



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Safety and Health at Work

journal homepage: www.e-shaw.net

Original Article

Breaking the Culture-specific Silence of Women Glass Bead Makers in Ghana: Towards Empowerment



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 February 2020

Received in revised form

27 July 2020

Accepted 11 August 2020

Available online 18 August 2020

Keywords:

Culture-specific silence

Glass beadwork

Occupation health hazards

Women affairs

Women empowerment

ABSTRACT

Background: The production of glass beads in Ghana is greatly impacted by the ingenuity of Ghanaian women. Preliminary investigations revealed the lack of interest on the part of women due to poor working conditions as a result of the influence of culture-specific silence. Therefore, the study investigated the poor working conditions faced by these industrious women with the ultimate goal of suggesting ways they can be empowered.

Methods: A phenomenological study was conducted in two indigenous glass bead communities in Ghana. Data were solicited via direct observations, personal interviews and focus group discussions. Twenty-six purposively sampled respondents were recruited for the study. Data from the study were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Results: The results confirmed that the elderly women glass bead makers are much influenced by the Ghanaian culture of silence. This prevents the women from speaking about the challenges they are facing in their work. Also, the women are silenced because of the fear of losing their jobs as well as the reluctance of their male managers to remedy the challenges they encounter in the course of work. This has resulted in poor remuneration, lack of insurance packages for workers, certification, and absence of personal protective tools for the women.

Conclusion: The study tasks the government of Ghana, the Legal Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA), the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission in Ghana, the Ghana Trade Union as well as the Local Government Workers' Union to empower the women to sustain the glass bead industry in Ghana.

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1. Introduction

The contribution of women in world development is now being recognized more than ever. Africa has witnessed relative increases in women's labor force participation rates [1]. Thus, the conversation about women's contribution to the diverse fields of development is now pronounced. This is seen in both academia and policy circles [2]. The stereotyped cultural narrative of women as a weaker sex has seen changes because of the numerous scholarships awarded them for their contributions. Yet, the problem of women empowerment still exists. Women empowerment theorists and researchers have asserted that unless women are empowered as their male counterparts, development efforts will still be partial [3].

The McKinsey Global Institute points out that if women were empowered to participate equally in economic development as the men do, the annual global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could have been stepped up by US\$ 28 trillion, a staggering figure that equates the combined GDP of the United States and China [4]. Empowering women to contribute more significantly has been deliberated widely by feminists. However, the areas of empowerment are varied. For instance, Refs. [5–8] argue that patriarchal power relations must cease to empower more women to have more control over material and intellectual resources. Correa [9] sees women empowerment in the inclusion of more positive aspects to sexual rights in the light of eroticism, recreation, and pleasure. On the other hand, Deshmukh-Ranadive [10] is concerned with

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changing the sociocultural norms such as culture-specific silence [11,12] that prevents female workers from voicing out their poor working conditions, as a great empowerment tool that would boost women's roles in development. This study aims at breaking the culture-specific silence to empower Ghanaian women artists with the right resources and working conditions to contribute significantly to glass bead production in Ghana. The Ghanaian woman, like other African women, past and present have demonstrated that even with their restricted access to material and intellectual resources, impacts greatly to development. In the 2018 Women Entrepreneurship Summit organized by the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) on Tuesday, June 5, 2018, the president of Ghana asserted that "women entrepreneurs in agro-processing, creative arts, textile or clothing design, and the financial or trading sectors have become an important part of the entrepreneurial landscape, with latest figures from the NBSSI indicating that 44% of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are owned by women" [13].

Babou [14] and Alex-Assensoh [15] acknowledged Ghanaian women immigrants who are noted globally for their hard work in foreign companies and academia. Amu [16] mentions that although biological and cultural factors impede the access of Ghanaian women to resources, their efforts in agricultural sector development have merited recognition. Sadly, the same cannot be said of women artists in rural regions of Ghana who engage in traditional and cultural crafts such as bead production. In many countries, conversations on art have revolved around men than women as a result of the restriction of women to domestic work. The challenge to the recognition of women artists historically may have been because of the stereotype that crafts did not fully qualify as creative arts, like the more pronounced fine arts such as sculpture, painting, and architecture purported to be for men. The researchers agree with Asante [17] that "Without date, women might have played unique roles as performing artists, verbal artists, body artists, and visual artists through the use of natural resources such as clay, straw, wood, stones, ivory, and fibres from plants and others to produce artifacts for their daily use" (p. 11). Some of the early anonymous artists of the prehistoric art geniuses were women [18]. Unfortunately, studies show that the contributions of African women artists to the development of the economy in the field of the "dominant traditional crafts" are often not recognized [19]. The world has seen some successes in the recognition of women's efforts to global development in the field of art after the Beijing conference in 1995. In Ghana, scholarly and literary attention has been given to the roles and contribution of women artists to economic development in the fields of textiles [20–22], basketry [23], and pottery [24,25].

The time has come for Africa and Ghana for that matter, to break the culture-specific silence imposed on women artists and listen to their voices. It is high time society closes their ears to the dominating "noises of men having drowned us out in every sphere of life, including the arts" (p. 2) [26]. African scholars must give attention to the contributions and challenges of women in art, because in Ghana, only 16.3% of the Ghanaian women population contributes to the industrial sector, with the percentage estimated to drop in the coming years [27]. Amu [14] insists that if the culture-specific silence imposed on women is not sufficiently addressed, the industrial sector would continue to trail in its achievements, with a lesser number of women fully participating. The same culture-specific silence confronts the women artists who engage in glass bead production in Ghana, hence the need for the study. It is aimed at breaking the culture-specific silence face by rural women glass bead makers in Ghana while highlighting the poor working conditions they face. Also, the study sought to find proactive ways of empowering the women glass bead makers to rekindle their

interest and heighten their contribution to the glass bead production in Ghana. The study is underpinned in the women empowerment theory by Ref. [28]. Women empowerment refers to the process of establishing measures that would enable women to challenge current cultural norms such as culture-specific silence and speak out on the poor conditions of work they face. This correlates with the view of Kabeer [7] who theorized women empowerment as the expansion of women's abilities to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied. This study is in thought with Ozoya et al. [28] and Kabeer [7], theoretically hypothesizing that if Ghanaian women bead makers are empowered by helping them to break away from the culture-specific silence, it would lead to an improvement in their poor working conditions and heighten their output and enrolment in the glass bead industry in Ghana.

1.1. Theoretical background on the culture-specific silence and its influence on female workers in Ghana

Culture-specific silence [11] is the silence dictated by the cultural norms and social values in a society. The causes and interpretations of this type of silence or nonverbal communication depend on the cultural norms regarding the participant and their traits [12]. Generally, culture-specific silence in history among global societies have been directed toward women [29]. The freedom to speak has been taken away from women in most global cultures with men often been the dominant vocal group. Among the Akans of Ghana, which is the focus of this study, culture-specific silence requires that women do not talk but to listen, as public and formal speech is culturally the prerogative of men [12]. As such, culturally, a woman's virtue, respect, and dignity are judged by her silence in most Ghanaian societies. An outspoken woman is culturally labelled as arrogant, disrespectful, or even a witch. Such a woman is said to be *Jbaa akokj nini* (a woman cock), trying to be a man (culturally seen as a cock) [12]. Although in some contemporary or urban Ghanaian societies, the culture-specific silence on the part of women is gradually been abrogated as a result of democracy and education. However, in many rural communities, such as in the areas where this study was conducted, the culture-specific silence of women thrives. This culture-specific silence has found its way in the workplace where the freedom of women to speak about their poor working conditions is viewed as culturally unacceptable. Women workers in many rural communities would prefer not to speak, condemn, or report the poor working conditions (*memmue m'ano*) because they see themselves as powerless or helpless to bring any change with their words, even if they ever dared to speak [30]. The culture-specific silence has led to the marginalization of women workers by their male counterparts in dominant positions at work [29]. Female workers who are entangled in the culture-specific silence, often face poor working conditions such as poor remuneration, withholding of salaries, verbal and physical abuse, denial of privileges, and other conditions of work [31]. Unfortunately, many of these female workers prefer remaining silent about their poor working conditions mostly because of the fear of losing their jobs [29]. Such female workers may shy away and/or refuse to voice out their poor working conditions to researchers [32]. Such female workers are less empowered and this mostly leads to continuous trauma that reduces their productivity at work and increases their life expectancy ratios [33]. Therefore, it is crucial to break or dispel this culture-specific silence that cripples female workers' freedom to speak about the poor working conditions they face. This empowerment holds the prospects of increasing the productivity levels and life expectancy ratios of female workers in societies where the culture-specific silence looms high.

2. Methods

2.1. Study areas

This sociocultural study was conducted within 12 months from July 2018 to July 2019 in two study areas in two regions of Ghana, namely, Krobo–Odumase in the Eastern Region of Ghana as well as Dabaa in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

Odumase Krobo (Fig. 1) is the capital of Lower Manya Krobo district in the Eastern Region of Ghana [34]. The place is a traditional craft village for glass bead production, which was exclusively women craft. The only thriving glass bead industry in Odumase Krobo earns an average monthly sale of 45,000 Ghana Cedis (\$7,800). Thus annually, the company earns 540,000 Ghana Cedis (\$93,600). The industry depends more on the tourist market with fewer earnings from the local market. This may be as a result of the manager always travelling to scout for international buyers for his glass bead products. However, the monthly wage of the female workers is 600 Ghana Cedis (\$104) with no other bonuses put in place such as transportation allowance, accommodation allowance, night work allowance, and health insurance schemes and allowances. On the other hand, Dabaa (Fig. 1) is a small town located in the Atwima Nwabiagya District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Dabaa, the traditional home of glass bead production soon spread to the two other neighboring communities including Asuofia Asamang and Atwima Akropong. The glass bead company is managed by an elderly, illiterate manager who has not put in place robust marketing strategies for his company, such as searching for tourist marketers as has been done by the manager at Odumase Krobo. As a result, the average monthly sale is 8,000

Ghana Cedis (\$1,380), with 96,000 (\$16,560) as the average annual earning of the industry. The average monthly wage of the female glass bead workers is 350 Ghana Cedis (\$61). There are no additional working allowances given to cater for accommodation, transportation, and so on.

2.2. Research design

As the study involved human participants whom the researchers wanted to understand and describe their attitudes through the garnering of verbal and visual data on glass bead production, the qualitative research design was adopted [35].

2.3. Research method

The data for the study were garnered from the women glass bead makers, their managers, and traditional authorities in the glass bead communities, who have insider's perceptions and perspectives through lengthy interviews [36]. As a result of this, phenomenology research was adopted. The researchers wanted to understand the lived experiences [37] of the women glass bead makers and the ordeal they face in the business. Rich description of the production processes that illustrate the plight of the women [38] was of great interest in the study.

2.4. Sample selection, size, and design

Because the study was phenomenological, the participants were selected purposively [36]. Thus, the researchers selected the women glass bead makers, their managers, and traditional chiefs

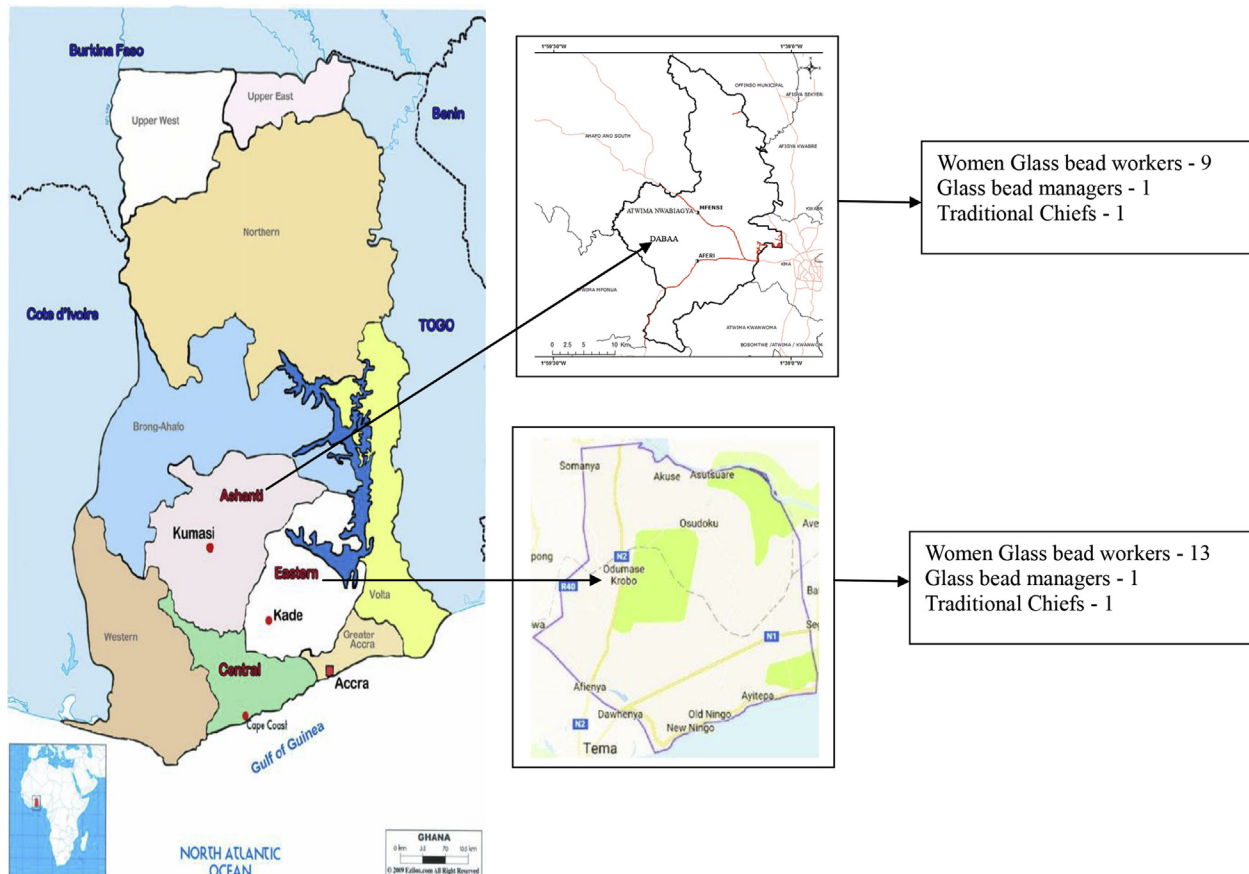


Fig. 1. The map of Ghana showing the study areas and breakdown of interviewees.

who know the challenges faced by the women in the glass bead industry. Creswell [35] and Boyd [38] posit that phenomenology requires long interviews and as such few respondents are often engaged to afford researchers more time to better understand the phenomenon under study. A total of 26 sampled participants from the two traditional glass bead production communities were involved in the study (Fig. 1).

2.5. Data collection tools and procedure

Two instrumental data collection instruments in the field of social and cultural anthropology thus direct observations and interviews (Personal Interviews and Focus Group Discussion) were used for garnering the data for the study. They aided the researchers in gaining detailed insight [39] into the challenges that the women glass bead makers face and how they can be remedied. A well-developed semistructured interview guide was used for conducting in-depth interviews, with each interview lasting for an average of 1 hour, 30 minutes.

Direct observations were made with the aid of a well-designed observation checklist with the researchers acting as nonparticipant observers. The two different data collection instruments used aided the researchers in creating data triangulation to validate the data if similar findings were gathered [40]. The semistructured interview guide and observation checklist designed for the study were pretested on a pilot section of the sample.

2.6. Ethical consideration

To ensure ethical research, informed consent forms with the approval of the Research Ethics Committee in the College of Art and Built Environment of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, were administered to all the participants. The informed consent form explained the rationale for the research, its procedures, risks, and benefits, its voluntary participation nature, and procedures to protect the confidentiality of participants' identity and views [41]. Participants who gave their full consent after the 2 weeks were recruited for the study.

2.7. Data analysis plan

The interpretative phenomenological analysis was used for analyzing the audio-recorded interviews and the video-recorded focus group discussions and observations (Fig. 2).

The first stage of the process is referred to as the emic perspective where the views of participants were transcribed [42]. The researchers carefully listened to the interviews to familiarize themselves with the views of the respondents to develop a holistic sense, the gestalt [43], to be able to represent their voices through thick quotes. All the personal views and preconceptions of the researchers were bracketed [44] so that the unique experiences of the research participants could be represented in truism [44]. To

confirm the validity and accuracy of the data transcribed, member checking with key participants was carried out [36]. The units of meaning from each of the interviews were delineated. Statements that clearly illustrated the researched phenomenon and represented units of relevant meaning were extracted [45]. The number of times the units of meaning were cited in the transcribed data in each interview, herein, referred to as significance to the research questions were judged as relevant [42]. That notwithstanding, unique revelations in the lived experiences of a small section of the women glass bead makers that threw much light on the research questions were given attention in the themes delineated. Clustered themes were generated from the list of units of meanings within a holistic context under each of the research questions for the study. A composite summary of the general and unique themes from the units of meanings was written and discussed rigorously with supporting scientific evidence.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. The culture-specific silence and the challenges faced by the women glass bead makers

Despite the hard work demonstrated by the women in the glass bead production, they recounted various challenges that they were facing. The challenges include occupational health hazards, poor conditions of service, lack of accredited certifications, and the lack of financial assistance to kick start their own small-scale industries after training. Unfortunately, none of the women has attempted to voice out these challenges to the manager for remediation. They cited three reasons for not wanting to complain about the aforementioned challenges. First, the women glass bead makers said it was improper to complain to a manager who is a man. Second, they failed to complain for fear of losing their job. Third, they opined that nothing would be done about their complaints because they were women.

Most of the female glass bead makers (86%) said that it was improper to complain as women to the manager, who is a man. These 19 women glass bead makers were influenced by the culture-specific silence that was popular in their rural communities. They did not want to be seen as arrogant and rebellious of the managerial authority in their workplace. They wanted to be seen as humble and submissive as it is culturally expected of women in their respective communities. This correlated with the view of Agyekum [12] that women in Ghanaian societies want to be viewed as respectful and submissive and not rebellious. Therefore, complaining of the challenges facing them was seen as improper. This was noted more of the elderly women glass bead makers who were older than 40 years. However, the three other glass bead makers (14%) were not influenced by the culture-specific silence were all below the age of 30 years. This may be a result of the influence of Western education and globalization, which is more evident in the younger generation [46].

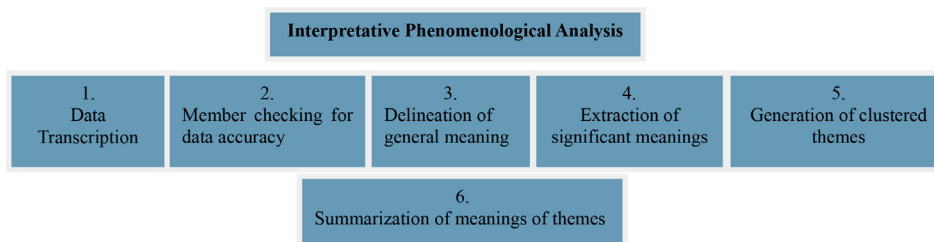


Fig. 2. Data analysis plan for the study.

A greater section of the women glass bead makers (95%) opined that they have decided to remain silent over the challenges that they are facing for fear of losing their jobs. These rural women glass bead makers did not have the required resources needed to set up their small-scale industries. Also, the glass bead industries that had employed them were the only industries in their respective communities. The women feared that if they complained about the challenges they were facing at the workplace, it may result in the loss of their jobs. They only had to remain silent over the challenges they were facing to ensure their job security. Two of the elderly glass bead makers disclosed that they have witnessed the sacking of three of their work colleagues who indirectly complained about the poor working conditions. Thus, they did not want to follow suit and lose their jobs. Mahrukh et al [29] found similar findings among female workers in the Pashtun society in Pakistan who because of the influence of culture-specific silence decided to remain silent over poor working conditions for fear of losing their jobs.

All the women glass bead makers decided to remain silent about matters regarding the poor working conditions they were facing at the glass bead industries because they held the position that the management would not do anything about the challenges they were facing even if they mustered up the courage to speak about them. Ballard-Reisch [30] noted similar sentiments among old adult workers in rural communities he studied. The women glass bead makers mentioned that one of their work colleagues who was a relative of the manager was warned severely for complaining about their poor remuneration. They said that it is probably because of their gender, that was why the management was not taking their complaints seriously. There is discrimination against women in terms of working conditions, with men enjoying better conditions of work than women [47]. The women glass bead makers are helpless in changing this discrimination against them and thus resort to silence. Previous studies on women working in the informal sector have reported that female workers who are influenced by culture-specific silence are mostly objects of poor working conditions such as poor remuneration, denial of essential allowances and working opportunities, and so on [31]. The findings of the study revealed that women glass bead makers experience similar poor working conditions. These included lack of certification as evidence of skills in glass bead production, lack of financial support for trainees to set up their small-scale industries, breach of occupation health hazards and safety requirements for glass bead makers as well as poor payment system and conditions of service (Table 1).

3.2. Poor payment system and conditions of service-non-coverage by minimum wage legislation and social security

One of the leading challenges the women face has to do with poor conditions of service. They complained that they are paid on a daily basis and their salaries are also very low, making it practically impossible to enroll on social security. They told the researchers:

“We are paid on a commission basis with no regular monthly salaries. Therefore, if you don’t plan carefully, you would end up squandering all your earnings. Because of the recent instability of the Susu (small monetary collections by micro-financial companies) and their constant report of fraudulent activities, we don’t want to save our monies with them. Keeping the daily stipends all by ourselves is difficult because of the low daily wages we receive” (WW-D, FGD, 27/12/2018).

“Because our salary is not on a payroll, we don’t have any contributions set aside for a pension scheme like the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) that many public and private organizations join. Besides, we are not enrolled in any insurance scheme because of the nature of our payment system. We would have wished our salaries were paid at the banks so that the insurance companies make deductions. We fear for our future when we grow old. We may not have any earnings that we can rely on” (WW-KO, FGD, 2/01/2019).

It can be inferred from the views of the women glass bead makers that because of their low remuneration and system of payment, they are unable to have privileges and opportunities such as a pension scheme as well as social security arrangement. Also, women glass bead makers are not given any allowances to cater to their accommodation, transportation, and health-related issues. Investigations made by the researchers revealed that the women glass bead makers do not know that they have rights as far as their payment, insurance, and social schemes are concerned. Their silence and lack of knowledge of their rights over these matters have given their male supervisors the infantry to deny them a good payment system as well as insurance and social scheme packages. This confirms the findings of Osei-Boateng and Ampratwum [48] as well as Holmes and Scott [49] that women in the informal sector are denied a better payment system, social insurance, and pension schemes because of their silence. The Legal Advocacy for Women in Africa must come to the aid of the poor women who work under precarious working conditions such as the glass bead makers at Odumase Krobo and Dabaa and provide legal representation for the improvement of their remuneration, occupation safety and health-

Table 1
Negative effects of the challenges faced by the women glass bead makers in Ghana

Challenge faced by the women glass bead makers in Ghana as a result of culture-specific silence	Negative effects of the challenges on the women glass bead makers in Ghana
1. Poor payment system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial of social security and pension scheme • Denial of health insurance package • Denial of all forms of working allowances such as accommodation, health, transportation, etc.
2. Absence of a robust arrangement in observing occupational health hazards and safety requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular health issues such as skin itching, low blood count, injury, body pains, eye problems
3. Absence of financial support to set up small-scale enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetual stay at their current workplaces even though they face precarious working conditions • Inability to develop their potentials and make better financial gains to enrich their livelihoods
4. Absence of certification as evidence of training in the glass bead production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to further their education in glass bead production in higher institutions of learning • Failure to provide certification of training to be able to set up and operate their glass bead production enterprises

Source: Field Survey, 2018/2019.

related issues, as well as enrolment for their social insurance pensions. Also, the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission in Ghana must set out a clear roadmap for private service pay systems in addition to the already existing public service pay system for those working in the informal sector. This will prevent private operators in the informal sector from poorly remunerating their staff, especially the voiceless female workers. The labor laws in Ghana offer some statutory benefits to employees including social security contributions. The Ghana Labour Act (Act 651) guarantees the right of employees to insurance pensions, whereas the National Pension Act (2008) orders for the payment of social security by employers and employees. The National Pension Act (2008) stipulates a monthly contribution of 18.5% of the gross pay of employees with the employer paying 13% and the employee paying for the remaining 5.5%. The department of labor must act swiftly to hold these employers accountable and prosecute them for not paying the social insurance pensions for the women. Sensitization workshops should be organized by the Ghana Trade Union as well as by the Local Government Workers' Union for all trade unions for craftsmen to enroll all their workers on social pension schemes or risk being banned from their operations.

3.3. Absence of occupation health hazards and safety requirements for the women glass bead makers

The women complained that they have no access to protective gadgets such as goggles, nose masks, aprons, and gloves exposing them to serious health risks. They mentioned that when they are sieving the pounded glass, they risk inhaling some of the tiny glass powder, which can affect their health. Also, when they are breaking the glass manually and pounding them, they need protective gloves to protect their hands from any injury. Again, in the firing of the beads, the women complained that the heat from the furnace makes them lose blood, as purported by medical officers they visited. In a focus group discussion, the women told the researchers:

“We experience skin itching frequently due to the glass that we work with. Also, because we wear slippers and sandals to work, sometimes, broken glasses on the floor hurt us. Also, the absence of goggles makes us experience eye problems. We also experience body pains whenever we engage in the pounding of the glass. The metal pestle is very heavy and the strenuous task makes us fall sick whenever we have huge orders” (WO-KO, FGD, 2/01/2019).

The women have decided to be silent about this poor working condition because they assert that their managers will not do anything about it. Their helplessness and failure to risk losing the job have resulted in their silence. When the managers were questioned on why they have not given the workers protective gadgets, they asserted that they have them but the women prefer working without them. The manager at Odumase Krobo told the researchers that the women are skilled and thus record low injuries during the manual breaking of the glasses and pounding of the glasses. Also, he stated that these women work better and faster without the protective gloves and thus did not prefer working with them. The researchers observed that the managers had more interest in the output of these women as compared to considering health needs. The researchers observed some scars on the legs and hands of some of the women purported to have been as a result of injuries from broken and powdered glasses. The poor remuneration also prevented the women from purchasing protective gadgets though they knew of their benefits. This condition observed in the study areas is a deliberate breach of the ethics and regulations in the occupational health and safety (OHS) regulations that should be meticulously followed and implemented by industries. The Society of Glass Beadmakers in the United States insists that all glass bead

production centers globally must ensure that the ethics in OHS are duly observed. Implementation of these ethics would call for a thorough analysis of the working conditions and its impact on workers' health and/or well-being while proposing solutions to zero or reduce to a minimal degree, all forms of occupational hazards and risk factors [50]. The field investigations carried out by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health revealed possible health hazards in a typical glass bead production workshop. The findings are similar to those the researchers observed in the two traditional craft centers that were studied. The three major health risks cited included workers exposed to IR radiations from heating equipment and devices for firing glass beads such as torches and kiln furnaces, getting cut by broken glass, as well as poor ergonomic practices [51]. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommended the wearing of protective eyewear and more ventilation outlets in the firing section of the glass bead production unit. Also, the institute suggested that glass bead workers must engage in frequent breaks to reduce the strain on the hands and wrists while undertaking the traditional hand washing practice before eating and after working. These same practices must be enforced at the bead making production centers at Odumase Krobo and Dabaa in Ghana. The Department of Factories Inspectorate under the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations in collaboration with the Bureau of Public Safety in Ghana must intensify their inspections of the safety measures and use of personal protective equipment at MSMEs, especially those in high-risk enterprises like glass bead production in Ghana. Strict sanctions must be imposed on employers who fail to provide and observe a healthy working environment and practices such as closing down their businesses as well as imposing huge monetary fines. Wider sensitization programs must be organized to educate informal sector workers on the appropriate agencies to report grievances on lack of protective gadgets and bad working environment that exposes them to dangerous health risks [52]. The Trade Union Corporation and labor unions must assist in carrying out these sensitization programs to hard-to-reach areas under the informal sector. Another solution could be incorporating occupational health care into public health care services at the district and local levels. Another giant feat of ensuring compliance with OHS practices is the passing of the National OHS policy that would give a more elaborate framework to regulate all forms of OHS in Ghana.

3.4. Absence of financial support for women glass bead makers to set up their small-scale enterprises

The women glass bead makers complained that they have no financial support to assist them in setting up their small-scale enterprises. The start-up capital as well as setting up a shop is a challenge. In a focus group discussion at Odumase Krobo, the women registered their displeasure saying:

“Many of us have graduated from here for the past nine years. However, we can't leave to work on our own because we are financially incapacitated to set up our small scale industries. The banks are feeling reluctant to give us loans because we don't have any savings with them and more so, their interest rates are high” (WO-KO, FGD, 2/01/2019).

Their financial incapacity to set up small-scale enterprises on their own has rendered them silent to keep on working for their managers who are not willing to improve their working conditions. The women wanted the government to recognize their traditional crafts and put up structures to help in the promotion and marketing of their products. Strategic financial and credit schemes that would build the financial capacity of workers in the informal sector should be developed by the Ghana government to support informal sector workers, especially for the women in small-scale industries to

boost Ghana's economy. Similar local development strategies have been implemented by the USA and UK to support MSMEs and entrepreneurs [51]. The Ghana government can do this by supporting entrepreneurs when they are attending international fairs and programs targeted at helping them find a market and prospective buyers for their products. Recently, the president of Ghana at the 2018 Women Entrepreneurship Summit organized by the NBSSI directed the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre to offer 50% of their loans for women entrepreneurs who engage in small-scale businesses.

Unfortunately, the interactions with the women showed that they do not know of the existence of the official Small and Medium-sized Enterprises' Credit Schemes in Ghana such as the Australian Import Program, the Japanese Non-Project Grants, the Canadian Structural Adjustment Fund and Support for Public Expenditure, the Trade and Investment Programme, the Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, the Export Processing Zone, and the Ghana Trade and Investment Gateway project. The researchers were surprised that the managers of the glass bead production centers did not know any of the donors supported schemes by the Government of Ghana such as the Business Assistance Fund, the Ghana Investment Fund, and the Export Development and Investment Fund. To remedy this situation, regular capacity-building workshops must be conducted by the NBSSI for the glass bead trainees who would want to establish their own small-scale enterprises to enlighten them on how to set up small-scale enterprises, the business financial aid agencies available and how to receive financial assistance from them. These donor agencies must also reach out to the informal sectors to offer such assistance.

The various trade unions in Ghana have established welfare and microfinance schemes to assist their members. The members of the Ghana bead society, as well as the local beads societies in Odumase Krobo and Dabaa, must discuss ways of setting up their welfare and microfinance associations to support their members financially. More importantly, these organized groups would strategically position them to receive financial support from funding bodies [53]. One such body is the World Bank that supports Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises' development programs. Other donor agencies include the Care-TechnoServe Fund for small-scale industries, DANIDA SME Fund, GTZ Fund for the promotion of micro and small enterprises, SECO, and FMO SME Financing Schemes as well as Oiko Credit. Other organizations such as the USAID, UNDP, UNIDO, IFAD/AFD, CIDA, and the Bank of Ghana's Private Enterprise and Export Development Fund (PEED) are ready to offer aid to young entrepreneurs with interesting, original and marketable business ideas.

3.5. Lack of certification as evidence of skills in glass bead production

The trainees who have graduated and are now working at the glass bead production centers in the two study areas told the researchers that they did not receive any certification after their training. Two glass bead makers who enrolled to learn the craft after their senior high school education retorted that they are unable to further their education in their chosen craft, thus glass bead production because they do not have a certificate as evidence of their training. They also mentioned that the certification of their training was also important if they wanted to set up their small-scale enterprises. They also admitted that all efforts to convince their managers to certify them for the training they have received have been futile. Thus, they have to just remain silent about this condition. The managers at the two glass bead production centers confirmed not issuing certificates to their trainees after they have successfully mastered the skills in the glass bead production. However, the manager at Odumase Krobo assured the researchers

that he was now going to award certificates to his trainees. Yet, when he was asked whether he has gotten approval from the appropriate bodies such as the Ghana Accreditation Board and the National Apprentice Training Board (NTAB) under the Council for Technical and Vocational Education Training (COTVET) legally mandated by the Ghana government to oversee and regulate apprenticeship training including registration, content to be taught, duration, and certification [53], he replied that he has not. Interactions with the managers revealed that they do not know of the existence of these agencies. This may partly be attributed to these agencies' focus on formal apprenticeship training institutions without absorbing the apprenticeship training institutions in the informal sector. To remedy this situation, the Ghana Beads Society must engage with the National Apprentice Training Board (NTAB) to find a permanent solution to accreditation and certification procedures for their trainees. Issues on certification procedures must be given serious attention because, in modern societies, certificates have been the professional credentials that authenticate the skills acquired by trainees [53].

The study aimed at investigating the influence of culture-specific silence on women glass bead makers to empower them to break the silence. The study has shown that the elderly women glass bead makers are much influenced by the Ghanaian culture of silence that prevents women from speaking about the challenges they are facing in their work to their male managers and supervisors. Also, the silence among the women glass bead makers is as a result of their fear of losing their jobs as well as the reluctance of their male managers to remedy the challenges they encounter in the course of work. The challenges faced by the women glass bead makers included poor remuneration, precarious working conditions that fail to observe occupational health standards and requirements, absence of financial support to set up their small-scale enterprises, and the absence of certification as evidence of their training. The study has suggested proactive ways that the concerned bodies can empower the women glass bead makers in breaking the culture-specific silence to address the challenges they encounter in the glass bead industry. Further studies investigating the level of knowledge of private and public informal sector workers, especially female workers on work ethics and labor laws would be worthwhile in addressing the knowledge gaps faced by women informal sectors on labor laws and work ethics. Also, future studies assessing the level of knowledge of managers of private-sector workers on how to ensure a good interpersonal relationship with workers is essential in improving the relationship between managers and female workers. This would make it easier in breaking the culture-specific silence among female workers for them to freely voice out their grievances as well as offering proactive suggestions that would improve the general well-being of the industry.

Conflicts of interest

All authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2020.08.002>.

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