Reflections on Organizational Barriers Vis-à-Vis Women Participation in Largescale Ghanaian Mines

Rufai Haruna Kilu
Division of Human Work Science, Department of Business Administration
Lulea University of Technology, Sweden
Postal Address: 971 87
E-mail: rufai.haruna.kilu@ltu.se
+46 734858950

Eira Andersson
eira.andersson@ltu.se

Mohammed-Aminu Sanda
mohammed.aminu.sanda@ltu.se

Maria Uden
maria.uden@ltu.se

Abstract
Writing from gender and organizational perspectives, this article reflects consciously with nuances upon varied effort working towards resolving the long existing binary barriers in the world of work. Working towards this goal, this article raises questions as to which organizational practices, processes, and procedures function to create participatory barriers to women in Ghanaian mine jobs. Adopting a mixed method design, the paper points to the culture of male-dominance, gender biases, role models and mentorship constraints, unfriendly family work policies, and relationship among women in male-dominated settings. These outcomes, according to the study, constitute considerable concern for organizational development, with practical implications for industry, employment, labor relation practices, and public policy in Ghana. Therefore affirmative action among others is recommended for gender deconstruction, and promotion of gender democracy, an agenda for inclusivity, and a safety valve for poverty escapes and a compact for achieving gender-equality in multinational Ghanaian mines.

Keywords: gender, binary barriers, male-dominance, gender democracy, sustainable development, Ghanaian mines
1. Introduction

Ghana is an attractive mineral resource base, and the mining industry is an important part of the Ghanaian economy, with gold alone accounting for over 90 percent of the mining sector. Ghana is the second largest gold producer in Africa and 10th largest producer in the world (see: world top 10 gold producer-countries). The gold mines in Ghana employs over 28,000 people, directly contributing about 38.3 percent of total corporate tax earnings, 27.6 percent government revenue and 6 percent GDP in 2011 (Aryee, 2012). The industry also contributes significantly to sustainable development through implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes for host communities and the general Ghanaian public. However, to fully realize potentials of the sector to contribute to socio-economic development, certain key challenges have to be addressed especially, poor diversification of the mines in area of gender equality. For example, Kwami (2007) did a study aimed at identifying obstructions to women participation in Ghanaian mines. The study showed prejudice, cultural restrictions and discrimination against women. Though women are majority of the Ghanaian population, yet underrepresented in mine works. This then raises a sustainability concern for core stakeholders in the mining industry.

Although Ghana's large-scale mining sector has received extensive attention, its dynamics in labor market issues continue to be poorly understood. And several issues remain unresolved that serve to obscure rather than unravel the binary barriers affecting effective participation of women. The problem moved beyond unresolved differences and took center stage in general mining literature focusing on health and safety, unionism, legislation, changing technology and global markets to the neglect of an equally critical aspects like diversity management and gender equality in Ghanaian mine work environment. Most of the studies on women in mining are foreign in nature, problematizing their application in Ghanaian context, and the relatively few works done on Ghana are mainly on small scale mining (Kilu, Anderson & Sanda, 2014).

In Ghana, mining is popularly perceived to require brut-physical strength, and as a preserve for men. It is evident that this perception can be found world-wide. These types of masculine ideals are shown to dominate mine workers' culture and practices. Especially, where gender equality debate is highly present in the surrounding society, such as the Scandinavian context (Abrahamsson, 2008; Abrahamsson & Johansson, 2006; Andersson, 2012, Andersson, Fältholm, Abrahamsson & Lindberg, 2013). Generally, the situation in Ghana has many parallels all over the world. In Australia, Bryant & Jaworski (2011) examined the gendering of skills shortage in selected industries including the mines, and the results pointed to gender discriminatory practices. Similarly, Purevjah (2010) studied gender equity issues in Mongolian mines. The study showed that majority of mining companies advertised mining jobs openly expressing preferences for male employees. According to Lahiri-Dutt & Macintyre (2006), the gendered construction of the mines and mining, and the conventional hegemonic notions of mining as a masculine job raise critical questions relating to gender and development, leading to major transformational processes in contemporary mine landscape, especially in developing countries. This inevitably leads to large scale formal mining companies being pressurized to improve their environmental, social and community commitments. And each and every one of these commitments needs to incorporate a gendered outlook if their contributions are to yield any meaningful and equitable results.

Historical antecedence to the phenomena of male-dominance in the mining sector is revealing and constituted both formal and informal barriers. The formal barriers are attributed to legal and legislative instruments, as well as educational traditions that construct science, technology,
engineering and mathematics as male preserve. For example, in Britain, women were legally excluded from working underground by the 1842 Mines Act. Similarly, in early 1900s, Article 2 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) convention 45 of 1935 came into play, forbidding women in underground mining. That article further stated that “no female, whatever her age, shall be employed in underground work in any mine.” Turning to the continent of Africa, legislative acts of 1898 and 1911, banned women from underground work in South African mines.

The informal barriers, on the other hand, are products of long standing cultures and traditions that segregated and stereotyped women from certain occupations. Evidence abounds from Yao (2006) in China, whose study sort to identify reasons why few women were employed in the coal mines of China. The results showed, the custom of foot-binding, cultural factors, and customs in traditional China, where it was ominous for women to be present in the mining tunnels. Similarly, in South African mines, women were excluded from mine work participation due to their value in food production and their natural reproductive functions. Therefore, both the formal and informal barriers makes the mine labor market unfriendly for women. Although a lot of the formal barriers may have been broken, lots of the informal barriers still persist.

The phenomena of women exclusion from mining and underground work may not have been universal over time. The inter World War periods led to a huge increase in the employment of women in the mines, due to lots of men joining the war fares. Bradley (1989) noted that in Germany and Belgium women worked underground until the twentieth century. Also, in 1960s in India, women worked in open-cast mines, and by 1970s, Chinese and American women also took up mine work (Bradley, 1989). According to Bradley, these women did heavy works such as dragging and pushing trucks and covering of coal. They also worked as coal carriers, sieving, loading, unloading and weighing coal. Bosman (1967) states that in Ghana, gold was obtained in or between certain hills and in river gravels where the streams enter the sea, and women use to flock to the seashore after heavy rains to pan for gold. According to him, the collection and washing of beach gravels and sand at Elmina and Axim were done by women and boys after violent rains. That women used large troughs and trays, which they filled with sand and gravels and washed repeatedly with fresh water till all the lighter materials was removed. The concentrate containing the gold was washed again in a small tray until all the dross was removed, leaving the gold.

Similarly, industrial and organizational sociological studies have paid considerable attention to male-dominated work contexts (Kerfoot & Knight, 1993). The character of these contexts provides fertile grounds for development of studies on women’s experiences in bureaucratic and professional organizations. Researchers prior to 1970s, tended to study male subjects, without considering female subjects and eventually turned blind eyes to the way sex and gender impact on organizations (Hearn & Parkin, 1983). Ground breaking works by Acker & Van Houten (1970); Kanter (1970) and other feminist theorists, open debate on significance of gender within work organizations, making a business case for work place equity, and laying solid foundation for gender and organizational paradigms (Wicks 2002). Rational for the new paradigm hinges on calls to expose and end discriminatory practices against women, which characterized work organizations and organizational analysis (Mills & Tancred 1992). Moving beyond the era of discriminatory critiques emerged a new order focusing on developing feminist theories of work organizations. This was shortly followed by numerous applied feminist technoscience studies that engendered explanations on organizational dynamics that create and sustain discrimination. As the field of feminist technoscience gained acceptance, the debate broadened to capture details on
masculinity, femininity and diversity management in work places. The continuous debate on this subject, lead to explain how women participation is limited in male-dominated industries such as engineering, construction, forestry, and mining.

This article undertakes a critical review based on relevant studies on organizational analysis, including the more recent interest in gender and technology, supported with empirical data to contend, and illuminate some of the key binary challenges confronting women in Ghanaian mine work organizations as a result of male-dominance cultures. In this regard, we raise the question on the organizational barriers affecting women, and their implications on gender equality. This in no uncertain terms will stimulate new research, to ensure better understanding of the organizational barriers, and subsequently move forward to make Ghanaian mine works more equitable, diversity tolerant and socio-economically sustainable.


Ghana has a culture of work-life, a long-standing national thinking, set to defining initiatives designed to creating more flexible, and supportive work environment, to enable employees focus on work tasks while at work, and enhancing productivity. Flexible work practice is a favored strategy in today’s Ghana, aim at meeting the needs of both businesses and employees (Aryeetey, Yeboa, & Sanda, 2012). Also, contemporary Ghanaian human resource managers deploy strategic approaches to managing employment relations with emphasis on leveraging people’s capabilities aim at achieving sustainable competitive advantage, through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programs, and practices, working towards more flexible and supportive work environments.

Work-life cultures are proven to be universal, Wei, Yill & Tian (2013) in China, explored how Human Resource Management helps organizations build supportive work-life/family balance work environments. The study showed that, although there is a positive relationship between implementation of Work-Life Balance (WLB) programs, and organizational performance and employees’ well-being, those programs’ under-utilization showed that un-supportive organizational culture form the barrier for the desirable outcomes of commitment and productivity. The study recommends that HRM departments should help organizations establish supportive organizational cultures, ones that elicit support, and enhancement of women’s positions. That only by the establishment of supportive work-family/life cultures that organizations and employees can capitalize on the implementation of WLB programs.

Also, legislations on maternity leave exist under leave regulations of mining companies of Ghana, as contained in their collective bargaining agreements. It stated that on submission of a medical certificate signed by the company’s medical officer, or where circumstances demand by a registered medical officer, or a registered midwife, a woman who becomes pregnant shall be granted maternity leave with pay as follows: six (6) weeks before confinement. Six (6) weeks after confinement. In addition, a further four weeks unpaid leave may be taken. On resumption of duty, a nursing mother shall be granted a forty-five (45) minutes, twice a day to nurse her child for a period of one year and close from work at 3:00 pm instead of 5:00 pm.

However, these regulations regarding working time limits and leave entitlements, have not been very helpful in enabling employees manage work and family responsibilities effectively. Similarly, Aryeetey et al, (2012) in Ghana, conducted a study to identify the challenges inhibiting
professional female employees from maintaining good work-family life balances, and also to develop a framework that organizations can use to understand such challenges, towards the design of alternative work arrangements to enhance the retention of professional female employees. The study revealed that conflict between work and non-work obligations, such as family responsibilities, are sources of stress which could motivate professional female employees to quit their jobs. Also, flexible time, compressed workweeks and telecommuting were identified as the most preferred alternative work arrangements as motivational tools to help retain their professional female employees, not only to improve the quality of their work-life balance but also to enhance their productivity in their organizations.

The 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) report in Ghana, indicates that the economically active population 15 years and older, by sex and industry indicates that men stands at 54.7 percent, as compared to 45.3 percent of women, a figure slightly higher than women. The report revealed that the women’s limited opportunities for employment in the formal sector is partly due to lower levels of education and other factors challenging their employability generally. This implies men are more likely to be employees than women in Ghana, as it may be in other parts of the world. The report further shows that the private sector, including mining companies, absorbs 93.1 percent of the economically active persons, with the public sector absorbing only 6.9 percent. Therefore, the private sector remains the largest employer of the working population in Ghana.

The report further indicated women representation in manufacturing (the second largest sector) stands at 51.9 percent, slightly above the men’s 48.1 percent. In wholesale and retail businesses, women represented 56.7 percent as compared to 43.3 percent men. In accommodation and food services, women representation stood at 54.7 percent as against 45.3 percent for the men. Women equally topped in household activities by 59.4 percent compared to 40.6 percent men. The knowledge of the fact that women dominated the men in some key industries is highly refreshing and becoming increasingly interesting, with implications for poverty alleviation, and effective inclusivity in industrial participation in Ghana.

In contrast, the report showed that men outnumbered women in areas of agriculture, forestry, and fishing by 55.5 percent compared to 44.5 percent. According to the report, agriculture, forestry, and fishing, inarguably remain the largest industrial sector in Ghana. In building and construction, men dominated by 86.1% representation compared to 13.9 percent women. And in mining and quarrying, which is central to this paper, men dominated by 80.8 percent compared to 19.2 percent for women. Therefore, the Ghanaian mine work is male-dominated, as evidenced in the PHC report in 2010.

3. Theoretical framework

Gender scholars and feminist theorists since 1980s have been critical on social constructions, and categorizations of society into able and disable, man and woman, male and female as well as division of roles and occupational segregations into all-male, all-female and mix jobs (Ampofo, 2014; Connel, 2010). In her manifesto for the cyborg in 2004, Donna Haraway criticized western traditions like patriarchy, colonialism, essentialism, and naturalism as being problematic formulations of categories and identities leading to "antagonistic dualisms" that are systematic to the logics and practices of domination of self and others, male and female, animal and machine, culture and nature. Instead, Haraway argued for a world of potent fusion, what we described as a
“magnetized world” committed to breaking down of boundaries and binary barriers. A world capable of melting down peril partialities, a world challenged to dissolving polarity and hierarchical dominations. This in our frame of thought will ensure effective world set to joining parts and pieces into wholes, as may be observed in a natural behavior of a normal bar magnet, reacting to magnetic substances.

Similarly, in her Agential Realism and Getting Real in Meeting the World Halfway, Karen Barad (1998), challenged the disciplinary divide between epistemology and ontology. Instead, suggested a new approach to knowledge production called ‘onto-epistemology.’ This refers to the study of inseparability of matter, human subjects, as well as inseparability of “‘being’” and ‘‘knowing.’’ We draw this analogy- “I am a man, you are a woman.” And because “I am a man, I perfectly fit into machine, technical and engineering jobs” and because “you are a woman, you don’t fit into these set of machine, technical and engineering jobs.” This is a typical case of social construction, characterized with occupational segregations that this study is not comfortable with. Barad’s theoretical formulation among other theories work towards elimination of categorizations, wiping away of discrimination and marginality in society as a whole, and the world of work in particular, as it may be the case in mine works of Ghana.

Also, some thirty-nine years ago, Kanter (1977), in her foundational work, entitled ‘the many and the few, in men and women of the corporation,’ where creation of masculinity was central in the organization she understudied. The work, of course, explained the administration of corporate bureaucracies, exposing growth of a “masculine” ethic in management, and “feminization” of the clerical work. The most suited part of Kanter’s work to this paper is, “why tokens face special situations?” The work pointed out that, the proportional rarity of tokens is associated with three perceptual tendencies namely: visibility, contrast, and assimilation.

The first perceptual tendency i.e. visibility of tokens accord them attention, earn them a wide group member’s awareness share, and make them less and less surprising, unique and noteworthy. Hence turns to mount unnecessary performance pressures and demands on tem. Of course, this situation may lead to stress or events or experiences perceived as threats or challenges to the affected individuals, which can be either physical or psychological.

The second perceptual tendency i.e. contrast of tokens, which is a polarization and exaggeration of differences between the many and the few. In uniform groups, members and observers alike may never become self-conscious about the common culture type, which remain taken for granted and implicit. However, in contrast, the presence of a person or two in a group, bearing a different set of social characteristics, increases the self-consciousness of the numerically dominant group, and the consciousness of the observer about what makes the dominant a class. They will then become more aware of both their commonalities and differences from the token. In order to preserve their commonalities, they try to keep the token slightly outside, thereby creating a boundary for the token. According to Kanter, in this scenario, there is a tendency to exaggerate the extent of differences between the dominant and the token, because tokens by description are too insignificant a number to defeat or deny unjustified generalizations. So, it is easier for the commonalities of the dominants to be noted in contrast to the tokens. Therefore, the tokens can easily be perceptually isolated, and cut off from the core of the group as compared to the dominants who represent a greater share of the group, and can never face the brunt of group isolation. In social psychological terms, isolation from a group is tantamount to estranging. George Simmel describes a stranger as a member of a group, who lives and participates, yet remains distant from
other native members of the group. That a stranger is perceived extraneous to the group, and even though in constant interaction with other group members, his/her “distance” is more emphasized than his “nearness.”

Assimilation, the third perceptual tendency, involves the use of stereotypes, or familiar generalizations about a person’s social type. In most cases, characteristics of a token are distorted to fit the generalization. Of course, the theory posits that tokens are easily stereotyped than people found in appreciable proportions. It is also easier for a tokens to find an instant identity by conforming to pre-existing stereotypes. So tokens are ironically, both highly visible as people who are different, and yet not permitted the individuality of their own unique, non-stereotypical characteristics.

According to Kanter, the aggregate effects of the three perceptual tendencies may lead to turnover and failure rates being measured much higher among tokens than that of the dominants, both at enterprises and early grade positions. Kanter also emphasized on the universality of the theory which is applicable to peoples of any kind who are rare and scarce, such as the few women among many men in science and technology settings, the lone black among a majority white community, the lone man among majority women and the few foreigners among natives. That any situation, characterized with significant types of people highly skewed, can produce similar results.

4. Method and Materials

This paper report findings on fieldwork from the four understudied mining companies and a mining university in, and around Tarkwa in the Western Region of Ghana. Tarkwa is the capital town of Tarkwa-Nsuaem Municipality which forms part of the 22 Metropolitan, Municipal and Districts in the region. A well noted mining town, hosting several mining companies and activities, giving out approximately 24 tons of gold annually, hence the justification for choice of Tarkwa as the study area.

Access to these four studied organizations was negotiated through the respective human resource managers, with the aim of satisfying basic ethical requirements in research. The researchers visited the field three consecutive times. The fieldwork span over a period between August 24th to December 31st, 2014, spending a period of 21 working days in the field. The four understudied mining companies were; Gold Fields Ghana Limited Tarkwa branch, incorporated in 1993 as a legal entity. The government of Ghana holds a 10 percent free carried interest, as required under the mining law of Ghana. Next is Anglo Gold Ashanti-Iduapriem mines, wholly owned by Anglo Gold Ashanti. The Iduapriem property is a 110 km square concession. Then comes the Golden Star Resources Ltd. in Bogoso, near Tarkwa. A Canadian based company, incorporated in 1992. The Company holds 90% interest in both Wassa, Prestea and Bogoso gold mines in Ghana. The Damang Ore body was first discovered between 1990 and 1995 when Ranger Gold entered the area to mine the tailings of the Abosso Gold Mine. In 1997 the construction of the Damang mine and mill completed and mining commenced.

4.1 Design of the study

In this study, we adopted a mixed method design, due to its numerous pragmatic advantages. First, employing the designs can lead to expanding the scope or breadth of research to offset the weaknesses of either approach alone, or by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are
balanced by the strengths of another (Caracelli & Green 1997). Also, the aim is to further ensure that understanding is improved by integrating different ways of knowing (Carvalho and White, 2007). Other views hold that, the collection and analysis of embedded qualitative responses can augment and explain complex or contradictory survey responses, and also, collection and analysis of structured survey and key informant interviews in an iterative analytic process can provide important information on emergent and unexpected themes (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert 2007). The basis for employing these designs are likewise varied, but they can be generally described as methods to expand the scope or breadth of research to offset the weaknesses of either approach alone (Caracelli & Green 1997).

1. Most of the data reported in this paper were derived verbatim from interviews conducted by ourselves, at the work places with both women and men miners, mine managers, as well as some mining engineering lecturers from University of Mines and Technology, that lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour, on their understanding of the organizational barriers affecting participation of women in mine jobs of Ghana. The qualitative approach witnessed twenty seven recorded interviews, made up of ten women and fifteen men. The interviews allowed the interviewees to reflect on and discuss their experiences. This is obviously not a method for the collection of objective data (Czarniawska, 2002), but it allowed us to capture how a number of diverse individuals make sense of organizational phenomena, including their interpretations (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Soderberg, 2003).

2. Also, two focus group discussions were organized, first with a group of students from University of Mines and Technology, who have been on vacation attachment with the mining organizations before. And secondly with a group of miners, selected across the four mining companies. According to Kitzinger (1995), focus group discussions have advantages of non-discrimination against people who cannot read or write and they can encourage participation from people reluctant to be interviewed on their own or who feel they have nothing to say. Also, focus group discussion has a hallmark of explicit use of group interactions to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group (Morgan, 1997).

3. A self-developed, pre-coded questionnaire was administered to 304 respondents, made up of 231 men and 73 women.

4. Also, a pre-test of the instrument was done at Anglo Gold Ashanti Limited in Iduapriem.

5. Participant observation was also conducted at the mine sites, which provided means of becoming acquainted with the miners work lifestyles, as well as the contextual setting for their narratives.

6. And of course, both the qualitative and quantitative data were simultaneously collected.

4.2 Means of recording, documentation, and analysis

The recorded the interviews and focus group discussions, and subsequently transcribed them. The data were then organized thematically, including both the recurrent themes and issues that were not recurrent, but were of interest in relation to the aim of the study. Also, handwritten notes were taken in the course of the interviews to augment comprehension of the process.
We focused the analysis on both literature and the aim of the study. The process of data analysis witnessed a merger of both qualitative and quantitative data sets. These data sets were linked by key informant identifications to ensure that records contained both the survey and the interviews. The qualitative data were analyzed for codes or themes manually. These codes were then developed into qualitative response categories. All quotes were verbatim, and have been approved by the interviewees. Hypothetical names have been used in the presentation of the study results. This on ethical ground seeks to protect confidentiality of the respondents. Results generated, then provide illustrations on organizational barriers affecting women participation in Ghanaian mine jobs.

5. Results

5.1 Phenomena of male-dominance in Ghanaian mine jobs

A profile of gender representation proportions to create a sense of sex composition among employees from the four understudied mining companies was done and captured in table one. This contains statistical data sourced from various Human Resource Managers, explaining employees’ status by gender in those companies.

Table 1: Gender distribution of employees in the four understudied mining companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mining Companies</th>
<th>Male N</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female N</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Fields Ghana Ltd, Tarkwa</td>
<td>2,453</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,549</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo Gold Ashanti, Iduapriem</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Star Resources Ltd, Bogoso</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Fields Ghana Ltd, Damang</td>
<td>1,508</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,630</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5,888</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HR, 2014

First is Gold Fields Ghana Limited, Tarkwa branch. The company is male-dominated, with male representation stood at 96 percent as compared to the few women representation of 4 percent. Second is the Anglo Gold Ashanti-Iduapriem mine, which is also male-dominated by 93 percent as compared to 7 percent women workforce. Then comes the Golden Star Resources in Bogoso. This company also has majority of its employees being men, thus, 97 percent as compared to the few women representation 3 percent. Gold fields Damang branch was the fourth company studied. It has 94 percent male workforce, as compared to 6 percent women representation. These findings suggest a problem of male-dominance and gender inequality, which may be working against sustainable development of the industry. This in turn set the pace for us to explore the organizational barriers working against participation of women in the mine industry of Ghana.

5.2 Organizational barriers facing women in Ghanaian mines
In order to gain understanding of the organizational barriers facing women in mine jobs of Ghana, a five scale itemed questionnaire was designed to complement the interviews. The scale runs between disagree to strongly agree. Questions among others centered on culture of male-dominance, relationship among fellow women, discriminatory practices against women, lack of family-friendly work policies, and lack of role models and mentorship issues. These questions were chosen against the background that, they constituted common and recurring themes in literature on gender equality and work-life studies, and responses are contained in table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
<th>Strongly Disagreed</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Strongly Agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lack of support from fellow women</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination against women</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lack of role models and mentorship</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of family-friendly work policies</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Work 2014

5.2.1 Gender biases

Women in male-dominated professions experience some biases in the course of their working life, Mantei recounted:

Sometimes management is not sure, they are scared and then discriminate against women. The women are mostly perceived weaker, and not suitable for the mine job. The thinking is that ‘after all, they can’t go far, the work is tedious, and working hours are not favoring them. They want people who are in always, and continuous!’ So, summing up all these, recruitment panels mostly settle on male candidates. ‘This is discrimination to the highest order, which is unfair!’

Similarly, Anatu put into perspectives her feelings about management in discriminatory selection of only men for screening programs, bothering on toxic effect of workplace exposures, which she finds very difficult to comprehend:

I remember one or two occasions have I stood up to say no, enough is enough; you have to include the women when doing certain things! Sometimes screening programs for toxic effect of workplace exposures, a basic health issue, and everybody is a man. I find it very difficult because we are all in the same department, doing the same thing, with same risk exposures, why do you consider only the men? And a woman is picked, only when there is no man!

Another response that sounded common among many women miners interviewed centered on discrimination on career development and progression. Josephine lamented:
Regarding programs for your career development, they will not consider you as a woman. Sometimes they think you will give birth and will not be stable, why developing you instead of the men, who will always be around. I personally sometimes put it before them that, it is an act of discrimination!

Also, a woman respondent specifically complained on a notch incensement, which is a performance assessment during the year, where recommendations are made to top up salaries of miners.

See, this woman worked very hard, and one thing I noticed about my women colleagues is that they are very, very hard working! Even when she was pregnant, she could close at 10 pm. She gave birth in April, took maternity leave for 3 months, and surprisingly, she was denied the notch incensement. So, i ask myself, is child birth now organizational mistake or a crime? If someone doesn’t speak up, it will happen to another, and continues. So these are some of the challenges confronting us as women.

5.2.2 Family-friendly work policies

Results of the study further attributed ineffective family-friendly policies to participatory barriers confronting women in the mines. Both male and female respondents attested to this fact. Sumani, a male mine worker had this to share:

The other reason that may not be revealing is, women going on maternity leave, even though we may fear mentioning it but that is the fact, the thinking is, you give such a high profile job in the mines to a woman and the time you may need her to take critical corporate decisions she is on maternity leave, this disrupts progress. On the contrary, you a male won’t go on paternity leave, even if you have hernia you will still go to work.

Similarly, Agyekum, a mine manager had this to say:

Other women miners made it a habit to become pregnant, and given birth to children when their services are required for us to pay them. So we paid one particular woman for three years when she had not drove the truck even once because we did not want to be partial. We advised her to reduce the speed of child birth before we realized just as the child was growing up, another one was on the line. We saw that this thing will not help the business, she actually opted for redundancy, we paid her the money and she left.

Sadiqque also expressed his view in this subject, just as earlier respondents did:

It is a business! See, these women, you bring them in, and across a cyclical period, they bleed on monthly bases. It is a 30 day cycle, they start from a point to a point, example, they start from 25 to the 5th of the following month. On monthly basis, you will lose about 6 to 7 days. Some have bad abdominal-crums, and have to be admitted in the hospital, and as a business man whose eyes are on a certain tonnage and targets, and assuming she is a critical person in the group. There will be a shakeup; someone has to be pulled from elsewhere to replace her. In fact, if the sensitivity of the job requires you to be available at any given time, and in full utilization, you are not likely to recruit a woman, you can see it as a form of discrimination, but for a good reason!
Hazel expressed his lamentation as:

On the surface, no one can say it, but within ourselves, we know that is the practice. As you can see this empty desk, it was being occupied by a woman assisting me here. She is in charge of data entering, she is not here because she is gone to give birth, and her absence is costing me a lot!

5.2.3 Relationship with fellow women in male-dominated contexts

Many of the women miners interviewed expressed their views regarding relationships with fellow women. Vida gave an account which reflects that of the majority of the female miners:

Let me give you this example, in my department, we are four women, one is not vocal, she doesn’t want to come in at all, and the other one, when you stand to talk at meetings she tells you to sit down. Sometimes when you say something and there is this collective voice no! You loss hope and feel like never to talk in meetings.

Similarly, Nihad gave an eloquent lamentation of this problem:

Even your women colleagues turn to draw you back in this organization. Because they think and believe there is no need to stand up and support your legitimate course of action, in fighting for your right, and for the collective interest of all women. So that is my worry in this organization.

Also, Akosua recounted to earlier respondents:

…but still, some of my female colleagues will not really accept the fact that they have to be there! It is heart breaking when you want to stand for every one and people will be drawing you back, saying certain things, sometimes you are considered as the spokesperson for the women, and sometimes you need support from your colleague women and you will not get it.

5.2.4 Lack of role models

The role model concept is very important for women in male-dominated jobs. This has a tendency for motivation, and to avoid women likelihood of feeling lonely. According to the respondents, Ghana is yet to produce a woman mine managing director or a mine manager in its mining history, even though a woman had been a chief executive officer of the Ghana Chamber of Mines for several years, in Ghana. This in no uncertain terms demotivates participation of women in Ghanaian mines. In this regard, Effua, a female respondent recounted:

I do not see women at the top of my organizational hierarchy, which always makes me sad, and think that there is no future in terms of my career progression in the mines. I always entertain fears I will be stuck to this small corner forever.

In such work environments like the mines, where women are few, most of them may need role models to coach them, which they lack. Ironically, the men as dominant group may see a minority group as a stereotype than equally competent peers. Another female miner shared this:

Also, the mine job is male-dominated work environment. In this case a little effort from a man, he is there! But you as a woman need to put in extra, extra effort to get to the top. In an environment like this, being a woman means, you are already written off. Also, for the
fact that other women were there and didn’t pull, it makes it quite difficult for another woman to get there.

6. Discussions

In this paper, we reflected on the participatory barriers facing women in Ghanaian mine jobs. The barriers identified were of course, organizational in nature and character. This conclusive discussion centred on how such organizational practices and processes work cumulatively to create the current phenomena of male-dominance in such an economically viable sector of the Ghanaian economy.

The Ghanaian mining sector is fast growing and attracting huge capital investment from foreign, and multinational investors, whose eyes are detailed on continuity of operations, high tonnage, and profit. Of course, this capitalization of the mine production process is never gender-neutral. This statement in the course of the interview that ‘they want people who are in always, and continuous!’ implies and lead us to hold growing suspicion of resentments against women, which may equally manifest in subtle discriminatory behaviors towards them in the world of mine works, as some of the respondents attested to. These behavioral patterns may range from implicit recruitment biases to explicit maintenance of long working hours, long distance work places, and unpopular shift systems. We also think that women may be distracted in an attempt to respond to some of these unfair treatments. Probably they may focus their energy, effort and time dealing with them to the neglect of core functions assigned them within the organizations, which in itself is problematic, finding themselves in a state of double jeopardy. In contrast, their men counterparts could concentrate on proactively developing their careers through the mechanisms and opportunities available to them.

Also, a critical examination of responses regarding family-friendly policies, lead to a grand and visible exposé as to extent to which family-unfriendly some modern organizations are. For instance, this expression that ‘if the sensitivity of the job requires you to be available at any given time, and in full utilization, you are not likely to recruit a woman.’ We consider this statement as a gross violation to some provisions of the national labor law, provisions on maternity leave and other leaves of absence. Indeed, legislations on maternity leave do exist under leave regulations of mining companies of Ghana. It stated among other things that ‘on submission of a medical certificate signed by the company’s medical officer, or where circumstances demand by a registered medical officer, a woman who becomes pregnant shall be granted maternity leave with pay as follows: six (6) weeks before confinement, and six (6) weeks after confinement.’ Precisely, three months of maternity leave to a nursing mother? We do not only see this as woefully inadequate to provide effective child care but also see it as ‘cosmetic joke’ on the part of employers. Even, in the mist of these structural inadequacies surrounding the maternity leave in Ghana, some mining companies still express reluctance in employing women. We adopt this critical posture, against the backdrop of comparisons with best practices elsewhere! Swedish parents, for instance, are entitled to 480 days of paid parental leave, of which 60 days are reserved for the father. This is in line with the Swedish state’s strict policy on promoting gender equality, hence mothers and fathers are expected to share the 480 days equally.

The lack of role models and mentorship for young female miners was a noted challenge. This reflected in a stated lamentation that ‘I don’t see women at the top of this organizational hierarch, which makes me think that, there is no future for me in terms of career progression.’ This statement may have two implications. On one hand, it could mean a state of frustration associated with sense
of hopelessness in continuous functioning in the mines. On the other hand, it could imply an expression of mistrust out there for a woman to be mentored by a male mentor. Just as Kanter (1977) puts it, that in work environments where women are few and do not occupy top management positions, they may lack role models, and may turn to rely on the men who are experienced for coaching. Ironically, the men (dominant) may see women (token) as a stereotyped, than equally competent peers to deal with. This is intensely interesting, and go further to explain how man (mentor) and woman (mentee) relationship may, in most cases not prove effective, going forward!

Another phrase ‘even your women colleagues turn to draw you back… no need to stand up and support your legitimate course of action…so that is my worry!’ This constitute a crystal statement of reasonable expectation from women as ‘tokens’ in male-dominated settings; explaining possibilities of women wielding corporate power through formation of alliances. This expectation confirms what Kanter (1977) emphasized in explaining power, its importance for leadership in large organizations, and how power is accumulated through activities and alliances. That sources of bureaucratic powerlessness is a function of basic structural issues, such as constraints imposed by work roles and effects of opportunity, power, and few numbers of women in ‘men’s worlds’ make them operate at a disadvantage. And how same structures or organizations systematically make some people ‘look good,’ and others ‘look bad.’ So, the victims, in this case, cannot be blamed! We expect a combination of governmental legislations, organizational policies, and programs to produce positive change.

In this regard, we show case the formation of Women in Mining (WIM) Ghana. Founded by group of women miners, to support and facilitate education on mining for themselves and for those not acquainted with the role women play in the industry. WIM - Ghana, further seek to educate its members on the technical and other aspects of the mineral resource and related industries through informative and educational programs. They institute and promote such educational, scientific, legislative and other programs as will foster unity and public awareness of the economic and technical interrelationship of mineral production with the national economy, and the public good. In addition to providing valuable educational benefits, the WIM organization function to offer members an opportunity to acquire new personal and professional contacts. Their regular meetings also provide a vital communication link for the variety of women representation, and a number of personal improvement workshops. With mining being a male-dominated, these women felt their purposes could best be served via self - organization, and mobilizations. The membership include women engineers, geologists, secretaries, community affairs and public relations and other women mine workers.

Of course, our sober reflections in the study, pointed to participatory barriers, which are organizational in outlook, which have functioned individually, and cumulatively to create and sustain this current phenomena of male-dominance in Ghanaian mine jobs. In a total of 5, 630 miners working in the four understudied mining companies, 95.4 percent of them were men, while 4.6 percent were women (see table 1). And there were few women competing with men in survey, geology, mining engineering, planning, and across all mine work operational departments. This phenomena of male-dominance in Ghanaian mine jobs may run parallel to other global mining jurisdictions, but there is a sharp contrast. In Zambia, the Lumwana copper mines has women dominating in the operating side as truck operators. And more than 50 percent of operators being women between age 18 to 35 years, who are entitle to 7 days off duty every month to attend to
their menstrual cycles. A package that is working perfectly to the attraction and retention of the women mine workers into the company.

In furtherance, the claim that ‘women are few in mine jobs because of the difficult work conditions’ does not hold water. We argued that difficult work conditions in the mines is gender neutral and not a monopoly of women brunt. Of course, work by nature is difficult, characterized with sacrifice of leisure and pleasure, and the men equally bear the burden of difficult work conditions, therefore we reject this claim.

In the mist of all these challenges confronting women, we think the picture, is not all that blur for women in Ghanaian mine jobs, and we definitely expect light at the end of the tunnel. Some mine managers attest to the fact that some women miners have survived, amazingly doing very well, showing that whatever the men can do, they are equally capable. That, it is not every man who is stronger than every woman. Some women are even stronger than some men, and some women are also more intelligent, and more technically inclined than some men, and as well, some women are emotionally stronger than some men. So, the claim of lack of physical, mental and emotional strength, constituting barriers to women participation in the mines, is neither here nor there, and gradually becoming subjects of history!

Conclusion

This paper gave a reflexive account of mine work organizational practices and processes that functioned singularly, and collectively to create participatory barriers to women, and how these barriers lead to create and sustain a culture of male-dominance in multinational Ghanaian mines. The culture of male-dominance in mine jobs may long be researched by various scholars in gender and technology studies, therefore one may argue, there is no need for repetition! However, most of such studies are foreign and European based, with few studies on Africa in general, and Ghana in particular, hence this work contributes to bridging a huge body of literature gap in the field, in Ghanaian context.

We realized the phenomena of masculinization of industrial mining practices as reflected over in this work, are mere constructions under technological changes, organizational designs as well as produced and re-produced by sociocultural identities. In our frame of thought, these masculinities do not only occasion overly visibility of men, but it also contributed to a higher conflation of masculinity with necessity, conceding to men expertise and prestige over women, which is a concrete fallacy. Also, arbitration of institutionalized authority, laws, systems and structures of governance, all of which have informed, and entrenched hierarchies and technologies which are often gender bias. Similarly, the biological essentialism, apparent in construction of the bodies, as explained in earlier reviewed texts, exposes the implicit masculine biases of men, representing women as unfit for certain work spaces, including mining because of their reproductive responsibilities. This then perpetuates the idea that men are naturally unable to work with women without violating the basic and fundamental norms of appropriate behaviors.

Therefore, the unbroken male-dominance is source of considerable concern, with practical implications on gender, and feminist technoscience studies as a whole, the mining industry, in particular, employment and labor relations institutions and public policy in Ghana. It also constitute a threat to gender equality, promoting economic marginalities, a challenge to mine work sustainability developments, and probably leading to socioeconomic exclusion of women in an all-important sector of the Ghanaian economy. Though current developments in gender equality
initiatives and legislations may be making business case for an increased number of women into mine jobs, with the aim of changing the demographic profile of the mining companies. We admit this may be yielding fruits in some jurisdictions including Ghana. We hold a strong conviction that with effective implementation of gender equality initiatives and legislations will provide fertile sheltered environment and a realistic interface between career choices and working life of women, and thereby increasing their numbers further within the mining industry. We hereby recommend affirmative action plan across all levels of mine work planning and decision making. Also, industrial support programs for women is highly recommended, such programs may offer alternative network developments that work to encourage women to support each other, gain insight into common problems confronting their careers. Women miners could also explore alternative mentorship programmes through formation of peer mentoring groups, meet on regular basis to mentor each other, share ideas on best practices in the world of mines. Indeed, e-mentoring is another option, where young females identify and connect with professional women miners elsewhere for expert advice. Mine work organizations can equally schedule meetings and public lectures and make information available on successful women through employee newsletters. All these aim at deconstruction of gender and work towards promotion of gender democracy in Ghanaian mine work organizations. A practice that will lead to an all-inclusive mine work participation, bringing about sustainable mine work development, trigger poverty alleviation results among women and above all, achieving gender-equality in Ghanaian mine jobs.

References


Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and Martha Macintyre (2006). Women miners in developing countries: Pit women and others. Ashgate publishing Ltd USA.


Purevjah, B 2010, ‘Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: Gender and Sustainable Livelihoods in Mongolia,’ In Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (Ed.) 2010, ‘Gendering the Field: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods for Mining Communities,’ Asia Pacific.


