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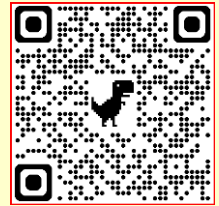
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## Chasing promises, facing realities: Women's perspectives on family members' migration to lithium mines in Goromonzi, Mashonaland East, Zimbabwe

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper explored women's perspectives on family members' migration to lithium mines in Goromonzi. The study answered the conceptual research question using a literature review. Gender role theory was utilised to unpack the key motives behind the migration of family members to lithium mining sites in Goromonzi. Qualitative research methodology rooted in the vessels of interpretative research paradigm was ensured, encompassed with a phenomenological research design to aid in giving the realistic context. The study complementarily linear snowballing and expert sampling to solicit the right population. Ethical considerations guided by anonymity and confidentiality were applied. Data from the participants was collected through the use of in-depth interviews and key informant interview methods. Trustworthiness was ensured to check the rigour and positionality was also anticipated. Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis was conducted, characterizing conceptualizing reasons for family members' migration central to financial gain, career advancement and escape from responsibilities. The study directly implied the utility of community work and developmental Social Work in enhancing women in lithium mining communities. Recommendations were proffered to the key authorities based on findings: sustainable employment creation, career development programs, community recognition programs, family support mechanisms, youth engagement and empowerment as well as community-centred approaches towards training settings.*

**KEY WORDS:** Chasing, realities, women, family, migration and lithium

## Introduction

The veracity of migration's promises remains uncertain for many women left behind in Goromonzi, as family members venture into lithium mining in search of economic stability. While migration is often viewed as a pathway to prosperity, the realities faced by those who remain tell a more complex story. Migration in search of greener pastures has long been a defining feature of livelihood strategies, yet its impact on families, particularly from women's perspectives, remains underexplored. The boom in lithium mining has triggered a surge in labour migration, with family members, mostly men, leaving home in pursuit of financial stability. While this migration is often seen as a vehicle for economic empowerment, women left behind face a dual reality one shaped by both promises of improved livelihoods and the stark challenges of separation, increased household burdens, and social vulnerabilities. Migration can result in financial remittances that improve household income, but it can also lead to emotional strain, disrupted parenting structures, and shifting gender roles. The absence of male providers often places women in complex roles as both caregivers and economic actors, sometimes fostering greater independence but also exposing them to financial instability and social isolation. In Zimbabwe, where mining communities are characterised by precarious labour conditions and fluctuating incomes (Kamete, 2021), the anticipated benefits of migration may not always materialize as expected, leaving families in a cycle of uncertainty. Therefore, it is the core mandate of this study to unpack the women's perspectives on family migration to lithium mines, interrogating whether migration truly fulfils its promises or if the realities they face outweigh the expected gains.

## Background

Migration has been happening across the world for hundreds, if not thousands of years. People move from one place to another due to war, persecution, seeking better opportunities, unemployment and the need for career advancement, just to mention a few. The migration of individuals might yield repercussions for both their former location and their new domicile. The repercussions may be economic, social, political, and demographic. The migration to mining regions is influenced by country-specific economic necessities and governmental frameworks. Bell and Jayne (2014) demonstrate that in Canada mining activities in areas such as British Columbia and Alberta induce significant internal migration owing to enhanced income opportunities and regional infrastructure developments. Deller et al. (2011) report that mining booms in remote areas of Australia, particularly Western Australia, draw workers from rural regions due to competitive salaries and government incentives, as substantiated by regional labour market analysis. Scanlan and McNabb (2015) assert that mining enterprises in resource-abundant regions of New Zealand, such as Otago and the West Coast, stimulate internal migration due to enhanced employment prospects and economic advantages. Ferreyra (2012) indicates that in Argentina, provinces rich in mineral deposits, like San Juan, witness migration from impoverished rural populations in pursuit of improved economic prospects. Silva and Monteiro (2013) illustrate that in Brazil, the mining sector in states such as Minas Gerais attracts labour migration due to substantial job creation and salary disparities, variables further enhanced by regional development plans.

In South Africa, past labour recruitment in mining regions like Gauteng and the North West was mostly driven by substantial salary differentials and the persistent influence of apartheid-era labour practices (Hugo, 2004). Ngoma (2013) illustrates that the Copperbelt

region in Zambia draws significant rural migration owing to attractive earnings and the prospect of enhanced living conditions, with migration trends closely associated with the availability of mining employment. Chigunta (2017) indicates that mining activities in the Midlands of Zimbabwe persist in attracting migrants from rural regions, motivated by economic prospects in both conventional mining and developing mineral industries. Moyo and Ndebele (2015) present empirical evidence that mining activities in Namibia, particularly in Erongo, promote internal migration due to salary incentives, improved infrastructure, and favourable local policies that provide alternatives to subsistence agriculture.

The migration to mining sites in Zimbabwe is driven by both push and pull factors. Push factors encompass economic difficulties, unemployment, and political instability in native countries, driving families to pursue improved livelihoods abroad. These issues are particularly pronounced in rural regions where conventional livelihoods such as agriculture may be inadequate to support families. Pull influences include the prospect of job possibilities, enhanced earnings, and superior living conditions linked to mining activities, which draw both skilled and unskilled labour (World Bank, 2020). A multitude of persons relocate to mining regions in pursuit of enhanced opportunities, a phenomenon seen in the burgeoning mining hubs of Zimbabwe. This movement may result in negative outcomes. The abrupt surge of residents into mining regions frequently leads to insufficient housing, strained public services, and environmental deterioration. The Marange diamond fields underwent a swift population surge, resulting in considerable socioeconomic and environmental issues (Chitongo & Maposa, 2017). Likewise, in regions such as Shamva and Kwekwe, swift migration to gold mining locations has exerted significant strain on local resources, resulting in overcrowding and environmental issues (Mufandaedza, 2018). The proliferation of mining operations in these regions has resulted in the disturbance of local ecosystems and insufficient access to healthcare and education. Nonetheless, the Zimbabwean government has undertaken many initiatives to address migration problems, including the regulation of the mining sector via the Mines and Minerals Act and the promotion of community development programs. The government has collaborated with international organisations to enhance housing and public services in mining towns (Chidoko, 2020). The Zimbabwe National Human Settlement Policy (2020) seeks to mitigate the inflow of individuals into mining regions through enhanced planning and infrastructure development. Therefore, it is against this background to unpack the perspectives towards the migration of family members to mining sites.

## Literature Review

### Global Overview

The migration to mining regions is a notable global occurrence driven by a confluence of economic prospects, socio-political dynamics, and environmental issues. Numerous families from economically disadvantaged areas relocate to mining sites in pursuit of improved livelihoods, job prospects, and access to essential services. Research indicates that migration to mining regions is frequently driven by the prospect of enhanced pay and superior living conditions. In Peru, families relocate to the gold mining regions of Madre de Dios, motivated by the economic opportunities presented by the mining industry (Lindhjem, 2017). Likewise, in nations like Australia, families have been relocating to mining centres such as the Witwatersrand region, which has historically drawn migrants in pursuit of employment in the mining sector (Mabin & Smit, 2017). Migration patterns are also evident in nations

such as Indonesia and Brazil, where gold and coal mining have attracted entire communities to urban mining towns, notwithstanding environmental and socio-economic constraints (Bebbington & Bebbington, 2018). Nonetheless, this worldwide tendency also entails considerable repercussions. Families migrating to mining areas frequently encounter overcrowded living conditions, insufficient infrastructure, and exposure to environmental risks. The influx of individuals can burden local economies and resources, resulting in increased social tensions and competition for scarce services (Bebbington & Bury, 2016). Comparative studies highlight the necessity for improved governance frameworks that reconcile the economic advantages of mining with the socio-economic requirements of migrating families (Bebbington et al., 2018). Government regulations and international standards designed to promote sustainable mining practices have been suggested to alleviate the negative impacts of growing urbanisation at mining locations.

### Regional Overview

The migration to mining towns and cities is rapidly straining middle-income countries, as it has been extensively recorded as a significant socio-economic phenomenon, with families relocating in pursuit of improved livelihoods. In Brazil, mining towns like Carajás have undergone significant population increases due to an inflow of migrants drawn by work opportunities in the mining sector (Sousa et al., 2020). In South America, mining communities have experienced a rising influx of families pursuing improved living conditions and employment stability in the mining industry (Mabin & Smit, 2017). The migration trends indicate a broader trend across middle-income countries in Latin America, where mining endeavours frequently offer economic prospects while simultaneously presenting issues associated with urbanisation and social integration (Bebbington & Bury, 2016). Notwithstanding the favourable economic outlook, families relocating to these mining towns frequently contend with insufficient housing, substandard infrastructure, and environmental deterioration, especially when mining activities are inadequately managed. In nations like Peru and Colombia, migration to mining areas has been characterised by conflicts among local people, migrants, and the mining sector (Sánchez et al., 2019).

Migration to mining sites constitutes a notable social and economic phenomenon in Southern Africa, especially in nations such as South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. Mining centres in South Africa, notably Johannesburg and Rustenburg, have historically drawn migrant labour, prompting entire families to relocate to these regions in pursuit of opportunity (Mabin & Smit, 2017). In Botswana, the migration of families to diamond mining towns illustrates the increasing demand for labour in the mining industry. The allure of permanent jobs draws families, although these regions frequently encounter issues about insufficient infrastructure and housing, resulting in congested informal settlements (Chanda, 2019). The inflow of families into mining towns in Namibia highlights the intricate aspects of rural-to-urban migration, as families pursue opportunities in the burgeoning mining sector (Chikozho, 2019). In these Southern African nations, the migration of families to mining regions serves as a survival strategy and reflects economic necessities, but it also incurs socio-economic repercussions, including pressure on local resources and services.

### Contemporary overview

Migration to mining sites in Zimbabwe, particularly in regions such as Marange and the Hwange coalfields, is shaped by regional migration patterns, as families relocate to these mining centres in pursuit of jobs and enhanced living conditions. In recent years, the

Marange diamond fields have experienced an influx of local and regional migrants, including those from neighbouring Mozambique and Zambia, attracted by the prospect of mining-related employment and prospects (Chitongo & Maposa, 2017). The Hwange coalfields have similarly drawn migrants from rural regions of Zimbabwe and adjacent nations, as families aim to exploit the labour need in mining activities (Kanyangarara, 2018). Notwithstanding the primary economic outlook, migration has resulted in issues including insufficient infrastructure, congested settlements, and environmental deterioration (Chikozho, 2019). Nonetheless, regional migration patterns generate tensions between migrants and local populations due to stretched resources and heightened competition for employment. Zimbabwe's dependence on its mining sector for economic advancement necessitates the formulation of policies that reconcile the advantages of migration with the issues associated with urbanisation at mining locations.

### Theoretical Framework

The study, central to women's perspectives on family member migration, was guided by the gender role theory. Gender role theory, originally formulated by Talcott Parsons in the 1950s, is a fundamental framework in the social sciences used to analyze the societal expectations placed on individuals based on their biological sex. Parsons argued that gender roles are socially constructed, with men typically assigned instrumental roles (task-oriented, often related to work and decision-making), while women are expected to fulfil expressive roles (nurturing, caregiving, and domestic tasks) (Parsons, 1955). This division of labour, as outlined by Parsons, has been influential in shaping the way societies understand gender expectations and how these roles impact various life experiences, including migration patterns.

Gender role theory poses a greater understanding of women's experiences when family members migrate for work. This migration is often driven by men fulfilling their instrumental roles, which is central to the masculinity model in this framework. Men leave their homes to work in mining sites, where they engage in physically demanding labour, while women are expected to stay behind and manage the home, raise children, and take care of domestic responsibilities (Jenkins, 2017). This dynamic results in women being left behind, with their role as primary caregivers and homemakers emphasizing the disparity in access to economic opportunities and social mobility.

The two-fold roles of the theory instrumental and expressive shed light on why women experience abandonment when family members migrate for employment. Men, fulfilling their instrumental roles, often prioritize their economic survival and advancement in the mining sector, which contrasts with women's role of being emotionally and physically tied to the domestic sphere. The productive roles that men engage in, such as working in the mines, are valued more in the economic structure, leaving women to assume the emotional labor of maintaining the family structure (Glick, 2016). This often leads to women facing social isolation and economic dependency, as they are unable to pursue external employment opportunities or self-empowerment due to societal expectations tied to their gender.

Furthermore, gender role theory provides insights into the specific challenges women face in mining communities, such as increased domestic workload, limited access to economic resources, and emotional frustration. The expectation for women to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities can restrict their opportunities for personal growth and limit their autonomy (Glick, 2016). Women in these communities often experience heightened feelings of

isolation, particularly as they are left to manage household chores and care for children while their male counterparts are working away. This can lead to a sense of disempowerment, frustration, and diminished self-worth, as women feel confined to their socially prescribed roles without access to external support or opportunities for self-development. Be that as it may, gender role theory provides a crucial framework for understanding the dynamics of migration in lithium mining communities. It highlights the socio-cultural forces that shape the experiences of women whose family members leave for work, underlining how the gendered division of labor results in emotional and social consequences for women. Henceforth, the gender role theory bridges the gap between women's lived experiences and the social structure.

## Methodology

Research methodology is the application of several standardised methodologies and techniques in the pursuit of knowledge. In a scientific study, methodology refers to the application of specific procedures used to systematically solve a research predicament (Babbie, 2017).

### Research Approach

A research approach is a plan to conduct research. As shown by Creswell (2018), the choice of a research approach is based on the type of problem to be studied, the researcher's personal experiences and the audience for whom the researcher writes. Therefore, the study was rooted in the veins of qualitative research approach. Entrenched in the vein of interpretivist paradigm to understand the subjective perspectives of women with family members migrated in lithium mining communities. As it was open without the use of pre-determined questions on women's experiences, this approach has embraced pragmatist epistemology, which stipulated that knowledge is always based on lived experience.

### Research design

According to Babbie (2017), a research design is perceived as a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends conducting a study, while the researcher considers it a large and comprehensive toolbox for the research journey to be undertaken. The study on women's perspectives on family members migration unveiled through the use of phenomenology research design in the interpretivist paradigm to explore women's experiences. Phenomenology is a method of enquiry coming from philosophy and psychology that is concerned with the understanding of social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved (Kirk, 2019). Nevertheless, key regulations of phenomenology have been eroticised through the use of qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews and key informant interview methods, and qualitatively made use of verbatim to present women's experiences analysed with hermeneutic phenomenology analysis.

### Target population

The target populations of this study are women with families who have migrated to lithium mines in Chinyika village. The statistics of the population are approximately 2, 431 households in the ward, that are capable of accommodating approximately two (2) women per household, to accommodate 3400 women, this is according to Zimstats, (2022). 12 women with experiences from the village population of 6, 276 women aimed on making inferences about the entire women who were selected as primary participants who have lived in the community for more than a year with experiences.

### Sampling

The study have selected 12 women through linear snowball sampling technique to be the representative sample of the population

under study and three key informants were selected from Chinyika village in which one was a headman, Social worker from National Aids Council and Community worker from Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small to Medium Enterprise and Development under expertise criteria on working with women residing in lithium mining communities.

### Data collection

Women's experiences were unpacked through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews and key informant interviews, merely on the recommendation of Babbie (2017), on the flexibility, spontaneity and room for probing by the researcher. These methods were aligned with the in-depth interview guide and the key informant interview guide of semi-structured open-ended questionnaires focusing on women's experiences residing in lithium mining communities. The researcher also applied a pilot test ahead of the implementation of the instruments on women's lived experiences.

### Data Analysis

The study has used hermeneutic phenomenology also known as interpretive phenomenological analysis, to analyse women's experiences in lithium mining communities. Hermeneutic phenomenology analysis as non-probability interpretative research was methodologically defined as a method used to integrate the principles of phenomenology, which focuses on participants' lived experiences, with hermeneutics, the art and science of interpretation (Fielder & Pincombe, 2015).

### Trustworthiness

The researcher made use of trustworthiness in ensuring the quality criterion of women's experiences in lithium mining communities. This was considered through ratification of core stages centralised to credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and positionality (Creswell, 2018).

### Limitations

The study was subject to numerous biases. It is so because the researcher made use of linear snowballing in which women generally referred their friends since sample members were not selected from a sampling frame thereby neglecting other women who experienced a lot in lithium mining communities.

### Ethical Issues

Our study was conducted by the ethical guidelines established by Women's University in Africa (WUA) and approval from the School of Social Work ethics committee was obtained for this research. Since this research was guided by the statutory standards crafted by the Council of Social Workers, ethical standards were defined as rules which guided the moral conduct of the researcher (Bryman, 2018), herein protected women with experiences in lithium mining communities. On that, informed consent and confidentiality were considered to ensure quality and formality of the research. Informed consent for participation in the study was obtained from all adult participants in writing.

## Findings

In this section, findings are presented within the Hermeneutic Analysis framework, ensuring that the researchers immerse themselves in search of women's meaning in their responses about abandonment due to migration of family members. As indicated below, the researchers ensure that data presentation and interpretation align with Nizza et al. (2021) four markers of achieving excellence in Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis that are: (1) constructing a compelling, unfolding narrative; (2)



developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account; (3) close analytic reading of participants' words; and (4) attending to convergence and divergence.

### Financial gain

Women with family members who migrated to lithium mining sites expressed that financial gain is one of the core motivational attributes that triggered their family members to partake in lithium mining as their core livelihood. The key informants reporting from the community also certified that salaries from lithium mining inspired all men in the community. The above observation can be interpreted in the following existential account of women who noted that:

*"My brother, my husband and I witnessed changes of life from our neighbors and after that I asked them and they told me that there are Chinese who are doing mining and are paying good money."*{Masivanda}

From the verbatim of Masivanda, the phrase "paying good money" reflects good salaries from the Chinese which is attracting their families to voyage to lithium mining. This signifies that family members are being attracted to better salaries, which are being offered by foreigners. Another participant had this to say:

*"My children saw their friends eating good food and buying nice clothes at the market, but I told them that I don't have money for that, and they decided by their own to go and look for money to lithium where their friends are having money."*{Gambiza}

The underlined factor mentioned by Gambiza as "eating good food" replicated the green light attraction of money, is also supported by a key informant anonymously named Officer 1 who postulated that money is dragging families to engage in anything that gives them an income to survive. He had to say;

*"Yes, I have seen that those families who mine lithium in this village do a lot of extravagancy spending at Growth Point, they can buy beer for everyone and purchase all the beer in the shop. I know that it's because of too much money they get and many young boys and men in the village have gone there"*{Officer 1}

### Career advancement

Generic participants of the study also testified that their family members are also driven by the need to advance their career into lithium mining. This was also unpacked holistically by the key informants who ensured their expertise knowledge which will eventually help them to reach higher order goals. Therefore, this can be witnessed by the accounts of participants who had thus to say;

*"Before the coming of Lithium with Chinese in this village, my husband was worrying that he don't have anything to do but he passed his education, Yes he have certificates and he did a course of maintaining machineries but he doesn't have anything to do before, so that's why he go there to work there."*{Mwenewazvo}

The phrase "he did a course of maintaining machineries" from Mwenewazvo highlighted the need to make use of educational qualifications for her husband, which drove her husband to work in the lithium mine. Another woman, who is a generic participant, has to say;

*"I am sure Mhofu went to lithium because there was an opportunity arising, without that he must be loitering in the community searching for beer to drink at Majuru*

*growth point if he didn't get someone who hires him to dig a pit for the toilet. So there was no choice because mudzimu haupekaviri"*{Maduve}

Maduve acknowledged that "Mhofu went to lithium because there was an opportunity around" representing her husband is a man of opportunities driven in the community. Even the set phrases "loitering" and "searching for beer to drink at Majuru growth point" ensure the absence of opportunities, hence the opportunity drove him into lithium. Nevertheless, even the idiom "Mudzimu haupekaviri" reflects that an opportunity comes once in a lifetime and it needs to be grabbed and utilised.

### Social status recognition

The participants of the study also shared their perceptions central to the need of acknowledgement that led their family members to desert them. Therefore, this can be testified with participants' accounts who had to say;

*"My son went to lithium mining sites near Arcadia to work so that he can purchase furniture for our house and to buy cows. We need those things because we can earn money with it in the community, and our neighbors can see us rich, and others can talk about our family name, giving a good example to others."*{Chihoro}

The compound verb phrase that "purchase furniture and to buy cows" echoed by Chihoro reflects the need for success and prestige in the community. Even the phrase "talk about our family name" directs to the position of being powerful in the community, why families abandoned their women to lithium mines. Conventionally, another participant had to say;

*"My husband wishes to be someone who has power so that he can employ all the youths in the community, doing something valuable for other people in this village to look up to him. It even benefits me and my children as one family because people will be praising our family name and the whole village even the village head can consult us in other issues, it's really good."*{Makore}

The participant mentioned Makore, echoed the phrase "power" to reflect the situation of having the capacity to dominate. Even the phrase "praising our family and consulting us" testifies to the need for social recognition through prestige.

### Escape from responsibilities

The participants of the study also highlighted that their family members are escaping home to lithium mining sites merely on the need for responsibilities. This can be uttered in verbatim of the participants who had thus to say;

*"If I appoint my child to household duties or even just to fetch firewood, he will not come back home early, and if I try to look for him, I can't even find him closer. If three days pass without seeing him, I will be sure that he goes to lithium and I can't do anything but just to send a message to him through others who go there if they are available."*{Mandlovu}

Analytic reading of the above Mandlovu's phrase central to "appoint my child household duties" to refer to the motherly traditional duty of seeking domestic support. Nevertheless, the phrase "not come back home" directs to escapism of responsibilities, which is a driven factor of lithium on the families of women. Nonetheless, another participant supportably had thus to say;

*"My husband always says that staying at home doing nothing or even work that is not hard is stressful, only that it makes your body weak. Mostly, he used to say that I would rather go to search for part-time work of digging pit sand so that I feel I am a man."*{Chirebvu}

The verbatim reflects phrases supportive of escapism of responsibilities; the compound verb phrase *"staying at home and doing nothing"* ensures the shaming of domestic responsibilities. Even the phrase *"digging pit sand"* reflects the need for active manhood work.

## Discussion

The study of women with family members who migrated to lithium mining in Goromonzi reveals several critical themes that resonate with, yet also diverge from, abandonment experiences in other global contexts. These themes, financial gain, career advancement, social status recognition and escape from responsibilities are not unique to Goromonzi but presented in various forms across the globe. The need for money is accelerating desertion of family members in Chinyika village to attain financial muscle, which can bring positive living. This shows that money is thereby acting as a pivotal pillar which enables families and women to survive as it is dragging both the man and the children. Accordingly, the pointed situation tallies with a study that was conducted by (Cornwall & Molyneux, 2018), which postulated that money is the driving force for greener pastures in traditional households. This presents that when money comes inside the house, it will be like the heaven ornamented on earth, as all parties turn to share happiness and freedom. Be that as it is, the highlighted situation contest with the gender role perspective in the ideal that most of man who are notably in industrial mining are driven by their physical characteristics which ensures them to undergo hard labour, as they are bounded by the belief that "hard labour pay's" as lamented by Smith, (1776) in his book 'An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.' Thus, the ideal behind mankind is all central to money and financial gain, which is a chief motivator for family members of women in Goromonzi.

The findings proclaimed that the rise of opportunities through industrial mining has created a marathon space for many families who are living below the poverty datum line. In a study that was conducted by the Global Institute (2017), in rural areas, many are reportedly affected by red eyes in search of employment. This concurs with the same situation which is happening in developing countries in which several people are seen as unemployed as they are failing to find jobs due to limited opportunities. To make matters worse in rural areas where technology is limited, a lot of man perceives it as difficult to gain momentum on work enrollment. Therefore, by so doing, the rise of industrialization has created a marathon of enrollment which enables individuals an ability to build their careers urgently. Consequently, the gender role perspective asserts that men are enrolled in instrumental roles as they are the primary duties they must pursue. This connects with the fact that every man in society is a hungry lion because all men are hunting for instrumental opportunities, which herein a grabbing point for every man in the society (Tinubu, 2023). Therefore, it is notable that the case of limited opportunities in Goromonzi has driven many to abandon their families in search of greener pastures to meet their unique situations. Thus, the rise of opportunities can drive man to act with desperation, similarly to the instinctual aggression of a lion when it is hungry.

More so, the need to archive personal growth has dragged several

people to venture into industrial mining since a lot of people have been notified of doing luxurious things in their communities. According to a study that was accomplished (Makarov & Pavlova, 2018), the same situation is also perpetuating in European countries, for instance, in Russia, where economic incentives from the mining industry are solely generating numbers of young people and male adults every day. World Economic Forum (WEF), postulated that the desire for social acknowledgment and respect is a key motivator for many male counterparts, in emerging economies where social mobility is a significant driver of economic growth (WEF, 2020). In most cases, substantial earnings from the mining industry enable people to engage in luxury spending, thereby stimulating the expensive claim on services, which annex acknowledgement in the community (Chikozho, 2020). On such baselines (Parson's, 1950) framework also purports that traditional gender roles dictate the forms of livelihoods considered enviable for male and female counterparts, often leading to patterns of gender in occupations. By so doing, it is clear that in most of the cases men are well motivated by the mining industry just to conform to their masculine norms and eventually easily meet social recognition. Thus, the only ability to easily attain recognition and social status in society is to console the mining industry as the elevator.

The findings further proclaimed that family members are viewing household work as unproductive, and which doesn't give any form of gains which benefit their selves and their families. As traditional gender roles and expectations continue to evolve, many men are seeking to break free from the constraints of domestic responsibilities and caregiving duties, which are now universal. According to a report by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), men are progressively more seeking to redefine their roles and responsibilities, prioritizing personal freedom and autonomy over traditional family obligations (OECD, 2020). The mining industry, with its often remote locations and demanding work schedules, is providing a sense of escapism and respite from family responsibilities, allowing men to focus on their personal goals and aspirations. According to a study that was conducted by (Eagly & Woods, 2016), men who are seen erotizing domestic work in society are perceived and labeled as weak and under feminine control. Drawing from the gender role theory, when men fail to prioritize instrumental work, they face social stigma for failing to meet the traditional masculinity duties, thus the perception of weakness is highly valued in situations where opportunities such as the need for lithium mining dwells. However, through such trends, one can articulate that such aspirin limits men to select the livelihoods they want regardless of the availability. Despite that, the gender role theory levels the fact that men and some children who are male counterparts gravitate to jobs that reinforce traditional masculinity rather than domestic work and feminine roles.

## Implication to practice

The findings from the study highlight critical gaps central to the family and community-based livelihoods in the Goromonzi community that perpetuate income generation and vocation growth within the geographical set-up of the community. The epic perceptions of women with family members who migrated to lithium mining sites in Goromonzi calls for developmental remedy towards the support of their selves as well as their families through livelihoods and family-based projects that can be facilitated within the proximity of their homes. Although venturing into lithium mining livelihoods as oriented by family members in Goromonzi covers core elements central to financial gain, career advancement, social status recognition and escape from responsibilities, there is a need to delve into collective efforts that cover the whole to

ameliorate the prolonged effects of migration which stems abandonment trends which attacks women who are left home alone. More so, the need to re-structure the roles of the society is a key step that can be oriented with community work efforts to enable women to participate in alternative livelihoods, which are not limited to reproductive and domestic duties, without taking their careers into the mining industry. Even (Longwe, 1990) gender analysis framework stipulates that conscientisation is the key point to ensure the participation of women through collective action. Nevertheless, community work interventions centered on conscientisation such as social support networks, time management training, income-generating projects and community education training, as well as supportive policies can play a vital role in ensuring the balance of triple roles of women. More so, the findings also highlight key areas for improvement in social work training settings. Incorporating the lived experiences of women affected by family migration to lithium mining sites into social work education can enhance students' understanding of economic migration, abandonment, and gendered livelihoods. Training programs should emphasize community-centred approaches that promote empowerment, grassroots participation, and alternative livelihood strategies. This enhances the green light to developmental social work in hard-to-reach communities and supports the movements of green social work which encourages devolution and participation in which community members may build their communities from the grassroots level (Ledwith, 2020). On that, the basements of the need for community work intervention on women reflect that a whole is greater than its parts in as far as constructional baselines of communities where women in lithium mining reside.

## Conclusion

The study highlights the perspectives of women towards family members' migration to lithium mines in Goromonzi as aggravated by the need for financial gain, career advancement, social status recognition and escape from responsibilities. Women participants noted that better salaries from mining attracted their families, improving their living standards. Career ambitions also played a role, with mining offering opportunities for utilizing educational qualifications and skill sets. Social status recognition further motivated families, with participants expressing desires to accumulate wealth and achieve community prestige. Escapism from domestic responsibilities was observed as another driver, with male family members avoiding household duties and pursuing mining work to affirm masculinity. The Gender Role Theory is relevant to the study's findings as it explains how societal norms and expectations around gender shape behaviour and decision-making. This theory explains that traditional gender roles often assign men the role of financial providers and women the role of caretakers. The created norms pushed men to seek higher earnings and career opportunities, as seen in the findings. Escapism from domestic duties also reflects gendered expectations of masculinity, where men may reject household work. The study also implies the call for community work initiatives throughout the call of gender analysis framework which stipulates that conscientisation is the key point to ensure the participation of women through collective action. Also, the paper has allocated social workers to their advocacy roles to transform the community to ensure equal gender roles. Pertinent to the training set, training programs should emphasize community-centered community-centred approaches that promote empowerment, grassroots participation, and alternative livelihood strategies. Nevertheless, recommendations have been offered central to sustainable employment creation, career development programs, community recognition programs, family support mechanisms,

youth engagement and empowerment as well as the participation of women to challenge traditional gender roles.

## Recommendations

The study can proffer the following recommendations;

### ➤ Sustainable Employment Creation

To address the financial motivation for lithium mining, stakeholders should prioritize creating sustainable employment opportunities. Developing alternative income-generating activities such as agro-processing, small-scale manufacturing, or vocational training for families could diversify livelihoods and reduce dependency on lithium mining. Government agencies and NGOs can play a role in providing funding and technical support for these initiatives. Families benefiting from these programs would enjoy greater economic stability, reducing the need for migration and maintaining social cohesion within communities.

### ➤ Career Development Programs

Establishing formal career advancement pathways in lithium mining could benefit individuals seeking professional growth. Companies operating in mining communities should implement training programs, apprenticeships, and skill certification to upskill local workers. Collaboration with educational institutions could ensure tailored courses relevant to the mining sector. This would benefit workers by improving their employability and increasing their earning potential, contributing to long-term local development. It would also reduce social issues stemming from job dissatisfaction and underemployment.

### ➤ Community Recognition Programs

To manage social status aspirations, community leaders and local authorities should promote non-material avenues of social recognition. Community awards and public acknowledgements for educational achievements, business success, or civic contributions can serve as alternatives to material status symbols. These initiatives would benefit families by providing recognition and validation within the community, fostering pride and reducing pressure on individuals to migrate for status-related gains. It would also strengthen community ties and promote healthy role models.

### ➤ Family Support Mechanisms

Community-based organizations and social workers should establish family support programs that promote family cohesion and help manage responsibilities at home. Initiatives such as parenting workshops and family counselling could encourage open communication and shared responsibilities. This would benefit women by alleviating household burdens and reducing the tendency of family members to migrate or escape responsibilities. Families that stay together and share duties more equitably can experience better emotional well-being and reduced conflict.

### ➤ Youth Engagement and Empowerment

To reduce youth migration to lithium mining as a means of escaping responsibilities, local governments and NGOs should provide youth engagement programs, including sports, arts, mentorship, and life skills training. Offering safe spaces for recreational and developmental activities would channel youth energies positively. This would benefit youths by promoting



personal growth, building self-esteem, and providing meaningful engagement. Additionally, families and communities would experience improved social stability and reduced family conflicts related to escapism.

### Contributions:

KG: Conceptualisation, research design, literature review, manuscript review, and participant recruitment

FS: Conceptualisation, research design, manuscript review,

KM— Manuscript writing, editing, and revisions, corresponding author.

This manuscript is the result of collaborative efforts.

### Ethics Declaration:

Our study was conducted by the ethical guidelines established by Women's University in Africa (WUA) and approval from the School of Social Work ethics committee was obtained for this research. Since this research was guided by the statutory standards crafted by the Council of Social Workers, ethical standards were defined as rules which guided the moral conduct of the researcher (Bryman, 2018), herein protected women with experiences in lithium mining communities. On that, informed consent and confidentiality were considered to ensure quality and formality of the research. Informed consent for participation in the study was obtained from all adult participants in writing.

### Funding Declaration:

The authors declare that there was no funding received for this study.

### Competing Interests Declaration:

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### Data Availability Statement:

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author. Due to confidentiality and ethical considerations, access may be restricted to protect the privacy of the participants involved.

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