

The Impact of Artisanal Mining on Career Development of Adolescents in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *The research explored the impact of artisanal mining on the career development of adolescents at three selected schools in Imbizo District, Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. Interpretivism research philosophy was employed in the study, and a qualitative research method was used. The phenomenological research design was adopted for the study. The sample comprised fifteen school children aged between 14 to 20 years, and six teachers were selected from schools in Imbizo district in Bulawayo province, Zimbabwe, using purposive sampling. Due to COVID-19 regulations, interviews were telephonically, and focus group discussions were conducted online. Interviews were used to collect data from children, while focus group discussions were used to collect data from teachers. The findings revealed that causes of child involvement in artisanal mining include influence from society, poverty, drugs, adventure and the COVID-19 outbreak. The research findings revealed that child involvement in mining brought undesirable behavioural traits such as anti-social behaviour, poor academic performance, health and safety risks and different forms of abuse. Strategies suggested by teachers to mitigate child involvement in*

illegal mining encompassed legalising the small-scale mines, life skills education, educational support to all vulnerable children, community awareness campaigns, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government involvement. The children suggested that the government could help by providing them with basic needs like food and paying for their schools and stationery.

Keywords: Artisanal mining, adolescents, career development, child labour, human rights, child abuse, safety.

1. Introduction

Mining is an ancient activity that was carried out by society as a symbol of wealth (Hilson, 2011). Great nations are equally measured in terms of the mineral wealth in their stores or underground (Block, 2017). In this vein, mining and possessing minerals remain fundamental to a nation, society or even individuals. However, mining has its fair share of negative impacts on society, particularly school-going children, regarding their career progression. It has been found grossly attractive to informal artisanal miners since they have got ready market which attracts high prices (Moyo, 2010). It is worrisome when there is the employment of minors where employers generally exploit children to the detriment and denudation of the high moral and societal fibre. Mining requires efficient skills and training, making it suitable for adults and not children, as it poses a surmountable risk to their physical, mental and social well-being (Phiri, 2009).

However, IPEC (2013) highlights that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that more than one million children work in artisanal mining. While significant progress has been made to curtail this, UNFPA (2013) notes that many adolescents are still denied the investment and opportunities required to realise their full potential. World Vision (2013) argues that most children drop out of school and those in school also participate at least some of the time. This phenomenon affects their rights and responsibility as family members since community members and leaders are passive observers of harmful activities that can potentially influence their career development. Therefore, it is the researcher's interest to identify the causes of child involvement in artisanal mining, its impact, and strategies to reduce the scourge that destroys career development and progression of children.

1.1 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

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- Why do children venture into artisanal mining in Imbizo district schools?
- How does artisanal mining impact the career development of adolescents in Imbizo district schools?
- What strategies can be employed to shape the career progression of adolescents involved in artisanal mining in Imbizo district schools?

2. Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

This research was guided by Albert Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) which is predicated on the notion that learning occurs through social observation and imitation of modelled behaviour (Pajarez, 2017). Myers (2002) points to Albert Bandura's observational learning as the foundation of all behavioural traits that most children may portray. Bandura believed that what determines whether the model will be imitated is partly due to the reinforcement and punishment received by the model. Hence, SLT is relevant because as children associate and interact with members of the society involved in artisanal mining, they observe and imitate. Most children venture into artisanal mining because they see those who do it driving flashy cars and living lavish lifestyle. This theory emphasises observational learning. Below are the relevant literature reviewed in the study.

2.1 Poverty as a cause of child involvement in artisanal mining

Children from impoverished backgrounds are often forced by circumstances to embark on the artisanal mining sector in order to provide sustenance and be the "breadwinners" for their family members and, in some cases, to source school funds (Travis, 2011). According to Hilson (2016) the involvement of children in mining is poverty-driven and is considered an avenue of acquiring funds to facilitate their education, which the parents, in their capacity, cannot afford. It is often argued that the scores of children involved in artisanal mining camps and doing hazardous work are products of this poverty (Hilson et al., 2017).

The second cause, according to existing studies, is peer pressure. Buhori (2016) further alluded that adolescents brought many qualities from peer relationships that developed from early social experiences in the family. Parents should take a proactive position to provide guidance and counsel to their children so as to train them in the ways that will develop appropriate, genuine and long-lasting friendships during early childhood, as failure to do so causes children to make ill-informed decisions.

According to literature, societal norm is one of the causes of children's involvement in hazardous activities. Godin (2013) noted that in other societies, children's involvement in dangerous activities is caused by a society's acceptance of child labour, where children can work as hawkers, miners, and servants. Many African societies have acknowledged that adolescents benefit significantly from mining, fishing, and hunting (Ismawat, 2019). According to Scooner (2015), the cause of children's involvement in labourer's activity is that some societies condone, turn a blind eye and do not address child labour as a pandemic but simply regard it as a norm.

2.2 Impact of artisanal mining on the career progression of adolescents

Zimbabwean children's education is still adversely affected by adolescents' involvement in mines as children fail to sustain the heavy weight shouldered upon them by such activities that see them performing badly in their school work (Scooner, 2015). The Zimbabwean Education Act chapter 25:04 refers to school education as comprising a complete range of suitable full-time instruction and activities and having regard to the age and the gender of children. However, artisanal mining still poses an undesirable impact due to the high failure rate of children involved in illegal mining (Ncube, 2015). Despite, policies and laws that govern children's rights to education, Ncube (2015) observed that the impact of children's involvement in artisanal mining is a resultant direct effect on a high percentage of children who drop out and prefer illegal mining and other criminal activities such as drug dealing, commercial sex working and shop looting which work against academic progression (Mabhena, 2012).

Literature has pointed to the physical, social and mental damages resulting from children's involvement in artisanal mining. Global reports on the impact of child labour are depression and anxiety, which are a catalyst to destructive behavioural traits like smoking, alcoholism or drug abuse (UN, 2015). According to Spiegel (2017), the impact of child labour in an intensive environment triggers

low self-esteem, depression, attachment problems, and anti-social behaviours. The effect of child labour in the region stretches to psychological and emotional issues such as anger, attention deficit, and reactive attachment (UN, 2021). Some workplaces abuse children, making them emotionally drained and losing their self-identity, not forgetting that these adolescents are deprived of appropriate socialisation where they can interact with their peers to build healthy self-esteem.

The third impact, according to existing literature, is intergenerational poverty. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) global estimates of child labour indicates that 73 million children are involved in hazardous activities. The ILO highlighted the impact of child miners as continued poverty and indecent youth employment. According to Human Rights Watch (2015), children's involvement in artisanal mining fuels endless poverty at the global level. Globally, the detrimental effects attributed to child labour was lack of employability which then drove the ILO programme aimed at facilitating school attendance and eliminating child labour which, according to ILO (2013), is a significant problem with its prevalence shown by children's participation in mining and farming in the Zimbabwean context, resulting in recurring poverty (Mabhena, (2012).

Fourthly, alcohol and drug abuse are the effects of children's involvement in artisanal mining, considering literature. In Africa, researchers have seen a rise in drug use among the 18 to 24 age group, and it poses a concern among policymakers (Chikoko, 2016). The use of drugs like broncleer (an illegal cough mixture), histalix (a prescription cough medicine) and methamphetamine, which is highly addictive, is rampant and one of the target users are artisanal miners, where adolescents are also found (Jakaza, 2018). Zimbabwean drug users' slang for methamphetamine is "mutoriro" and their ability to procure is through mining, where they can get cash for drugs (Chikozho, 2019).

2.3 Strategies for positive career progression of adolescents in artisanal mining

Literature points at educational support as a way of shaping career progression. World Vision (2013) reports that in a study carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo, parents have proposed that the government or NGOs should assist by paying school fees for children. The exorbitant cost of education has caused a hike in school dropouts and forced children to engage in artisanal mining; however, this could be minimised through the provision of free education (Balchin, 2016). Free education would help children leave artisanal mining and concentrate on their education so they can build promising careers for themselves (UNICEF, 2015).

Secondly, studies have pointed out the need for community empowerment courses in order to mitigate child mining while promoting better careers. Government and NGO professional training programmes are essential to transition children and adults from artisanal mining (Makore, 2012). These encourage adolescents to commit to education and training, drifting away from artisanal mining (World Vision, 2013). The training programs could include skills such as tailoring, agricultural skills, food and catering, sculpting, woodwork and more (Bryceson, 2015). However, the training should be free to curb financial challenges, which may hinder expected attendance (Oxfam, 2017).

Literature alludes to good career progression to proper career guidance and counselling. Career education plays an important role in the career paths of children, adolescents, young adults, and older adults and helps in developing an attitude that encourages planning for one's career. Developing this kind of attitude is best done in small doses, beginning when children are in the formative stages, so that the attitudes can be personalised because career education is life education. The skills needed to make meaningful career choices are those needed to make meaningful life choices; that is why the process is referred to as career-life planning (Super, 2010).

It is also suggested that efforts and measures should be developed and implemented by both NGOs and the government to create awareness of the effects of child labour, particularly illegal mining (Makoro, 2013). Public seminars to sensitise people on the rights and responsibilities of children are quintessential. Parents should assume their roles of primary caregivers and raise their children uprightly. They should desist from shelving their responsibilities and being dependent on their children as a source of income (UN, 2015). Community members and leaders should be actively involved in protecting their children. They should stop being nonchalant and drop the laissez-faire attitude of passive observers towards these harmful activities perpetrated by local children. Children

are a great resource and must be nurtured by the whole community (WHO, 2019). As the saying goes, "it takes a village to raise a child," meaning every community member must play an active role in ensuring this scourge is eradicated.

4. Research Methodology

An interpretive paradigm was adopted for this study. According to Myers (1997), interpretivist paradigm involves access to reality through social systems, including symbols, ideas and values. To understand a social phenomenon, it is essential to rely on the experiences of the subjects under study (Myers, 1997). It is through this paradigm that the researcher sought to understand the experience of adolescents who are involved in artisanal mining. A qualitative research approach was used for the collection and analysis of data. Willing (2001) argues that qualitative research usually focuses on the meaning of and how people make sense of the world. The method also allowed the researcher to probe further to get detailed information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Charmaz (2011) adds that qualitative research provides researchers with room for flexibility in the conduct of a particular study to facilitate the examination of sensitive or complex topics. Qualitative research gives room for cross-case comparison and analysis, which also helps validate data (Best & Kahn, 2006). Phenomenology research design was adopted in this research. This research design describes things in the world people live in (Cresswell, 2013). Giorgi (2009) notes that phenomenological research gives room to explicit and implicit information and verbatim quotations, as indicated in the data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Hence, the research design was relevant in examining the experiences, views and impact of adolescents involved in artisanal mining.

A total of twenty-one (21) participants were purposively selected and took part in the study willingly. These were six (6) teachers and fifteen (15) learners from the three selected schools in Imbizo district, Bulawayo province in Zimbabwe. Six qualified teachers comprised three (3) males and three (3) females. Their ages ranged from thirty-six (36) to forty-four (44) years. Teachers were considered for the study as they spent more time with adolescents in school and also played a parental role to the learners; hence, they could provide relevant information for the study. Years of experience ranged from six (6) to fourteen (14) years in teaching. The level of education ranged from diploma to degree level. The fifteen (15) adolescents were composed of eight (8) female and seven (7) male participants. Their ages ranged from fourteen (14) to twenty (20) years. The level of education ranged from grade six (6) to form four (4). The adolescents were selected based on their concurrent exposure to school and involvement in artisanal mining. The interviews and focus groups were used for data collection. The interviewed participants were school children coded as T1 to T15, while the focus group participants were teachers, coded as F1 up to F6. Thematic analysis is suitable for qualitative data analysis; hence it was employed throughout the study for data processing (Kumar & Chakraborty, 2016). The researcher transcribed the recordings from focus group discussions and interviews conducted in Ndebele to English so that working with data could be easy. Pseudonyms were used to present the views of participants, followed by a clear analysis by the researcher.

4.1 Ethical Considerations

The research ethics were considered and upheld throughout the study. We first got authority from the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province Research department. Further approval was sought from the Imbizo district school inspector. The participants were not coerced or manipulated in any way, but they participated in the study of their own volition. The consent for children was obtained from their parents or guardians who signed consent forms. Children were given assent forms, which the researcher explained before they signed. To ensure confidentiality, the voice recordings were not divulged, names and personal information of respondents were not captured, but numbers were used as codes during data collection to promote anonymity. They were further told that they were free to withdraw from being part of the study at any moment. To promote the welfare of participants as a major goal, the research minimised any harm by avoiding the use of interview questions which could cause unpleasant feelings or any uncomfortable memories. Research integrity was adhered to through the honestly stated research goals, methods, and findings.

4.2. Demographic characteristics of the participants

The below table 1 and 2 contain the demographic representation of participants. Table 1 detailed the teachers who participated in the study, and table 2 described the learners who participated in the study.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

Participant	Academic Qualifications	Professional Qualifications	Work Experience	Gender	Age
f1	O'Level	Diploma in Education	6 years	Female	39
f2	O'Level	Diploma in Education	12 years	Male	41
f3	A'Level	Degree in Mathematics	8 years	Female	38
f4	A'Level	Degree in Economics	7 years	Male	44
f5	O'Level	Diploma in Special Education	9 years	Female	37
f6	A'Level	Degree in English	14 years	Male	36

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	School	Level of Education
T1	Female	15	A	Grade 7
T2	Female	16	A	Grade 6
T3	Female	16	A	Grade 7
T4	Male	15	A	Grade 6
T5	Male	14	A	Grade 6
T6	Female	19	B	Form 4
T7	Female	17	B	Form 3
T8	Male	20	B	Form 4
T9	Male	18	B	Form 3
T10	Male	18	B	Form 4
T11	Female	14	C	Grade 6
T12	Female	16	C	Grade 7
T13	Female	14	C	Grade 7
T14	Male	15	C	Grade 6
T15	Male	15	C	Grade 7

5. Presentation of Data and Discussion of Findings

Three main themes emerged from the data, including causes of children's involvement in artisanal mining, the impact of artisanal mining on the career progression of adolescents and suggested intervention measures to shape the positive career progression of adolescents. Sub-themes emerged from the main themes.

5.1 Theme derived from research question 1: Causes of child involvement in artisanal mining

The first research objective sought to identify the causes of child involvement in artisanal mining. Different views were drawn from the participants and in-depth interviews revealed the following themes.

5.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Society and poverty

Nine (9) participants from interviews and four (4) from the focus group indicated that people influenced the children within their social environment to partake in artisanal mining. This was shown by one of the responses from the participants who indicated that:

T7 *“My mother makes a living through mining activities and she used to go with me just to take care of my little sister. One day, I found myself involved in carrying smaller quantities of stones from one point to another.....and that’s how it all began.”*

T4 *“u aunt wami wayengicela ukuthi ngimphelekezele kwesinye isikhathi, sooo lami ngangikholisa nje ukuhamba laye, ngibona abantu besebenza ngaze ngacina lami sengisebenza”(My aunt would ask me to accompany her to the mines and I enjoyed watching people work until I finally got involved).*

Members of the society play an influential role in coercing children’s involvement in mining, including parents, friends, neighbours and relatives. People who are closely connected with children have the capability to shape their behaviour. This is in line with Bandura (2010) who revealed that social learning occurs when one observes what others are doing and then imitates that behavior, hence impacting adolescents taking artisanal mining. This agrees with Newman (2017), who indicated that society influences a child's behaviour. Therefore, anyone in society can influence a child's involvement in artisanal mining, whether it be friends, parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours or peers.

Most participants indicated that poor socio-economic conditions lead children to activities that may help provide their basic needs. This was shown by some of the responses, which implied that:

T8 *“ngangiswele imali yeskolo, abazali labo kubasinda ngasengisithi lami ngibancedise ezintweni ezinjengokudla lokunye.” (I did not have money for school fees. My parents struggled to pay for me, so I decided to help support my family in buying food stuff and more).*

F4 *“Poverty is the major driver in mining. The children prefer to engage in artisanal mining to sustain personal and family needs, such as food, clothes and more.”*

From the above excerpts, it is clear that parents' unemployment affected children to the extent that they find ways to provide basic needs for themselves and their families. These findings agree with Hilson (2016) who stated that children in poverty-stricken environments indulged in illegal activities to obtain funds to access education their parents could not afford. In this regard, if poverty is not eliminated, child mining may be difficult to eradicate. According to the United Nations declaration, one of the fundamental human rights of children is access to education; hence it is saddening to see the lengths children have to go to acquire education let alone good quality education.

5.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Alcohol and drug abuse

Findings from this research also indicated that adolescents engage in drug and alcohol use which finally drags them to mining activities. Fifteen (15) participants mentioned the use of drugs and alcohol among children. This is shown by the responses that said:

T3 *“Abantu bayabe bezdingela imali yotshwala eskorokoseni” (People need money to buy drugs and alcohol).*

F3 *“Bayabe bedinga imali yembanje lotshwala ngoba bathanda ukuhlala bedakiwe vele. Bona kubo utshwala yinto enhle, ababoni lokuthi kuyalimaza ende kuyadanisa.... Kuyadanisa kakhulu” (They need money to buy these illegal drugs because they want to always be drunk and to them, alcohol is a good thing. They don’t even realise what it does to them. It’s so sad, yah it’s so sad).*

Thus, adolescents' urge to take drugs and alcohol may help them forget their problems, but the lasting health effects may negatively affect their career choice and advancement, especially if they become addicts. When that happens, society will treat them as outcasts, and no one would want to employ a drug addict as their perception of the world may be questionable under the influence of drugs. These findings align with Chikoko et al. (2016), who indicated that the habit is risky and exposes children to more health dangers due to addictions from smaller doses of alcohol, inhalants and marijuana, among others. Furthermore, findings agree with Bryceson (2016), who alluded that drug use among the 18 to 24 age group is rampant and affects their sense of judgement.

5.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Child-headed families

Child-headed families were brought to the fore as the chief cause of child involvement in artisanal mining. Some participants pointed out that:

T2 *“kuyabe kumele ngibone ukuthi abanawami badlile, bagqokile lani lani ngoba bathembe mina, ngingahlala singalamba”* (I have to make sure that my siblings get food, clothes and more because they all depend on me, so if I play a passive role, hunger may kill us.)

F1 *“These children are justified ngoba at the end of the day kumele bazbonele ukuthi badlile and okunye ababuya bekugqokile sooo, kuyathinta. Thina eskolo sethu syabadobhela okokuqoka kuma lost and found uniforms asehlale kakhulu”* (They fend for themselves in terms of food and clothing. Their uniforms are so touching to look at. In our school, we end up distributing to them the neglected lost and found uniforms.)

From the participant's view, the death of parents increased to orphaned children. These children are left to care for their siblings. To do so, they have to partake in mining. The outcome of the research revealed that child-headed families were a major driver of artisanal mining as children are left to fend for their siblings. This is accordance to Phiri (2009), who connoted that responsibilities burden children who finally resort to mining.

5.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Adventure and COVID-19 outbreak

Adventure was pointed as a drive to children's involvement in mining. The participants had this to say:

T11 *“mina ngang'kholisa nje indlela abenza ngayo imali.... Kuyaziwa vele ukuthi ikorokoza lilenyuku. Khona nje kuyachaza nje just eqinisweni ziyawa lapha”* (I used to enjoy how these people make money and it's known that they have money. It's a good place to be, there is much fun).

From the above excerpt, some children are adventurous. They do some of these activities merely for exploration. Super (2010) indicated that adolescence is a time of turmoil and children are vulnerable to negative influences as they fight to develop value systems. Therefore, some behavioural traits displayed by adolescents had nothing to do with the socio-economic only but other contributory influences.

Many problems have been attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has fueled consistent involvement in mining. Participants had this to say:

T13 *“Kungakabi le covid sasihamba nje singathola iskhathi kodwa ngendaba zama lock down sesihamba wayawaya”* (before the covid 19 outbreak, we used to go but not as frequent as now, we now go every day.)

F3 *“Ever since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been disturbed learning patterns and children are getting ample time to go and dig and of course most parents have since lost their jobs, even those who depended on diaspora are affected.”*

The views above indicate that the lockdown had created more time for mining. Children felt they had been granted time to do all mining activities. This is in line with Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (2011) which indicated that school children were driven to illegal activities due to prolonged lockdown hence worsening poverty levels. Thus, the lockdown created ample time for adolescents to explore illegal activities as they were idle.

5.2 Theme derived from research question 2: The impact of artisanal mining on career progression of adolescents

A number of sub-themes emerged from the above research question to indicate how artisanal mining had a negative impact on adolescents, reducing their chances of legibility in career development.

5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Anti-social behaviour

Several participants felt that artisanal mining was not suitable for children and had this to say:

F6 *“Abantwana abasela mbeko lenhlamba eqanjwa lapho mmm iyayangisa futhi abalandaba lokuthi ngubani oseduze. Khonale vele kuskorokoza akuhlonitshwana and abantwana laba bafuna ukubuya lobudlwangudlwangu babo eskolo” (The children lack discipline and constantly use vulgar language, which is so embarrassing and they don't care who is around them. People do not respect one another in mines and they bring the same behavior to school.*

F1 *“I have personally witnessed how they bully others and drag other children into trouble. Also, late coming to them is not an issue.”*

From the participants' views, the ill-discipline among the learners involved in artisanal mining was rampant. Other learners were not comfortable around child miners due to bullying. Reprimanding these children was a far cry from remedying disciplinary issues as a ripple effect they became a bad influence on other children. This is in agreement with Ettekal and Ladd (2015) who indicated that the low socio-economic background was a major cause of anti-social behaviour, which they believed involved aggression towards other people, destruction of property, theft and serious violations of rules and laws. Therefore, criminal behaviour stood as a stumbling block to positive career development.

5.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Poor academic performance

The participants pointed out reduced academic performance due to concurrent activities in mining and learning and one teacher had this to say:

F2 *“Mining is the major facilitating demise of academic performance. Instead of being academically minded, they become economic thinkers and that mindset is an enzyme taking morale from education. Total achievement requires total commitment. Therefore, it takes the commitment and competence of a learner to develop an interest in academics. In some cases, the valuable vessels of knowledge end up deserting the school, which is perilous to academic performance and a steady future.”*

From the above excerpt, it is clear that if one concentrated more on artisanal mining, the value of education and proper employment would slowly diminish. Handling money at a tender age had curtailed good academic performance. This is in line with Aizawa (2013), who said that fatigue in children was exhibited through poor schoolwork, reduced energy levels, lack of concentration and poor development of mental faculty of children. Therefore, child labour destroyed intellectual and mental growth, hindering career development and career path.

5.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Physical and psychological abuse

There is much exposure to abusive and traumatising environments, which has been indicated. Some of the teachers and children mentioned that:

T11 *“kuhlala kulwiwa ngale akumnandi lezinto eziyabe zibangwa zyabe zingacaci” (There is too much fighting and it is so uncomfortable. People may just fight you over petty issues)*

T7 *“Akumnandi abantu kuhlala kungumsindo ucine uzbone lawe susezindabeni, kodwa kulabanye vele abalomlomo, kuyabe kufuna nje unanzelele. (It is not easy and people always fight. At times, I find myself involved but some people can pick on you. So you have to be extra careful.)*

Based on the above views, mining environment also had traumatic events. Some of the experiences reduced their self-esteem. Anxiety was the course of daily life. Violent behavioural traits was imparted at the child's formative stages as they observed and imitated. According to research findings artisanal mining had an impact to health and safety. The information is in line with Majoko (2018), who implied that children who could not comprehend safety rules were always at risk. From the findings, artisanal mining effects ranged from physical, social and mental deterioration. This indicated the high safety risk that children were exposed to all sorts of dangers as they operated in illegal mines.

5.3 Theme derived from Research Question 3: Suggested intervention strategies to shape positive career progression of adolescents

5.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Legal provision

Most participants suggested the need to apply legal action to those who employ children. The participants further suggested that children should comprehend the consequences of being involved in illegal artisanal mining. One of them indicated that:

F2 “umthetho kumele usebenze ebantwini abaqhatsha abantwana labo abantwana bafundiswe izinto ezibophisayo lempumela yazo. Kodwa laso isigaba senzani ngakho kanti? Usobhuku yena uthini? Lo ngumthwalo womuntu wonke esigabeni ngoba abantwana ngabomuntu wonke. Nxa kuyikuswela kabadingwe bephathiswe ngokusemthethweni hayi ukugcina abantwana bengotsheketsha kuyaphumani khonapho?” (Legal action must be taken against those who employ children in mines. And those children have to be taught how illegal it is and advised again of the consequences. But also, it’s not always about children but the community; society has to shoulder such tasks as children belong to the whole society. I mean society has a role to play. Children in need must be identified at the societal level and get the necessary help. Kraal heads, what are they doing? Those are the people who need to make sure children are helped. Community leaders should remove children from the mines.)

Findings highlighted that there should be a legal provision for illegal small-scale mining to apply labour laws and policies that hinder children’s involvement in artisanal mining. This is in accordance with Mabhena (2012), who said that government and regulatory bodies should be taken to task regarding child labour and law enforcement.

5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Educational support

Educational support is necessary for the needy and the vulnerable. Provision of uniforms, school fees, books and food is a concern and participants suggested that if all learners can benefit from NGOs as well as the government, an improvement towards minimising child involvement in mines can be noted. Some of the participants said that:

F5 “Kumele abantwana laba abaswelayo bancediswe. Kababhadeletwe inhlawulo zeskolo bethengelwe impahla lezingwalo. Abanye babuya imlomo imhlophe nke ubona ukuthi akudliwanga lutho. So nxa kuvuma igovernment lama NGOs babambisane ekuncedeni abantwana laba abaswelayo ngoba abancedwayo kathesi balutshwane. Kuvele khona kuqala kwakusiba lama feeding scheme ezokolo abantwana besidla kungela hlupho. Abanikwe ukudla bahlaliseke. (Children need to get educational support from the government and non-governmental organisations in the form of uniforms, fees, stationery and food. Some come to school on an empty stomach and so far, children who are funded educationally are few. There used to be a feeding scheme back then in schools. If possible, free education and meals are a better mandate, especially for vulnerable children, who might gain contentment.

According to the participants’ views, there was a need to identify needy and vulnerable children and render the necessary support. This was in agreement with Balchin (2019), who implied that forcing artisanal mining on children could be minimised by making education free. The suggestion is also in line with UNICEF (2018), which proposed that free education promotes concentration and accessibility to education. Thus, it was imperative that the focus be shifted to education with positivity.

5.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Guidance and counselling

Teachers suggested improvements in guidance and counselling. They highlighted the need to take guidance and counselling to a better level to ensure that it is applied to school children.

F1 “abantwana kabafundiswe ngobubi balezizinto khonaphana nje beqalisa ku ECD kuze kuyefika phezulu. I Guidance and counselling kayibe yinto ephilayo lapha ezokolo ibambe ingqondo besebancane ngoba nxa sekhulile kkkkkkk aaaa abadala bathi sigoqwa sisemanzi.

(There is an arising need for guidance and counselling from as early as early childhood education (ECD) throughout the spectrum, which in this case may work to draw the attention of the learners away from such activities. So...guidance must be practical in schools for early grooming because you can't teach new tricks to an old dog.)

Guidance and counselling must involve all school children at all educational levels for children to make informed decisions and choices. The findings indicated guidance and counselling as a measure to curb child involvement in artisanal mining and to shape a positive career progression. This is also in accordance with Hiebert, Borgen and Schober (2010), who implied that counselling is required when people need to explore their views and attitudes related to career and educational opportunities, their personal level of readiness to pursue various options, their cultural and societal contexts, and the need to include others who may be important in the decision-making process for that person.

5.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Awareness raising

The community needs to be conscientised of the risks of illegal artisanal mining. Teachers suggested that people need to take up responsibility so that children can be given time to learn without disturbances. Focus group members were of the same view and some of them revealed that:

F3 "There is a need for awareness raising on the risks of this activity as they get involved. This is important as children and the community may get to know the better ways and time for making money and avoid the risky ones."

F6 "Abazali kabawazi lamalungelo abantwana (parents are unaware of children's rights), so these campaigns should include a lot about the child. This way many issues can be addressed all at once."

Awareness raising, advocacy and lobbying may change the leaders' attitudes and the community they serve. The community had to be taught about children's rights and that the responsibility to provide for children lies with the parents or guardians. This may reduce the negligence that some parents display. The suggestion is in line with (UN, 2015), who said that efforts and measures should be developed and implemented by both NGOs, government and parents to create awareness of the effects of child labour. Furthermore, the findings agree with Hiebert et al. (2010), who proposed that public seminars sensitise people on child rights and parents' responsibilities in child development.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

A number of factors were the major vehicles that drove the minors towards child involvement in artisanal mining. These causes include poor socio-economic backgrounds, the societal influence, child-headed families, the COVID-19 outbreak, and having fun. Artisanal mining has many effects, including criminal and anti-social behaviour, health and safety, and physical and psychological impact. The findings suggested that intervention strategies to shape a positive career progression of adolescents were guidance and counselling, which can help children make informed choices. School heads were encouraged to supervise and monitor guidance and counselling so that learners obtain psychological support. Legalising small-scale artisanal mining was also suggested as a way of prohibiting minors from working in mines and imposing stringent legislation to eradicate and abolish this practice. Furthermore, providing educational support to vulnerable children and awareness campaigns were also suggested to help the community, parents and guardians actively participate in their children's career development.

Recommendations to shape career development in adolescents were made based on the findings. Firstly, it is suggested that all vulnerable children's education be fully supported to maximise quality education and resources. Secondly, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is also recommended to include mining in the curriculum as a technical subject or integrated in existing subjects to pave the way for children who have aspirations in the mining sector. Furthermore, there is a need to legalise and support small-scale artisanal mining. Labour policies should promote children's rights by prohibiting child involvement in illegal mining. School heads and facilitators should provide and monitor guidance and counselling, which is more practical to enable informed decision-making towards career choice and development at the formative stages of the learner's lives. Lastly, awareness

campaigns can be made in the community so they can be aware of their responsibilities and children's rights to take active involvement in their children's career development.

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