

# Challenging masculinities? The experiences of women in artisanal gold mining: Insights from Shurugwi female gold panners

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines artisanal gold mining as an economic and livelihood strategy that was long dominated by unemployed men in Shurugwi, but which is now increasingly being joined by women. It focuses on their experiences in this field, revealing the gendered nature of the experiences of artisanal miners. To meet the objectives of the study, the researcher settled on a qualitative research methodology and employed unstructured interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and transects walks. The findings made herein show that inasmuch as the experiences of female gold panners expresses a number of challenges due to the masculine nature of gold panning, they survive, and should not, therefore, be viewed as passive recipients of the dictates of the artisanal mining field. Female artisanal miners are deploying their habitus to survive in the field of artisanal mining, and thereby dictating the everyday activities the field. This paper argues that female artisanal miners utilised various forms of capital. Therefore, they should be understood as rational actors (female gold panners) who can strategically deal with their vulnerability in the artisanal mining field.

The researcher used Bourdieu's field and habitus concepts in order to understand and explain the experiences and the nature of responses to the challenges bedeviling female gold panners in Shurugwi.

**Key words;** *artisanal mining, livelihoods, structures, capital, field and habitus.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It is indisputable that there is a continuous decline in fixed gender roles, resulting from the levels of women empowerment, gender equality and equity programmes across the world. These changes clearly portray that gender is a social construct and not a static phenomenon. This is evident in gender relations and socially defined masculine and feminine roles. Men and women in Zimbabwe and across the world are inverting socially acceptable occupations and domains for different genders. These gender role changes are attributed to a number of factors which include gender and empowerment programmes, globalization and economic factors. For example, in Zimbabwe economic calamities that have

manifested since the early 1990s after the adoption of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) and ongoing women enlightenment and empowerment programmes have a stake in the alterations of gender relations in all spheres. The prolonged economic downturn has resulted in not only women occupying masculine domains, but men assuming roles which were for a long time known as women's domains such as vending and cross border trading (Muzvidziwa, 2015). The shrinking employment opportunities in Zimbabwe led many people to resort to informal economic activities (Nyamwanza, 2010; Gukurume 2015). The promising recognition of artisanal mining attracted a number of people. Regardless of the masculine nature of the occupation, there is an increase in the number of women engaging in this field (Dreschler, 2002).

Artisanal mining refers to small-scale mining by individuals, groups, families or co-operatives with minimal or no mechanisation, often in the informal/illegal sector of the market (Hentschel, Hruschka and Priester, 2003). It is individual or collective extractive work which is characterised by small-scale, unregulated, under-capitalised and under-equipped operations, where minerals are extracted from uncertain reserves (Dreschler, 2002; Hentschel, Hruschka and Priester, 2003). Regardless of the fact that small-scale mining can lead to the unsustainable use of non-renewable resources and has negative effects on human and environmental well-being, it can empower and be a livelihood option for marginalised groups by virtue of its low investment costs and short lead time from discovery to production (Shoko, 2004). It is also important to note that artisanal mining usually produces minerals from deposits that are uneconomic on a large scale but the activity is very important for livelihood diversity especially in the mineral rich rural areas of developing countries.

Women have always lagged behind in relation to professional involvement and participation in the mining and other economic sectors. This is also the case with small-scale and artisanal mining and a number of factors explain this. Traditionally,

the development of the mining industry has given women a marginal space due to the labour intensity and risky nature of the activities in the sector. (Moyo, 2012). For example, the migrant labour system in most mineral-rich countries employed males and introduced regulations that restricted families from living together at the mines. The notorious hostel system in South Africa is one example of a structure that enhanced the marginalisation of women in the mining sector. Women remained in the rural areas and worked on the land as a deliberate ploy by the colonialists to keep mine wages low (Moyo, 2012). Women, it can be argued, subsidised mining companies and were, in turn, exploited through the use of their unpaid labour in subsistence agriculture, which in its turn subsidised mining operations. Even though the migrant labour system was dismantled with the attainment of political independence, the mining sector is still gendered in Africa (Viega, 1997). The patriarchal nature of society and the masculine nature of mining activities partnering with colonial policies of discrimination against women made it difficult for the latter to venture into mining at all scales. The pre-colonial division of labour also gave women a backstage in mining (Moyo, 2012). Finally, women had less access to education and training and did not have the skills required in the mines. This brief overview explains how women were sidelined from large-scale mining.

However, the rate of women's assimilation into small-scale mining has been witnessed at a faster pace than in large-scale mining. About 30% of the artisanal miners in the world are women and the majority are in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff, 2003; ILO, 1999; Amankwah and Anim-Sackey 2003). Most women in artisanal mining are concentrated in areas near their homes and in most cases, they are involved in mining to complement their agrarian activities (Shoko, 2004). Artisanal mining communities are diverse, dynamic and distinct and they vary with culture, space and time (Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff, 2003). Women in these communities are

also unique and play different roles. They provide labour as panners, ore carriers and processors, providers of goods and services such as cooking, shop keeping, and sex work (Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff, 2003). In rare cases, women are mine owners, buying agents, and equipment owners (Mugedeza, 1996; Amankwah and Anim-Sackey 2003).

It is essential to note that artisanal mining has been of significance in absorbing unemployed rural and marginalised groups across the globe and gold mining is one of the important livelihood strategies in many developing countries (Kitula, 2006), and especially in rural sub-Saharan countries (Andriamasinoro and Angel, 2012). The introduction of Neoliberal Structural Adjustment Policies as well as recurrent of droughts in the SADC region increased the number of people engaging in alluvial gold panning (Shoko, 2004). Economic turn down in Zimbabwe which can be attributed to poor governance, the adoption of SAPs in the early 1990s, poorly executed land reform and economic sanctions led to an increase of female-headed households as a significant number of men migrated to other countries in search of greener pastures and this exposed women to masculine activities in order to feed families (Tevera, 1999). The new millennium marked a gradual and notable increase in the number of female artisanal miners particularly in developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America (MMSD, 2001). However, the masculine nature of artisanal mining results in women having different experiences to their male counterparts.

Gender equity in artisanal mining is good for business and development as it brings sustainability and proper tricking down of the benefits which accrue to artisanal mining. Internationally, governments, mining companies, civil society organisations, and mining communities are increasingly recognising the livelihood importance of artisanal mining and its potential to spearhead local development (Spiegel, 2015). It is increasingly contributing to gross domestic product with artisanal miners'

income spent locally to supplement agriculture. Moreover, in developing countries, women form the majority in rural areas where both agriculture and small-scale artisanal mining provide the main means to earn a living (Hinton, 2009).

Artisanal gold mining is therefore at rife due to limited employment opportunities and is a livelihood activity for poor people seeking to escape poverty or to diversify their livelihoods (Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff, 2003). In this regard, women are joining artisanal mining to improve their lives. Traditionally, women in artisanal mining communities engage in activities that were different from those of men. There is, however, continuous change in the roles played by women and these bring with them different advantages and a unique set of risks for women (Hinton, Viega and Viega, 2012). Women are, nonetheless, often ignored by development initiatives and programmes directed at improving and transforming artisanal mining; for example, there are very few women who acquired mining claims from the indigenisation programme in Zimbabwe (Moyo, 2012). Regardless of the diverse and important roles undertaken by women in artisanal mining, very little research has been done to document the experiences of women in artisanal mining although the numbers of women engaging in artisanal mining have increased. Thus, there is a paucity of information on how artisanal mining is impacting the lives of women, economically, socially and physically, as well as how their experiences differ from those of men.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

There is an increase in the number of women engaging in artisanal mining due to the constraining economic environment in Zimbabwe and these women face a plethora of challenges. Males in artisanal mining face difficulties due to its labour intensive nature and the harsh general working environment (Chiwenga, 2016). Regardless of the challenges which are faced by men who are traditionally believed to be stronger than women especially in such labour intense and

risky domains women are increasingly venturing into artisanal mining. By venturing into artisanal mining, women are challenging masculinities and ignoring all the constraints in this economic activity. Women's experiences in artisanal mining are unique due to the masculine nature of artisanal gold mining. There are opportunities, challenges and complexities which are being presented to women in artisanal mining due to the nature of activities in artisanal mining. It is therefore the essence of this research to explore these experiences of women in artisanal mining and to investigate how women adopt and adapt to the masculine environment in artisanal mining.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

The study sought to investigate gender relations and explore the gendered nature of experiences in artisanal gold mining. It also analysed how women survive regardless of the constraints in artisanal mining.

### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used Pierre Bourdieu's theory of power and practise more specifically his concepts of capital, field and habitus. This theory helps us to understand the relationships in artisanal mining and how those relationships shape the experiences by women artisanal miners. Bourdieu saw the field as an arena of battle, 'The field is a field of struggles' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992,101). It is the structure of the field that both 'undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position, and to impose the principle of hierarchisation most favourable to their own products' (Bourdieu, cited in Wacquant, 1989, 40). In this study, the field is a field of struggle between women artisanal miners, masculine structures and the nature of artisanal mining. Women are employing and deploying different strategies to improve their position in the field of artisanal mining. Their strategies are rooted in their habitus. The field is a type of competitive market place in which various

kinds of capitals (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) are employed and deployed. However, it is the field of power (of politics) that is of the utmost importance; the hierarchy of power relationships within the political field serves to structure all the other fields. This thereby creates a tense environment for female artisanal miners and impedes them from accruing the actual benefits due to power relations which are found in the field of artisanal mining. To cope with the challenges they face women deploy and employ different kinds of capital which is rooted in their habitus. The habitus reflects objective divisions in the class structure, such as age groups, genders, and social classes (Ritzer, 2008). Habitus means '*systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures*' (Bourdieu, 1980, 53). In simple terms these are 'habits' acquired from professions and social situations that enable actors to influence, and interact with the processes, tools and resources in a given structure. A habitus is acquired as a result of long-term occupation of a position within the social world and women have occupied an inferior position for a long time in artisanal mining. Thus habitus varies depending on the nature of one's position in that world and those who occupy the same position tend to have similar habitus. In this case, women artisanal miners have a similar habitus which is enhancing unity in their counter-hegemonic struggles in challenging masculinities and improving their position in artisanal mining.

The positions of various agents in the field are determined by the amount and relative weight of the capital they possess (Ritzer, 2008). It is capital that allows one to control one's own fate as well as the fate of others. Women in artisanal mining use different capitals to control their fate in the field of artisanal mining. Bourdieu usually discussed four types of capital; economic capital, social capital, symbolic and the 'popular' economic capital (Bourdieu, 1994). This idea is, of course, drawn from the economic sphere (Ritzer, 2008), and the meaning of *economic capital* is obvious. *Cultural*

*capital* “comprises familiarity with and easy use of cultural forms institutionalized at the apex of society’s cultural hierarchy” (ibid). *Social capital* consists of valued social relations between people. *Symbolic capital* stems from one’s honor and prestige. symbolic capital brings symbolic power which accounts for the tacit, almost unconscious modes of cultural/social domination occurring within the everyday social habits maintained over conscious subjects. Those with symbolic power has the capacity to exercise symbolic violence which is gentle, invisible, pervasive violence that is exercised through cognition and misrecognition, knowledge and sentiment, often with the unwitting consent or complicity of the dominated.

## 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Having realised that the phenomena under study required a methodology that explores the voices, experiences and practices of all the relevant social actors, the researcher settled for a largely qualitative research paradigm due to its capacity to capture the voices, feelings and values of the research participants within their own frames of reference or social setting, which was in line with the objectives of the study (see Best, 1993). The flexibility of the methodology used enabled the researcher to probe deeply into the experiences of female artisanal gold miners in Shurugwi and to capture the voices of the participants through in-depth unstructured interviews. Qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to employ key informant interviews, unstructured interviews, observation, and transect walks as fundamental data collection techniques. Qualitative inquiry enabled the interaction of the researcher and the participants (female gold panners) leading the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding as possible on the phenomena under study.

## 6 DATA COLLECTION

### 6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured or in-depth interviews were

employed in collecting data from female artisanal miners in groups and from key informants. These are one to one interviews where the interviewer gains a lot from discussing issues with the interviewee with questions developing from the views of respondents but in line with the topic being studied (de Vos et al 2014). Thus this researcher was able to explore and probe into issues which needed clarification. Babbie and Mouton (2006) also explain during in-depth unstructured interviews the astute researcher can learn from unspoken words, non-verbal cues and from the environment. However, there is no a data collecting tool which is flawless and for this reason, the researcher triangulated semi-structured interviews with focus group discussions and transect walks (see Babbie and Mouton, 2006) to complement what he understood from the in-depth interviews.

### 6.2 Focus group discussions

The researcher also used focus group discussions to interview groups in the field. In most cases artisanal miners work in small groups and the researcher capitalised on these. The focus groups ranged from six to 12 women and the researcher conducted five focus group discussions. According to de Vos, et al (2014) focus group discussions are a means to better understanding of how people view their situation. The researcher created a conducive environment that encouraged all people to express their experiences, feelings and thoughts freely.

### 6.3 Key Informants interviews

The researcher also utilised key informant interviews. Such interviews involve those respondents with knowledge and personal experience of the research area studied (de Vos et al, 2014). In this case, the researcher collected information from senior female artisanal miners and female claim owners who were identified through ‘snowballing’. Key informants provided information based on their experience in artisanal mining over a long period of time.

## 6.4 Transect Walks

Transect walks as defined by Best (1993) are observation and spatial data gathering tools taken around a community to observe people, surrounding, resources, environments, etc. The technique was used to observe the environments in which the artisanal miners operate. This helped the researcher to identify some of the challenges that are faced by artisanal miners as well as coping strategies.

## 6.5 Sampling techniques

After considering the footloose nature of artisanal miners and the nature of their activities, the researcher settled largely for snowball sampling, where some mining groups led him to others. Snowball sampling is often used to find respondents in covert operations as it is useful in the identification of hard-to-reach individuals (de Vos et al, 2014). Snowball technique is used when there is no appropriate knowledge about participants for the intended study (see de Vos et al, 2014). This technique was used in finding different mining points, which could not be done without the assistance of experienced artisanal miners.

## 7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In social research, we may interact with a complicated or demanding socio-political environment and this can influence our research. Research should therefore be based on mutual trust, acceptance, co-operation, promises kept and well-accepted conventions and expectations between all parties involved (Bergely, 2008). This researcher observed the following ethical principles,

- Observing and respecting gatekeepers in the process of the research, The researcher asked permission from the local Chief as well as ward councillors before undertaking his research.
- Informed consent. The researcher informed key informants and people in focus groups

of the nature of the research and the reasons why he was undertaking it. He further informed participants that their participation was voluntary and they were allowed to withdraw from the research whenever they felt inclined to do so.

- Privacy and confidentiality were also assured and ensured. Research findings were presented using pseudonyms to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

## 8 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

In this section the findings are presented thematically with themes drawn from the objectives of the study.

### 8.1 Challenges which are faced by women in artisanal gold mining in Shurugwi

There are a complex range of challenges faced by women which impede them from realising the benefits arising from artisanal mining. This section explores these challenges in artisanal gold mining in Shurugwi.

### 8.2 Gender relations in gold panning in Shurugwi.

The research revealed that the inequitable gender relations in artisanal gold mining in Shurugwi are hindering women from realising the benefits that accrue from such mining. First, the gold panning environment is highly masculine and women face hurdles due to the masculine nature of these activities. For example, Martha (not her real name), a female gold panner, told us that there is extreme violence in gold panning and women are easy targets of violent acts by male gold panners. Family break-ups also occur with females divorcing husbands who try to control money and gold which they get from artisanal mining. It was established that husbands often claim that it is not socially acceptable for women to be found in artisanal mining. Consequently, most women in artisanal mining are single. However, there are

cases when males and females in artisanal gold mining were working together amicably with clear division of labour with women undertaking feminine duties like cooking for the men and fetching water. Tendai (not her real name) a 26-year-old female artisanal miner stated that they interacted like brothers and sisters with their male counterparts. Through transect walks the researcher observed that the nature of jobs and working conditions in artisanal mining were far from being enabling for female gold panners. In some cases one was supposed to walk for kilometres carrying heavy bags of soil and stones looking for water where they can separate gold from the soil.

### **8.3 Sexual harassment and abuse in mines**

It was also revealed that due to difficult gender relations in artisanal mining, women are victims of sexual violence and abuse, which is more prevalent in remote areas out of easy reach by the police. From discussion with female gold panners in a focus group it was clear that rape cases occurred more often in remote mining areas than elsewhere and women usually avoided these areas even when they contained more gold. Jossie (not her real name), a female gold panner, pointed out that there is high prevalence of sexual, verbal and emotional violence in artisanal gold mining. She further said that many rape cases occur, but they usually go unreported because most miners operate illegally and there are no law enforcement agents in the areas where they operate. Female gold panners agreed that they had witnessed about three cases of rape in the previous year and only one case was properly prosecuted. It was revealed that there are some areas which are dangerous for women to walk alone.

It was revealed through a focus group discussion that *makororokoza* (informal gold panners) take advantage of the women with whom they work and have sex with them whenever they want to do so. These women do not resist as they will be seeking security and favours in return. What is

worse is the scarcity of women in gold panning which results in more gold panners having sex with a single woman (Focus group Discussion 3). One of the participants in the focus group discussion also stated that women are soft targets for violence in the gold panning areas and they are not only victims of sexual violence but also of physical violence. The latter can occur when women panners find gold and do not have a syndicate of vigilant males to protect them.

The multi-sexual relations by gold panners expose the majority to HIV/AIDS and STIs. Most of the latter are not treated in clinics, as most gold panners claim that they know herbs (*maguchu*) to cure them. Gold panners live in the bush and their flimsy shelters are not desirable, particularly for women. This increases their chances of women being victims of sexual violence since they do not have secure shelter. Gold panners often assume that women who take up gold panning are free to offer sex in exchange for any favours. Finally, we learned that not all sexual relations in artisanal mining are a result of rape cases but some women work as sex workers on the artisanal mines; this was said to be increasing the cases of STIs among artisanal miners in Shurugwi.

### **8.4 Marginalisation of women by structures that undergirds artisanal mining**

It was noted by the researcher that there are no structures which take into account the cultural gender relations in artisanal mining. There is no effective law enforcement to cater for women who are victimised sexually and physically. Rather women are marginalised and not given a voice.

We should also note that very few women benefited from the indigenisation policy. From 20 small-scale mines which were visited by the researcher, only three were owned by women, though most were beneficiaries of the indigenisation policy. Thus the gendered nature of the policy became apparent.

## 8.5 STRATEGIES BY FEMALE GOLD PANNERS IN SHURUGWI TO IMPROVE THEIR POSITION IN ARTISANAL MINING

In response to the challenges being faced by women in artisanal mining, women in Shurugwi are employing and deploying a number of strategies to counter these challenges.

Women in artisanal mining are victims of sexual violence and as a way of coping, they tend to 'tolerate' predatory male behaviour in order to avoid violence. This portrays the rationality in women in artisanal mining as they seek to improve their condition. It was pointed out by Maggie (not her real name), a female gold panner, that the only way to reduce violence in artisanal mining is through the exchange of sexual favours with protection and help in carrying out labour intense duties. Women told us that they may have more than five boyfriends to cater for their own different needs in artisanal mining. It was clear from the discussions with female gold panners that they are not concerned with the spread of STIs, since they have unprotected sexual intercourse with all the men they would be in a relationship with due to lack of access to reproductive health services in the areas they will be working in. It also became clear that women in artisanal mining are more like sex workers, since their main duty is to fulfil the sexual needs of men in return for protection, labour, and money. In cases of rape, women report to the men who protect them. They may lie or may exaggerate the violation in order to expose the perpetrator to punishment by her 'protectors'. By informing on the violation, she also protects her own relationship with her protector, for if he (or they) were to discover that she had betrayed her fidelity to him (or them), she would lose their protection.

We also learned that not all women who respond to the challenges in artisanal mining by the aforementioned means. Some women pointed out that they find men they can trust and they work in groups with those men. They pointed

out that they undertake the female duties like cooking, fetching water and they work in small cooperatives with men thereby creating a form of specialisation. Some were even and could fight men. In discussion with Mai Timo (not her real name), a female gold panner she stated that men and women are both capable of violence.

Some women are very successful in artisanal mining and are improving their social positions from their remittances, and are able to send their children to school up to O-level. About 5% of the participants pointed out that they managed to escape poverty through artisanal mining. Mai Chido (not her real name) began a tuck-shop from the money she earned from gold panning. Nonetheless most women who are successful in artisanal mining work in syndicates with men.

## 9 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section the findings are discussed in line with Bourdieu's theory of practice, mainly his concepts of field and habitus, and related literature.

Female gold panners are working in a field that is not enabling, but their economic situations force them to stay within it. Artisanal mining is dominated by masculine traditions and structures and women continuously face challenges in this livelihood strategy which largely masculine (labour intense and violent). Ritzer (2008) quotes Bourdieu defining the field as, 'A space in which a game takes place, a field of objective relations between individuals or institutions who are competing for the same stake.' In artisanal mining women are competing with males to improve their livelihoods and realise the benefits which accrue to artisanal mining. Masculine structures which dominate the field of artisanal mining dominate and perpetuate violence against women. Women are being victimised physically and sexually by dominant male groups in gold panning. The habitus which was acquired by male gold panners causes them to employ violence and this culture is deployed against women to their disadvantage, as outlined above. In line with this, Machipisa (1997)

drew our attention to the extreme violence against women in artisanal mining in Tanzania. He pointed out that the development of the Tanzanian Mining Women Association arose against this backdrop (ibid). Viega (1997) also revealed how sex workers in the field of artisanal mining are victimised and left without being paid by artisanal miners in Latin America. This spells out a common habitus of artisanal miners that perpetuates violence against women and undermines their efforts to achieve a better life by working as artisanal miners.

There are more cases of divorce among female artisanal miners who are abandoned by their husbands. The latter feel threatened by their wives who have challenged traditional patriarchal concepts of masculinity that allow a husband to control his wife. In his study of female cross-border traders, Dube (2012) discovered that males deploy symbolic violence against women whom they consider too independent. The same scenario is being witnessed in Shurugwi by female gold panners where their husbands are using their symbolic power to try and control and control women and the benefits they get from artisanal mining. This is in some cases resulting in family break-ups, and gender-based violence in artisanal mining as women may resist the control mechanisms which will be imposed by men. It is evident that in the field of artisanal mining, a hierarchy of power relationships exists and serves to structure experiences in the field with men enjoying the benefits in acquired from artisanal mining more than women since they have the symbolic power which is reinforced by the patriarchal values which are maintained in artisanal mining. Women who challenge these structures are discriminated against through violence, threats and lack of security as they may not find male syndicates to work with. Those who survive often do so by submitting to male norms, a male hierarchy, male sexual demands, and by being constrained to male-defined female occupations that service men, such as cooking and cleaning. Benya (2016) clearly portrayed how the presence of women in mining has served to

transform mining, or to reinforce the historically dominant masculine occupational culture in the mines. Benya pointed how women position themselves to ensure that they survive in the masculine artisanal mining environment. Which concurs with the findings in this research which reveals the contests which are inherent due to the increased visibility of women in artisanal mining.

On the other hand, we perceived that women deploy strategies to cope with the constraining masculinities in artisanal mining, which are rooted in their habitus and capitals they possess. Women are employing different forms of capital to shape and reshape their experiences in the field, which is gender biased. This is helping women to strategically position themselves and improve their position in the field of artisanal mining. Habitus reflects objective internalised divisions defined by age, gender, class and social position (Ritzer, 2008). Women internalised their feminine positions in society which were impacted in them through socialisation and they are these very feminine behaviours and capacities or incapacities which are dictating their position in artisanal mining. Habitus is acquired as a result of long-term occupation of a position within the social world and women have occupied an inferior position in society due to patriarchal structures in society and this is further impacting on their position in in artisanal mining. However, female gold panners use erotic capital to lure males to work for them or to accommodate them in artisanal mining. This is enhancing their accommodation in artisanal mining for example some women have more than five boyfriends to provide them with security and other needs in the field. This is in line with the views of Rugaranganda (2008) who pointed out that genitals are assets. In artisanal mining it is used by female gold panners as capital to enhance their positions and to effectively challenge masculinities. Gukurume (2011) refer to this as erotic capital which is a form of capital based on a valued form of sexuality. They employ and deploy erotic capital to cater for the challenges they face in artisanal mining. In this research it was pointed

out that some women use erotic capital to influence other men to protect other men. Some women are becoming successful in artisanal mining due to their capacity of employing erotic capital and to work with their male counterparts harmoniously.

Risky sexual behaviour appears habitual among artisanal miners and female artisanal miners regardless of the dangers this poses to their health through STIs and HIV and AIDS. Indeed, miners have long been known for transmitting STIs even during the colonial period. Such habitual behaviour is in line with Bourdieu (1987) who explained that habitus, is a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organising principles of action. ZIMSTATS (2010) ranked Shurugwi as second to Beitbridge in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and this can be attributed to activities of artisanal miners.<sup>1</sup>

## 10 CONCLUSION

This research explored various challenges which are faced by women in their bid to challenge masculinities in artisanal mining in Shurugwi. Artisanal mining offers an alternative livelihood strategy in Zimbabwe, a country with very high formal unemployment. However, the structures within artisanal mining are clearly gendered and biased against women. Nonetheless, female artisanal miners in Shurugwi employ different strategies to counter the constraining environment and masculinities in the field of artisanal mining which are rooted within their habitus and capitals. Some women are successful and they have improved their position through artisanal mining, but they are few in number. Artisanal gold mining is certainly not an ideal place for women but limited livelihood options have meant that some women have no option but to attempt it.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is dedicated to my parents. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Mr O. T Nyamwanza and Ish Bhila.

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