Breaking down gender barriers: Exploring experiences of underground female mine workers in a mining company

A research report presented to

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Occupational Social Work

SUPERVISOR

Dr. T. Nkomo

July 2017
DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and has never been published or submitted elsewhere in fulfilment of any other degree.

Ms. Sally K. Ledwaba

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Signature

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Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give the highest praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for the wisdom and strength He has bestowed upon me. It has been an extremely tough road but His grace and His mercy saw me through the completion of my studies. To my family members, particularly my mother Catherine Ledwaba and father Richard Ledwaba, thank you for the support you offered me during this time and for putting up with an absent child. Your prayers have kept me going. My warmest gratitude goes out to Mokgobi Ramushu with whom I walked this journey from the start to finish. Thank you for believing in my capabilities even when I had little faith, you truly are one of a kind.

I would further like to thank the two supervisors that assisted me in completing my study, Dr. Warria and Dr. Nkomo. I have greatly benefitted from the wealth of knowledge, analytical critique and the professional guidance you offered me. Great appreciations to the mining company which granted me the permission to conduct my study with their employees and for offering the necessary support during my data collection phase. Sincere gratitude to all the research participants who voluntarily offered their valuable time to be interviewed for the study. Your contributions are highly valued and are what made the completion of this study possible.
ABSTRACT

Research Title: Breaking down gender barriers: Exploring experiences of underground female mine workers in a mining company

Women have previously been discouraged from pursuing careers in the mining industry given the nature of the work in the field and the physical strength needed to do the work. However, literature has reported an increase in the number of women penetrating the field in recent years (Benya, 2009; Singer, 2002). New legislative frameworks in South Africa, such as the Mining Charter of 2002 (amended 2010) and the Mineral Petroleum Resources Development Act have made provisions for females to be absorbed into the field of mining, but this has not gone without challenges. This study thus sought to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of underground female mine workers and demystify gender barriers that affect the functioning of women within the mining sector.

The study was qualitative in nature and adopted a case study design to richly understand the phenomenon. The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data. Ten participants and two key informants were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data collected from participants was analysed using thematic analysis, in conjunction with the literature reviewed.

The study addressed the social and human needs of female mine workers. It was found that, the mining industry has not been progressive in adequately addressing the unique needs of women who work underground. The study was essential in unravelling the experiences of female mine workers and thus made recommendations that can be used to introduce workplace appropriate interventions to be implemented to ensure that underground women mine workers are well accommodated within the industry.

Keywords: underground female mine workers, gender, mining industry
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<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTS</td>
<td>Heat Tolerance Screening</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Growth Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth Employment and Redistribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPRDA</td>
<td>Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002</td>
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<td>NUM</td>
<td>National Union of Mineworkers</td>
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<td>NPO</td>
<td>Non-Profit- Organization</td>
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<td>PPE</td>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
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<td>TEBA</td>
<td>The Employment Bureau of Africa</td>
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