work patterns, gender experiences, and the

meaning behind them of women working in the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry. Rooted in multiple disciplines, including anthropology (Hansen, 2006) and social work (Riessman & Quinney, 2005), researchers have established that storytelling provides a useful research tool for gaining insight into human experiences and understanding the meanings behind them (Hansen, 2006; Lewis, 2011; McCormack, 2004; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Storytelling in social work has often been viewed as a metaphor of, and a synonym for, the term “narrative” (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Stories, like narratives, can be found in an individual’s life history or “life story” as well as in personal interviews and conversations. When viewed as a research method, storytelling takes place at two levels: (i) “personal experience stories” constructed by the individuals themselves and (ii) the researcher’s reconstructed or interpretive stories drawn from the personal experiences of the participants (McCormack, 2004).

The respondents, through semi-structured interviews and conversations, spontaneously shared stories about their work in the mine in Twi (an Akan language widely spoken throughout Ghana) interspersed with Talon (Talensi local language).

Analytical procedure

Analysis of the ethnographic data began with anthropological fieldwork when the women’s stories were collected, copious notes taken, interviews recorded, and observations made. Anthropological procedures identified by Bernard (2011) were used to analyze the ethnographic data: listening to and transcribing audio-recorded interviews; reviewing extensive field notes; and reflecting on observations of mining activities. The ethnographic data were grouped into artifacts based on mining tools and equipment; behaviors, mainly shanking (sifting crushed rocks) or *salmabalga* (shallow pit mining); and events such as funerals and festivals. From these procedures, the author determined the work patterns of the Talensi small-scale gold miners as well as any emerging work patterns that led to gender reproduction. This article has retained the voices of the women through the illustrative stories.

Findings

According to Bernard (2011), ethnographic study involves the description and interpretation of text. The interview transcripts and field notes revealed how work patterns in gold production were gendered in the industry.

Nette’s story

Nette is a middle-aged, hardworking shanker from Gorigo (a village in the Talensi district). During an interview, Nette shared her experiences of working in the mines as a *salmabalga*, that is, a shallow pit miner. Her story illustrates the realities of women’s everyday activities and others’ expectations about gender roles.

Nette relocated to Kejetia at the invitation of a friend and joined other women in carrying rock ore or load.³ While doing this work, one of the miners identified a few pieces of rock as sample or rock ore that had a high content of gold; this was in Obuasi, near Kejetia. All the miners immediately began to dig their own individual mining pits in the area, including Nette. Women were not expected to use digging tools such as pickaxes and hammers because these tools were regarded as “men’s” tools so Nette used a hoe to dig, but was hoping to get a pickaxe and hammer from a male friend. According to Nette, by digging at her own pace she would have reached the gold-bearing rock, but the men asked her to stop digging. Browne (2000) indicated that patriarchal systems lead to a persistent gender division of labor. The patrilineal conception that women should work with the tools assigned to their gender prevented Nette from purchasing a pickaxe and hammer for digging. In conforming to organizational practices, the normative conceptions about gender remained unquestioned (Kelan, 2010). Indeed, women in the Talensi mines did not question the limitations placed on their work. After obtaining and intermittently using a pickaxe and hammer, Nette dug to a depth more than twice her height in 1 week (Nette is about 5’8” tall).

Nette told how the men stopped her from digging deeper pits when she went back to continue working in her pit the following week:

Three of my attempts to sink my own pits failed. The men will not allow us to work in deep mining pits. My initial intention was to resist, but when the confrontations increased in intensity, I gave up and allowed the men to take over. I can’t fight them. They came in a group to take the pit from me.

Nette’s story provides an overview of work patterns in the Talensi mining industry, showing that the workers’ roles are determined by gender. Women are expected to work in shallow mining pits only; when

³ In the Talensi mining industry, the terms load and chipping are used interchangeably to refer to rock ore grounded for gold extraction.

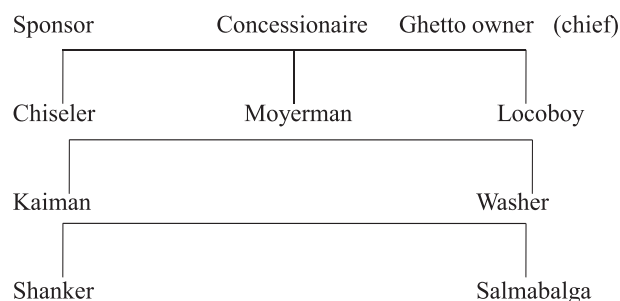


Figure 2. Organizational chart of the Talensi mining industry.

the pits get deeper, the men take over. As Nette's story shows, gender role differences are depicted by the use of different work tools and practices.

Work patterns in the Talensi gold-mining industry

Talensi work patterns are structured on a three-tier organizational chart, as shown in Figure 2, which was drawn with the help of women miners. Schematic interpretations showed that the most important and valuable tasks are at the top. In the Talensi mine, work was patterned in two main ways – practically and symbolically. In the practical sense, men did all the tasks that took place underground while women were responsible for some of the tasks that took place above ground. As found by Hinton et al. (2003) that a representative spread of women's activities in mining included panning, washing, and carrying ore, in the Talensi mines these activities can be broadly grouped into shanking (sifting of rock ore, load, or chipping) and salmabalga (shallow pit mining). Nette and the other women could only be shankers or salmabalga workers. Women's jobs, represented as the lowest level on Figure 2, are seen as being of less value and importance than the underground tasks. Although some scholars explain the less important roles of women as resulting from their lack of social capital, including education and skills, the influence of patriarchal values for gendered division of labor exists (Blau & Kahn, 2000; Browne, 2000).

Women remarked during the discussions and conversations that sponsors and concessionaires, the two main financiers, and the ghetto or pit owners occupied the highest tier because, the women agreed, these three categories of men had the expertise and money needed for investment. Yigba, one of the shankers, confirmed:

Women's work in the mining communities is made possible by the men. We cannot work here without men's expertise. In fact, we would have no small-scale gold-mining activities in this area if the men didn't return from other mining communities in the southern part of Ghana to begin mining on

our land. The men also have the money to acquire mining land. We are aware of the tedious way men have to go to acquire concessions [i.e., bureaucratic hurdles], besides the large sums of money invested in mining.

In the Talensi gold-mining industry, concessionaires have acquired the mining land from the government of Ghana through the Minerals Commission. In an interview, the Regional Director of the Minerals Commission for the Upper East explained that each concession in the Talensi area covers about 25 acres of land. Ghetto owners acquire a piece of land from the concessionaires and recruit a work team, referred to as a "gang" or ghetto, to work underground. The landowners, some of whom double as small-scale miners, have a share in the gold mined on their land.

Chiselers, moyermen (drillers), and locoboys (transporters) are grouped together and occupy the next tier on Figure 2. The women explained that chiseling requires previous knowledge and experience; moyermen bear the greatest risks associated with inhaling large amount of dust from the rocks during drilling underground; and locoboys perform the most strenuous tasks of carrying rock ore from underground into the homes of the sponsors or ghetto owners. The only male workers who do not work underground are kaimen (pounders) and washers, and these are on the next tier. The kaimen are responsible for pounding rock with a high gold content to reduce gold losses through crushing and milling, while the washers are responsible for sluicing and amalgamation (adding mercury to rock paste to combine with gold). Females, shankers and salmabalga workers occupy the lowest tier.

The relationship between tasks and tools for women and men

The tools and equipment men and women used in their mining activities and the tasks they performed are based on gender. In Nette's story, she was required to leave the deep pit and take up tasks that were more aligned with her gender. These practical and symbolical processes limit women to being shankers and/or salmabalga workers.

Salmabalga. *Salma* is the Talensi word for gold and *balga* means stirring, the main process used in preparing a meal. The name salmabalga referred to workers who produced gold by stirring. Salmabalga is done on riverbeds or on dry land. It is the first stage of the gold production process. When someone had identified a gold deposit, both men and women rushed to the site to shallow dig together. However, as the pits get deeper, the women were required to

leave and start digging in a new spot because women were not expected to work in deep underground pits. In some cases, women who lost their pits were compensated by allowing them to be shanking leaders.

Women were required to work with tools identified with their gender: scraping the surface of the ground with hoes, collecting dirt into round metal bowls, shaking the content to blow the earth away, washing the gravel in the pan, and searching through the gravel to find gold nuggets. Women could occasionally ask a man working in the next pit to collect a pile of earth with a shovel, which most of the men were willing to do to support the women or for the loan of digging tools such as a pickaxe.

Some of the women argued that it was easier to do salmabalga in the riverbeds, a space reserved for women and older children. Memuna, about 50, who has been a salmabalga worker for more than 5 years, remarked:

I prefer to do salmabalga in the stream, where the men do not work. I cannot dig with a hoe and the men would not allow me to sink a pit with the tools they use. I am old and cannot dig the hard, dry ground with a hoe. Working in the stream doesn't require digging. I use my hoe to collect gravel from the riverbed and look through the gravel to find nuggets. Besides, I don't have to carry water over a long distance to wash my gravel.

The values and ideals of Talensi social organization, based on the patrilineal system, influence not only the practices and tools used for working in the mines, but also determine the spaces for women to work. According to Mkhwanazi (2014), some societies uphold the values and ideals of practices that affect men and women differently and in the process reproduce gender. Among the miners, gender reproduction occurs when the society attempts to uphold the Talensi system of patrilineality whereby women work in spaces reserved for them and perform tasks that are similar to their household chores. When a society upholds the values and ideals that reinforce gendered practices and spaces, gender becomes more complex and difficult to undo. In the process of upholding the values and ideals that affect gender, the society reproduces gender.

Shanking

Similarly, a shanker used a sieve of about 4 ft² to sift chipping or load, a pan or six-gallon metal bowl to carry chipping, a small plastic bowl that holds about a quarter of a gallon to move the chipping into the sieve, and a plastic bucket that serves as a seat. Shankers sifted chipping, load, or finely grained stone, known as *kun ziiom* in the Talon or Talensi

language, in preparation for amalgamation, a process used to separate gold from rock ore. All the tools a shanker used were identified with household roles and gender [sieves, buckets, and bowls are everyday tools used in the Talensi home, while shaking and sieving are done in the preparation of meals].

Nica, a middle-aged shanker who had lived for 2 years in Kejetia working to support her five children, reiterated a similar experience to Nette's:

When we [referring to shankers] decide to work in the same jobs as the men, the men won't allow us. The men always tell us that we should shank because women cannot do the more tedious work that takes place underground, but I beg to differ. Women can also work underground. In the last gold find, I dug a pit with my hoe and a male friend's hammer. When you know there is gold where you are standing, you will be able to dig to reach the gold, but the men don't allow us to dig deeper.

Nica's story confirmed that when the Talensi society upholds the values and ideals that reinforce gender practices in the mining industry, they are doing gender (i.e., making the practices the gendered norms of the industry). The norms of the mining industry remain unquestioned.

During interviewing, the Regional Director of the Minerals Commission stated:

The very acts of shaking, sifting, and stirring involved in the shanking and salmabalga jobs are interpreted as women's roles since these acts are also used during household activities.

As Dubu, a moyerman (driller) reiterated, it was appropriate for women to shank because

You don't expect me to carry a bowl with chipping. In our society, men don't carry bowls and women don't dig pits.

Dubu's assertion reinforced the notion that men and women should engage in roles that are socially acceptable based on gender. Kelan (2010) argued that doing gender emerges out of the interactions in an organization. The appropriate activities for women can best be interpreted as constituting doing-gender activities that become normalized in the mining industry (Linstead & Pullen, 2006). The perpetuation of gender dynamics normalizes gender practices in an organization.

Concluding discussion

The present study used gender reproduction as a framework in order to explore the construction and

representation of gender practices within the work organization of the Talensi small-scale gold-mining industry in Ghana and its implications for social welfare policies. The findings show that the work patterns of the mining industry are based on a binary system that creates unequal opportunities for men and women.

According to Kelan (2010), a binary system of work has an important and lasting effect on an organization when the binary becomes normative and remains unquestioned. When the binary system of gender is unquestioned, the system “maps” differently onto men and women (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In the mining industry, women who have the desire to work in mining pits, regardless of the depth of the pits, face persistent challenges.

Gender roles are closely linked to the ideological underpinnings of the social organization of society. For example, patriarchal values and ideals that stem from the Talensi patrilineal system of social and economic organization reinforce gender roles that are difficult for women to deal with. In the mines, Nette says,

Women miners hand over their pits to the men who request the pits because women should work only in the roles assigned to them.

Dubu, a moyerman (driller) explained,

In our society, men don't carry bowls and women don't dig pits,

thereby reaffirming society's influence on the work patterns in the mines.

Doing gender becomes unavoidable in an organization because of normative perceptions, what West and Zimmerman (1987) referred to as perceived “essential” differences. More importantly, the process of doing gender is complicated when reinforced with the ideals and values of the society. In the Talensi mining industry, for example, the taken-for-granted ideology that men should work underground constitutes a doing-gender practice. When the society's values and ideals reinforce the ideology, the practice becomes complex and difficult to undo, leading to persistent inequities between women and men, thereby reproducing gender.

The findings of this study support the conclusion that the values, ideals, and practices in the patrilineal Talensi society influence the work of women and of men, producing persistent inequities that remain unchallenged. Persistent gender inequities in the mining industry need to be addressed if the small-scale mining industry is to continue to provide employment and income to improve the lives of all workers, including women.

Limitations and future research

The main limitation of this study is that there is no comparative study, especially in the southern part of Ghana, where small-scale mining activities operate along the fringes of large-scale mines. Future research studies should be conducted to understand how work organization unfolds in the patterns of other small-scale mines in Ghana and in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Additionally, the data collected through interviews and observations reflect the interpretations of the researcher and the interviewees. As Briggs (1986) argued, among other problems, interviews have the tendency to deprive the researcher of broader patterns and may underplay the feelings, thinking, and verbal expression of the interviewer and the interviewee.

Social welfare policy implications

This study examined the relationship between work patterns and gender reproduction in small-scale gold-mining activities, and addressed important areas of policy implications. The key findings of the study have social welfare policy implications.

The separation of tasks and tools based on gender reflects a binary system that leads to unequal opportunities for men and women. This research suggests that a comprehensive government policy could promote gender-neutral roles by enhancing opportunities for women miners to acquire mining pits, which could be achieved through measures such as reducing bureaucratic processes to encourage women to acquire mining licenses. When women acquire and own mining pits, they will be able to engage in jobs other than shanking and salmabalsa. Recent studies have shown that women in Zimbabwe are breaking through the barrier that has restricted women from working underground (IRIN News, 2013). According to Hove and Hlongwana (2015), Zimbabwean women who own mining pits and work underground reap tremendous benefits from their work.

Another key finding of this study is that the values that stem from the Talensi patrilineal system of social and economic organization reinforce cultural values and ideals in the mines. Gender roles in the mines are difficult for the women miners to undo. The acquisition of mining pits, if made possible by the government, would not only improve the benefits women get from their work, but would also challenge the entrenched patrilineal values and ideals about gender division in work. Women's ability to own mining pits and work underground would challenge the longstanding, unquestioned notions about gender practices that are reinforced by societal values and ideals. Governmental measures to support women in

acquiring and owning mining pits would reduce or even eliminate the persistent inequities in the work practices and use of tools which, because they remain unchallenged, reproduce gender.

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