

Parenting Practices and Attitudes Instigating and Perpetuating Child Labour in Mining Communities in Tanzania

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Abstract

Child labour elimination is a challenge in almost all countries worldwide. Studies show that child labour is deep-rooted within households where it is produced and supplied to various economic sectors as specifically demanded. The knowledge about how it evolves within the household during an individual's childhood is complex. This study explores the influence of parenting practices and attitudes on the genesis of child labour in small-scale gold mining communities in Tanzania. A qualitative research approach was adopted during the investigation. A purposefully selected sample of 73 participants obtained from the population of mining communities in Tabora and Shinyanga was used. Primary data were collected using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, while secondary data were gathered from grey literature. The collected qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. The major findings established that the problem of child labour evolves and is perpetuated during an individual's childhood due to households' parenting practices and attitudes towards child work. It is proposed that the government, policymakers and other stakeholders responsible for the elimination of child labour should design and implement intervention policies and programmes aimed at changing parenting attitudes of community members and practices towards child work.

Keywords: *households, parenting practices, childhood, child work, child labour*

Introduction

While children are the future nation of every society, parents and caregivers have the primary responsibility for their upbringing. Quinn (2005) states that in every community, child-rearing—also known as child-parenting—is influenced by a cultural model that specifies the kind of an adult that the parents or caregivers desire to raise. This goes along with a set of practices that may sometimes be habitual and routinely enacted, or more deliberate and strategically deployed, that are thought to be most effective when raising a child to be that kind of a desired adult. The vision of what kind of an adult one should be, and the local wisdom about how to raise a child varies; and often differs dramatically from one child-rearing community to another (*ibid.*). Every culture has its own common sense, and members of each culture anchors their everyday lives on their own common sense. Also, every culture has its own cultural ideologies, from which parents get the concepts of moral virtue and parental goals of child-rearing (Geertz, 1975; cited in Liu, 2003).

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At birth, children are viewed as individuals who do not possess culture, have no conception of the world, language or morality (Grunlan & Mayers, 1988). They are considered to be uncultured and unsocialized persons. Thus, the period between infancy and adulthood is a very significant stage in an individual's life since it is during this stage that the state and condition of a child's life is shaped into a better adulthood life, such that this individual is able to know his or her rights, duties and responsibilities. During this period, parents are concerned with the growth and development of a child in accordance with the communities' norms and values. It is the desire, hope and objective of parents to mould a child so that s/he is capable of managing the tasks of adulthood life. A child is induced into participating in various family chores and other economic activities at a very young age of five years, even though s/he may not be able to perform the activities like adults. This kind of parenting practice generally aims at promoting all forms of values that give the developing human being a sense of guidance as per a particular community's morals and values. Whatever the lifestyle of a household, such indoctrination is inculcated into a child through parenting practices (Nwoke, 2013). To become the type of human being that parents desire, a child is habitually engaged in almost all domestic chores and many other economic activities partaken by the family as a regular social norm, and also as an investment in the child for learning the ways of the world (Serra, 2009).

In Tanzania, there are many regions that are rich in various mineral deposits where large and small-scale mining activities take place (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Specifically, there are more than five regions within the Lake Victoria gold fields region (the ring of gold), located in north-western Tanzania, in which small- and large-scale mining is taking place (Bryceson, Jønsson, Kinabo & Shand, 2012). Besides agriculture and other economic activities undertaken by the people in these regions, many households engage in small-scale gold mining activities as their major source of income and livelihood. Children are an important component of the population within the mining communities in these regions. Every family is a miniature society containing and upholding all the societal value systems, and serves as a nursery that nurtures all cultural values.

While parenting practices exercised by many parents and caregivers in mining communities tend to focus on orienting, preparing and introducing children into various family businesses, yet parenting continues to be a complex endeavour as many parents approach it based on their socio-cultural contexts, and/or their individual value and belief systems (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Bornstein, 2012 as cited in Ulferts, 2020). It has been noted, however, that engaging children in housework and other family businesses, such as mining, reflects hidden child labour (Webbink et al., 2013). Despite the fact that there are diverse dimensions of how parents handle the period of an individual's childhood and child work in a household, and community at large, the instigation of child labour is not clearly understood on how it is linked to child-care and development practices that derive from cultural and socio-economic conditions affecting households and

communities (Colangelo, 2020). This context forms the basis of this study, which intended to explore on how parenting practices and attitudes within households instigate and perpetuate child labour in artisanal mining communities.

Methodology

Study Area

This study was conducted within the gold mining communities in Tabora and Shinyanga regions in Tanzania. Specifically, the study took place in Kahama and Igunga districts. Kahama district is in Shinyanga region, and is located in the north-western part of Tanzania. It lies between latitudes 3° 15' and 4° 30' south of the Equator, and longitudes 31° and 33° east of Greenwich. It covers an area of 8,447km². The study was conducted in Kahama urban district council; involving participants from the district council headquarters, and from Mwime-Ilindi village in Zongomera ward, and Bumbiti village in Mondo ward; where small-scale gold mining activities take place, and the use of child labour is dominant.

In Tabora region, the study was conducted in Igunga district. This district is located between latitudes 3° and 4° south of the Equator, and longitudes 33° and 34° east of Greenwich. The district covers an area of 4,499km², of which 3,145km² (69.9%) is arable land. Respondents were drawn from the district headquarters, and others from three villages where small-scale gold mining activities takes place and the use of child labour is common. These villages were Matinje and Buchenjegele in Mwashiku ward, and Bulangamilwa in Chomachankola ward.

Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach was adopted in all stages of the research, and a case study design was used to depict and understand the participants' context, knowledge, views and lived experiences on the research subject in the study areas. Two sampling methods were used to obtain study participants. First, a purposive sampling method was used to select and obtain potential adult local community members and other relevant informants from the said mining communities. Several selection criteria were used to obtain the respondents. These included their knowledge regarding parenting practices and child labour in the study communities, their willingness to participate in the study, as well as their ability to communicate well and provide comprehensive information on the research subject. Furthermore, snowball sampling was used to obtain children participants. The children were selected and included into the study sample based on their age, gender, type of family they come from, if the child is involved in child labour, and if the child has the ability to effectively communicate and provide information on the research topic. A total of 73 study participants—consisting of 53 adults and 20—children were involved in the study.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through two phases. The first phase involved in-depth interviews conducted with all sampled participants. The second phase involved

focus group discussions (FGDs) with pertinent informants. Four (4) FGDs, comprising of 5-6 members, were conducted in the study areas. Two (2) FGDs, each comprising of 5 members, were conducted in Kahama district in Shinyanga region. The first FGD included village executive officers (VEOs), and officials from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with the eradication of child labour. The second FGD was conducted with adult members from the small-scale gold mining communities. In Igunga district, the first FGD was conducted with village executive officers; and the second was conducted with members involved in small-scale gold mining activities.

Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data from in-depth interviews and FGDs were mainly in the form of raw, handwritten notes. The analysis of such data involved several stages as given in Denscombe (2007) and Cohen et al. (2011). The first stage involved transcribing textual field data via a Microsoft Word® processor, and developing and organizing the information obtained as per the research questions. At this stage, the developed transcripts were thoroughly studied to gain an overview and understanding of the key ideas, and taking note of recurring themes. The second stage involved sorting, identifying and examining emerging key themes or issues, and making judgments about the meaning, relevance, importance, and implicit connections between the ideas. The third stage involved indexing the data by identifying portions or sections of the data that correspond to a particular theme, and a subsequent placement of each data at a corresponding theme to draw a larger picture of the reality under investigation. Finally, the last stage involved interpretation of the indexed data, which was done by assigning meanings behind the obtained key themes and sub-themes to identify patterns and connections within and between the themes and sub-themes.

Findings

The leading questions that participants were asked required them to explain their understanding on whether community members are aware of the existence of child labour in small-scale gold mining communities, how they define child labour, and how they distinguish between normal and hazardous child work. The findings from interviewees revealed that child labour was perceived and recognised by most parents and community members, and they can further distinguish between normal child work and child labour. This was affirmed by many interviewed local community members in Kahama and Igunga districts as aptly put by one participant:

Child labour is present in this place and most people can distinguish between normal child works from hazardous work. Community members in this area define child labour as any form of work which is tedious and tortures a child [nimo ugo gulinducha ng'wana¹] (Key Informant, Igunga, February 2019).

Four different ways of how people perceive and define child labour in the study area were established. First, majority of the people in the study communities

¹ A Sukuma and Nyamwezi phrase translated as 'work that tortures a child'

viewed and defined child labour as any kind of work that is tedious and tortures a child. Secondly, community members viewed child labour as work that is hazardous and exploitative to children. Thirdly, some community members viewed child labour as work that is prohibited or disapproved by the local community and government leaders. Lastly, community members indicated that child labour is a perpetual issue in the mining community since children are involved in all sorts of chores in the mining activities.

The next main questions required participants to identify and describe how parenting practices and attitudes instigate and perpetuate child labour in small-scale mining communities. Responses from interviews and FGDs with participants identified four main parenting practices that provided a ground for child labour to emerge or evolve. These were: traditional parenting culture, parenting attitudes, parenting patterns or arrangements, and traditional child fostering systems. Most of the respondents indicated that during the period of childhood, the primary parenting roles and attitudes focus on child upbringing, moulding, supervising, teaching and disciplining so that children can grow, develop and imbibe the desired values and morals that their parents and community want them to have.

An analysis of the responses from interviewees and FGD participants in Kahama and Igunga districts showed that traditional parenting culture is the first parenting practice that instigates child labour in the study area. It was revealed that three different traditional parenting cultural contexts that instigate child labour in the study communities comprised of parents' decision-making mode, socialization of children, and child training. Respondents indicated that parents in many households in the study communities tended to dominate the decision-making process in their families regarding choices on household consumption and production, child work and child education. In most cases, children were non-decision makers in the family; and their preferences on consumption and production, labour choices and education were determined by their parents. Specifically, children were sent to work at home and in different labour market regimes based on the decisions made by one or both parents, as revealed by the interviewed village executive officers in Kahama and Igunga districts illustrated in the following quote:

Children are non-decision-makers in almost all families in this area; and their preferences on consumption and production, schooling and labour choices are determined only by their parents (Key Informant, Kahama, 15th January, 2019).

In both districts, it was also revealed that child socialization is another form of parenting culture that instigates child labour, as asserted by one of the local community member:

In our community, there is a common parenting cultural belief that proper child upbringing involves engaging children in their parents' occupations as early as possible as a viable child socialization process. This type of parenting culture tends to uphold child labour since parents continue to engage children in mining activities, believing that this enables them to be tough and hard-working for their better future (Key Informant, Kahama, 15th Jan 2019).

Furthermore, respondents asserted that parents are concerned with the growth and development of their children in accordance with the communities' norms and values; and that it is the desire, hope and objective of parents to socialize their children to make them be capable of managing the tasks of adulthood life. It was indicated that girls are specifically socialized to learn the roles of motherhood, wife, and other female-appropriate skills relevant for adulthood life; whereas boys are socialized to learn the roles of men, and other male-appropriate skills relevant for managing adulthood tasks.

The traditional child training system was another form of traditional parenting culture that provides the context for child labour to evolve. An analysis from the interviewees' responses showed that the family is the primary institution for child-learning: here is where a child is born, grows up, and is taught life skills, values and norms of her/his society. This is achieved by involving the child in all kinds of family chores and other economic activities to mould the child into the kind of a person that parents want the child to be. The traditional child-training is a rigorous process whereby a child is required to participate in all household work activities that aim at developing an attitude of fatherhood for boys, and motherhood for girls. Children are trained by accompanying and understudying their parents in performing several hard and tough activities such as artisanal gold mining to inculcate in them the attitudes of endurance of life hardships, obedience, conformity, unity, and the like. During FGDs with village executive officers, as well as in-depth interviews with local community members in Kahama and Igunga districts, participants underlined—as one of them put it—that:

Life involves a lot of livelihood challenges. Therefore, rigorous training activities for children are important because they make them develop tolerance behaviour and stimulate pride in cultural institutions. These values are important during adulthood (Key Informant, Igunga, 12th February, 2019).

However, it was also revealed that training of children by involving them in work that is beyond the limits of light, or normal child work, produces child labour. Respondents showed that when parents and caregivers fail to draw a line between normal and hazardous work, they allow child labour to emerge. Accordingly, the limits for normal child work involve the age of the child, type and nature of the work, and time undertaken to accomplish the work. This was illustrated by one of the interviewed community member thus:

When a child of seven years is engaged, for instance, in the task of drawing water from a distant source using a five litres container to fill up a 500-litre tank at her home, the child will make 100 trips to fill the tank. This may take a day or so to accomplish the task. This kind of child work is tedious and torturing to the child; and unacceptable to many community members. 'This is child labour' (Key Informant, Igunga, Feb, 2019).

It was also revealed that parenting attitudes grounded on gender and indigenous attitudes on child work was the second parenting practice that instigates child labour in the study communities. The analysis of the responses from interviewed participants showed that parenting attitude regarding gender is a common

approach upheld by many people in the mining communities. Such parenting attitudes determine a number of things, such as the type of work to be done by girls and by boys, the number of working hours, and decisions about who goes to school and who goes to work. In an FGD with small-scale gold miners in Igunga district, the following was noted:

In the Sukuma and Nyamwezi culture, all tough work like gold mining activities should be assigned to boys; while almost all domestic and services provision in the mining sites is for girls. This attitude is common among small-scale gold mining communities, especially among families with children aged 7 to 17 years (Miners' FGD, Igunga, February, 2019).

Similarly, study participants from the mining communities showed that children are valued according to the satisfaction they provide to parents, which is weighed against the costs entailed in child-rearing, or other reasons such as the provision of economic and emotional security in old age. This means that children are obliged to participate in almost all household enterprises such as farming, street vending, and so on; which are available within or outside the home, as one community member summed up:

Children are regarded as economic assets for a family, and in fact in the Sukuma and Nyamwezi beliefs, children are viewed as valuable wealth (nsabho²): so having as many children as possible is an object of pride and admiration (Key Informant, Igunga, 2019).

Findings also indicated that household enterprises represent a core of low-income labour market that is open to children. The nature of work activities carried out by families in small-scale gold mines involves a division of labour based on gender and age. Small-scale gold mining is considered an activity of men, and as such more boys are involved in most mining activities; whereas girls are mainly involved in domestic chores at home, and service-provisions in the mining sites. Such viewpoints influence parenting behaviours or approaches to child upbringing in the study communities.

The third parenting practice that provides a context for instigating child labour in the study communities was the kind of parenting patterns or arrangements. This is illustrated by an analysis of the interviewed respondents from the two districts. One key informant in Kahama revealed:

A myriad of family parenting patterns changes have emerged in the community, including single parenthood, sibling parenthood, child parenthood, rejected children, spouse separation, increased divorces and abandoned families; and now these parenting patterns are becoming very common (Key Informant, Kahama, January, 2019).

It was also observed that this situation has created a group of vulnerable people that are having difficulties in providing adequate parental childcare. Therefore, single parenthood, and older sibling parenthood, are the contexts that compel the

² A Sukuma and Nyamwezi term meaning 'wealth'

victims—especially children—to consistently join the labour market and indulge in various activities, including small-scale gold mining, as a survival strategy. This was illustrated by one of interviewed children thus:

How can I stay home playing on Saturday and Sunday while my mother, who was abandoned by my father, is toiling alone crushing rocks on the gold mine? I feel that it is my duty to assist my mother! That's why I go with her to work in the mines (Child Interview in Kahama, January, 2019).

It was also revealed that traditional child-fostering—which is common among the Nyamwezi and Sukuma societies—was the fourth significant parenting practice that causes child labour to evolve. This practice involves relocating, transferring and giving out or exchanging children among families, usually among extended families or kinsmen, for reasons such as strengthening family ties, improving survival chances, acquiring life skills, acquiring formal education, and sometimes rendering assistance and help to foster parents. This is illustrated by a summary of responses gathered during FGDs conducted in Kahama and Igunga districts:

Indeed, child fostering is a very common parenting practice in these mining communities. Usually, children are sent out of their nuclear family to go and live with close relatives or kinsmen based on marital bonds. Here, host families tend to involve the children in all domestic chores and economic activities like small-scale gold mining. The children are involved in carrying heavy rocks, crushing rocks, and so on, in small-scale gold mining sites. In fact, host families tend to uphold child labour as a normal way of raising children and preparing them for future adulthood life (FGDs with community members, Igunga and Kahama, 2019).

Throughout that time, the fostering family undertakes the responsibility of ensuring an 'appropriate' child-upbringing is done. Therefore, based on the above findings, it was established that such parenting practices and attitudes creates a room for child labour to emerge and grow.

Discussion

This study has established that there are four main parenting practices and attitudes among households and mining communities in Igunga and Kahama districts that provide the ground for child labour to evolve and grow. The first context is the traditional parenting culture, which refers to how parents and caregivers treat their children, and what they believe as relevant regarding their children as they grow and develop into the kind of person they desire. The purpose is to attain positive development outcomes in the individual child. This study further shows that there are three different cultural parenting aspects that instigate child labour: parents' decision-making mode, socialization of children, and child-training. This study established that parents in the mining communities in Igunga and Kahama districts often dominate the decision-making process regarding household consumption and labour choices. Children are non-decision makers, or passive ones, in the family; and their preferences on consumption and labour choices are normally determined by their parents. Most parents in small-scale gold mining communities make deliberate decisions to send their children to work

rather than sending them to school. When non-altruistic parents take decisions to send their children to work in small-scale gold mining sites, such decisions give room for child labour to crystalize.

Rogers and Swinnerton (2002) have showed that parents send their children to work hoping that they are inculcating in them the values and virtues of being responsible persons. Unfortunately, most of the time this has not been realized because children end up being engaged in worst or exploitative work situations, thus instigating child labour. In other words, parents' decision-making behaviour seems to uphold child labour. The findings of this study established that child labour also emerges when children are demanded—and expected by their parents and families—to work or be involved in production. As soon as household production pattern is meant for the market—where the primary goal is increasing the quantity of goods produced, and making more sales and profits—parents often decide to utilize their children' labour so as to maximize their productive capacity. Thus, a decision to engage in small-scale mining activities by both parents and children is driven by extrinsic motivation because of the expectations for better outcomes (Larson & Keiper, 2007). At this point, child labour starts to take shape and emerge.

It was also found that the socialization of children is one of the traditional parenting cultures whereby many parents in the mining communities are concerned with the growth and development of their children in accordance with the communities' norms and values, so that they can be capable of managing the tasks of adulthood life. Girls are socialized to effectively learn the roles of motherhood, wife and other sex-related appropriate skills; while boys are socialized to learn the roles of fatherhood, husband and other skills required of male adults. Children in Igunga and Kahama districts are socialized by being engaged in household chores and other income-generating activities, including artisanal gold mining. It has been established that that children in gold mining sites start washing gold ore at the age of 3 years, breaking rocks with hammers from the age of 6 years, and working in the mines underground doing labour as adults from the age of 9 years and above (Hentschel et al., 2003). This was also found to be the case in Igunga and Kahama districts where children begin working in artisanal gold mines at a very early age. Here, they undertake various tasks including ore extraction, drilling rocks, carrying mineral ore from one spot to another, pushing carts, cleaning galleries, and crushing rocks despite the fact that these mining activities are defined under the international law as the worst form of child labour (ILO, 2004; OECD, 2017). Thus, parenting practice based on child socialization instigate and perpetuate child labour, although parents do not perceive it that way. Parents do not seem to abhor child labour, although many of them understand very well that it is a hazardous business.

Child training is very essential in preparing a child for adulthood life. Education develops a child's way of thinking; and gaining skills, attitudes and understanding needed for the development of human thinking capacity and actions. This study

found that in Kahama and Igunga districts, parents begin educating and training their children through the master-apprentice relationship, whereby children accompany parents in performing almost all family work, including artisanal gold mining. This starts at an early age so that apprentices acquire the desirable skills as they grow into adulthood. At the age of 7 years and above, children become a part of adult routine life by being involved in simple household tasks and economic activities until they become more and more used to it (Boakye-Boaten, 2010). In the study areas, children do not only learn how to extract gold from gold ore, but also earn income at the end of the process; which in turn motivates them to continue spending more time doing mining activities. Many parents take for granted that engaging children in mining activities at an early age is a training technique that helps them in many aspects of life, such as building self-esteem and acquiring adulthood qualities. Although the involvement of children in gold mining activities is viewed as a training that enables them to acquire some mining skills, it provides the ground for the hidden child labour to evolve (Webbink et al., 2013).

Parenting attitudes form another ground on which child labour emerges and grows. Attitudes refer to viewpoints, perspectives, reactions, or settled ways of thinking about aspects of parenting or child development, including parents' roles and responsibilities (NASEM, 2016). In this study, it was established that many parents and community members in the mining communities—and specifically the Nyamwezi and Sukuma culture which is predominant in the said communities—view a child as any person who has not attained adulthood competencies regardless of his/her age. Inadvertently, in these cultures a child is but an adult in-the-making who lacks universal skills and competencies of the adult that s/he will become. Like in many other traditional African families (Nwoke, 2013), child-parenting attitudes held by many people in the mining communities in Kahama and Igunga districts focus on child upbringing as a process of orienting a young human being into the value system and societal norms of the people in the community.

Many parents' attitudes partake child growth as a by-product of a transformation process into adulthood that a child undergoes as s/he grows up. A child's maturity is attained when s/he is capable of fulfilling certain social roles expected of him/her, and how well s/he is integrated into his family and community. In fact, in the Sukuma and Nyamwezi culture, an adult could still remain—or be described—as a child (*nyanda*) after failing to fulfil certain social roles expected of him/her. To become the type of a person that parents desire, a child is seriously groomed at a very early age in almost all activities partaken by the family as a regular social norm, and also as an investment in the child for learning the ways of the world (Serra, 2009). Hence, in this context, the attitudes of parents and community members towards a child's growth and development into a preferred adulthood become a precursor to child labour.

The study has also established that parenting patterns or arrangements—such as single parenthood, sibling parenthood, child parenthood and abandoned families—

are common grounds for child labour to emerge and grow among the mining communities in the two districts. Such parenting patterns leave members under difficult livelihood situations, which in turn compel them to engage themselves or their children in hazardous labour so as to survive. Many children falling into one of these parenting arrangements usually become overwhelmed by anxieties; they become increasingly vulnerable, desperate and often find themselves joining some age-inappropriate business activities as survival strategies. For instance, many children living in either sub-standard care, or those being cared by a single parent, older siblings, or elderly grandparents, may be forced to leave their home when still at tender age and go somewhere else to work—especially in small-scale gold mines—for their own survival, and/or that of their families. The presence of vulnerable children—especially those lacking parental care—becomes a context to instigate and perpetuate child labour. The study also found that some children coming from households where parents have separated—or families where the father has absconded the family due to livelihood hardships or family conflicts—miss appropriate parental care; and thus become vulnerable to child labour. Consequently, such parenting patterns very often provide an environment conducive for child labour to emerge and grow.

Traditional child fostering is a significant socio-cultural and informal institutional arrangement among the Nyamwezi and Sukuma societies in Kahama and Igunga districts. As discussed earlier, the fostering process is mostly conducted through foster parents' own experiences, and involves rigorous grooming of the fostered child so that s/he is well prepared for adulthood life. During the time of grooming, a child is likely to be involved in activities beyond normal child work, which in most cases constitute child labour. This happens depending on the fostering families' parenting attitudes, level of parenting knowledge, self-efficacy, and the ability to distinguish between normal child work and hazardous or worst forms of child work. In fact, no fostering families want their fostered children to bring disgrace to them in any way; so, they will make certain that the children being fostered are drilled in all kinds of family work to ensure that they grow and develop into culturally desirable competent mature members of the society. This drilling process of a child in various family activities during child fostering also provide a context for child labour to emerge among the studied mining communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has established four major parenting practices that tend to instigate and perpetuate child labour: traditional parenting culture, parenting attitudes, parenting patterns or arrangements, and child fostering. The study proposes two advocacy strategies targeting parents, caregivers, local community members and leaders at village and ward levels to mitigate attitudes and practices that instigate child labour. The first is designing and implementing community-based awareness building and mobilization programmes aimed at the change of parental attitudes; and imparting skills on relevant and universally acceptable parenting practices or styles to parents, caregivers and community members. Second, to conduct capacity building

campaigns involving local community leaders and committees on child labour and most vulnerable children at village and ward levels so as to empower them to address issues pertaining to parenting practices and attitudes related to child work that instigates and perpetuate child labour among mining communities in Tanzania.

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