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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

DRIVERS OF MIGRATION: HOW POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS SHAPE ECOWAS MIGRANTS' RELOCATION BEHAVIORS IN GHANA

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

FEBRUARY 2026

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except for references to other people's works, which have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my research carried out at the Department of Political Science under the supervision of Prof. Isaac Owusu-Mensah, Dr Abdul-Jalilu Ateku, and Dr Charles Amo-Agyemang.



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grandmother, Afia Saah Adwubi, who nurtured me in my childhood, my father, Mr. Kwasi Boateng, and my mother, Ms. Margaret Nsiah. To my sister, Ms. Afia Amoah, and my brother, Mr. Kwaku Boahen, for their unwavering support, prayers, and guidance throughout my PhD journey.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
CDD-GHANA	Ghana Center for Democratic Development
CEPS	Customs, Excise, and Preventive Service
CLOGSAG	Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana
CMS	Center for Migration Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GIPC	Ghana Investment Promotion Center
GIS	Ghana Immigration Service
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
GUTA	Ghana Union Traders Association

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HDI	Human Development Index
ICMPD	International Center for Migration Policy Development
ID	Identification Card
IDI	In-depth Interview
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGO	International Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPS	Internally Displaced Person
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MIDWA	Migration Dialogue for West Africa
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
NADMO	National Disaster Management Organization
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NLMP	National Labor Migration Policy
NMP	National Migration Policy
NPP	New Patriotic Party
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCR-IFRC	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the factors that contribute to south-south migration in West Africa and the challenges associated with it, particularly how political instability and oppression influence ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana; how poverty and unemployment facilitate the relocation of ECOWAS migrants to Ghana; how inequality and poor social infrastructure shape ECOWAS citizens' migration behavior; and how natural disasters and drought compel ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana. It is primarily based on data regarding ECOWAS migrants in Ghana and their experiences in the border towns of Sampa, Aflao, and Hamile.

While academic research on the drivers of migration has surged in recent years, a gap remains in knowledge concerning the factors that influence south-south migration and the challenges that migrants face in host countries. This study aims to address this gap. It answers five main research questions: First, in what ways do political instability and oppression cause ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana? Second, how do poverty and unemployment increase the likelihood of ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana? Third, what role has inequality and poor social infrastructure affect the future migration behavior of ECOWAS nationals? Fourth, to what extent do natural disasters and droughts drive citizens of ECOWAS to migrate to Ghana? In other words, do natural disasters in other ECOWAS countries contribute to migration in Ghana? Fifth, what have been the major challenges for these migrants in Ghana?

This thesis is guided by a critical realist ontology, adopting a qualitative research design and approach. The process consisted of two phases. First, elite interviews were conducted with senior government officials and representatives from NGOs. Second, focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews, recordings, and data analysis were performed. In total, 43 in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with ECOWAS migrants, government officials, local Ghanaians, business representatives, NGOs, and academics.

To examine the factors that account for migration to Ghana, the research draws on the push-pull theory. Using this framework, it identifies four main factors facilitating migration to Ghana: i) political factors; ii) economic factors; iii) social factors; and iv) environmental factors. However, this study introduces a fifth factor, described as (v) religious factors. Together, the analysis shows the drivers of ECOWAS migration to Ghana. The responses are also influenced by the emerging discourse on poverty reduction, human security, and survival, as well as environmental degradation and destruction.

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The study further demonstrates that the lack of proper documentation and rising costs of living are not the only major challenges facing ECOWAS citizens in Ghana; language barriers, policy limitations, and discrimination also pose significant difficulties. The thesis reveals that while ECOWAS migrants choose Ghana over other West African countries, their choice comes with a cost. This study, therefore, questions and challenges the tendency in migration studies literature to focus on trends, patterns, continuity, and complexities of migration while downplaying the primary factors or drivers that contribute to migration in the first place.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter sets out the background of the thesis, explains its goals and objectives, significance, and scope. It briefly situates the study in the field of political science and provides a chapter-by-chapter outline. In brief, the thesis examines the factors that account for the citizens of ECOWAS to migrate to Ghana. In particular, it is interested in understanding why ECOWAS citizens migrate to Ghana and the challenges they face while living in the country. These dynamics create uncertainties that affect the host country and the migrants themselves. At a more theoretical level, the thesis is concerned with understanding the underlying factors that shape the future migration behaviors of ECOWAS nationals. In doing so, it integrates perspectives from comparative migration studies and international development.

1.1 Background to the Study

Migration has long been recognized as a fundamental human strategy for survival and advancement in the human race. Throughout history, individuals and communities have moved across borders to escape poverty, food insecurity, oppression, and other hardships (Kumasi et al., 2019). Migration is a defining global phenomenon. According to a 2024 report by the United Nations, there are approximately 304 million international migrants worldwide, accounting for 3.7% of the global population.

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Migration in Africa is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including poverty, unemployment, inequality, insecurity, and inadequate social services, all of which affect individuals' decisions to move within the continent (Attoh and Ishola, 2021). As of 2024, Sub-Saharan Africa was home to approximately 24.3 million international migrants, making up 2.0% of the world's international migrants relative to the total population (United Nations, 2024).

The total number of intra-African migrants, estimated at 20.8 million, exceeds the number of African migrants relocating to non-African countries (19.7 million). In contrast, the figure for non-African migrants moving to African countries is significantly lower at 4.3 million people (UN DESA, 2025). These data suggest that while African migrants tend to move outside the continent, they do so to a slightly lesser degree than they do within Africa. Furthermore, the limited influx of migrants from outside Africa is significant. The primary routes of intra-African migration are predominantly between neighboring countries, underscoring the tendency for migration within the continent to occur over short distances and follow a more localized pattern rather than a global one (Nistri et al., 2023).

Migration has been a crucial and evolving issue in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for decades now. Yet, there is a limited understanding of the factors that shape migrants' future decision behaviors and settlement outcomes. This is significant because the settlement behaviors of migrants expose them to major challenges, including discrimination, exclusion, hostility, and hate speech, especially where economic resource mobilization opportunities are limited (Awumbila et al. 2018; Bisong 2019; Arhin-Sam 2019). This situation becomes even more challenging for ECOWAS migrants perceived to have more adequate economic activities than well-established Ghanaians living in those border settlements. For this

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reason, their ability to live peacefully and work freely is key to strengthening regional integration within the ECOWAS region.

As already indicated, most migrants from the West African sub-region, like those from other parts of the world, are motivated by improved employment opportunities and economic conditions (Afrobarometer, 2019). Several factors, including population growth, poverty, poor economic performance, environmental degradation, climate change, and conflict, have driven the diverse migration patterns observed in the sub-region (Adepoju, 2005; Bakewell and de Haas, 2007).

Ghana's robust economy, dedication to democratic principles, and notable political stability have positioned it as a prominent migration destination within the ECOWAS region (Segadlo, 2021). The Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) reported that in 2018, nearly 956,000 individuals were officially documented upon arrival in the country (GIS, 2019). Data from the UN DESA reveal that the number of Ghanaian emigrants increased from approximately 762,000 in 2010 to 1,004,000 in 2020, with 446,000 residing in other West African countries. Simultaneously, the immigrant population in Ghana, predominantly from neighboring countries, increased from approximately 194,000 to 476,000 during the same ten-year period (UN DESA, 2021). It is worth noting that the immigrant demographics in Ghana include nationals from Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Given that many migrants' populations reside in Ghana, a limited understanding of why they chose Ghana over other sub-Saharan African countries or the factors that shape their decisions to migrate to Ghana poses a particular threat to the Ghanaian citizenry and the state institutions. This, in turn, affects the continued existence of the ECOWAS protocol and many other formal legal frameworks that guarantee human security, survival, and free movement of people from one place to another.

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1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The West African sub-region has a rich history of human migration that continues to this day. While there is a prevailing understanding that migration from West Africa is primarily directed toward Europe, data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicate that approximately 90% of the 7.4 million migrants living in West Africa in 2021 originated from other countries. Over the last three decades, the proportion of migrants has risen steadily from 2.6% in the mid-1990s to 2.8% by the mid-2020s; nonetheless, their share of the overall population has remained relatively constant (UN DESA, 2020).

Nevertheless, a notable trend has recently emerged, with an increasing number of West African migrants relocating to Europe and North America. While this migration trend or pattern is widely acknowledged and dominates ongoing discourse in the migration literature, the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), however, indicates that intra-regional migration remains the dominant form of movement among individuals in West Africa (Filho et al., 2022). For instance, by the end of 2020, approximately two-thirds of West African migrants had settled in another country within the sub-region (UN DESA, 2020). This raises an important question about where do these migrants go? And why do they go to those specific destination countries?

Ghana has emerged as one of the prominent destinations for such migrants. Upon arrival in Ghana, many ECOWAS migrants gravitate toward border towns and communities, such as Accra, Aflao, Sampa, and Hamile, revealing dramatic patterns and trends in migrants' settlement behavior and presenting an exciting research landscape in these communities. To be clear, the border towns and settlement behaviors of ECOWAS migrants in Ghana are far from new, but it is especially unclear

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to the government, policymakers, the media, ordinary citizens, and the country's general security apparatuses what factors motivate migrants to move to Ghana.

Existing literature highlights the economic and political drivers of migration (Adepoju, 2009; Aryeetey, 2018; Teye et al., 2019) but provides less attention to the social and environmental factors that also shape intra-regional migration (Adepoju, 2006; Awumbila et al., 2014; Filho et al., 2022). Moreover, these drivers are often studied in isolation rather than in terms of their interactions in practice. While the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol has received extensive attention as a legal framework, fewer studies have examined the lived experiences of migrants, especially the everyday challenges they face in host countries like Ghana, including documentation, housing, cost of living, discrimination, exclusion, and language barriers (Awumbila et al. 2018; Bisong 2019; Arhin-Sam 2019). Finally, there is limited scholarship linking these experiences systematically to Ghana's migration policies and its evolving role in regional migration governance during the Fourth Republic. In summary, while the extant literature provides valuable insights into the demographics and statistical studies of migrants in Ghana, knowledge gaps remain. Most notably, few empirical studies have so far delved into the underlying factors that push and pull migrants to Ghana and away from their home countries. Similarly, we know very little about the main challenges that these migrants face when they relocate to Ghana. At present, the existing literature has failed to systematically explore the factors that influence ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana and the challenges these migrants face while living in the country.

The central question of this thesis is to examine the push and pull factors of migration, as well as the complex and diverse viewpoints surrounding migration in the ECOWAS region, with a particular focus on Ghana's experience during the Fourth Republic. Additionally, this study draws

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broader implications of migration in ECOWAS, highlighting Ghana's distinctive role and challenges as a destination for migrants.

1.2.1 Research Objectives and Questions

The overarching objective of this research is to examine the underlying factors that contribute to citizens of the ECOWAS region migrating to Ghana and the challenges they encounter while living there. In other words, the study seeks to understand the factors that shape the decisions of ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

i. To examine how political instability and oppression cause ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.
ii. To assess the extent to which poverty and unemployment increase the likelihood of ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana.
iii. To ascertain how inequality and poor social infrastructure affect ECOWAS citizens' future migration behavior to Ghana.
iv. To determine whether natural disasters and droughts drive ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.
v. To explore the major challenges facing these migrants in Ghana

The main research question is to examine the factors that account for ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana and the challenges they face during their stay?

The specific research questions of the study are as follows:

i. In what ways do political instability and oppression cause ECOWAS citizens migrate to Ghana?

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ii. How do poverty and unemployment increase the likelihood of ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana?

iii. What role has inequality and poor social infrastructure affect the future migration behavior of ECOWAS nationals?

iv. To what extent do natural disasters and droughts drive citizens of the ECOWAS to Ghana? In other words, do natural disasters in other ECOWAS countries contribute to migration in Ghana?

v. What are the major challenges facing these migrants in Ghana?

1.3 Situating the Study in the Field of Political Science

Migration in West Africa is often viewed as a demographic or economic phenomenon, yet political institutions, state capacity, and regional governance fundamentally shape its regulation and outcomes. This study situates migration within the core concerns of Political Science by examining how Ghana's political institutions, policy processes, and regional commitments under the Fourth Republic structure migration flows and experiences. By focusing on the interplay between domestic governance and regional integration, the study contributes to debates in comparative politics of migration, state-society relations, and the political economy of development.

While there is evidence of pockets of democratic backsliding (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025) in Ghana's Fourth Republic, the country's ongoing political stability and democratic governance serve as an attractive magnet for migrants from ECOWAS countries experiencing political turmoil (Awumbila et al., 2014). The field of Political Science provides the tools to analyze how democratic processes, human rights protection, and the rule of law shape migration trends and migrant integration. This research highlights the political, social, environmental, and religious factors, as well as economic opportunities, that shape migration patterns and trends.

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A central focus is on how Ghana's political institutions, governmental agencies, and policies (Kandilige et al., 2023) under the Fourth Republic regulate migration flows within the ECOWAS framework. Particular attention is given to the implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol and the tensions between national legislation and regional obligations (Teye et al., 2019). This tension uncovers a governance paradox: while Ghana is committed to regional integration through the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, it also strives to protect national priorities, often resulting in political and institutional negotiation that defines migrants' access to rights and opportunities.

This study also engages the political economy dimensions of migration—specifically, the influence of governance structures on economic prospects for migrants, labor rights, and social cohesion—which are crucial for understanding migration within the field of Political Science. In other words, migration in Ghana cannot be understood apart from the broader development strategies, policy choices, and regional cooperation efforts that are politically negotiated and implemented.

Further, the research addresses the politics of identity and belonging, including nationalism, ethnicity, gender, and the political discourse surrounding migrants in Ghana (Awumbila et al., 2018). These dynamics illustrate a significant issue in Political Science regarding identity politics, inclusion, and the challenges of governance.

In conclusion, this study is situated within the field of Political Science as it examines migration through the lenses of governance, policy implementation, democratic processes, regional integration, political economy, and the dynamics between the state and society. By focusing on Ghana's Fourth Republic, it contributes to understanding how political institutions and state structures shape migration experiences within the ECOWAS region. The analysis extends debates

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in Political Science about the capacity of democratizing states to balance national sovereignty with regional commitments, as well as the political dimensions of mobility in contexts of regional integration.

1.4 Significance and Scope of the Study

Beyond justifying the choice of Ghana as a case study, it is equally important to point out the contributions of this research. First, this study aims to advance the current literature on South-South migration significantly. It specifically seeks to clarify the factors influencing migration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with Ghana as the focal point. The ongoing development in Ghana's Fourth Republic has made migration a key part of the country's historical story during the period under study. By examining and recording migration patterns in Ghana and the broader West African sub-region, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on this phenomenon, providing a valuable resource for students and future researchers.

Second, the study enriches discourse on the underlying causes of migration by offering sub-region-specific insights, thereby contributing to the theoretical literature on the causes and dynamics of migration in developing countries. This is significant because attempts to theorize the reasons behind migration have largely come from scholars in the developed world, with little attention paid to the factors that drive migration in the developing world. This study aims to address this gap.

Third, this study offers tailored policy recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to address the challenges communities face due to the unrestricted movement of ECOWAS citizens into Ghana. Understanding the drivers of migration, including political, economic, social, and environmental factors, helps ECOWAS governments to formulate and implement policies that

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enhance free movement protocols, improve economic mobility, and strengthen regional integration within the ECOWAS.

Fourth, the study reveals that social and religious factors—such as cultural ties, family reunifications, religious celebrations, and festivals—play a significant role in helping ECOWAS governments mitigate social tensions, including xenophobia, hate crimes, discrimination, hostility, and exclusion. These factors promote inclusion and brotherliness while also intensifying efforts to manage urban population pressures in host countries by reducing negative attitudes towards migrants from ECOWAS member states. Addressing these gaps furthers our understanding of the relationship among political, economic, social, environmental, and religious factors that drive migrants to host countries. Also, it contributes to the nascent literature on migration and politico-socio-economic characteristics by revealing distinct patterns in the underlying circumstances and integration experiences of ECOWAS migrants in sub-Saharan Africa compared to the developed world.

Finally, the study provides empirical data that help us to understand the motivations behind intra-regional migration in the ECOWAS region, understand factors that would enable us to protect migrants 'rights to the city significantly, that is, the rights of migrants to live and work in host countries, and ensure safe migration pathways within ECOWAS. This knowledge helps us significantly address gaps in intra-regional migration patterns, contemporary migration trends, and policies to strengthen integration within the ECOWAS sub-region.

This research focuses exclusively on the complex and multifaceted causal factors shaping ECOWAS migrants' decisions to relocate to Ghana and the challenges they encounter while living there. It is not concerned with the personal and psychological characteristics of migrants, the administrative or legal processes of obtaining visas or permits for migrants in Ghana, and the

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cultural practices and traditions of migrants unrelated to their decisions to relocate to Ghana. In addition, it is limited to examining the underlying factors that motivate ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana during the Fourth Republic (1993 to present).

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation relates to the methodology adopted. As mentioned in chapter four, this research faced challenges in accessing participants because some of the key participants, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, did not respond to the interview invitations despite repeated efforts on the part of the researcher to encourage participation. The lack of availability of research participants points to a reduction in the sample size. For this reason, the qualitative analysis was conducted without the insights of key informants from the Foreign Affairs Ministry. While the researcher had hoped to capture the views of these informants, the researcher was unable to do so because the Ministry repeatedly "misplaced" three introductory letters and interview schedules that the researcher had given them. Rather, the researcher relied on the Ministry of Interior, the Ghana Immigration Service, and the National Development Planning Commission for insights in the analysis.

The second limitation relates to the research focus on ECOWAS migrants as the unit of analysis. While this approach is useful, the study acknowledges that migrants are often vulnerable and at risk of ethical, social, and power imbalances, including stigma, limited access to social services, psychological trauma, and even legal repercussions. However, the explanations in this research did not focus on the personal and psychological characteristics of migrants, the administrative or legal processes of obtaining visas or permits for migrants in Ghana, and the cultural practices and traditions of migrants unrelated to their decisions to relocate to Ghana. Rather, the perspectives provided by diverse participants in this research have provided useful insights into understanding

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the underlying factors that motivate ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana under the Fourth Republic (1993 to present). For this reason, the limitations outlined reveal scope for future research, but they do not in any way affect the validity and credibility of the research findings.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The remainder of this dissertation is organized into seven chapters. **Chapter Two** reviews the relevant literature, drawing on books, journals, reports, and other sources to address the research questions and objectives. **Chapter Three** sets out the theoretical framework, focusing on the push-and-pull theory and its relevance to the study. **Chapter Four** outlines the methodology, including the qualitative research design, the use of primary and secondary data, ethical considerations, and the rationale for selecting the three case study areas: Sampa in the Jaman North District, Aflao in the Ketu South District, and Hamile in the Lambussie-Karni District. **Chapter Five** presents the data analysis, linking fieldwork findings to the study's objectives and hypotheses. **Chapter Six** discusses the results in relation to empirical evidence, theoretical insights, comparative literature, and policy debates. Finally, **Chapter Seven** summarizes the main findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature on migration at the Global, African, West African, and Ghanaian levels is quite extensive. This chapter reviews the literature based on the following seven thematic areas: (i) Conceptual clarification of migration; (ii) Regional cooperation frameworks; (iii) Challenges of implementing ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol; (iv) Challenges faced by ECOWAS migrants; (v) Ghana as a migration hub; (vi) Drivers of Ghana's attractiveness; and (vii) Ghana's national policy framework and international engagements. The overall aim is to situate the study within broader debates on migration governance and development from the global to the national levels by complementing existing studies and addressing knowledge gaps.

2.1 Studies on Migration at the Global Level

2.1.1 Conceptual Classification of Migration

The movement of people from one place to another in international policy development and practice has been extensively documented, albeit with diverse perspectives (Geddes et al., 2022; UN DESA, 2024; ICMPD, 2020; Arifeen, 2013). Notwithstanding this, the consensus among scholars is that migration refers to the movement of people from one district or province to another, whether within the same country or across international borders. This definition is widely accepted by migration researchers, including Boyle and Halfacree (1998) and Khalid and Urbanski (2021), and is supported by the 2022 World Migration Report.

Estimating the precise number of migrants is difficult because of the combination of conceptual, methodological, and practical challenges leading to data inconsistencies. Nonetheless, the United

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Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimated that there were around 304 million international migrants globally in 2024, accounting for 3.7 percent of the total population (UN DESA, 2024). This figure is projected to increase to between 330 and 380 million by 2050. It is important to note that this figure represents a very small fraction of the world's population, indicating that citizens' decision to remain in their countries of origin remains the predominant trend. Hence, in today's globalized world, many individuals do not cross international borders; rather, a significant proportion of citizens migrate within their own countries and subregions (UNDP, 2009).

For instance, the ICMPD 2020 report reveals that migrant populations are unevenly distributed, with Europe having the highest proportion of migrants relative to its population at 8.4%, followed by Latin America and Africa. In contrast, Asia accounts for the largest total number of migrants, totaling 106 million. This shows that global migration patterns are increasingly diverse in origin and destination. Scholars have identified factors accounting for these migration trends. As noted by Arifeen (2013), the factors influencing migration discourses include issues related to rights, the role of remittances as catalysts for development in countries of origin, the aging population in destination countries, the impact of terrorism, and the implementation of border controls in the context of insurgency and counterinsurgency strategies, as well as considerations of international economics and health in the era of globalization.

However, certain migration patterns pose significantly greater challenges than others, affecting both migrants and governing bodies. The journeys undertaken by migrants may occasionally be marked by perilous and potentially fatal consequences, frequently associated with various social, political, economic, environmental, and policy-related factors that can deeply impact how people engage in migration (McAuliffe et al., 2017).

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While migration has long been part of human existence (Maru, 2015), recent large-scale international migration is driven by economic opportunities, conflicts, and environmental issues, with remittances sent to developing countries exceeding foreign direct investment (FDI) and official aid in many countries (World Bank, 2025). For this reason, studies on global migration tend to include analyses of international migrant stocks, trends in migration, the effects of policies, and socio-economic impacts across various regions. While these are insightful, they also tend to ignore the underlying reasons associated with the movement of people across various borders.

Who then is a migrant? An individual identified as an "international migrant" is someone who has left their country of origin and settled in another country, as defined by the United Nations (UN), based on statistical aspects of international migration. A distinction is made here between "long-term migrants," as someone who resides in a new location for at least one year, and "short-term migrants," as someone who stays for a minimum of three months but less than one year. Thus, a migrant fundamentally refers to someone who decides to move from one geographic area to another. This process may involve relocating to a different country, transitioning from a rural to an urban area, or moving within the same country from one region or state to another (World Migration Report, 2022).

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Individuals who migrate leave their homeland to reside permanently or temporarily in a foreign country. In other words, migrants depart their country of origin to settle in another country and establish permanent or semi-permanent residency (Kyereko, 2018). There are several categories of migrants. These include emigrants and immigrants. The classification of migrants as either emigrants or immigrants depends on the nature and duration of their migration; however, the enduring or semi-enduring aspects of their relocation distinguish these two categories.

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Migrants can further be divided into two main categories: permanent and temporary migrants. Permanent migrants relocate with no intention of returning to their home countries, whereas temporary migrants plan to return after a specific period (Cohen, 1996). Migrants can again be classified as voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary migrants have the freedom to choose their destinations and paths, whereas involuntary migrants are forced to migrate due to external factors such as natural disasters, armed conflicts, or other forms of coercion (Cohen, 1996; Agyei and Clottey, 2007). Common motivations for migration often involve improving living conditions and safety and escaping poverty and violence, which are essential human aspirations (United Nations Population Fund, 2005).

It is essential to distinguish between seasonal labor migration and forced migration or displacement resulting from severe droughts, conflicts, or acts of terrorism (Adaawen et al., 2019). This distinction is particularly significant in the context of migration in Africa. For instance, the civil wars of the 1990s in Sierra Leone and Liberia, along with the persistent instability linked to Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, have all led to numerous instances of forced displacement in this area. Consequently, individuals have been compelled to relocate internally and internationally, seeking refuge in neighboring countries (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020).

Seasonal migrants, for example, relocate for a limited duration each year, relying on specific seasonal conditions, as noted by the International Organization for Migration (2019). In contrast, short-term migrants engage in travel that exceeds three months but remains under one year, regardless of seasonal variations. Temporary migrants move for a defined period and return to their home countries. Long-term migration, also referred to as permanent migration in some studies, involves a change in residence lasting more than a year. Flahaux and de Haas (2016)

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emphasized, for instance, that migration patterns in West Africa primarily concentrate along corridors that connect the region's more humid southern zones to its arid northern areas (Dick and Schraven, 2021). These are connected to environmental changes that have largely influenced these migration trends.

The challenges faced by immigrants, emigrants, and migrants often overlap, encompassing the need to adapt to unfamiliar social norms, languages, and cultural practices while navigating complex legal and bureaucratic systems. However, the specific experiences and obstacles encountered by each group can vary significantly and are influenced by factors such as the motivations for their migration, resources and support available to them, and the host country's legal frameworks and cultural practices.

2.2 Studies on Migration in Africa

Studies on migration in Africa provide a dynamic and complex landscape primarily shaped by movements within the continent. Generally, migration in Africa takes place internally, largely driven by factors such as poverty, conflict, climate change, economic disparities, and evolving migration policies.

Africa migration involves a substantial flow of domestic and international migrants both in and out of the region. Scholars estimate that this trend is likely to change. According to Adepoju (2016), it is expected that migration will rise in the coming years due to demographic, economic, and political factors. For example, approximately 21 million Africans resided in another African country in 2020 alone (Restelli and Tintori, 2025). This figure makes a notable increase from 2015, when it was estimated that around 18 million Africans were living in the region. Similarly, the

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number of Africans living across the continent also increased during this period, from approximately 17 million in 2015 to over 19.5 million in 2020 (World Migration Report, 2022).

In Africa today, there is a growing awareness among policy experts and migration researchers that a range of economic, political, social, and environmental factors continue to push and pull migrants (Dinbabo et al., 2017). For this reason, it is suggested that migration in Africa frequently arises from socioeconomic obligation, aimed at reallocating resources in high-risk environments and coping with high levels of production uncertainty in both rural and urban areas (Perch-Nielsen, 2008). For example, Hirsch (2021) argues that about 80% of migration that occurs in Africa is both intra-regionally and inter-regionally based. This is in stark contrast to the assertion in sensationalist media coverage and mainstream discussions that an 'exodus' of desperate Africans is fleeing poverty in their home countries and seeking 'greener pastures' in Europe and North America (Flahaux and de Haas, 2016).

While irregular migration to Europe and North America continues to decrease, migration within Africa is on the rise, particularly with notable labor movement occurring in West, Central, and Southern Africa. Prominent destination countries in these regions include Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire. One of the factors that helps us to explain these trends is efforts towards regional integration and agreements, exemplified by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the 'Africa We Want: Vision 2063'. These regional conventions are shaping migration trends in Africa by improving integration and mobility prospects for young people.

It is instructive to note that the African Union's migration policy framework has established that migration has increased significantly across all regions of Africa, predominantly among the youthful migrant demographics, including those under 30 years of age (African Union, 2018). The framework goes on to say that most of the intra-regional migration is concentrated in West,

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Southern, and East Africa. In addition, significant inter-regional movements are also observed from Central Africa to Southern and West Africa, as well as from the Horn of Africa to East Africa. Furthermore, large migration trends have been observed within the West African sub-region (Hirsch, 2021). For instance, an AU report also highlights similar trends that migration along the northern route (towards Europe) is relatively minimal, especially when compared to the more substantial southern route from East/Horn of Africa to Southern and Western Africa (Hirsch, 2021).

2.3 Studies of Migration in West Africa

Broadly, the literature on migration in West Africa highlights that Ghana's role as a destination country within ECOWAS is shaped by a complex interplay of political, economic, social, and environmental factors. Politically, Ghana's reputation for democratic stability, peaceful transfers of power, and an open-door policy distinguishes it from many neighboring states where instability and conflict drive out-migration (Segadlo, 2021; Bosiakoh, 2012; Siaw et al., 2016). Economically, Ghana's relative prosperity, employment opportunities in agriculture, mining, and services, and its classification as a lower-middle-income country attract migrants seeking better livelihoods (Anarfi et al., 2003; Quartey, 2009; Kandilige et al., 2023).

Socially, long-standing cultural ties, linguistic affinities, Pan-African ideals, and better access to education and healthcare reinforce Ghana's attractiveness as a host society (Yahaya, 2021; Bosiakoh, 2012; Siaw et al., 2016). Environmental factors, including drought, climate change, and the allure of fertile land and natural resource frontiers, have historically influenced intra-regional mobility, thereby consolidating Ghana's status as a hub (Yaro, 2008; Awumbila et al., 2014; Filho et al., 2022). At the same time, migrants face persistent challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles in documentation, restrictive national policies, a high cost of living, xenophobic sentiments, and language barriers that complicate integration despite the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol

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(Awumbila et al., 2018; Teye et al., 2019; Arhin-Sam, 2019; Bisong, 2019; GhanaWeb, 2019). Together, these dynamics highlight both the opportunities and constraints that define Ghana's position in regional migration systems.

2.3.1 Migration and Regional Cooperation in West Africa

Regional cooperation has long been central to migration patterns in West Africa, where mobility predates modern political boundaries and continues to shape social and economic life. The ECOWAS is the sole regional economic community in Africa that has established a protocol for free movement (Bisong, 2019). This community encompasses the entirety of West Africa. It consists of 15 member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo (Dick, 2018; Dzordzormenyoh, 2022).

The heterogeneity of the region is marked by a linguistic divide, with Anglophone countries (Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), Francophone countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Togo, and Guinea), and Lusophone countries (Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau) influenced by their unique colonial legacies and governance systems (Dick, 2018). Despite this diversity, ECOWAS has sought to foster integration across varied social, economic, political, and ecological contexts.

Migration itself has been a defining phenomenon in the sub-region for centuries. Pre-colonial trade networks, including the trans-Saharan routes, facilitated movement for pastoralism, commerce, and religious missions as early as the 6th century (Bakewell et al., 2008, 2009). Natural disasters and conflicts also spurred mobility (Adepoju, 1995). Post-independence, countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire, buoyed by relative prosperity, became prime destinations. In contrast,

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others like Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, and Cape Verde emerged as labor-exporting countries. Senegal has played a dual role as both a source and destination of migrants (Mouthaan, 2022).

Regional integration initiatives and agreements have influenced migration patterns in West Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has established various protocols and frameworks to promote the free movement of individuals, goods, and services across the region. Notably, the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment, adopted in 1979, permits citizens of ECOWAS member states to move freely within the sub-region (ECOWAS, 2020). This protocol has been instrumental in ensuring cross-border mobility and fostering trade and economic integration throughout West Africa.

In summary, this section demonstrates that regional cooperation is inseparable from the long-standing culture of migration in West Africa. The next section, therefore, examines in greater detail the specific ECOWAS protocols and their impact on regional migration governance.

2.3.2 The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Regional Migration

Building on the previous discussion of migration and regional cooperation in West Africa, it is important to focus more closely on the specific role of ECOWAS in shaping migration dynamics.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plays a vital role in overseeing migration within the West African sub-region. It has a significant history of international migration primarily due to its highly mobile demographics. Migration trends in West Africa predated the establishment of contemporary political boundaries, which prompted the introduction of regulations to ensure the free movement of individuals, goods, and services in 1979 (Flahaux and de Haas, 2016). The protocols of ECOWAS focus on enhancing intra-regional migration, protecting migrant rights, and promoting regional integration and development. Nevertheless, executing these regulations has proven a complex challenge for member states.

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Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that significantly impacts various societal dimensions, including governance, poverty alleviation, conflict resolution, security, and development (Odobo et al., 2017). In West Africa, this sub-region exhibits one of the highest rates of intra-regional migration (Dick and Schraven, 2018). The increased levels of migration observed in West Africa can be attributed to the presence of numerous smaller countries in terms of population size and land area (Flahaux and de Haas, 2016). In countries with smaller populations, there tends to be a greater propensity for migration to transcend national boundaries, thereby explaining the higher average emigration rates in these smaller countries (de Haas, 2010). Additional contributing factors to this migration trend include the distribution of various ethnic groups across multiple West African countries, which fosters robust cross-border network connections. Moreover, the colonial era established significant migration patterns, primarily towards coastal areas.

Moreover, additional factors, including the extraction of natural resources, the expansion of commercial agriculture, and the development of significant coastal urban centers such as Lagos, Abidjan, and Accra, contribute to ongoing migration trends. Commercial plantations in neighboring coastal countries attract migrants from Sahelian countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger (Dick and Schraven, 2021). Internal migration rates in West Africa are seven times greater than those in other global regions (Devillard et al., 2015). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the migrant population in West Africa rose from 6.9 million in 2015 to 8.2 million in 2020 (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

Sub-regional organizations, exemplified by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), play a crucial role in addressing and regulating migration. This entity has developed extensive frameworks and strategies to address the multifaceted challenges associated with

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migration, including governance, poverty alleviation, human rights violations, and conflict resolution (Odobo et al., 2017).

To address migration challenges, a thorough examination of the specific initiatives and policies enacted by ECOWAS is essential. One notable initiative is the Free Movement Protocol, designed to ease the movement of individuals across a region and foster economic integration. Furthermore, ECOWAS has initiated the Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA) to strengthen the collaboration among member states in managing migration and tackling its multifaceted aspects.

In conclusion, ECOWAS's initiatives illustrate both the potential and the challenges of regional migration governance. The next section provides an overview of the ECOWAS Protocols and their roles in facilitating migration within ECOWAS member states, offering a more detailed exploration of their provisions.

2.3.3 An Overview of the ECOWAS Protocols and Their Roles in Facilitating Migration Within ECOWAS Member States

Having examined the broader role of ECOWAS in shaping regional migration, it is now useful to turn to the specific protocols that govern free movement within the community. These instruments form the legal and institutional foundation of intra-regional mobility. Protocol A/P.1/5/79 outlines citizens' freedom from member states to enter, reside, and establish themselves within the territory of another member state. This protocol was intended to be implemented in three distinct phases over 15 years (Adeniran, 2012). Article 3 of the Revised Treaty of 1993 establishes a common market by eliminating barriers to the free movement of individuals, goods, services, and capital, as well as the rights to residence and establishment (Bisong, 2019). Furthermore, Article 59 of the Revised Treaty confers on community citizens the right to enter, reside, and establish themselves. It is incumbent upon member states to acknowledge and protect the rights of community citizens

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within their jurisdictions, as outlined in the relevant protocols. Collectively, these two articles in the Revised Treaty provide the foundation for facilitating the free movement of individuals throughout the region.

The primary objective of the treaty that established this sub-regional organization was to enhance the seamless movement of individuals and goods by eliminating all barriers to human mobility and promoting regional integration (Garba and Yeboah, 2022). This initiative created a free movement protocol designed to foster regional integration by allowing citizens of member states to travel freely within the sub-region. The protocol calls for a borderless area where community members can move freely and take advantage of available opportunities and resources (Yeboah et al., 2021). The benefits of this arrangement include access to the human resources of other member states, facilitating landlocked countries' access to coastal areas, and the shared enjoyment of natural resources among member states. Furthermore, it is viewed as a mechanism that can significantly impact economic, social, and cultural development activities cohesively within a subregion (Yeboah et al., 2021).

The ECOWAS region is home to approximately 350 million individuals and is characterized by a wide array of societal, economic, political, and ecological contexts (Dick and Schraven, 2018). The climatic conditions within this region vary significantly, ranging from the arid desert terrains found in the northern region of Mali and Niger to various types of savannahs in the interior of West Africa, as well as forest-savannah transition areas and tropical rainforests along the southern coast (Dick and Schraven, 2018).

From an economic perspective, the region includes rapidly advancing lower-middle-income countries, such as Ghana, alongside some of the world's poorest countries, including Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. They are ranked among the least developed countries globally. In 2023, all three

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countries are positioned near the lowest tiers of the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (United Nations Development Program, 2023).

The ECOWAS common approach to migration serves as a foundational framework for regional migration initiatives. Although it lacks legal authority over member states, it provides a significant reference point for formulating migration policies and initiatives (Bisong, 2019). This Common Approach outlines 6 key priority areas that highlight the relationship between migration and development. These areas include facilitating free movement, managing regular migration, harmonizing policies, regulating irregular migration and human trafficking, safeguarding the rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, and addressing gender issues in migration (Bisong, 2019).

The established protocols illustrate the mobility culture prevalent in the ECOWAS region. Within this framework, migration encompasses both short-term cross-border movements and long-term relocations, which are defined as movements lasting more than one year. Short-term cross-border mobility often involves ethnic groups, especially pastoralist communities, who migrate with their livestock, a practice known as transhumance (International Organization for Migration, 2019).

Intra-regional migration can be classified into three distinct temporal categories. The first category encompasses both permanent and return migration. Permanent migration is predominantly observed within ECOWAS countries, where individuals use the Protocol on Free Movement to either settle indefinitely or reside in another member state for an extended period. The second category pertains to educational and transitional migration, characterized by stays lasting more than one year. The third and final category includes seasonal laborers, temporary cross-border workers, female traders, professionals, and undocumented migrants (Awumbila et al., 2018; World Bank, 2019).

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In summary, these protocols represent a cornerstone of ECOWAS's efforts to promote regional integration through mobility. The following section scrutinizes the prospects and obstacles linked to migration within the ECOWAS region, evaluating the practical implementation of these agreements.

2.3.4 The Opportunities and Challenges Associated with Migration in the ECOWAS Region

The dynamics of human mobility within the ECOWAS region present a range of complexities concerning the underlying motivations, consequences, stakeholders, governance, and interrelationships among various localities. Migration to West Africa has both beneficial and detrimental effects on the region.

2.3.4.1 Opportunities Associated with The Implementation of The ECOWAS Migration Protocol

In January 2006, the Heads of State and Government approved the concept of 'Border Countries/Cross Border/Local Integration.' This decision laid the groundwork for a Community Legal Framework and initiated a cross-border program to accelerate regional integration through joint social, economic, and cultural development initiatives (Adepoju, 2015). The strategic regional document titled 'Regional Integration, Growth, and Poverty Reduction in West Africa: Strategies and Action Plan,' co-authored by ECOWAS and WAEMU in 2006, acknowledges the significance of migration in driving economic transformation, fostering growth, and alleviating poverty (Adepoju, 2015).

ECOWAS operates under a variable-speed framework in which member states collectively agree on common objectives. However, progress towards their realization varies significantly, with some countries advancing swiftly. In contrast, others do so at a more measured pace (Adepoju, 2015). It is crucial to note that smaller, more homogeneous groups tend to achieve more effective cohesion. For instance, members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) benefit

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from shared characteristics, such as a common currency, colonial heritage, and the French language, which facilitates the implementation of collaborative initiatives more readily than in the larger ECOWAS, which encompasses a diverse array of former Francophone, Anglophone, and Lusophone countries.

A critical requirement for successful integration within a community is enhancing communication and transportation networks. This includes developing highways and railways that connect various countries within the community, thereby facilitating the movement of individuals and goods (Adepoju, 2015). Challenging conditions in the sub-region have hindered intra-regional trade, particularly affecting landlocked countries that rely on coastal ports for importing and exporting goods. However, there have been significant efforts to rehabilitate and expand much of its infrastructure to promote economic integration (Adepoju, 2015). Concrete proposals have been made to strengthen transport and telecommunication connections among member states, especially by establishing trans-coastal, trans-Sahelian, and combined trans-coastal/Sahelian rail links.

The advancement of the private sector, the promotion of trade (which encompasses regional advocacy and negotiations aimed at securing improved trade conditions for primary products from West Africa), the formulation of sound macroeconomic and microeconomic policies, and the provision of support for their effective execution are essential components for fostering economic growth and development (ECOWAS, 2001). The proposals outlined in Abuja in 2000, which included harmonizing and modernizing customs policies, liberalizing maritime services, and implementing a zero percent duty on approved industrial products, goods, and traditional handicrafts, were specifically designed to promote the establishment of a free trade zone. Additionally, the introduction of travelers' checks was intended to facilitate cross-border transactions and other related activities (Adepoju, 2015).

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There has been a notable rise in remittances from countries recognized for their labor exportation, including Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Mali, and Sierra Leone. This upward trend is evident in rising regional remittances, which have significantly increased average household income across various West African communities. These financial transfers have served as a crucial support system, helping to alleviate economic hardships and reduce poverty through strategic investments (Garba and Yeboah, 2022). World Bank statistics indicate an increase in inward remittances, with Sierra Leone experiencing a rise from $47 million in 2016 to $53 million in 2019, and Burkina Faso seeing a jump from $397 million in 2016 to $467 million in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, the World Bank (2023) projected that remittance flows to sub-Saharan Africa would be $53 billion in 2022, marking a 6.1% increase compared to 2021. The growth in remittance inflows to sub-Saharan Africa in 2022 was primarily driven by Nigeria, which received $20.1 billion, and Ghana, which received $4.7 billion, making them the leading recipients (World Bank, 2023).

The free movement policy has facilitated the establishment of businesses by certain ECOWAS nationals, irrespective of their possession of the requisite documentation. In contrast, low-skilled workers who primarily operate within the informal sector frequently remain uninformed about these provisions. Nevertheless, they can work with minimal hindrance (Yeboah et al., 2021).

In 2019, Ghana hosted approximately 460,000 foreign nationals, of whom around 68% were from various regions of West Africa (UN DESA, 2019). Many of these migrants were low-skilled laborers who primarily worked in the informal economy. According to Teye (2018), as referenced in IOM (2020), around 43% of these individuals were employed in agriculture, 11% in manufacturing, and 28% in wholesale and retail trade. The agricultural sector particularly benefited from the free movement protocol, which allowed cattle herders from Niger and Mali to migrate to

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Ghana and Nigeria in search of grazing land for their livestock. Furthermore, intra-regional migration within West Africa generated over $3 million in remittances for the ECOWAS member states (Devillard et al., 2015).

Regional migration patterns existed before the establishment of borders and the segmentation of political entities (Flahaux and de Haas, 2016). This historical context significantly influenced the early adoption of regulations regarding individuals' free movement in 1979, which was crucial in promoting regional integration. Despite these regulations, their implementation by member states encounters various challenges.

However, migration presents significant challenges and risks. In West Africa, irregular migration, which includes human trafficking and smuggling, is an urgent issue. Many migrants undertake dangerous journeys, often with the help of smugglers, in search of better opportunities in Europe or other regions (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). This situation leads to numerous dangers, including exploitation, abuse, and potentially fatal consequences. The European Union and several West African countries have begun collaborative efforts to address irregular migration and enhance border management to support safe and orderly migration (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). The next section discusses these challenges.

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2.3.4.2. Challenges Facing ECOWAS Migration Protocol Implementation

The limited enforcement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol regarding entry, residence, and establishment is noteworthy. The treaty, signed in Lagos on May 28, 1975, established ECOWAS and encompassed a broad spectrum of economic activities (Yaro, 2008). Article 27 of the Treaty establishes the long-term goal of creating community citizenship, to be automatically granted to all nationals of Member States. The revised Treaty of ECOWAS in 1992 further reinforced the rights of community citizens to enter, reside, and settle within the

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Member States, mandating that these rights be acknowledged within their respective jurisdictions (Yaro, 2008).

Furthermore, the member states that ratified the treaty seem to uphold the principle of free movement for individuals; however, the process of regularizing documentation for settlement remains fraught with challenges. While harassment at border crossings has reduced, it hasn't entirely disappeared (Yaro, 2008; Adepoju, 2015). Discrimination against migrants persists in many member states, where local populations often perceive the economic success of newcomers as a threat, motivating them to pursue achievement in various endeavors.

Certain member states, like Burkina Faso and Togo, subject migrants to harassment and often require them to make unofficial payments to enter the country. Additionally, some citizens of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) lack passports or identity cards, thereby complicating the verification of their nationality (Teye et al., 2015). As a result, these individuals face harassment at border checkpoints and are frequently required to make unofficial payments to enter member states (Awumbila et al., 2018). It is important to note that migrants' experiences can vary significantly based on the specific borders they cross. Furthermore, travelers may be subjected to unofficial payment demands at various entry or exit points (Teye et al., 2015). There are ongoing concerns about the misuse of privileges granted by the protocol, with some sub-regional citizens engaging in activities such as smuggling and the illicit trade of narcotics.

Moreover, migrants face various restrictions and discrimination. Although bilateral, regional, and universal agreements, as well as national legal frameworks, explicitly prohibit discrimination, individuals from ECOWAS member states still encounter discriminatory practices (Teye et al., 2015). Within different national legal systems, certain privileges and rights are granted exclusively to citizens, thereby excluding foreigners from these protections.

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Member states experience considerable delays in incorporating protocols into national legislation (Bisong, 2019). Although the right of entry and the elimination of visa requirements have been implemented across all nations, advancements regarding the Right of Residence, the Right of Establishment, and access to employment have been notably limited (Devillard et al., 2015), alongside the removal of the "90-day stay" regulation. Only a few member states have successfully enacted the right of residence and establishment and established mechanisms that facilitate the movement of community citizens within the region (Bisong, 2019).

A significant barrier to effectively implementing free movement protocols, particularly regarding the right to establishment and residency, is the inherent political fragility of the ECOWAS institution (Adepoju, 2015). This fragility stems from pronounced internal divisions between Francophone and Anglophone member states, as well as divergent national interests among ECOWAS members (Arhin-Sam et al., 2022). Additionally, there is a considerable lack of financial support from the member states of the institution. Consequently, there is a lack of commitment to community protocols, which is evident in the failure to ratify and implement these agreements.

In the ECOWAS region, there is a contrast between countries with small populations and those with significantly larger populations and land areas. Some countries lack resources, while others possess abundant human and natural resources (Adepoju, 2015). Smaller and less economically developed member states often harbor skepticism toward the demographic and economic powerhouses within the Community, such as Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in anti-foreigner sentiment recently, fueled by economic decline, rising youth unemployment, and political instability (Adepoju, 2015). The Protocol on Establishment and Residence remains poorly implemented, despite its critical connection to the principles of free

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movement, trade integration, tariff policies, and the enhancement of labor mobility within the sub-region.

These points highlight the challenges associated with standardizing immigration processes and documentation. However, a significant issue arises regarding the definition of travel documents. Although the ECOWAS protocol allows for the acceptance of alternative travel documents, such as travel certificates, certain border management officials in various countries, including Ghana, often prioritize the exclusive use of passports (Awumbila et al., 2018). This practice stands in opposition to the 1979 Protocol concerning the Free Movement of the People.

A significant obstacle to achieving the potential for free movement within the ECOWAS region is the disparity between national laws and protocols established by the ECOWAS. During times of economic, social, or political turmoil, migrants from ECOWAS member states often face expulsion from their host countries, as evidenced by recent occurrences in Nigeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea. In response to these crises, member states frequently implement protectionist measures, including the mass expulsion of migrants and the imposition of restrictions on employment opportunities for citizens from other ECOWAS countries in specific sectors, such as security, public services, and informal activities such as trading and taxi services (Awumbila et al., 2014).

2.4 Studies on Migration in Ghana

2.4.1 Historical Background of Migration

To better situate the study, it is important to trace the historical evolution of the migration patterns that have shaped West Africa, and Ghana in particular. This history provides a foundation for understanding contemporary dynamics within ECOWAS. The movement of people among ECOWAS member states and Ghana has significantly influenced the socio-economic and political

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dynamics of West Africa over the centuries. Diverse patterns of human migration mark Ghana's historical and contemporary narratives (Segadlo, 2021).

Migration to Ghana can be traced back to the 'caravan era,' during which market traders from Niger and Nigeria relocated to Ghana (formerly known as the Gold Coast) either permanently or seasonally (Teye et al., 2024). Immigration patterns during both the colonial and post-colonial periods in Ghana were predominantly characterized by seasonal or temporary migrants who aimed to capitalize on job prospects within the mining and agricultural sectors (Teye et al., 2024).

2.4.2 Pre-Colonial Era (Pre-1900)

Migrating to Ghana from various West African countries began before colonization (Clottey, 2007). This era was characterized by vibrant trade activities that facilitated the movement of merchants from various countries, who transported goods such as ivory, kola nuts, livestock, animal hides, and textiles to the Salaga market for commerce (Wolfson, 1958).

Previously, individuals could travel freely from their countries to neighboring countries without any restrictions. There was largely no need to seek permits to cross borders, as no man-made political divisions separated territories during the pre-colonial era. Citizens of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo, who had families in Ghana, migrated into the country without regard for these artificial borders, and the same was true in reverse (Adjepong, 2012).

During the pre-colonial era, migrants consistently viewed the West African sub-region as an integrated economic community, facilitating the movement of individuals in alignment with the trade of goods and services travelling from North to South and from West to East. For example, in this pre-colonial context, Nigerian migrants in Ghana developed a robust economic network between the two countries, participating in various activities such as trade and offering unskilled and skilled labor in the gold mining sector (Addo, 1974).

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Historically, migration between neighboring countries sharing similar social and ethnocultural characteristics has occurred regularly and continues to persist in contemporary times (Adjepong, 2012). Similar factors have contributed to the influx of migrants in Ghana, thereby increasing the immigrant demographic.

The movement of ECOWAS citizens to Ghana can be traced back to the era before the colonial period (Adjepong, 2012). In the pre-colonial period, migration was primarily driven by transregional trade, the quest for new agricultural and pastoral lands, religious pilgrimages, and educational pursuits (Bakewell and de Haas, 2007). Additionally, the identification and extraction of natural resources, particularly minerals, have drawn immigrants to Ghana. The discovery of gold in the region sparked a significant gold rush, leading to the establishment of numerous enterprises (Adjepong, 2012).

2.4.3 Colonial Era (1900–1957)

During the colonial era, Ghana emerged as a focal point for migrants from several Western African countries. According to Adjepong (2012), while migration of individuals into Ghana commenced in the pre-colonial period, the surge of immigrants became particularly evident during the colonial period, largely due to the establishment of international political borders that delineated one country from another.

In the nineteenth century, Ghana became a major destination for migrants seeking employment in cocoa plantations and mining industries (Kandilige et al., 2023). Awoonor (1990) stated that by 1911, Ghana had become the world's leading cocoa producer. The steady increase in cocoa production sparked an economic boom, especially during the 1920s and 1940s, attracting immigrants from neighboring countries searching for jobs in cocoa-growing regions.

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Clottey (2007) noted that the economic expansion of the 1930s exacerbated the labor shortage for underground mining, as employment in the cocoa sector became more appealing than employment in the mines. The author further indicates that laborers migrated from Liberia and Sierra Leone, with an even greater influx of unskilled workers from the French West African territories of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Benin.

The economic opportunities associated with colonial mercantilism and the economic surge following independence drew migrants from the West African sub-region (Anarfi and Kwankye, 2003). This substantially increased Ghana's population from approximately 2 million in 1921 to approximately 6.7 million by 1960 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005).

According to Segadlo (2021), colonization has significantly altered mobility patterns. Internally, migration from north to south emerged as the predominant trend, driven by the colonial economy's need for labor in cocoa cultivation, plantation work, mining, and infrastructure development and railway construction.

2.4.4 Post-Colonial Era and Early Republic (1957–1960)

The post-colonial period witnessed a rise in voluntary labor migration for paid employment, creating an intricate network of relationships and dependencies across arbitrary boundaries established during colonial rule (Yaro, 2008). The Ghana Statistical Service's (2010) report indicates that in post-independence Ghana in 1957, many more migrants, primarily from Northern Africa, continued to arrive because the country was relatively affluent. Additionally, rural-urban migration persisted in the early 1960s. The report further notes that post-World War II, the number of West African urban residents has increased remarkably, highlighting the migration phenomenon.

Following its independence in 1957, Ghana's flourishing economy has remained an attractive destination for migrants within the sub-region (Bakewell and de Haas, 2007). In West Africa, intra-

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regional migration has primarily been characterized by a significant north-south flow from the landlocked Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) towards the more affluent agricultural, mining, and urban populations of coastal West Africa, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Gambia (Yaro, 2008).

2.4.5 Late 1960s to 1980s: Changing Patterns

Despite gaining independence, migration patterns have remained largely unchanged (Adjepong, 2012). While some Ghanaians emigrated to other countries, the influx of immigrants into Ghana significantly surpassed the number of Ghanaians who left. In the 1960s, Ghana experienced an economic downturn that led to a significant increase in emigration. Between 1974 and 1981, approximately 2 million workers left the country, primarily for Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire (Bakewell and de Haas, 2007).

The proximity and permeability of Ghana's borders further influenced the dynamics of social relations. A thorough analysis of migrant origins in Ghana during the 1960s revealed that a significant number of migrants originated from neighboring countries, including Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, and other allied countries (Adjepong, 2012). They capitalized on the comparatively short distance between Ghana and their home countries to migrate and establish themselves there for various reasons.

Driven by rising anti-immigrant sentiments that viewed migrants as economic threats, the Ghanaian government enacted the Aliens Compliance Order in 1969. This new policy resulted in the expulsion of immigrants without valid residence permits (Teye et al., 2024). The implementation of the Aliens Compliance Order resulted in the deportation of an estimated 155,000–213,000 migrants, primarily from Nigeria, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, and Mali (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

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The period from the 1960s to the 1980s witnessed a significant economic decline in Ghana, which subsequently altered migration trends and increased labor emigration (Anarfi et al., 2010). Furthermore, in the late 1970s, a substantial number of professionals began to depart from Ghana, driven by adverse climatic conditions that caused drought and famine, as well as further economic deterioration. By the mid-1980s, the imposition of stricter economic restrictions led to a mass exodus, often referred to as the "brain drain," which impacted various sectors, including medicine, education, and engineering. Many medical practitioners, pharmacists, teachers, nurses, and engineers have left the country (Asiedu, 2010).

2.4.6 Fourth Republic (1993–Present)

Since the 1990s, migration patterns have become more diverse, and Ghana has emerged as a more attractive destination for migrants, especially those from nearby West African countries (UN DESA, 2019). The restoration of constitutional governance in 1993 led to renewed stability and economic growth, which subsequently influenced the migration trends.

The re-establishment of a vibrant multiparty democratic framework and the adoption of a new constitution in 1992 initiated a phase of political stability that has persisted to this day, contributing to an increasing influx of migrants to Ghana (Eberhardt and Teal, 2010). Since 1992, Ghana has held eight successful democratic multiparty elections through 2024, facilitating peaceful transfers of power between political parties, particularly between the two de facto political parties (the NDC and NPP). This has consolidated its liberal and democratic gains.

Ghana's economy experienced consistent growth between the late 1990s and the 2000s. A significant number of Ghanaians have migrated, partly due to their enhanced financial capacity to bear the expenses associated with international migration and the presence of established social networks that aided this movement (UN DESA, 2015).

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The 1990s were characterized by significant political turmoil in the sub-region, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of refugees from Liberia, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone (Essuman-Johnson, 2003). At the turn of the 21st century, Ghana hosted nearly 60,000 refugees and asylum seekers, primarily those fleeing civil unrest in Liberia (UNHCR, 2005). However, this figure declined to 13,436 in 2019 (UNHCR, 2020). As of January 2024, Ghana had approximately 10,690 registered refugees and asylum seekers, with the largest contingent originating from Burkina Faso. Additionally, there are an estimated 8,000 unregistered Burkinabe asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2025). Ghana has welcomed citizens from ECOWAS member states, particularly Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Liberia, Togo, and Nigeria (Affrifa, 2004).

2.5 Ghana as a Migration Hub

Ghana is celebrated for being the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence (Attoh and Ishola, 2021). Ghana attained independence from British rule in 1957 and, in 1960, became a republic within the British Commonwealth (Achanfuo-Yeboah, 1993). It is bordered by Francophone neighbors, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo. Ghana is situated along the Gulf of Guinea and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean within the West African sub-region. The country encompasses a land area of 238,540 square kilometers and has a total population of 34,630,808 people (World Population Review, 2024). While approximately four million individuals reside in the capital city of Accra, most of the population is concentrated in the southern region of the country, particularly along the Atlantic coastline (World Population Review, 2024). The demographic composition includes various ethnic groups, with Akan representing 47.5%, Dagbani 17%, Ewe 14%, Ga-Adangbe 7%, Gurma 6%, Guan 4%, Gurunsi 2.5%, and Bissa 1% (World Population Review, 2024). Additionally, there are around 375,000 registered permanent legal residents in Ghana alongside foreign workers and students (World Population Review, 2024).

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Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has significant consequences for both countries of origin and destination. Historically, Ghana has been a major center for migration in the West African sub-region. This development can be attributed to several factors, including its stable political climate, relatively strong economy, and advancements in infrastructure, particularly in social amenities (Amponsah, 2023).

Ghana's rise as a migration hub is further supported by its status as a leading producer of gold and cocoa, as well as the discovery of a substantial oil field off its coast in 2007. Additionally, the country's high rates of electricity access and its growing e-waste recycling and disposal sector have increased its appeal as a destination for ECOWAS citizens. The proactive initiatives toward electrification have led to significant improvements in electricity access, making Ghana an attractive option for migrants seeking better living conditions and economic opportunities (Bahar, 2017).

2.5.1 Ghana's Position as a Migration Hub in the ECOWAS Region

As a robust democracy and significant economic entity in West Africa, Ghana, alongside Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, serves as a primary destination for immigrants from the ECOWAS region (Adepoju, 2015). In 2019, Ghana hosted nearly half a million migrants, specifically 466,800 individuals, which represented 1.5 percent of its overall population. A substantial majority of these migrants are nationals from ECOWAS countries; in fact, 74 percent of all individuals migrating to Ghana come from four member states: Togo, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso (UN DESA, 2019).

Ghana's position as a migration hub within the ECOWAS region can be attributed to several factors:

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First, Ghana serves as a migration hub in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), highlighting its role as a primary destination and transit point for migrants from other ECOWAS member countries (Siaw et al., 2016). This trend involves a significant influx of individuals from neighboring countries in the ECOWAS region who migrate to Ghana for various reasons, including economic opportunities and educational prospects (Siaw et al., 2016). Many migrants from countries such as Togo, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria often travel to or settle in Ghana, drawn by its relatively stable political environment and economic opportunities.

Ghana has shown its critical role in promoting regional integration through migration within the ECOWAS framework. The principle of free movement of individuals, goods, and services is essential to regional integration (Abdullah, 2019). The author further states that this principle enhances economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and social cohesion among member states. As a central migration hub, Ghana fosters greater interaction and exchange among migrants from across ECOWAS, resulting in a rich, diverse multicultural society that promotes mutual understanding and collaboration.

Second, Ghana's geographical location plays a pivotal role in its emergence as a migration hub within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Located in West Africa, Ghana serves as a natural passage for migrants from neighboring countries and beyond (Konadu-Agyemang and Adanu, 2003). The country shares borders with several ECOWAS member states, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo, facilitating cross-border movement for purposes such as pursuing economic opportunities, seeking education, seeking asylum, and engaging in trade (Konadu-Agyemang and Adanu, 2003; Siaw et al., 2016). Additionally, Ghana's coastal geography has historically fostered trade and interaction with other West African countries, reinforcing its role as a vital nexus for commerce and cultural exchange.

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Finally, the collaborative efforts and cooperation of its member states profoundly shape Ghana's status as a migration hub within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This synergy has solidified Ghana's position as a primary destination and transit point for migrants traveling through the ECOWAS region (Saha, 2007). An in-depth examination of the impact of regional collaboration on Ghana's status as a migration hub highlights the specific mechanisms by which agreements and cooperative initiatives among ECOWAS countries have enhanced Ghana's importance in migration dynamics. By fostering regional collaboration, stakeholders have worked to synchronize immigration policies, visa protocols, and border management strategies (Saha, 2007). This harmonization has effectively lowered migration barriers within the region, thereby facilitating the movement of individuals and reinforcing Ghana's appeal as a key destination for migrants.

2.6 Factors Contributing to Ghana's Attractiveness for Migrants

Contrary to the popular narrative suggesting that migration from West Africa predominantly flows toward Europe, this review reveals that both historical and contemporary migration patterns within West Africa are primarily intra-regional. Migrants within the sub-region mainly consist of laborers who migrate from Sahel countries to the resource-rich and coastal communities in the south (Teye et al., 2024).

A notable north-south trajectory primarily characterizes intra-regional migration patterns in West Africa. This phenomenon mainly affects individuals from the landlocked Sahelian countries of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, who seek better opportunities in the more prosperous agricultural, mining, and urban areas of coastal West Africa. Specifically, many migrate to countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Ghana (Yaro, 2008).

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Several factors contribute to Ghana's attractiveness to migrants from the sub-region. Since gaining independence in 1957, the country has established itself as a significant destination for international migrants, especially those from neighboring West African countries (Integral Human Development, 2020). Key draws that have emerged after independence include enhanced economic opportunities, shared political ties and stability, robust social networks and infrastructure, and environmental considerations.

Migration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has consistently been a pivotal aspect of regional integration, influenced by socio-economic, political, and environmental factors. Among the several member states, Ghana has emerged as one of the leading destinations for intra-regional migration, attracting individuals from neighboring ECOWAS countries due to its relative political stability, economic opportunities, and historical connections. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, which grants citizens the right to enter, reside, and establish themselves in member states, has further facilitated this mobility, positioning Ghana as a central node in the region's migration dynamics (Adepoju, 2009; World Bank, 2021).

The literature on migration in ECOWAS identifies various push and pull factors that influence migration patterns. Key drivers of mobility include economic disparities, environmental degradation, and political instability in countries of origin. In contrast, Ghana's relatively higher levels of economic development and perceived opportunities serve as significant pull factors (Aryeetey, 2018).

2.6.1 Political Factors

Ghana's relative stability, especially when compared to certain neighboring ECOWAS countries, significantly boosts its appeal as a destination for migration. Throughout the Fourth Republic, Ghana has developed a reputation as a sanctuary for stability and democracy, particularly when

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juxtaposed with countries that have faced conflict or political turmoil (Segadlo, 2021). Ghana is acknowledged as a functioning state with a stable democratic framework. The country boasts several competing political parties, a vibrant civil society, and well-established governmental institutions (Adam et al., 2020).

Political instability, marked by a series of military coups, has discouraged prospective migrants from the area (Kyereko 2018). As noted by Vescey (2018), the widespread occurrence of diverse conflicts, political unrest, and inter-ethnic violence has rendered the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) relatively frequent within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Compared with its neighboring countries in the sub-region, Ghana stands out for its political stability and commitment to democratic governance, making it an attractive destination for migrants fleeing political unrest and conflict (Siaw et al., 2016). With a strong democratic framework and a proven record of peaceful power transfers, Ghana provides a safe and stable environment for those seeking refuge.

A major factor attracting migrants to Ghana is its open-door policy, along with its relatively stable political climate, which makes it an appealing destination. Ghana is renowned for its enduring political stability, attracting individuals seeking peaceful living conditions (Bosiakoh, 2012; Integral Human Development, 2020). Additionally, the laws and regulations governing migration, border management, and integration significantly affect both migrants and the local population (Yahaya, 2021). Understanding these policies and their effects is essential for comprehending migration trends in the region.

Although the National Migration Policy (NMP) emphasizes international regulatory frameworks, it also acknowledges the importance of addressing internal migration, thereby assisting the movement of ECOWAS nationals fleeing political turmoil. Nevertheless, critics argue that the

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focus on external financial support often overshadows the challenges of internal migration, potentially disconnecting efforts to address domestic needs from commitments to international stakeholders. This situation illustrates the complex landscape of migration governance in Ghana, influenced by both local necessities and global demands (Segadlo, 2021).

The Immigration Act of 2000 serves as the principal legislation in Ghana that regulates immigration, detailing the rules for the entry, residency, employment, and expulsion of foreign nationals. The National Labor Migration Policy (NLMP), instituted in 2016, advocates for the rights of labor migrants and ensures compliance with Ghanaian labor regulations. Moreover, the ECOWAS free movement protocol facilitates visa-free entry for nationals of member states, thereby promoting regional integration and enhancing economic opportunities. Finally, the Refugee Law of 1992 provides a legal framework for the rights and protections of refugees, ensuring that Ghana meets its international responsibilities and supports vulnerable groups (Kandilige et al., 2022). This is to prevent an incident or a situation that is similar to the Aliens Compliance Order, which happened under the Busia regime. The implementation of the Aliens Compliance Order resulted in the expulsion of approximately 155,000 to 213,000 migrants, a significant number of whom came from Nigeria, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, and Mali (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

Ghana is recognized for its relatively welcoming stance towards migrants, especially individuals escaping persecution (International Organization for Migration, 2019). An essential reason for immigration to Ghana is its relative peace, security, and political stability; the country is frequently referred to as a haven of peace in West Africa. This situation has historically attracted, and will continue to draw, migrants from the sub-region, particularly those fleeing political turmoil and conflict (International Organization for Migration, 2009).

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In addition to enhanced governance, Ghana has experienced consistent progress and development over the past decade, resulting in a more favorable business environment. These advancements, coupled with the recent discovery of oil near Cape Three Points, close to the border with Côte d'Ivoire, are expected to attract labor immigrants (International Organization for Migration, 2009).

Political instability, marked by military coups and civil unrest, has been a significant catalyst for migration within the ECOWAS region, particularly in Niger and Mali, where violence has forced many individuals to seek safety. In contrast, Ghana has become a stable refuge for those fleeing turmoil due to its commitment to democratic governance and human rights (Akokpari, 1999; Segadlo, 2021). While economic factors are often emphasized in discussions of migration (Adepoju, 2009), it is essential also to recognize political motivations, such as the need for safety, stable governance, and civil liberties. A comprehensive understanding of the interplay among these factors will provide greater clarity into migration patterns and guide the development of effective policies to address these challenges.

2.6.2 Economic Factors

The circumstances in the ECOWAS region are pressing, driving many individuals to seek better opportunities in neighboring countries, particularly Ghana (Cole, 1985). The economic challenges faced by ECOWAS member countries, including high unemployment rates, unequal resource distribution, and a lack of economic diversification, have prompted individuals to migrate in search of improved living standards (Ampofo, 2021; Teye et al., 2024).

Individuals living in poverty are often compelled to leave their place of origin when conditions deteriorate beyond a critical level of tolerance; migration, in all its forms, is essentially a response to similar core factors: namely, the lure of opportunity and the impetus of severe poverty (United

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Nations Development Program, 1994). For many individuals, the drive of poverty is as compelling as the attraction of better living conditions in prosperous areas.

The economic dynamism of the migration corridor between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire has attracted a significant influx of both internal labor migrants and international migrants from countries such as Togo and Nigeria (mainly to Ghana), Guinea (largely to Côte d'Ivoire), and Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali (to both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire) (Yaro, 2008). In a display of Pan-African unity, the political authorities of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have facilitated the movement of immigrants by allowing them to work and live within their territories (Anarfi and Kwakye, 2003). Meanwhile, the traditional north-south migration pattern has persisted since the colonial era, continuing to meet the agricultural demands of their plantations (Yaro, 2008).

Migration and various forms of human mobility have had a major influence on Ghana's development throughout its history (Kandilige et al., 2023). Additionally, Ghana's economic growth and substantial labor demand have made it a prominent destination for immigrants from West Africa (Anarfi et al., 2003; Awumbila et al., 2008; Quartey, 2009). During the nineteenth century, particularly in the colonial era, Ghana emerged as a key destination for migrants seeking employment in cocoa plantations and the mining sector (Kandilige et al., 2023).

Ghana is recognized as one of the five lower-middle-income countries in West Africa, according to the World Bank's 2019 classification (Ibourk, 2020). The country's relatively stable economy, along with its favorable employment conditions, makes it an attractive destination for migrants seeking better economic opportunities. Several sectors across the country, including agriculture, mining, and services, offer diverse job opportunities for incoming migrants. Compared to its neighbors, Ghana has experienced economic growth, creating potential pathways for migrants seeking employment and improved living standards (Siaw et al., 2016).

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As a result, social tensions sometimes arise and persist between migrants and the citizens of the host country, leading to divisions between countries of origin and destination. These unfortunate situations hinder the effective integration of migrants and the fulfillment of their basic rights (National Migration Policy, 2016).

In recent years, they have increasingly recognized economic factors as crucial drivers of migration within the sub-region. Increased unemployment rates, poverty, and a scarcity of economic opportunities in numerous ECOWAS member states compel individuals to seek better livelihoods in more affluent countries, such as Ghana (Amadi, 2025). Ghana's expanding economy, bolstered by sectors like mining, agriculture, and trade, offers a comparative advantage in attracting migrants (Hilson, 2013). Nevertheless, the migration process is fraught with legal, social, and economic obstacles, including the inconsistent application of the Free Movement Protocol, labor market limitations, and socio-economic disparities (Yeboah, 2021).

This study addresses this gap by investigating the economic determinants that compel ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.

2.6.3 Social Factors

A significant factor in the migration of ECOWAS citizens to Ghana is the presence of well-established social networks and cultural ties.

The migration of individuals throughout West Africa is not a recent phenomenon (Yaro, 2008), and substantial evidence indicates that current migration patterns in this region are heavily influenced by historical factors (Adepoju, 2006).

Historical, cultural, and linguistic ties have profoundly shaped migration flows between Ghana and its neighboring West African countries. These connections, characterized by common borders

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and ethnic affiliations, have positioned countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Burkina Faso as major sources of migrants to Ghana (Yahaya, 2021). Furthermore, Ghana's historical significance as a center for Pan-Africanism and its involvement in several independence movements across the continent have reinforced its role as a vital destination for cultural and historical migration (Yahaya, 2021).

Unlike its neighboring countries, Ghana's relatively advanced educational and healthcare systems make it an appealing choice for migrants seeking quality education and medical services (Bosiakoh, 2012; Siaw et al., 2016). The country has a growing educational sector, with more universities and institutions, attracting migrants seeking high-quality education for themselves and their families. Additionally, Ghana's improved healthcare infrastructure and increased access to medical care position it as a preferred destination for those seeking better healthcare options (Bosiakoh, 2012; Siaw et al., 2016). This acts as a significant pull factor, motivating ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana to access these resources that may be limited in their home countries.

The social determinants of migration, such as family reunification, educational opportunities, and cultural connections, are increasingly recognized as significant drivers of individuals' migration decisions in the ECOWAS region (Bensah, 2023). For example, research indicates that family relationships frequently serve as a pull factor, with migrants aiming to reunite with relatives who have already settled in Ghana (Oladehinde, 2024). Additionally, education is a crucial element, as Ghana's relatively developed educational system draws students from neighboring countries (Uchenna, 2021). Moreover, the cultural and linguistic similarities among ECOWAS member states ease the integration process for migrants, thereby lowering the social and psychological burdens associated with relocation (Adepoju, 2008).

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Despite these insights, existing migration scholarship has predominantly focused on economic and political factors, often sidelining the nuanced social dimensions that shape migration patterns.

2.6.4 Environmental Factors

Environmental factors such as extreme weather, drought, and scarce resources can force people from countries with sensitive ecosystems to migrate to more suitable areas, including parts of Ghana. Improved climate conditions are widely recognized as environmental factors that encourage migration (Schurmann et al., 2022). Additionally, the availability of arable land has led pastoralists from the Sahel to migrate and settle in Ghana.

Moreover, the mining and cocoa sectors in Ghana continue to attract migrants from northern Nigeria. Historically, during the British colonial period, Ghana's mining industry was arguably the most significant in West Africa, providing a range of job opportunities that were largely unavailable to the local populace (Yaro, 2008). The mining sector in Ghana, particularly gold mining, has attracted individuals from surrounding countries seeking better-paying employment than is available in their home countries. This influx is driven by the widespread perception that Ghana is a land of opportunity for those involved in the extraction and processing of natural resources (Awumbila et al., 2014). The development of resource frontiers to boost cocoa production in the central and western regions has led to substantial migration into Ghana and to widespread circular migration within the country (Yaro, 2008).

The rise of commercial oil and gas production in Ghana, along with a shortage of skilled labor, has led to a dependence on skilled workers from ECOWAS member states and other African countries. Since the beginning of the new millennium, Ghana has attracted significant numbers of foreign nationals eager to participate in and establish enterprises in various sectors, including real estate, oil and gas, retail, agriculture, and both large- and small-scale mining (Teye et al., 2024).

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The effects of climate change may lead to a reduction in pastureland and heightened stress on local ecosystems, particularly in the drought-sensitive Sahel region of West Africa. Climate change and environmental degradation have prompted pastoralists from Niger and Mali to migrate to neighboring countries in search of water and grazing land for their livestock (Filho et al., 2022). This situation has the potential to spark conflict that could escalate into violence between herders and farmers. The interactions between these groups have also negatively affected socio-economic progress in certain regions that accommodate migrants, such as Agogo and Shai-Osu-Doku (Kandilige et al., 2022). In Ghana, herdsmen journey from as far away as Niger and Mali, leading to increased tensions and disputes with local agricultural producers (Clottey, 2007). Prolonged conflicts between agriculturalists and herders have intensified due to the impacts of climate change, leading to heightened competition for resources, further aggravated by governmental shortcomings in ensuring security (Brooke-Holland, 2023). Consequently, this has fostered resentment among local communities in Ghana towards ECOWAS citizens.

Environmental challenges, including disasters caused by climate change (such as flooding), have negatively impacted agricultural output in several ECOWAS countries. The discussion surrounding environmental threats has gained greater prominence, particularly about migratory movements (Kuhnt, 2019). Severe weather conditions have forced people to leave their homes in search of more favorable climates. The movement from the North to the South has become a notable trend in migration patterns (Clottey, 2007).

Changes in climate conditions pose a significant threat to many farmers and pastoralists across Africa. Variations in rainfall patterns, characterized by reduced precipitation, combined with the decreasing availability of arable land, have led to fragile ecosystems, desertification, and deforestation, which are adversely affecting agricultural productivity (Adepoju, 2006).

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The impact of environmental factors on migration trends is increasingly recognized as a 'threat multiplier,' intensifying existing vulnerabilities and prompting movement. Climate-related events, such as desertification, drought, and unpredictable rainfall, have rendered vast areas of the Sahel region uninhabitable, forcing populations to seek refuge in more stable environments (International Organization for Migration, 2023). Despite the growing research on environmental migration, significant gaps remain in understanding the specific environmental factors that drive ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana, as well as the socio-political and economic impacts of these movements.

2.7 Challenges Faced by Citizens of ECOWAS Countries who Migrate to Ghana

The movement of ECOWAS citizens to Ghana is influenced by regional integration frameworks such as the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, which ensures citizens have the right to entry, residence, and establishment. Nevertheless, systemic challenges persist, hindering migrants' integration and livelihoods. This review consolidates existing literature on critical issues, including improper documentation, xenophobia, accommodation, cost of living, language barriers, and policy limitations. These challenges obstruct citizens from fully reaping the benefits of the principles outlined in the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol.

2.7.1 Improper Documentation

Citizens from ECOWAS living in Ghana often face difficulties in acquiring the necessary documentation. They encounter bureaucratic hurdles when attempting to secure legal residence and work permits, despite the full implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols. This predicament has led to challenges related to employment, access to social services, and overall integration into Ghanaian society. As a result, migrants may find their access to government services, including law enforcement and other public resources, significantly limited (Mixed

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Migration Center Research Report, 2021). The procedures involved are complex, protracted, and costly, thereby creating obstacles for many migrants.

Adepoju (2005) notes that several migrants lack awareness of the documentation mandated by ECOWAS protocols, resulting in their irregular status. The typical ECOWAS citizen might overlook the necessary documents required before traveling across an international border, mistakenly believing it is standard procedure, as they are merely entering a neighboring country (Ghana) by land. Akakpo (2021) argues that immigration officials require travelers to provide a passport, while health authorities require a yellow fever vaccination certificate. It is therefore imperative to underscore that ECOWAS citizens will present these valid documents before immigration officers permit them to cross the border.

Despite the ratification of the protocol allowing free movement of individuals within the sub-region, which had been previously hindered by colonial authorities, several border checks still exist. As a result, this has caused significant harassment and the extortion of funds from travelers by security officials at various checkpoints (Bolarinwa, 2015).

Undocumented migrants have reported instances of extortion by officials at checkpoints, even when they possess valid ECOWAS Travel Certificates (Ammassari, 2014). While the ECOWAS protocol permits the acceptance of alternative travel documents, including travel certificates, some border management officials in different countries, such as Ghana, frequently favor the sole use of passports (Awumbila et al., 2018). This approach contradicts the 1979 Protocol regarding the Free Movement of People.

Prolonged waiting periods for passports and residence permits compel migrants to depend on exploitative intermediaries (Awumbila et al., 2014). Migrants frequently encounter challenges in

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securing residence permits and work authorization, and occasionally face harassment by officials (Teye et al., 2019). This situation arises due to a significant number of migrants from ECOWAS lacking the requisite travel documentation, such as ECOWAS travel certificates or national identification cards (Teye et al., 2019). Moreover, border management authorities often pressure migrants to make unofficial payments or risk being denied entry to their desired destination (Awumbila et al., 2018).

The Ghana Investment Promotion Center (GIPC) Act of 2013 places limitations on non-nationals in certain sectors, including petty trade, which conflicts with the rights to establish businesses as granted by ECOWAS (Teye, 2017). Moreover, there are inconsistencies between Ghana's national employment regulations and the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, leading to confusion and uneven enforcement (Teye et al., 2019). Ghana's national laws tend to prioritize local citizens over individuals from ECOWAS member states. The introduction of the Ghana Card is intended to distinguish between Ghanaian nationals and foreign residents, potentially affecting their access to the labor market and related outcomes (Kandilige et al., 2022). The drafters of these regulations have suggested that public and other essential sectors in Ghana should be managed by local individuals, although citizens from ECOWAS may be hired for technical roles when there is a lack of local expertise.

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2.7.2 Policy Limitations

Notwithstanding the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, citizens of ECOWAS living in Ghana face considerable policy restrictions that impede their capacity to completely integrate and seize opportunities. These obstacles arise from discrepancies in both national and regional policies, bureaucratic challenges, and gaps in enforcement.

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One of the main challenges is the disparity between Ghana's domestic legislation and the stipulations of the ECOWAS protocol. The inconsistencies between national laws and the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol led to confusion and obstructed the effective implementation of the protocol. Migrants frequently encounter difficulties in navigating these legal intricacies (Teye et al., 2019). Although ECOWAS advocates for free movement, Ghana's national policies occasionally conflict with regional agreements. For example, employment regulations and residency requirements often impose more stringent conditions than those specified in ECOWAS protocols, confusing migrants (Yeboah et al., 2020).

While the ECOWAS protocols grant citizens the authority to reside and partake in economic activities, the Ghana Investment Act (Act 865) places limitations on migrants' involvement in certain low-capital economic ventures. Such ventures encompass petty trading, taxi driving, managing beauty salons, printing recharge cards for telecommunications users, manufacturing exercise books, distributing retail sachet water, and marketing finished pharmaceutical products (Awumbila et al., 2018; Teye et al., 2019; Kandilige et al., 2022).

The fear that migrants might dominate current economic opportunities has led to the implementation of strict business regulations in their home countries. Until recently, Ghana required a minimum investment of $300,000 from Nigerian firms seeking to establish operations within its borders (Oloruntoba, 2016). Teye et al. (2019) argue that anxiety about competition with immigrants may have influenced authorities' decision-making in enacting these regulations.

Member states have enacted protectionist laws and measures that limit the employment of citizens from other ECOWAS countries in specific sectors, including public service, security, and informal activities such as trading (Awumbila et al., 2014). Despite the presence of ECOWAS conventions, the lack of political will to enforce these agreements or to harmonize national legislation with

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ECOWAS protocols remains a critical political challenge (Zanker et al., 2020). For instance, Ghana often places greater importance on its national laws than on ECOWAS Protocols. This strategy aims to ensure that its citizens can benefit from the scarce opportunities present within the country. Although Ghana claims to uphold ECOWAS agreements, its application is frequently inconsistent. Border officials and local authorities sometimes apply national regulations more stringently than ECOWAS provisions, leading to arbitrary restrictions on movement and residency (Yeboah et al., 2021).

2.7.3 High Cost of Living

The high cost of living poses a considerable challenge for ECOWAS citizens living in Ghana. The increased expenditure on food, transportation, and other vital goods and services creates a substantial strain for ECOWAS migrants, who often have restricted financial means. They find it difficult to cover basic needs due to the steep prices in Ghana, which can hinder their capacity to save or remit funds back to their countries of origin.

The escalating cost of living, particularly the rise in food and transportation costs, places a significant burden on migrants' financial resources, especially those employed in low-wage informal sectors (Arhin-Sam, 2019). The increasing prices of food and essential commodities have a disproportionate impact on low-income migrants. Imported goods, which make up a considerable share of Ghana's market, are affected by variable exchange rates, leading to their rising costs (Today Online, 2024). Additionally, local food prices have experienced a sharp increase due to inflation and disruptions in the supply chain.

The country is currently facing a crisis in the cost of living, highlighted by an inflation rate that surged to 54.1% in December 2022, an increase from 50.3% in November 2022 (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). The rapid decline of the Ghanaian cedi against major

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international currencies, such as the U.S. dollar, has coincided with this inflationary trend. As reported by Bloomberg, the cedi concluded 2022 as the second weakest currency in Africa, having depreciated by 38.86% against the U.S. dollar. The decline of the Ghanaian cedi against significant international trading currencies further intensifies the financial strain on migrants, particularly those who earn in the local currency, namely the Ghanaian cedi. This depreciation reduces the value of remittances sent to families in their home countries (World Bank, 2022).

The elevated cost of living may lead to increased poverty and health disparities, placing additional strain on a healthcare system already under significant pressure (Atimu and Luo, 2020). Accessing affordable healthcare continues to be a challenge for migrants, as private healthcare costs are substantial and public healthcare institutions often operate beyond their capacity (Today Online, 2024). While the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) provides some assistance, the processes for registration and renewal can be quite burdensome for individuals who are not residents of Ghana.

2.7.4 Accommodation

Accommodation remains a major issue for ECOWAS citizens living in Ghana, despite the Free Movement Protocol that encourages regional migration. The limited availability of affordable and adequate housing, combined with a high cost of living, creates significant challenges for ECOWAS migrants who struggle to find suitable housing. These migrants often face obstacles in securing affordable and appropriate accommodations due to the low supply of affordable housing in Ghana. Additionally, some Ghanaians complain that the high rents paid by Nigerians to landlords have worsened the housing affordability crisis in Ghana.

People moving from ECOWAS countries to urban centers like Accra and Kumasi face extremely high rental costs, forcing many to live in crowded informal settlements (Amanor, 2010). The

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housing market in Ghana is characterized by high rent prices, with landlords often demanding large upfront payments (Modern Ghana, 2024). Migrants, especially those with limited resources, struggle to acquire affordable housing, leading to many living in overcrowded or poor conditions.

Migrants originating from ECOWAS countries often face discrimination within the housing sector, as landlords tend to favor renting to Ghanaian citizens (ListingsProGH, 2025). Landlords may impose higher rental rates on non-nationals or may entirely refuse them rental opportunities (UNHCR-IFRC, 2020). The refusal to accept non-national tenants or the requirement for excessive deposits stems from xenophobic biases (Owusu, 2007). Several landlords insist on exorbitant advance payments, occasionally demanding as much as two years' rent in advance, which is beyond the financial reach of most migrants (Achamwie and Danso-Wiredu, 2021). Such exclusionary practices restrict their housing choices and compel many to reside in overcrowded and inadequate living conditions (ListingsProGH, 2025).

Despite Ghana's dedication to the protocols established by ECOWAS, bureaucratic obstacles hinder migrants from acquiring residence permits, which are frequently necessary for securing formal housing arrangements (ListingsProGH, 2025). Moreover, the inadequate enforcement of housing regulations permits landlords to take advantage of tenants without encountering legal repercussions (Achamwie and Danso-Wiredu, 2021). Migrants experience a lack of tenure security, as landlords exploit their irregular status to carry out arbitrary evictions (Yaro et al., 2021).

2.7.5 Xenophobia and Discrimination

Notwithstanding the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, xenophobia and discrimination continue to pose considerable challenges for ECOWAS citizens in Ghana. Despite initiatives by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to promote regional integration, the resurgence of nationalism and anti-immigration violence has hindered progress (Akinola, 2018c).

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Individuals migrating from ECOWAS countries frequently face hostility that is deeply embedded in socioeconomic conflicts. These migrants are susceptible to discrimination in their host countries (National Migration Policy, 2016).

Discrimination against migrants is a prevalent issue in many countries, where local populations often perceive the success of newcomers as a threat. These migrants generally aim to improve their lives through their respective pursuits. However, these circumstances have deteriorated in several areas, with migrants increasingly facing violence and abuse, especially during periods of economic hardship (Yaro, 2008).

Residents view migrants as rivals for employment and resources, which perpetuates stereotypes (Teye et al., 2015). For instance, Nigerian migrants are labeled as "fraudsters," whereas Fulani herders are often accused of encroaching on land and obliterating farmlands (Akyeampong, 2006). Typically, responsibility for economic and social problems is attributed to foreigners rather than to underlying issues such as corruption, mismanagement, and external influences (Yaro, 2008). It is important to emphasize that this xenophobic tendency does not define the South African situation.

Migrants face discrimination even though regional agreements prohibit such actions against ECOWAS citizens (Teye et al., 2015). In Ghana, migrants still experience xenophobia and discrimination (Bisong, 2019). Negative perceptions of foreigners, fueled by economic competition or cultural differences, can hinder integration and lead to social unrest.

Second-generation migrants hold a peripheral status in Ghanaian society, as they lack recognition as citizens (Kandilige et al., 2022). They may face xenophobic sentiments and discrimination from the local populace, which can result in social exclusion and restrict their access to resources and opportunities while residing in Ghana (Gould, 1974).

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The growth of migrant populations has been linked to an increase in criminal activities within Ghana, such as kidnapping, armed robbery, money laundering, and the trafficking of counterfeit goods (Teye et al., 2019). Awumbila et al. (2018) also connect the rise in these criminal activities to the influx of migrants. In addition, a cross-section of Ghanaians views Nigerians as deceitful, a perception rooted in past incidents where certain Nigerians were involved in fraudulent activities (Essuman-Johnson, 2006). In Ghana, there exists a stereotype that foreigners are kidnappers and con artists (Akinola, 2020). In the latest xenophobic episode in Ghana, triggered by the alleged abduction of three Ghanaians by a Nigerian in December 2018, a Ghanaian radio station remarked that this incident could easily be interpreted as a provocation for hostility against Nigerians residing in Ghana (Akinola, 2020).

Migrants have reported experiencing discrimination when trying to access healthcare and education, as service providers often prioritize citizens (Awumbila, 2016). Language barriers and cultural differences further intensify the challenges of integration. Furthermore, reports suggest that xenophobic sentiments are occasionally exacerbated by media narratives that depict migrants as factors contributing to crime and economic instability (Premium Times Opinion, 2020).

2.7.6 Language Barriers

ECOWAS is made up of countries with varied colonial backgrounds, resulting in a separation among English-speaking, French-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking countries. Although most countries were able to shed many colonial legacies after gaining independence, colonial powers had a significant influence on the linguistic makeup of many of them. West African countries currently belong to one of three colonial legacies of imposed languages: Portuguese, French, or English (Mina et al., 2018).

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The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement promotes cross-border mobility; however, language barriers impede its complete execution (GhanaWeb, 2019). These language barriers have a considerable effect on the integration and mobility of ECOWAS inhabitants in Ghana. Despite the Free Movement Protocol, the linguistic disparities between Anglophone and Francophone member states pose challenges in social, economic, and administrative engagements.

Ghana, an English-speaking country, is surrounded by French-speaking countries, which complicates communication for migrants from adjacent regions. A notable language barrier is present, as the majority of individuals hailing from Francophone countries do not possess adequate English skills (Teye et al., 2015). Francophone migrants from Burkina Faso or Togo encounter difficulties in accessing public services primarily conducted in English (Arthur, 2010).

The presence of various official languages at border checkpoints further obstructs individuals' free movement (Bolarinwa, 2015). Immigration officials in Ghana frequently encounter challenges in communicating with migrants from ECOWAS because of these language disparities. This situation complicates border control procedures and occasionally leads to misunderstandings and delays in processing travel documents. The Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) has recognized this challenge and has advocated for the implementation of policies aimed at mitigating language barriers in migration enforcement (GhanaWeb, 2019).

Language barriers play a significant role in social exclusion, as migrants find it challenging to communicate effectively with residents. This frequently results in misunderstandings, discrimination, and restricted involvement in community events. Francophone migrants, specifically, face challenges in establishing social networks due to language disparities (Asaaseradio Online, 2024).

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The formal sector interacts with ethnicity, thereby reinforcing exclusion (Anarfi et al., 2003). Language barriers restrict job opportunities for ECOWAS migrants in Ghana, especially in areas that necessitate direct customer interaction or administrative involvement. Employers frequently favor candidates who are proficient in English, thereby marginalizing Francophone migrants who face challenges with the language. This exclusion diminishes their economic opportunities and compels many to seek informal employment (GhanaWeb, 2019).

2.8 Ghana's Policy Implications on Migration Across West Africa

The Government of Ghana has actively sought to integrate the principles of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, particularly those concerning entry rights, migration governance, and policy formulation, into its policy-making processes (Teye et al., 2019). The elements of the ECOWAS free-movement protocols have significantly influenced the discourse surrounding border management in Ghana.

Ghana possesses an articulated national migration policy that encompasses the legal and regulatory dimensions of migration. This protocol outlines fundamental principles for formulating the National Migration Policy (NMP) and acknowledges the necessity of promoting unrestricted movement. The principal legislative framework governing immigration in Ghana includes the Immigration Act (573) of 2000, the Immigration Amendment Act (848) of 2012, and the Immigration Regulations (L.I. 1691) of 2001 (International Organization for Migration, 2018).

2.8.1 Government Policies and Institutions in Managing Migration in Ghana

Migration has increasingly become a prominent issue that intersects with various aspects of development policy formulation in Ghana (Kandilige et al., 2023). This phenomenon is particularly noteworthy in Ghana, where both internal and external migration significantly influence the country's demographic trends and socioeconomic conditions (Yahaya, 2021). The

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formulation of migration policies in Ghana involves a diverse array of stakeholders, including government ministries and agencies, regional organizations, international entities, and global donors (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021).

Both national and international entities collaborate daily to shape, execute, and manage Ghana's migration policy. Among the global stakeholders, traditional organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), various United Nations agencies, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) play significant roles in both the formulation and implementation of policies (Kandilige et al., 2023). Furthermore, two influential international organizations in migration governance in Ghana are the International Center for Migration Policy and Development (ICMPD) and the German development agency, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) (Kandilige et al., 2023).

Ghana's framework for migration governance is complex and multifaceted, as seen in Table 2.1. The lack of a central authority responsible for coordinating all migration activities in the country results in a fragmented approach. Different government ministries, departments, and agencies are responsible for developing policies and overseeing various aspects of migration-related matters (Kandilige et al., 2023).

The National Migration Policy (NMP) serves as the foundational framework for developing migration policies in Ghana and is often referred to as a comprehensive document (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). It encompasses a wide range of migration-related topics, including internal migration, irregular migration, urbanization, human trafficking, labor migration, border management, diaspora engagement, forced displacement, citizenship, climate change, and the management of migration data. Additionally, the NMP addresses various cross-cutting themes such as gender,

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health, education, vulnerable populations, tourism, cultural heritage, trade and services, and natural resource management (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021).

The Government of Ghana has implemented strategic initiatives to oversee both internal and external migration within its borders and beyond. The following outlines several significant policies and institutions that are essential to the effective management of migration in the country.

Table 2. 1: Government Institutions in Managing Migration in Ghana

Ministry	*Agency, Directorate, Unit*	*Key Responsibility*
Ministry of Interior	Migration Unit Ghana Immigration Service Ghana Police Service	Entry, stay, and removal of foreigners
Ministry of Employment	Labor Department	Licensing and monitoring of private employment agencies An intermediary in the international labor market between employers and job seekers
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Diaspora Affairs Bureau Consular Units	Relations with the national abroad and their protection
Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection *Ministry of Finance*	Human Trafficking Secretariat Department of Gender Department of Children	Fight against the trafficking of persons Implementation of policies regarding remittances

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Central Bank of Ghana	Consumer Reporting Financial Stability	Implementation of policies about remittances

Source: Devillard et al., 2015

Various ministries and public institutions are involved in migration-related matters, such as the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), as well as the Ministries of Education, Tourism, Justice, and Health.

2.8.2 Opportunities and Challenges for Policy Development Regarding Migration to Ghana by ECOWAS Members

Migrants originating from ECOWAS member states in Ghana present a range of opportunities and challenges pertinent to the formulation of policies addressing economic, social, and legal dimensions. The potential advantages for the development of migration policies in Ghana, stemming from ECOWAS members, include the following:

The formulation of a migration policy by ECOWAS member states for Ghana represents a pivotal opportunity for fostering economic advancement and development. As a middle-income country experiencing consistent economic growth, Ghana has emerged as a desirable hub for skilled labor migration and economic integration within the ECOWAS framework (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The dynamics of intra-regional migration hold the potential to invigorate economic growth in Ghana, as migrants contribute significantly to the labor market (Yahaya, 2021). The effects of migration on Ghana's economy can be beneficial, including the transfer of skills, knowledge, and remittances, which collectively promote economic expansion, job creation, and improved productivity.

Ghana actively supports the unrestricted movement of individuals within the ECOWAS, a position aimed at improving labor mobility and facilitating skill transfer. Programs such as the Intra-African

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Talent Mobility Program (Schurmann et al., 2022) exemplify this. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) promotes integration and free movement among its member countries, creating opportunities for developing policies that enhance labor mobility, trade, and economic cooperation under the free movement protocol. Such initiatives are likely to encourage the exchange of skills and knowledge across member states.

Ghana benefits from policy development assistance provided by ECOWAS. The Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA) offers technical guidance and benchmarks for creating national migration policies for each member state. This support is instrumental for Ghana in crafting its migration policies. The introduction of the National Migration Policy (NMP) in 2016 was an important step toward a strategic framework for overseeing internal, intra-regional, and international migration. The objective is to harness migration as a tool for socioeconomic advancement (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

However, in addition to the potential advantages, formulating migration policies in Ghana presents several challenges. Key issues include the prolonged nature of developing infrastructure and capacity-building policies, which often result in slow progress. This bureaucratic complexity can discourage individuals from engaging with the system, leading some to seek alternative routes to bypass established procedures. Furthermore, the government faces difficulties in executing these policies, which may be partly due to insufficient targeted funding, as numerous stakeholders have stated that they require enhanced external financial support (Mouthaan, 2019). Additionally, the politicization of migration policymaking in Ghana has intensified since the mid-2000s, particularly within specific contexts and discussions (Adam et al., 2020; DGAP, 2021).

Party politics in Ghana significantly influence the National Migration Policy (NMP). One notable challenge arises from the tendency of new administrations to adopt distinct policy agendas while

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neglecting initiatives established by their predecessors. For example, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which introduced the NMP in 2016, was succeeded by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the same year. The NPP's limited involvement in formulating the NMP may explain the current government's reluctance to embrace the policy fully, as it has indicated a preference to reassess it since taking office in 2017 (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). Furthermore, the excessive involvement of politicians in areas such as diaspora engagement often undermines the roles of civil servants and non-governmental organizations, posing a significant threat to the long-term viability of policies once political transitions occur (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021).

Ghanaian actors continue to lack ownership of the National Migration Policy (NMP). External stakeholders have significantly influenced both the formulation and certain aspects of the policy's execution. The NMP initiative was launched in 2012 and completed in 2016, primarily due to funding from the European Union and technical guidance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). Although Ghanaian officials support the IOM initiatives funded by the European Union (EU), they criticize the sidelining of local institutions during implementation, particularly in the design of consultation processes and the hiring of international personnel to manage operations. Critics highlight that international and European entities involved in Ghana co-authored the NMP. The Ministry of Interior, responsible for the policy domestically, delegated the drafting responsibilities to consultants from the Center for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana, under the guidance and technical oversight of the IOM (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021).

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2.8.3 Ghana and International Cooperation and Coordination in Addressing Migration Issues

Ghana emphasizes the importance of international collaboration and coordination in addressing migration challenges. As a global phenomenon, migration necessitates the joint efforts of various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, international organizations, civil society, and private sector participants (Arrocha, 2013). Moreover, Ghana recognizes that migration transcends national boundaries and that its effective management relies on international cooperation, akin to the principles upheld in trade and capital flows. The country also understands that successful migration entails integration, assimilation, loyalty, and responsible citizenship, alongside the encouragement of diversity and the embrace of multiple identities (Arrocha, 2013). Ghana asserts that migration will continue to influence global dynamics, and it is imperative to facilitate this process in an environment characterized by freedom, solidarity, and the absence of conflict, discrimination, or new barriers.

Ghana promotes the creation of regional and continental frameworks aimed at maximizing the advantages of intra-African migration to foster structural transformation (Arrocha, 2013). This approach encompasses the integration of gender-sensitive perspectives into migration policies and regulatory structures, the development of public-private partnerships to enhance labor mobility, the exploration of financing strategies to optimize the effects of remittances and savings from the diaspora, and the establishment of multilateral collaborations to tackle the underlying factors contributing to migration beyond the continent.

The country's engagement with a range of international partners, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and European entities such as the European Union (EU) and individual European countries, has significantly shaped the

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formulation and execution of its national migration policies, underscoring its dedication to tackling migration issues (Kandilige et al., 2023). In its efforts to confront migration challenges, Ghana promotes an inclusive and thorough dialogue that emphasizes constructive communication among all relevant parties. The country asserts that fostering open and secure environments for discussion at multilateral platforms, including the International Dialogue on Migration and the Global Forum on Migration and Development, is important (Martin and Straubhaar, 2002).

Ghana's engagement with both individual states and state unions is closely linked to its partnerships with international organizations and adherence to global legal frameworks governing migration (Kandilige et al., 2023). The country has established lasting relationships with key entities, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Recently, Ghana has gained greater visibility on the international stage (Kandilige et al., 2023). It has actively contributed to shaping the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM), and it continues to be a significant participant in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

Ghana has established a strong partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) to promote dialogue and collaboration on international migration issues at the regional level (International Organization for Migration, 2018). This partnership involves participating in programs such as the Migration Dialogue in West Africa (MIDWA) and adhering to the African Union's guidelines and plans, which aim to facilitate the movement of people within Africa and enhance the implementation of migration policies in the sub-region.

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Ghana acknowledges the importance of collaborative policies between sending and receiving countries, emphasizing a compassionate approach that incorporates the effective application and coordination of international standards aimed at safeguarding immigrant workers and their families (Martin and Straubhaar, 2002). This perspective aligns with the broader call for international collaboration to tackle migration challenges, as highlighted by multiple sources. The necessity of international cooperation and coordination in addressing migration issues is crucial (Martin and Straubhaar, 2002). Countries recognize that robust migration governance is vital for ensuring safer, more orderly, and regular migration flows. Achieving this goal requires the development of shared policies, effective coordination of international norms, and the creation of regional and continental frameworks.

Ghana recognizes the significant role that migrants play in both their countries of origin and their countries of destination. These individuals can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills, promote technological advancement, engage in research and innovation, and contribute to sustainable development initiatives. The country acknowledges that migration transcends national boundaries, representing a global challenge that necessitates international collaboration and coordination (Martin and Straubhaar, 2002). Consequently, it is essential to examine Ghana's initiatives aimed at creating regional and continental frameworks to leverage the advantages of intra-African migration for structural transformation.

Ghana advocates for governance and social development approaches that are inclusive, taking into account the needs of both the local population and migrants. By implementing initiatives aimed at stimulating economic growth in areas of emigration, the objective is to maximize the advantages of migration while alleviating the factors that contribute to involuntary migration.

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2.9 Research Gap

While considerable research has examined the economic and political drivers of migration in West Africa (Adepoju, 2009; Aryeetey, 2018; Teye et al., 2019), much less attention has been given to the social and environmental dimensions that also shape patterns of migration (Adepoju, 2006; Awumbila et al., 2014; Filho et al., 2022). Moreover, existing studies often treat these drivers in isolation rather than analyzing how they interact in practice. Scholarship has also focused heavily on the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol as a legal framework, while comparatively little is known about the lived experiences of migrants in host countries, particularly the challenges they face with documentation, housing, cost of living, xenophobia, and language barriers (Awumbila et al., 2018; Bisong, 2019; Arhin-Sam, 2019). Finally, there is limited research that links these drivers and experiences systematically to Ghana's national migration policies and its evolving role in regional migration governance during the Fourth Republic. This gap provides the foundation for the present study. The objectives and research questions in Chapter 1 guide the study in light of the previously discussed and identified knowledge gaps.

2.10 Conclusion

The literature review on migration in ECOWAS, particularly from the perspective of Ghana's Fourth Republic, highlights the dynamic and complex nature of migration in the region. Despite significant progress in promoting free movement and regional integration, numerous challenges continue to persist. This review has given an in-depth summary of the key themes and issues related to migration in the global, Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, including ECOWAS, and a focus on Ghana. As outlined in the previous section, the gaps in the literature reveal the need to examine more closely the social and environmental dimensions of migration, the lived experiences of migrants, and the policy implications of Ghana's role in regional migration governance. By

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articulating clear research objectives and questions, this study positions itself to address these gaps systematically. The next chapter builds on this foundation by presenting the theoretical framework that informs the study. It discusses the push-and-pull theory of migration, clarifies its relevance to the research objectives and questions, and establishes how it will guide the analysis of Ghana's role in ECOWAS migration.



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CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING FACTORS THAT DRIVE MIGRATION

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed the relevant literature, highlighting economic, political, social, and environmental drivers of migration to Ghana, as well as challenges faced by ECOWAS migrants. It also identified gaps and outlined the research questions and objectives of this study. To address these questions and analyze these themes systematically, this study adopts the push and pull theoretical framework. This chapter presents the theory, its strengths and weaknesses, and its application to Ghana's Fourth Republic. Establishing a strong theoretical basis is essential for research, as it provides the conceptual grounding for the key ideas that align with the study's aims. Accordingly, this chapter offers an in-depth examination of the push-and-pull migration theory and its relevance within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with a focus on Ghana as the destination country for this study.

3.1 Push and Pull Theory

Over the years, migration has been a longstanding phenomenon, shaped by numerous influences, including economic conditions, natural disasters, and diverse social and political contexts (Urbański, 2022). Within migration studies, the push-and-pull theory is a prominent framework (Figure 3.1) that elucidates the motivations behind migration and the decision-making processes of individuals or groups relocating from one place to another.

According to Zanabazar et al. (2021), push and pull factors have a significant impact on migration patterns. This theory distinguishes between "push factors," which are the circumstances that

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compel individuals to leave their current environment, and "pull factors," which are the factors that entice them to move to a new location (Khalid and Urbański, 2021). Initially propounded by Lee in 1966, the push-and-pull theory of migration posits that various conditions are crucial in influencing individuals' decisions to move from their place of origin to a new destination.

This theoretical framework has been extensively used to elucidate the complexities of human migration. The push and pull theory clarifies the contrasts between the migrants' places of origin and their intended destinations (Van Hear et al., 2017). By examining both push factors (which compel individuals to leave their current locations) and pull factors (which attract them to new environments), the theory provides a nuanced perspective on migration dynamics. Additionally, it acknowledges that the migration decision can be impacted by intervening obstacles, including geographical distances, legal barriers (such as immigration regulations), financial costs associated with migration, and the emotional toll of separating from family members (Filho et al., 2022).

This theory posits that migration results from the interplay between "push factors" present in the place of origin and "pull factors" at the destination (Hou et al., 2011). These include economic challenges such as increased unemployment rates, rising living expenses, and downturns in the business cycle; political issues such as conflict, terrorism, and inequitable legal systems; as well as social oppression, persecution, human rights violations, and environmental crises like drought, deforestation, and water shortages. Additionally, natural disasters exacerbated by climate change are significant contributors (Keaveney, 1995; Van Hear et al., 2017; Khalid and Urbański, 2021). According to Van Hear et al. (2017), while poverty is a critical driver of migration, it is noteworthy that those in poverty often lack the essential resources required to facilitate their relocation.

Pull factors are the advantageous characteristics of destination countries that entice individuals to migrate. These factors encompass a favorable climate, lenient immigration policies, enhanced job

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opportunities, and opportunities for business growth. Additionally, they involve political and social stability, access to better healthcare services, religious acceptance, and the absence of persecution (Keaveney, 1995; Van Hear et al., 2017; Urbański, 2022).

Migration has historically played a pivotal role in regional development within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), acting both as a reaction to and a catalyst for socio-economic transformations. The free movement of individuals, a key goal outlined in ECOWAS's 1979 Protocol, creates opportunities for regional integration and economic advancement, yet it continues to evolve amid ongoing structural challenges (Amadi et al., 2025). As a fundamental component of regional integration, ECOWAS promotes the unrestricted movement of people, goods, and services to foster economic development and cohesion among its 15 member states, including Ghana (Bensah, 2023). Within the ECOWAS framework, the free movement protocol has opened pathways for labor migration, cross-border trade, and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, the interplay of push factors, such as economic instability and environmental degradation, along with pull factors like perceived economic opportunities and political stability, represents only a part of the complex migration dynamics.

This theory reveals the ongoing migration patterns from relatively impoverished Sahelian countries, particularly Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, to more affluent coastal countries like Ghana, which share linguistic and ethnic connections (Teye et al., 2015; Awumbila et al., 2018). The push-and-pull theory is a robust analytical framework for understanding the unrestricted movement of individuals, commodities, and services among the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This framework significantly contributes to the elevated migration rates observed in the West African sub-region, with Ghana emerging as a primary destination for migrants.

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Political stability and economic reforms marked the Fourth Republic, which began in 1992, creating a favorable environment for migration (Owusu, 2020). Factors driving the migration of ECOWAS citizens to Ghana include climate change, political instability, terrorist activities, economic challenges, and food shortages (Schurmann et al., 2022). Severe weather conditions, such as droughts, force individuals to leave their home countries within ECOWAS for places like Ghana, which are less affected by such damaging climatic conditions. Some scholars (Lee, 1966; Harris and Todaro, 1970) argue that migration in this context is driven by the desire of individuals from economically challenged areas to seek opportunities in more prosperous regions. Many West Africans are attracted to Ghana because of its vibrant retail market, which provides pathways for personal growth and economic development (Yendaw et al., 2019).

Schurmann et al. (2022) demonstrated that economic factors play a crucial role, as a corresponding economic pull factor accompanies each identified push factor. The subsequent pull factor, most frequently referred to as "availability of land," was associated with push factors across all driver categories. Additionally, "improved climatic conditions" were primarily linked to environmental or economic pull factors. It is important to note that every pull factor is connected to push factors across different driver categories (Schurmann et al., 2022).

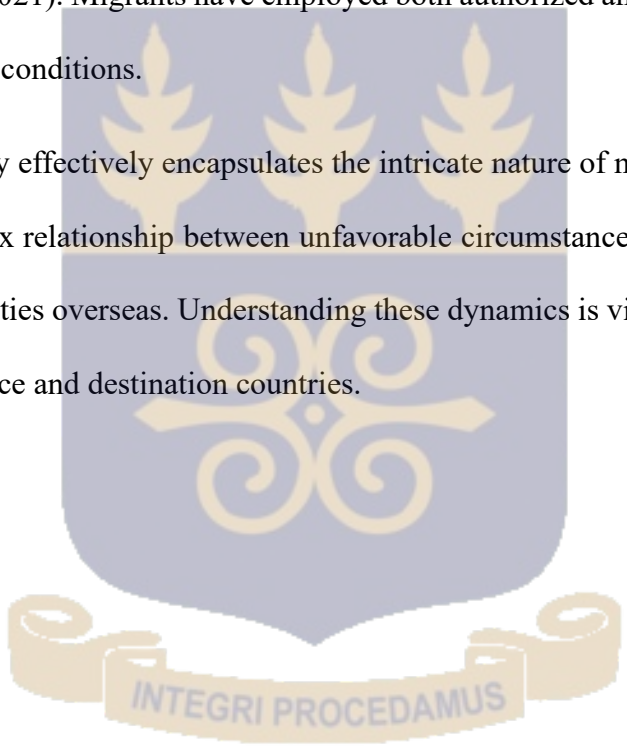
To comprehend the relationship between development and heightened migration, it is essential to transcend the notion of West African migrants as mere passive entities affected solely by external 'push' factors, including poverty, demographic pressures, violent conflicts, or environmental degradation, akin to the way physical objects respond to gravitational or electromagnetic forces (Flauhax and de Haas, 2016). Such 'push-pull' frameworks overlook the fact that individuals migrate only when they possess the necessary aspirations and resources to undertake such

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journeys. Therefore, migration should be understood as a manifestation of individuals' ambitions and capabilities (de Haas, 2014).

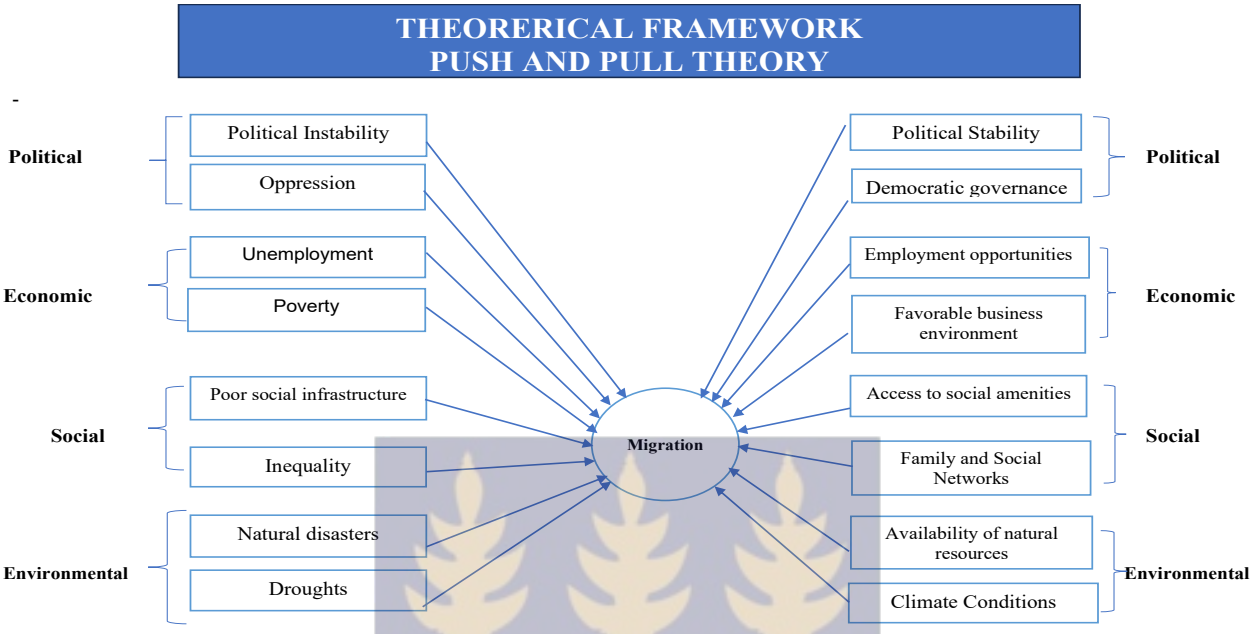
Localized overpopulation due to migration can lead to temporary resource shortages, which may incite competition and conflict over these limited resources, potentially escalating tensions (Khalid and Urbański, 2021). Additionally, the ongoing influx of migrants can lead to unrest and discord within communities, as indigenous people may perceive immigrants as a threat to job opportunities (Khalid and Urbański, 2021). Migrants have employed both authorized and unauthorized methods to seek improved living conditions.

The push and pull theory effectively encapsulates the intricate nature of migration in West Africa, highlighting the complex relationship between unfavorable circumstances in one's home country and appealing opportunities overseas. Understanding these dynamics is vital for creating effective policies in both the source and destination countries.



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Figure 3. 1: Theoretical framework showing push-pull drivers.



Adapted: (Khalid and Urbański, 2021)

3.2 Strengths of the Push and Pull Theory

This theoretical framework offers a comprehensive lens for examining migration. It considers the diverse elements that compel individuals to migrate, including the adverse conditions that drive them from their countries of origin and the appealing opportunities that draw them to new locations (Van Hear et al., 2017). This theory effectively elucidates the complexities of migration patterns within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The push-pull theory provides a framework for formulating targeted policy interventions. It enables policymakers to identify and address the underlying factors that influence migration (Schurmann et al., 2022), thus offering vital insights into the specific elements of migration that require intervention. By focusing on push or pull factors, governments and organizations can create

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strategies to improve conditions in the origin areas or enhance opportunities in the destination regions.

This theoretical framework streamlines migration analysis by classifying its causes into two main categories: push factors, which refer to the reasons prompting individuals to leave a particular area, and pull factors, which denote the attractions of a new location. This classification is instrumental in understanding the motivations behind migration trends within and among ECOWAS countries (Schurmann et al., 2022). By distinguishing between push and pull factors, this approach enables policymakers and researchers to systematically categorize the underlying causes of migration, thereby facilitating the formulation of targeted interventions.

While this theory has notable strengths, it is not without its shortcomings.

3.3 Weaknesses of the Push and Pull Theory

Van Hear et al. (2017) critique the push-and-pull theory as overly simplistic and deterministic. They argue that the decisions surrounding human migration are inherently complex and multifaceted, rendering a binary push-and-pull model insufficient to encapsulate the nuances involved. Nonetheless, this theory remains empirically relevant within the broader discussions of human migration (Lee, 1966; Harris and Todaro, 1970; Khalid and Urbański, 2021). A binary framework cannot adequately represent the inherently intricate decision-making processes surrounding human migration (Van Hear et al., 2017). This theoretical approach offers a basic overview of migration determinants. Still, it fails to account for their varying significance, neglecting the nuanced interactions among the various factors influencing migration within the ECOWAS region (Megersa and Tafesse, 2024). Political instability, economic inequality, and

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conflict play crucial roles in this context. These factors can exert a significant influence, depending on the specific circumstances of each individual.

This theory faces criticism for presuming that the originating population is homogeneous (de Haas, 2008). A factor that acts as a push for one individual may not exert the same influence on another. This variability complicates the ability to generalize about migration choices. Recent discussions suggest that the general contextual factors typically categorized as push or pull may operate in a differentiated manner at the individual or personal level, potentially motivating some individuals to depart. In contrast, others choose to remain (de Haas, 2008).

This theory fails to comprehensively examine the decision-making processes of individuals or communities in the context of migration (de Haas, 2014). It posits a straightforward and linear connection between push and pull factors, neglecting the psychological, cultural, and personal influences that may affect these decisions.

3.4 Justification for Adopting the Push and Pull Theory

Although widely used in migration studies, the push and pull theory has notable limitations that require a more nuanced approach in this thesis.

First, the framework is often criticized as being overly simplistic and deterministic. By reducing migration decisions to a binary of “push” and “pull,” it risks overlooking the interplay among factors. As highlighted in Chapter Two, migration within ECOWAS is shaped by overlapping economic, political, social, and environmental dynamics rather than by isolated drivers. This study responds to that limitation by examining how these factors interact in the Ghanaian context during the Fourth Republic.

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Second, the theory tends to neglect migrants' lived experiences. Structural conditions are important, but they do not capture the everyday challenges migrants face after moving, such as documentation barriers, accommodation shortages, xenophobia, and language difficulties. These issues are central to understanding migrant integration in Ghana. This thesis addresses this gap by incorporating the voices and experiences of migrants alongside structural explanations.

Third, push and pull approaches often assume homogeneity among populations, treating groups as if they respond uniformly to the same factors. In practice, the literature suggests that gender, age, occupation, and social networks have a significant impact on whether individuals are able and willing to migrate. A factor that compels one group to move may not have the same effect on another. By framing migration drivers within the specific contexts of Ghana's Fourth Republic, this study highlights these differences.

Fourth, the framework downplays the importance of policy and governance contexts. Migration is influenced not only by favorable or adverse conditions but also by how governments regulate entry, residence, and economic participation. As Chapter Two showed, inconsistencies between Ghana's national laws and ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols, along with strict employment and investment rules, significantly impact migrants' experiences. This study directly examines these institutional factors to explain migration outcomes better.

Finally, the push and pull theory has been faulted for its weak treatment of migrant agency. Migrants are sometimes depicted as passive actors responding to external forces, but scholars argue that migration reflects both aspirations and capabilities (de Haas, 2014). Poverty may "push" individuals, but those without sufficient resources cannot move, while others migrate to pursue opportunities despite limited pressures at home. This study builds on this critique by treating migrants as decision-makers navigating both structural constraints and personal circumstances.

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In summary, although push and pull theory remains a useful framework for classifying migration factors, its limitations emphasize why this study is necessary: to connect structural influences with migrant experiences, analyze the role of governance, and highlight the agency of migrants within the ECOWAS–Ghana migration context.

3.5 Application of the Push and Pull Theory

The push and pull theory provides a useful lens for analyzing migration within ECOWAS, particularly in the Ghanaian context during the Fourth Republic. By situating migration drivers within this framework, the study can connect the themes identified in the literature review—political, economic, social, and environmental factors—while also accounting for the challenges migrants encounter as intervening obstacles.

3.5.1 Political Factors

Political dynamics are central to migration decisions. Countries experiencing instability, coups, or violent conflict create strong push factors for their citizens. Within ECOWAS, this is evident in states such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, where instability has displaced many people. Conversely, Ghana's sustained democratic governance, institutional stability, and record of peaceful political transitions since 1992 function as pull factors, attracting migrants who seek safety and predictability.

3.5.2 Economic Factors

Persistent economic inequalities within ECOWAS act as major push factors, driving individuals from poorer, less diversified economies toward countries with more robust opportunities. High unemployment and limited income prospects in many member states encourage migration toward Ghana, where relatively better employment options in agriculture, mining, services, and trade are

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available. Ghana's economic growth, coupled with its classification as a lower-middle-income country, serves as a powerful pull factor for those seeking improved livelihoods.

3.5.3 Social Factors

Social networks and cultural linkages significantly shape migration flows. Historical ties, shared languages, and families across borders create powerful pull factors that encourage movement to Ghana. Family reunification, Pan-African identity, and educational opportunities also play a role. Ghana's relatively developed healthcare and educational systems attract migrants seeking better access to social services. At the same time, the presence of well-established West African migrant communities in Ghana lowers the risks of relocation by providing support structures.

3.5.4 Environmental Factors

Environmental pressures are increasingly important in shaping migration. Drought, desertification, and climate variability in the Sahel create push factors, forcing individuals to seek arable land and sustainable livelihoods elsewhere. Ghana, with relatively more favorable climatic conditions and agricultural potential, serves as a pull destination. Additionally, its growing resource sectors, such as cocoa, mining, and oil, attract migrants seeking opportunities linked to natural resource economies.

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3.6 Intervening Obstacles

Despite these drivers, migration is not frictionless. Intervening obstacles mediate the relationship between push and pull factors. In Ghana, these include bureaucratic hurdles related to documentation, restrictive employment and investment laws, xenophobic sentiments, language barriers, high living expenses, and limited housing options. While the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol creates opportunities for mobility, its uneven enforcement and conflicts with Ghana's

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national laws complicate migrants' ability to integrate. These barriers highlight the importance of going beyond structural push-pull factors to consider migrants' lived realities.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the push-and-pull theory of migration as the framework for this study. The theory explains how negative conditions in countries of origin, such as political unrest, economic struggles, environmental challenges, and limited social opportunities, combine with favorable conditions in destination countries, such as political stability, economic opportunities, and social networks. While the theory offers a practical way to categorize migration drivers, its weaknesses, particularly its tendency to overlook lived experiences, policy factors, and migrant agency, highlight the importance of this study.

By applying the push-and-pull theory to migration trends within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly in Ghana's Fourth Republic, the study can analyze not only the structural drivers of migration but also the obstacles migrants face upon arrival. This application provides the basis for the hypotheses developed in this chapter, which operationalize the research questions outlined in Chapter Two.

The next chapter turns to the methodology, explaining the qualitative research design, case study approach, and data collection methods that were used to investigate the hypotheses and answer the study's research questions.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROFILE OF STUDY AREAS

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Building on that foundation, this chapter presents the methodology and scope, detailing the procedures used to design, collect, and analyze data to achieve the study's objectives. While scholars continue to debate the extent to which the principles of scientific inquiry can be fully applied in the social sciences, there is broad agreement that a sound research methodology provides a systematic and reliable means of gathering data. Accordingly, this chapter presents an overview of the research design, sampling strategies, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures employed in the study. It also outlines the ethical considerations that guided the fieldwork and reflects on the challenges encountered during the research process.

4.1 Philosophical Assumptions

This section discusses the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study. This is essential because the study must situate its research within a philosophical context. There is a longstanding debate over the various philosophical assumptions that undergird social science research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). For this reason, this study is grounded in interpretivism, a philosophical perspective that emphasizes the role of human interpretation in constructing knowledge of the social world. It also emphasizes the importance of subjective reality and rejects the universality of truth or objectivity of truth by arguing that truth is socially constructed through subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings that individuals attach to the social world.

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Proponents of interpretivism argue that a thorough understanding of social reality requires examining human actions and behaviors, as well as the meanings and interpretations individuals attach to their environments (May, 2011). Interpretivists assert that human interpretation is inherently linked to and depends on knowledge, unlike positivists, who rely on quantitative data. In other words, interpretivists hold that individuals have diverse understandings of the same phenomenon. Hence, if there is any lesson to take away from the notion of interpretivism, then it is about the fact that it is rooted in the pluralistic or multiple view of realities, rather than the single, objective view of reality.

For this reason, interpretivism emerged as a critique of positivism, adopting a subjective viewpoint. It assumes that reality is subjective and may vary among different people. It places greater emphasis on the in-depth variables and contextual factors, recognizing that humans differ from phenomena by adding layers of meaning, based on the premise that human beings cannot be studied in the same manner as physical phenomena (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). For instance, Saunders et al. (2012) argue that interpretivism establishes a distinct connection between the research and the subject of study, as it posits that individuals cannot be separated from their knowledge.

It is worthy of note that research in the social sciences necessitates this differentiation and must differ from the methodologies employed in natural sciences. Interpretivism acknowledges differences such as cultures, circumstances, and temporal factors, which contribute to the formation of distinct social realities (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). This gives a better understanding of how drivers (politico-socio-economic factors) attract ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana. It then engages these migrants to document further the challenges they face during their stay. This gives firsthand information on the multidimensional factors that come into

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play in border towns such as Aflao, Hamile, and Sampa. Thus, participants can contribute to the discourse based on their interpretation of the issues.

As mentioned earlier, interpretivists assert that human interpretation is inherently linked to and depends on knowledge, unlike positivists, who rely on quantitative data. Interpretivism distinguishes itself from positivism by focusing on the depth and richness of insights obtained, rather than on establishing definitive, universal laws that can be generalized and applied irrespective of key variables and factors (Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, interpretivism emphasizes the importance of human interpretation in creating knowledge about the social world. Proponents of interpretivism argue that a thorough understanding of social reality requires examining human actions and behaviors, as well as the meanings and interpretations individuals attach to their environments (May, 2011).

4.1.1 Justification for Interpretivism

The choice of interpretivism was based on the following: First, the study argues that the factors influencing ECOWAS migrants' relocation to Ghana are subjectively and socially constructed, shaped by migrants' perceptions of the environment and available opportunities. This notwithstanding, the researcher plays a key role in knowledge production through interactions with migrants. For this reason, the study acknowledges the instrumental role of the researcher as someone who collects and interprets data based on their own lens while at the same time striving to understand migrants' perspectives.

Second, the study examines the push and pull factors shaping ECOWAS migrants' relocation behaviors, as well as the challenges they face in Ghana. This creates an interdependent relationship between structure (the environment of migrants) and agency (relocation behaviors). The use of interpretivism is crucial to understanding the causal mechanisms that drive and influence migrants'

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behaviors. Here, the rationale is to help in developing a much deeper understanding of the empirical results by relying on the push and pull theory.

Third, through critical reflections, the data that have been collected and analyzed are less likely to be generalized when the interpretivist paradigm is adopted. Considering that data ought to be primarily influenced by a specific contextual perspective and values (Saunders et al., 2012), the data in this case shows the perspectives of ECOWAS migrants living in the border towns of Ghana. Nevertheless, adopting the interpretivist paradigm can yield a profound understanding of particular contexts, such as cross-cultural studies, and the factors that affect specific developments through the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. This approach can lead to significant insights and conclusions that may differ from others, as forcefully argued by Saunders et al. (2012). For this reason, the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm is likely to result in a high level of validity in the data, as it is grounded in personal experiences and contributions of ECOWAS migrants while taking into account different variables (Myers, 2008).

The study acknowledges the existence of other research paradigms, such as positivism, post-positivism, pragmatism, and constructivism, that could have been used. However, interpretivism presents a better alternative for answering the research questions because it transcends the universality or objectivity of reality associated with positivism and post-positivism and the undermining nature of pragmatism in understanding the essence of philosophical assumptions in social science research (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010). The study also acknowledges that interpretivism is more sensitive to individual meanings, beliefs, experiences, and contributions, in stark contrast to the constraints imposed by the positivist research philosophy. Nevertheless, interpretive research is not without its critiques, as it rejects knowledge established as universally

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applicable, thereby questioning its validity and necessitating criteria distinct from those used in the positivist paradigm.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Qualitative Research Design in Migration Research

This study adopts a qualitative research design, using a case study and qualitative data collection methods. This design was selected based on the research objective of understanding the motivations and experiences of ECOWAS citizens living in Ghana. For this reason, a qualitative case study design was adopted (Table 4.1). This approach provides the flexibility to investigate complex social phenomena in their real-life contexts. Scholars such as Stake (1998), Jensen and Rogers (2001), McNabb (2002), Yin (2003), Gerring (2004), and Baxter and Jack (2008) highlight the effectiveness of case studies in fostering discovery and enabling a comprehensive examination of processes, relationships, and cause-and-effect dynamics in the social sciences. Thomas (2011) further emphasizes that case studies enable the exploration of specific details and contexts, rather than relying on broad generalizations. This notwithstanding, Willis (2014) has identified some weaknesses of the Qualitative Case Study, including: a) lack of generalizability: findings from a single or a small number of cases cannot be reliably generalized to suit broader contexts. b) the issue of subjectivity and researcher bias: the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis makes results vulnerable to the researcher's personal thinking and orientation.

In this study, the case study approach proved particularly useful in capturing the unique qualities of migrant engagement at Ghana's borders, including the diverse and sometimes competing forces that shape migration experiences. It provided a framework for the researcher to understand participants' settings through both formal and informal interactions, enabling the collection of firsthand information. As Creswell (2014) explains, this approach involves gathering data in

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participants' environments, inductively analyzing it from specific observations to broader themes, interpreting meanings, and presenting findings systematically.

This design's qualitative approach was especially well-suited for studying migration. Qualitative research enables the observation of individuals in their natural environments and allows participants to express their perspectives openly, yielding deeply contextual insights (Seale, 1999). It also acknowledges that people's actions are shaped by their interpretations, making it possible to understand migration phenomena from both individual and collective perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This orientation avoids imposing preconceived categories and instead captures the diverse perceptions and lived experiences of migrants, officials, and community members (Byman et al., 1998).

Table 4. 1: Explanations of the Research Design

Research Activity	**Research Strategy**
Method	Qualitative data collection and analysis
Sampling technique	Purposive and snowball sampling
Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion (FGD)
Data Analysis	Otter.ai software (Thematic Analysis)

To operationalize this design, the study employed two complementary strategies for data collection. First, documentary analysis was conducted through a systematic review of books, published articles, government records, and international reports. Second, fieldwork involved elite interviews with policymakers, experts, and organizational representatives, as well as focus group

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discussions in border towns. These strategies together facilitated methodological triangulation, ensuring that multiple sources and perspectives informed the findings.

4.3 Sources of Data

The study relied on both primary and secondary data sources. While primary data were gathered through face-to-face interviews with key informants and elites, secondary data were drawn from official documents, including government white papers, policy documents, published reports, academic books and journal articles, conference proceedings, and working papers. This process began in February 2022 during the proposal or idea development stage and continued through August 2025, complementing the fieldwork with historical and policy context. The combination of documentary analysis, elite interviews, and focus group discussions enabled methodological triangulation, strengthening the validity of findings and allowing the study to capture migration from multiple perspectives.

4.4 Methods of Data Collection

Two major data collection methods were used to obtain information for the study. (1) Elite interviews and (2) Focus Group Discussion. These data were gathered in two phases. The first phase, conducted from July to October 2024, involved elite interviews with key participants including the Director of Research at the Ministry of Interior, senior migration officers from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), officers from the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), executives of the Ghana Union of Traders Association (GUTA), a migration officer from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), a senior lecturer and a PhD candidate from the Center for Migration Studies (CMS), the Security and Border Programs Officer from Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), and

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a Member of Parliament (MP) serving on the Foreign Affairs Committee. All of the interviews in the first phase were conducted in Accra. The second phase, conducted between August and September 2024, involved focus group discussions with ECOWAS migrants and ordinary Ghanaians in the border towns of Hamile, Sampa, and Aflao.

The use of focus group discussions in this qualitative research allowed the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences, motivations, behaviors, attitudes, feelings, and challenges associated with the drivers of migration in the ECOWAS region. In addition, focus group discussions encourage interactions among participants to build on each other's responses and provide richer, more detailed feedback than one-on-one interviews. Finally, the flexible nature of focus group discussions enables the researcher to dig deeper and explore unexpected insights more than a rigid survey method.

As shown in Table 4.2, a total of 43 participants were involved in the data collection exercise (comprising both the first and second phases). These sessions offered responses to the "how" and "why" questions of migration choices, as well as the challenges and opportunities migrants encounter at borderlands.

Table 4. 2: Summary of Participants for 2024 Fieldwork

Border Towns Interviews (MMDAs)	**Elite Interviews (Locations:)**	**Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**	**Recruitment Techniques**
Ketu North Municipal	Academic elite: Center for Migration Studies (CMS), Senior Lecturer: 1 3rd Year PhD Candidate: 1	Ecowas migrants and residents: 11	Migrants – Purposive Sampling

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Assembly (AFLAO)			Local people—snowball effect
Lambussie-Karni District (HAMILE)	Government officials: Ministry of Interior (Migration Unit): 1 Ghana Immigration Service (GIS): 1 Parliamentarian (Foreign Affairs Committee): 1 National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO): 3 National Development Planning Commission (NDPC): 2	Ecowas migrants and residents: 8	In-person: submission of invitation letters to ministries, departments, and agencies.
Jaman North District (SAMPA)	Think tank: Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-GH) 1	Ecowas migrants and residents: 9	Data analysis: The interviews (audio recordings) were transcribed using Otter.ai. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis.
	International Governmental Organizations (INGOs): International Organization for Migration (IOM): 2 GIZ: 1		
	Business owner: Ghana Union Traders Association (GUTA): 1		
	N = 15	N = 28	Total N = 43

Source: Compiled by the author

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4.5 Target Population of the Study

The selection of participants was guided by the need to gather perspectives from individuals directly or indirectly involved in migration activities. This ensured adequate representation of stakeholders who shape or experience migration dynamics. Participants included policymakers from government institutions, representatives of international organizations, business owners, academic experts, think tanks, and members of migratory and settled communities. These officials were interviewed because they are key implementers of migration policies in Ghana and deal with ECOWAS migrants daily.

Migratory communities were examined through three geographical lenses: the Northern Belt (Lambussie-Karni District, Upper West Region), the Middle Belt (Jaman North District, Bono Region), and the Southern Belt (Ketu South Municipality, Volta Region). These border towns and communities were selected for three main reasons: (i) they were chosen because they represent some of the historically important entry points in Ghana; (ii) each of these areas serves as an official entry point into Ghana and is recognized under the Immigration Act of 2000 (Act 573) as a legal border crossing; and (iii) border posts in these areas are equipped with permanent structures and staffed offices for the Immigration Service, Customs, Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS), Small Arms Department, and Health Units. For this reason, migrants passing through are required to present travel documents and undergo screening by immigration officers, who determine their eligibility for entry. This is not to suggest that other border towns and posts lack security protection. Rather, the number of security personnel present in the selected towns and communities exceeds that at other entry points in the country.

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Hence, studying these official gateways provided an opportunity to observe first-hand the interaction between border institutions, ordinary citizens, and migrants, while also situating the research within the broader socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts of migration in Ghana.

4.6 Sampling Technique

A multi-stage, non-probability sampling strategy was employed, using purposive and stratified techniques. Purposive sampling was selected because it identifies information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives (Crouch and Housden, 2003). Stratification ensured that different categories of stakeholders—government officials, international organizations, community members, and others—were represented in proportion to their respective populations. This approach prioritizes depth of insight rather than statistical generalizability, allowing the study to gather perspectives from participants best placed to illuminate the dynamics of migration governance.

The recruitment process began with introductory letters sent to ministries, departments, and agencies. These were followed up with targeted outreach to senior officials in migration-related institutions, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). To secure appointments, the researcher visited institutions in person, followed up by telephone and email reminders, and submitted additional letters where necessary. In border communities, migrants and locals were recruited through purposive sampling and snowball referrals, a process that enabled the researcher to access networks of individuals actively involved in or affected by migration.

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Several factors account for the inclusion of participants in the study. These are: a) all participants must be ECOWAS nationals, b) all participants must be 18 years and above, c) all participants must be residing within the border towns of Aflao, Hamile, and Sampa, and d) all participants must have been living in Ghana since 1992. Any other factor that does not meet this requirement is excluded from this study.

4.7 Sample Size and Composition

A total of 43 participants participated in the study (Table 4.2). Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

- Focus Group Discussions: 28 individuals (18 men and 10 women) from border towns such as Hamile, Sampa, and Aflao participated in FGDs. They included ECOWAS migrants, local Ghanaians, opinion leaders, community leaders, and local authorities. These group discussions explored everyday experiences of cross-border mobility and interactions between migrants and host communities.
- Elite Interviews: 15 participants (9 men and 6 women) represented institutions and sectors central to migration governance and policy. They included seven government officials, three representatives of international organizations, a staff member from a think tank, two academics, a business owner, and a parliamentarian. Their expertise provided a policy-level and institutional perspective on migration dynamics.

The researcher terminated the study's sample size to 43 because of 2 reasons: a) after interviewing about 40 participants, there were no new insights derived from the responses of the participants. Hence, after the 43rd participants the researcher decided to terminate the interviews. b) Interviews of 40 participants and above are largely consistent with the literature on migration studies, where

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migration scholars have demonstrated that the interviewer reaches saturation when responses of participants become repetitive of what is already known from the previous participants (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2022).

This mix of community voices and elite participants ensured a balanced dataset for analyzing both the drivers of migration and the structures governing it.

4.8 Data Collection/Research Instrument

The researcher primarily used a semi-structured interview guide as a major instrument for collecting data from the research participants, including ECOWAS migrants, key informants, and ordinary citizens. One of the advantages of using this instrument is that the researcher can ask follow-up questions and probe deeper to gain insights and a better understanding where needed. In addition, this instrument makes it possible for the researcher to engage with the participants while also learning different views and perspectives.

4.9 Data Analysis

In addition to interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher employed non-participant observation to capture contextual details of border settings and migration practices unobtrusively. These observations complemented insights from participants and the existing literature on free movement within Ghana. It is acknowledged, however, that this technique may have inadvertently excluded certain stakeholders whose perspectives were not directly observed.

All interviews and focus group discussions were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed using Otter. The transcripts were carefully reviewed against the original recordings to ensure accuracy, with discrepancies corrected to preserve the integrity of participants' accounts. The data were then subjected to thematic analysis, which involved systematically identifying, coding, and

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organizing recurring patterns, themes, and trends. This process facilitated the development of a nuanced understanding of migration characteristics in West Africa, particularly regarding the motivations, governance practices, and lived experiences of migrants in Ghana.

4.10 Challenges of conducting migration research

Like all empirical research, this study encountered practical challenges and faced limitations that shaped its design, implementation, and scope. While these challenges did not prevent the completion of the study or undermine the validity or reliability of the findings, they are important to acknowledge as they influenced the process of engagement with both institutions and communities. The difficulties encountered can be grouped into five main categories: institutional barriers, logistical constraints, safety and security concerns, and participant responsiveness.

4.10.1 Geographical Scope

The original aim of the study was to examine migration patterns across various border regions in Ghana, aiming to provide a national view of ECOWAS migration. However, practical limitations, such as the timeline of the academic program and the logistical challenges of fieldwork, led the study team to focus on three border sites: Hamile (Lambussie-Karni District), Sampa (Jaman North District), and Aflao (Ketu South Municipality). While this narrowed geographical focus meant fewer participants from other border towns could be included, the selected sites represent Ghana's Northern, Middle, and Southern migration zones, offering a broad view of different migration experiences.

4.10.2 Institutional Barriers

Gaining access to elite participants in government institutions proved challenging. While introductory letters were submitted to ministries, departments, and agencies, responses varied. Some officials were forthcoming and cooperative, whereas others delayed communication or

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declined to participate. In some cases, such as with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), written responses were offered in place of interviews, which restricted opportunities for in-depth engagement. These barriers reflect the bureaucratic and political realities of conducting elite interviews in Ghana.

4.10.3 Logistical Constraints

Logistical difficulties also affected fieldwork. Transportation to border towns such as Aflao, Sampa, and Hamile was often unreliable, resulting in delays or rescheduled meetings. Coordinating accommodation and communication with research assistants added further complexity. Similarly, organizing focus group discussions required multiple attempts due to participants' availability, which slowed the overall pace of data collection. These constraints point out the importance of flexibility and adaptive planning in qualitative fieldwork.

4.10.4 Safety and Security Concerns

Security considerations shaped both case selection and fieldwork execution. For example, Bawku Municipality was initially identified as a research site but was later excluded due to escalating violence, which made it unsafe for fieldwork. On the advice of faculty supervisors, Hamile was selected as a safer alternative. Likewise, curfews in Sampa resulting from chieftaincy disputes restricted researcher mobility and limited evening interactions. These adjustments were necessary to safeguard the researcher's well-being while maintaining ethical standards of data collection.

4.10.5 Participant Responsiveness

The responsiveness and availability of participants varied across sites. Focus group participants sometimes arrived late, withdrew due to other commitments, or required rescheduling, resulting in smaller groups than planned. Elite participants occasionally cancelled interviews at short notice due to pressing political or professional duties. Persistent follow-ups and the support of local

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contacts ensured sufficient participation levels to meet the study's objectives, despite these setbacks.

Taken together, these challenges and limitations highlight the realities of utilizing a qualitative research design to conduct migration research in border settings. They demonstrate how access, logistics, security, and participant dynamics can influence the research process and limit its geographical scope. Despite these obstacles, the researcher employed several strategies to minimize their impact. Persistence in addressing institutional barriers included repeated follow-ups by phone calls, email, and in person, as well as accepting written responses when interviews were not feasible. Logistical challenges, such as transport delays and rescheduling of focus groups, were mitigated by relying on local contacts and assistants who helped reorganize meetings and secure venues. Safety concerns were managed through consultation with supervisors, which led to replacing high-risk sites such as Bawku with safer alternatives like Hamile, and by observing curfews and local security protocols in Sampa.

Moreover, issues of participant responsiveness were overcome by maintaining flexibility, conducting smaller group discussions where necessary, and using snowball referrals to reach additional participants. These adaptive measures ensured that data collection remained feasible, ethically sound, and consistent with the study's objectives.

Furthermore, the data were carefully interpreted and triangulated across interviews, focus groups, and documentary sources, ensuring that the study retained its academic rigor and produced reliable insights into migration dynamics in Ghana under the ECOWAS framework.

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4.11 Ethical Consideration

The discourse surrounding ethical considerations in social science research is marked by significant debate, as highlighted by Israel and Hay (2006) and Wiles (2013). Nonetheless, a compelling case exists for adhering to ethical standards in this field, as Bouton et al. (2004) argued. In academic contexts, the terms "ethics" and "research ethics" are frequently used interchangeably; however, it is essential to recognize the distinction between them. Ethics pertains to the philosophical examination of moral questions (Wiles, 2013). In contrast, research ethics focuses on making decisions regarding various actions guided by ethical principles, rather than considering expediency or efficiency (Barnes, 1979). Burnham et al. (2004) outline five ethical principles that researchers should follow when conducting political research. These principles include avoiding harm and deception, protecting participants' privacy and autonomy, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring confidentiality.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Social Sciences at the University of Ghana approved the research study. Before starting the study, the researcher sought permission from various institutions identified as potential sources of valid and credible information through thorough background investigations. Participation in the research was voluntary, and no coercion was used on any participant.

Before data collection began, the researcher explained the study's purpose, reiterated it, and clarified its aims and objectives for each participant. Throughout the data collection process, participants were informed of the potential benefits and risks associated with the research, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Finally, all collected data were kept confidential and used solely for academic work.

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4.12 Brief Profile of the Three Border Towns

Ghana is often categorized into three distinct regions: the Northern, Middle, and Southern Belts (Figure 4.4). The Northern Belt, encompassing the Lambussie-Karni District and Hamile, is adjacent to Burkina Faso. The Middle Belt, which includes the Jaman North District and Sampa, borders Côte d'Ivoire. Finally, Ketu South Municipality and Aflao, representing the Southern Belt, share boundaries with Togo.

4.12.1 Hamile (Lambussie-Karni District)

The Lambussie-Karni District is bordered by the northwestern part of Ghana's Upper West Region. It stretches from Hamile in the north to Karni in the south (Figure 4.1). The district is bordered to the north by the international boundary with Burkina Faso, to the south by Jirapa District, to the east by Sisaala West District, and to the west by Lawra District.

Hamile is a diverse community characterized by various ethnic backgrounds. It is recognized as a settler community known as "Zongo," with the Sisaala people in a position of authority. Other ethnic groups in Hamile include Moshie, Waala, Fulani, and Zamrama, among others. The local economy is primarily informal, with many residents engaged in various business activities, including retail, provision shops, food vending, hospitality services (such as hotels and restaurants), farming, and petty trading, among others.

The Hamile border is relatively small and experiences heightened activity on Sundays and Thursdays, as these are the primary days for border crossing. Currently, border officials report the passage of approximately 50 to 100 buses, each carrying between 15 and 20 passengers. Many individuals using this border come from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal.

Border officers operate from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with a night shift in place to ensure security. Officers on night shifts are tasked with safeguarding the border; some remain at the offices, while

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others conduct patrols in the surrounding areas. The border is closed at night to passengers and vehicles, necessitating individuals to wait until the following morning to cross after the closure at 6:00 p.m.

Figure 4. 1: Map of Hamile in the Lambussie-Karni District



Source: ArcGIS. [Accessed on 10 November 2024]

4.12.2 Sampa (Jaman North District)

The Jaman North District is in the western part of the Bono region, bordering the northwestern part of Côte d'Ivoire (Figure 4.2). The Tain District delineates it to the north and extends to the eastern part of the district, with the Jaman South District to the southwest and Berekum Municipal to the southeast (Jaman North District Assembly, 2022).

According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the total population of Jaman North District is 117,909, comprising 58,623 males (49.72%) and 59,286 females (50.28%). The urban population comprises 70,188 individuals (59.52%), living in urban areas, while the rural population comprises 47,721 individuals (40.47%) in rural locales (Jaman North District

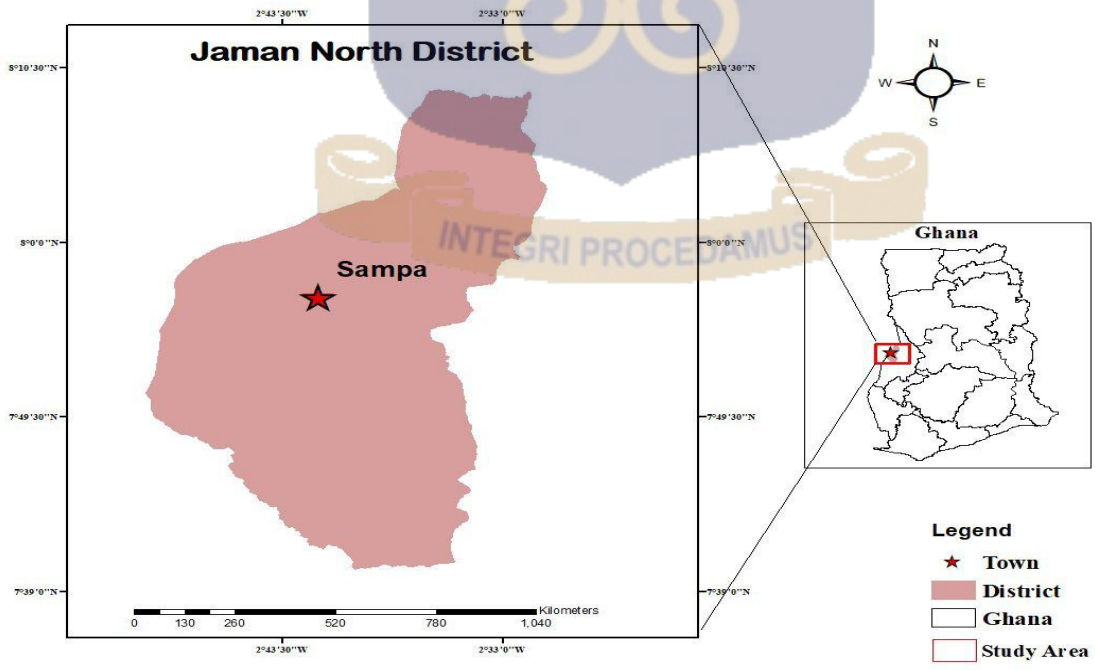
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Assembly, 2022). The Sampa community has a cosmopolitan character, with residents from various cultural backgrounds. It is home to three Indigenous tribes: the Fantra, Jula, and Mo, who are recognized as the rightful owners of the land. The Indigenous people primarily communicate in the Fantra/Nafaanra language, while the broader community predominantly speaks Twi.

Although a significant portion of the population is engaged in agriculture, commerce, industrial activities, and services, the predominant economic activities in Sampa are largely in the informal sector. The community boasts one of the largest markets in the Bono region, with market activities peaking on Monday. During harvest, Sampa becomes a major marketplace for cashew products.

On typical market days, approximately 60 people from the border region officially cross from Côte d'Ivoire into Ghana via the Sampa border, marking the highest recorded traffic. On regular days, the number of people crossing the border ranges from 20 to 30 per day.

Figure 4. 2: Map of Sampa in the Jaman North District



Source: ArcGIS. [Accessed on 10 November 2024]

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4.12.3 Aflao (Ketu South Municipality)

Ketu South Municipality serves as Ghana's eastern international entry point. Located in the southeastern region of Ghana (Figure 4.3), it shares borders with Togo to the east, Keta Municipality to the west, Ketu North Municipality to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south (Ketu South Municipal Assembly, 2024).

According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the total population is 214,409, comprising 113,513 females (52.94%) and 100,896 males (47.06%). This significant population increase is primarily due to the arrival of immigrants from neighboring countries, including Togo, Benin, Nigeria, and Niger, who are involved in commercial activities within the municipality or are passing through to other regions of West Africa (Ketu South Municipal Assembly, 2024).

Aflao is a cosmopolitan area marked by a diverse population comprising individuals from various backgrounds. The community is primarily Ewe, with the Ewe language as the predominant means of communication among its inhabitants. The local economy operates informally, with residents engaging in various business activities, including hospitality services (such as hotels and restaurants), food vending, petty trading, retail and provision shops, and farming.

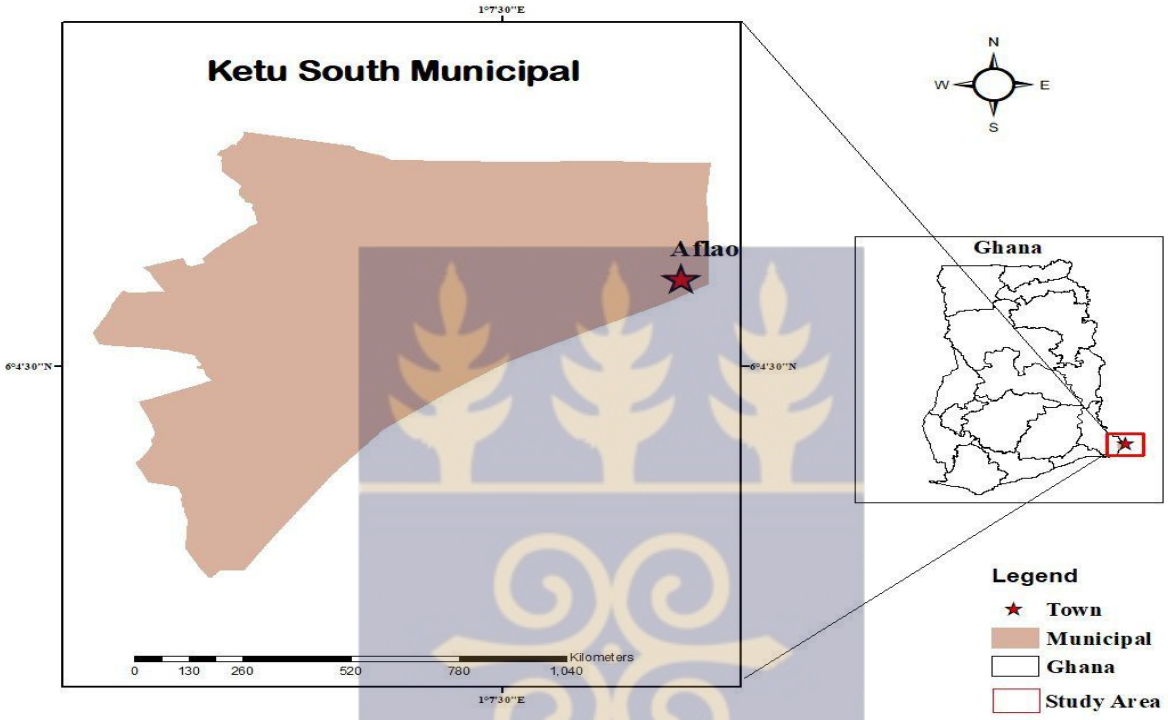
The Aflao border is the largest officially recognized land entry point in Ghana. Approximately 2,000 individuals use this border daily. It facilitates access for people from many places in West Africa, particularly those from Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, provided they possess the necessary documentation. The border operates continuously, remaining open 24 hours a day, except during national emergencies or other exceptional circumstances.

This border is distinctive because it is in a town close to the capital city of another country, specifically, Lomé in Togo. Such proximity between a capital city and a neighboring town, such

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as Aflao, is relatively rare. This unique geographical situation fostered a vibrant exchange of business activities between Ghana and Togo.

Figure 4. 3: Map of Aflao in the Ketu South Municipality

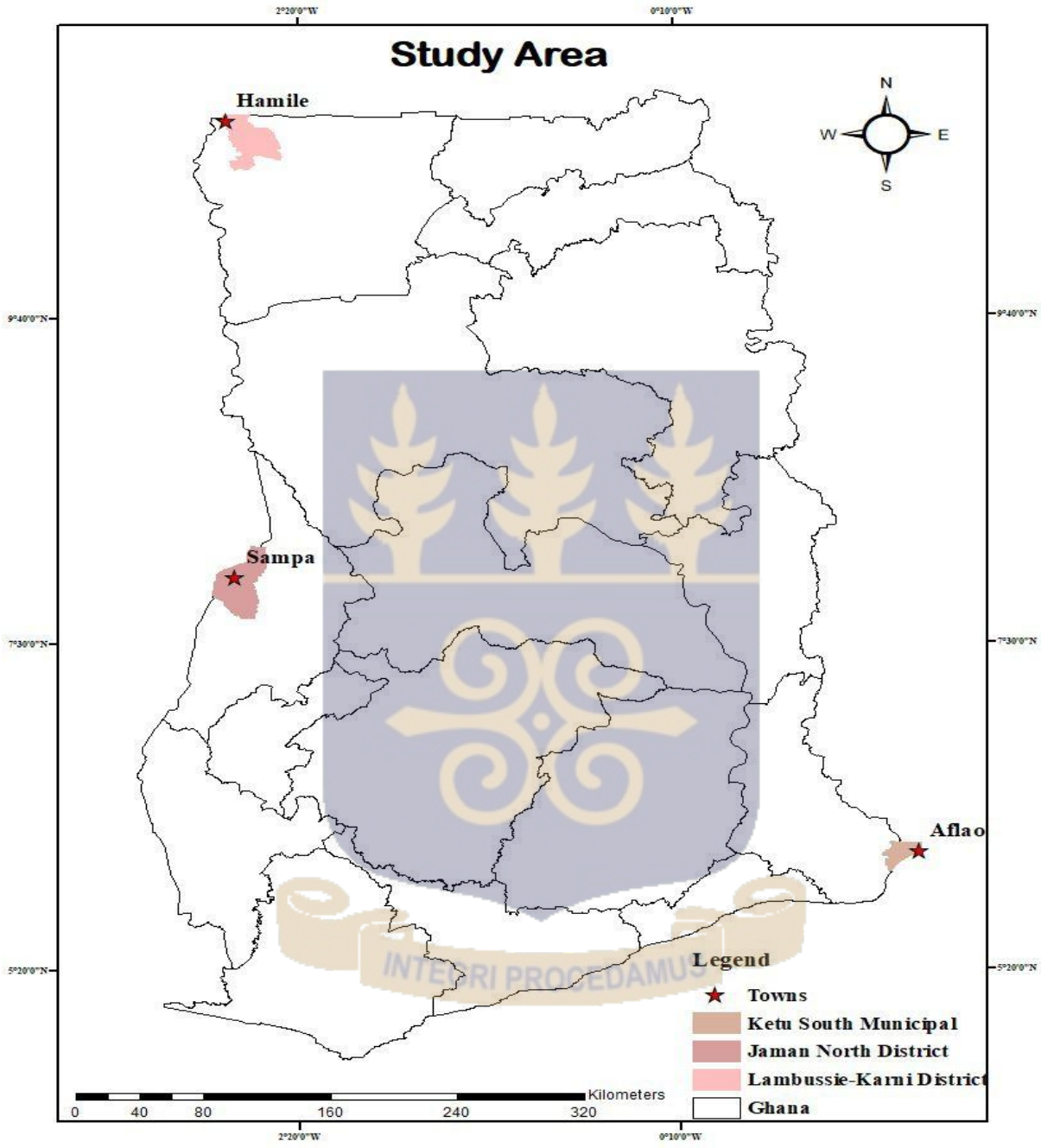


Source: ArcGIS. [Accessed on 10 November 2024]

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Figure 4. 4: Map of Ghana indicating all the Study Areas



Source: ArcGIS. [Accessed on 10 November 2024]

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4.13 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted for the study, presenting the research design, philosophical orientation, and rationale for the methodological choices. It detailed the target population, sampling procedures, sample size, and data collection methods, while also reflecting on ethical considerations, field challenges encountered, and strategies used to address them. The justification for case selection and the profiles of the three study areas were also provided, highlighting their relevance for understanding Ghana's role as a destination country within the ECOWAS migration framework.

Finally, the chapter explained the analytic strategies used to interpret the data, showing how the research instruments were aligned with the overarching questions of the study. Taken together, the chapter demonstrates the methodological rigor and coherence underpinning the research. The following chapter presents the findings, offering an empirical account of the factors influencing migration into Ghana and the challenges migrants encounter.

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CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology of the study. This chapter presents the empirical findings on why the citizens of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) migrate to Ghana as a destination country. Specifically, it examines the primary drivers of migration in the West African sub-region, with particular attention to the chapter, which discusses the push and pull factors for migration in Ghana. The main argument is that while Ghana has been hailed as an attractive destination for many ECOWAS citizens, certain socio-economic and political factors provide useful explanations for why this is the case and the challenges that need to be addressed if Ghana is to be consistently viewed in this way. Using the push and pull theory of migration studies, this chapter's primary goals include: (i) to examine how political instability and oppression cause ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana; (ii) to assess the extent to which poverty and unemployment increase the likelihood of ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana; (iii) to ascertain how inequality and poor social infrastructure affect ECOWAS citizens' future migration behaviors to Ghana; (iv) to determine whether natural disasters and droughts drive ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana; and (v) to explore the major challenges facing these migrants in Ghana. The findings are based on the qualitative data collected from 15 participants (elite interview) in Accra and 28 participants (4 focus group discussions) in the Lambussie-Karni District (Hamile), Jaman North District (Sampa), and Ketu South Municipality (Aflao).

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This chapter highlights the factors that motivate ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana and the challenges they face during their stay. It then concludes and prepares the way for chapter six, which discusses the findings.

5.1 Political Factors

Political factors are a major reason why many citizens of ECOWAS countries migrate to Ghana. It is well known that Ghana is one of the leading developing countries with a favorable political climate in the West African sub-region and across the African continent. Although some political commentators have recently raised concerns about democratic backsliding tendencies in Ghana, especially since 2017 onwards (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025), Ghana has long had a distinct political identity among its peers in West Africa since the 1950s because of its vibrant nationalist political leadership and stable political climate compared to many other ECOWAS member states.

5.1.1 Political (In)Stability and Oppression

Political stability played an important role in migrants' decisions to move to Ghana. The empirical findings from the field research suggest that many citizens within the ECOWAS region highly value political stability. Some participants indicated that it has always been their heartfelt desire to see their home countries maintain a certain level of stability and political freedom within the ECOWAS region. However, the anecdotal evidence shows that several ECOWAS countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Guinea-Bissau, find themselves at a crossroads regarding political (in)stability and government oppression. These ECOWAS countries have increasingly faced political insecurity and instability. A case in point is the emergence and development of violent extremist groups, including Al-Shabab and Boko Haram, as well as ongoing endemic poverty that significantly shape migration patterns in these countries (Eizenga, 2019). Furthermore, several ECOWAS countries have been characterized by weak governance regimes,

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civil unrest, and episodes of military coups and dictatorships. For this reason, many participants explained that they have no choice but to leave their home countries due to the political unrest and instability they face regarding their future. Such circumstances have adversely impacted their personal lives and family relationships, leading many to consider or choose Ghana as a destination country. This is because Ghana has a relatively more stable political environment.

This point is echoed by a participant below:

> Ghana's stable political environment and democratic governance make it an attractive destination for migrants from countries experiencing political instability, conflict, or authoritarian regimes (Director of Research, Migration Unit, the Ministry of Interior, 22 August 2024).

Another participant added:

> Ghana is seen as an island when it comes to peace in the West African sub-region. Although we had our fair share around 1981, Ghana has seen and enjoyed peace. So basically, the main reason many people come to Ghana is our peaceful political environment (Senior Officer, Migration Department, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 8 August 2024).

To put the above quotes into context, Ghana's political stability and dedication to democratic governance set it apart from other countries in the ECOWAS region, making it a favored destination for migrants fleeing political unrest and conflict (Siaw et al., 2016). The relative peace in Ghana, compared to the instability common in neighboring countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso, makes it more appealing to migrants from the ECOWAS region. People often seek migration opportunities due to concerns about safety and peace. Overall, Ghana rarely experiences

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significant ethnic or political violence, largely due to the strengths of its social network system, including chieftaincy institutions, along with the administrative capacity of its government institutions and non-governmental sectors, which usually facilitate a stable environment that minimizes political and ethnic conflicts (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). The over three decades of peace and stability in Ghana have attracted migrants from neighboring countries, who enjoy a political climate that provides a safe and serene environment in which to go about their daily lives without excessive interference. Consequently, Ghana's political stability functions as a key push-and-pull factor for ECOWAS citizens, influencing their migration decisions. This situation is also impacted by broader regional issues related to security and development in the Sahel region, which greatly influence individuals' choices to migrate.

5.1.1.1 Political Instability

As noted earlier, political instability has long been a major concern in the West African sub-region, creating significant barriers to improving regional mobility for development. The effects of this instability have been severe, leading to the loss of lives, families, friendships, and property. Since the early 1990s, several countries in the ECOWAS region, especially Liberia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Senegal, and Mali, have experienced political turmoil, which has posed numerous challenges to their citizens (Teye et al., 2015).

For example, Sierra Leone (1991-2001) and Liberia (1989-1996 and 1999-2003) experienced intense political unrest and civil conflicts, causing many refugees and asylum seekers to migrate to Ghana (Essuman-Johnson, 2003; Bakewell and de Haas, 2007). By the early 2000s, Ghana hosted nearly 60,000 refugees fleeing Liberia’s civil war (UNHCR, 2005). By 2019, this number had dropped to 13,436 as these displaced individuals found more stable environments, like Ghana.

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Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire also experienced a civil war after the 2010 elections. This led many of its citizens to seek refuge in Ghana, given that Ghana is a nearby country. Once in Ghana, their safety was largely assured.

Participants stressed the importance of ending political turmoil in West Africa. According to 12 participants, there have been 6 successful and 2 attempted coups in West Africa since 2020 (ICMPD, 2022; Brooke-Holland, 2023). Countries such as Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger have experienced coups that toppled democratically elected leaders. Due to the ongoing unrest, considerable tension persists in these Sahelian countries. Some participants noted that this lack of political stability, along with the failure to address the root causes of conflicts, has driven many ECOWAS citizens to seek refuge and stability in Ghana. This point was reinforced by two participants explaining why prospective migrants often prefer Ghana.

One migration expert explained:

> Ghana's political stability and democratic governance attract migrants from politically unstable countries in the ECOWAS region. This stable democracy ensures that the rights and freedoms of residents in Ghana are well protected without any abuse (Senior Lecturer, Center of Migration Studies (CMS), University of Ghana, 16 October 2024).

Another participant asserted:

> In some instances, the root causes of protracted conflicts may be identified but not addressed. The conflict situation may have been managed for years to bring about some amount of peace. Such instances will only be waiting for current issues (electoral violence, tribal issues, etc.) to trigger the protracted conflict by

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> destroying lives and properties (A member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Parliament of Ghana, 4 September 2024).

Participants were of the view that political instability, often triggered by political, religious, and ethnic tensions, serves as a major catalyst for migration (Adepoju, 2006). Ongoing conflicts and political unrest in several ECOWAS countries have led to increased displacement. People are compelled to flee these unstable situations in search of safety in countries like Ghana. Most importantly, Ghana's relative political stability and democratic governance, compared to other regional countries, make it an attractive destination for migrants from ECOWAS seeking refuge from instability and conflict (Siaw et al., 2016; International Center for Migration Policy Development, 2022). This stable political environment, as some participants noted, acts as a strong pull factor for ECOWAS citizens. This is especially evident within Ghana's Fourth Republican political system, which is founded on core principles of the rule of law, democracy, and good governance.

5.1.1.2 Oppression

The empirical finding suggests that government oppression is a significant factor driving ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana, as many individuals have fled from hostile environments in their home countries. During interviews, 10 participants made repeated references to ongoing political repression in several ECOWAS countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. They indicated that citizens face authoritarian regimes that suppress dissent and restrict political freedoms. These countries have experienced military coups and subsequent crackdowns on political opposition, prompting individuals to seek refuge in Ghana, where they perceive greater political stability and freedom (The Conversation, 2024).

A participant had this to say:

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> We had to leave our country of origin and seek shelter in a different country. There were uncertainties surrounding our future due to the oppressive system back home. We did not have any plan on how we would have survived if we had remained there (A migrant from Burkina Faso in Hamile, 16 September 2024).

About 15 participants concurred with the above assertion, arguing that violent and extremist activities are predominantly observed in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. These actions have resulted in extensive human rights violations, significant internal displacement, and a severe humanitarian crisis (Torres-Soriano, 2010; Attoh and Ishola, 2021; Raga et al., 2023). Participants observed that since 2015, there has been a notable rise in violent incidents, including kidnappings, assassinations, and roadside bombings perpetrated by extremist groups in the Sahel region (International Organization for Migration, 2022). For example, following the recent terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso in July 2022, more than 1,800 Burkinabe refugees sought asylum in Ghana (Agbey, 2022).

A key informant had this to say concerning the recent attacks in Burkina Faso:

> I have had some engagements with the migrants who entered Ghana in 2022. It was an impromptu decision they took. The military clashed with some of the jihadist groups (JNIM and Islamic State). The exchange of fire between the groups involved created a very dicey situation where lives and property were lost. Those who were able to run away did so to protect themselves from being harmed. They were emotionally and mentally distressed, so we had to make arrangements to accommodate them (An Immigration Officer in Hamile, 14 September 2024).

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The above statement also highlights how religious bigotry and intolerance have significantly contributed to fostering instability in West Africa, where internal conflicts are often driven by factions representing various religious groups (Annan, 2014). These conditions create a climate of fear and insecurity, prompting individuals to seek refuge in Ghana. Given the ongoing instability and tension in many ECOWAS countries, five key informants explained that repressive government behaviors promote favorable conditions for the rise of terrorism and various forms of criminal activity (International Center for Migration Policy Development, 2022). In stark contrast, Ghana stands out as one of the few countries in the sub-region that has not experienced a jihadist attack. This suggests that Ghana's notable achievement in maintaining internal security can mainly be attributed to its decentralized security model, which employs a bottom-up approach through district, regional, and national security councils. This organizational structure improves coordination and encourages the sharing of information at both local and national levels, while also strengthening regional security committees (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2022). Two participants praised Ghana for its relatively welcoming attitude towards migrants, including those escaping political persecution. They claimed that Ghana's commitment to human rights and refugee protection makes it an attractive refuge for individuals fleeing oppression (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Furthermore, they argued that Ghana's governance is characterized by a liberal and open system, rooted in its constitutional authority granted by all stakeholders, including the general population. This framework has largely fostered an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can coexist peacefully, reducing the likelihood of serious conflicts (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2022).

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5.1.3 Long-Standing Democratic System of Government

An important aspect of good governance is its link to established democratic systems across the ECOWAS region. This marks a significant milestone for the participating countries. Ghana's more than thirty years of consistent democratic practice in West Africa serve as a model for other ECOWAS member states. For example, after a period of military rule, there has been a noticeable rise in public support for democratic principles in Ghana. Specifically, Ghana has made significant strides toward improved governance, thereby fostering a more peaceful and stable political environment (Towah, 2019). Since 1993, Ghana has successfully preserved its democratic framework without major disruptions. This stability has enabled all relevant stakeholders to act in accordance with the Constitution and its principles, ensuring free and fair elections every four years. For instance, the 2022 Afrobarometer Survey shows that over 76% of Ghanaians prefer democracy over autocracy as the system of governance. Conversely, neighboring countries like Mali and Burkina Faso often face the overthrow of democratically elected leaders or the manipulation of their constitutions to extend the terms of incumbents. As a result, the outcomes of their elections are frequently decided before voting even begins. According to seven key participants, these conditions drive ECOWAS migrants to migrate to Ghana, where there is a proven track record of systematic governance and democratic development.

This was disclosed by a key informant:

> The democratic nature of Ghana puts the country up there when we talk about West Africa. Democracy is a good thing. I have been in Ghana since my childhood, and this type of system cannot be allowed in my home country. The leaders have done well to protect this democratic system, and the citizens have

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> also conducted themselves extremely well (A migrant from Burkina Faso in Hamile, 16 September 2024).

Given the availability of constitutional and institutional frameworks, Ghana has conducted competitive multiparty elections since 1992, characterized by the significant role of two main political parties: the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which have successfully alternated power (Freedom House, 2023). Notably, while heightened tensions and uncertainties have historically accompanied elections in Ghana, these challenges have not escalated to the levels observed in other ECOWAS countries, thereby enhancing Ghana's attractiveness to citizens from the sub-region. Ghana has experienced nine successful electoral processes and peaceful transitions of power in the Fourth Republic, with the most recent transfer of authority occurring on 7 January 2025, when the NPP handed over power to the NDC.

A common sentiment shared by 4 participants is that Ghana is often lauded as a beacon of democracy within Africa (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). They opined that Ghana's enduring democratic framework in the Fourth Republic has attracted individuals from other ECOWAS countries to migrate to Ghana (Adepoju, 2015). This influx, according to one migration expert, has further facilitated peaceful power transitions, rendering Ghana an attractive locale for those searching for a secure and stable environment.

5.1.4 Vibrant Political and Civic Space

Among the interviewees, 22 participants mentioned that Ghanaian society exhibits a rich tapestry of diversity, largely attributable to the dynamic political environment that empowers its citizens. They believe that the general population enjoys the rights and freedoms necessary to enhance their quality of life. They affirm that Ghana's political framework has evolved to a stage where state institutions operate autonomously, free from external directives. By this, they suggest that

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governance in Ghana is fundamental to any developmental agenda, with civil society and the private sector playing crucial roles in advocating for effective governance (Towah, 2019). For instance, this active political landscape has facilitated the engagement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Yet, there is evidence that Ghanaians do not trust their public institutions. Nevertheless, despite recent findings indicating a decline in public confidence in the judicial system (Afrobarometer, 2024), Ghana's public sector institutions continue to serve as the ultimate authority in resolving disputes and administering justice.

One participant succinctly explained:

> The political space in Ghana is so interesting and attractive. Stakeholders in Ghana have a significant say in the decisions made by the government. Hardly will individuals or non-state actors have the courage to challenge the decision(s) of the government in other countries using the courts and other state institutions, but that is very common in Ghana. It is an excellent practice, and I hope it continues (Senior Immigration Officer, Research Department, Immigration Headquarters in Accra, 19 August 2024).

Another informant indicated:

> I am fortunate to have been in Ghana for some years now. My parents are Nigerians, but I was born in the Ivory Coast. I have spent the greater part of my life in this town. I had my basic school education here, so I can even speak Twi just as I speak French and English. I have started my nuclear family in this town. Ghana is like heaven when I compare the country to Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. Citizens and other private entities are players in the political space. They ensure

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> policy decisions by the government are tilted to suit them, using the courts and other state institutions. The state actors also give them a listening ear and act according to the law. I am always amazed at how these dynamics in Ghana are mostly done peacefully (An Ivorian businessman, based in Sampa, 18 September 2024).

What the informant means by him being "amazed" is his inability to understand how Ghana's political landscape is characterized by vibrant civil society organizations (CSOs) and strong governmental institutions that contribute to political stability and uphold the rule of law (Mkandawire, 2017). As one migration expert notes, Ghana's political environment provides a platform for various stakeholders to share their views on important issues shaping the country's future. To do this, civil society must play a key role in promoting political stability by engaging with the government and advocating for accountability. This is because the capacity of civil society organizations to act as intermediaries between the state and its citizens is crucial in reducing potential conflicts and enhancing the government's responsiveness to public concerns.

For instance, Chapter 4 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution enshrines the rights to freedom of association and assembly. In practice, this allows political and civil organizations as well as ECOWAS citizens to convene, organize, and campaign without interference from the state. The right to demonstrate is upheld, and permits are not required for individuals to conduct meetings (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). According to one migration expert, in its 2023 assessment, Freedom House categorized Ghana as a free country, awarding the government an overall score of 80 out of 100, with specific scores of 34 and 40 for political rights and 45 out of 60 for civil liberties, respectively. With this accolade in mind, Ghana's vibrant civic space and stable political system

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attract West African members to migrate to Ghana. It has also contributed to the respect and observance of the rule of law in Ghana.

5.1.5 Migration Policies (Open-door Policies)

Migration has emerged as a significant global issue over the last twenty years, with the necessity of effective migration governance underscored in both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, documents to which Ghana is a signatory (Ghana Immigration Service, 2023). In partnership with development allies and various stakeholders, the Ghanaian government has developed and executed migration policies tailored to the country's needs. These policies are informed by the projections outlined in the ECOWAS migration framework, ensuring compliance with ECOWAS regulations and management practices within the sub-region. Consequently, all migrants utilizing the sanctioned entry pathways receive appropriate support from relevant authorities and duty-bearers.

The following quotation illustrates this point:

> The local policies Ghana has implemented are a bit friendly towards foreigners. Any purposeful foreigner living in the country can live comfortably, like the nationals, or even better than some. This can be traced to Ghana's role as the first independent country in Sub-Saharan Africa, and also helping other African countries to gain independence (Director of Research, Migration Unit, the Ministry of Interior, 22 August 2024).

About half of the participants noted that migration has increasingly become an important topic in Ghana's policy development, as highlighted by Kandilige et al. (2023). They believe that the Ghanaian government has implemented various migration policies to facilitate movement within

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the ECOWAS region. According to them, these initiatives aim to strengthen regional integration and promote the unrestricted movement of people, thus encouraging migration into and out of Ghana. Furthermore, they assert that the government has worked to fulfill its international obligations at the continental, regional, and national levels, seeking to maximize the developmental benefits of migration while mitigating negative impacts and protecting the rights of migrants (Ghana Immigration Service, 2023). Scholars such as Yahaya (2021) have emphasized that the frameworks and regulations surrounding migration and border management are vital for ensuring that migration is effectively managed for the benefit of all stakeholders. For this reason, two participants describe Ghana's open-door policies as having a positive influence on the management and regulation of migration, not only in Ghana but across the entire ECOWAS region. They explained that they support Ghana's open-door migration policy because it allows West African citizens easy passage to Ghana. Additionally, the policy helps prevent a repeat of the tragic events of 1969, when Ghana implemented the Aliens Compliance Order (Act 160), which led to the deportation of many West African residents. As a result, Ghana's open-door migration policy makes it easier and more attractive for citizens of ECOWAS countries to migrate to Ghana when needed.

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5.2 Economic Factors

In addition to the political factors, 28 participants identified economic factors as one of the vital reasons for ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana. It is essential to note that the identification of economic reasons as a primary cause of migration is not a new concept. Economic issues have been prevalent in the day-to-day activities of ordinary ECOWAS citizens. For this reason, Ghana's relatively stable political environment encourages or facilitates business flourishing. In particular, poverty and unemployment represent critical challenges associated with migration within the

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ECOWAS region. These factors act as significant motivators, compelling individuals and families to relocate to various areas in West Africa, including Ghana, in search of improved living conditions. According to some migration scholars, such as Van Hear (2012), the prevalence of poverty and lack of employment opportunities has driven individuals to seek better opportunities in other ECOWAS countries. He maintained that the ECOWAS protocol, established in 1979, which promotes the free movement of individuals, residency, and establishment, supports this migratory trend by acknowledging migration as a vital component of the region's economic integration (Yeboah et al., 2020; Attoh and Ishola, 2021).

5.2.1 Poverty

Approximately 10 participants noted that poverty is a major obstacle to development in the West African sub-region. They explained that in 2019, about 106.8 million people were living below the poverty line of $2.15 a day, representing 27.2% of the total population (Aikins, 2024). For example, Annan (2014) found that several West African countries are among the poorest in the world. According to him, widespread poverty greatly influences individuals' vulnerability and their likelihood of migrating. He also stated that the high rates of poverty and human deprivation, along with a decline in overall well-being for a large part of the population, have worsened clandestine migration patterns (Adepoju, 2006). These factors, according to five participants, help explain why, since gaining independence, the West African sub-region has experienced ongoing political instability and outbreaks of severe diseases, including Ebola, Cholera, and Lassa fever. The participants describe countries such as Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Niger, Mali, and others as being in urgent need of financial support to promote economic recovery. To them, these countries struggle to meet the basic needs of their citizens, such as access to food, shelter, and clean drinking water. According to participants, these urgent issues hinder the efforts of ECOWAS countries to

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achieve sustainable development, prompting citizens to seek opportunities in neighboring countries that are making efforts to reduce poverty and provide better living conditions.

The following quote illustrates this:

> The poverty levels in most of these West African countries are so bad that most of the policies the governments have put in place are not enough to reduce poverty. Poverty in all forms affects national development. Ghana, being relatively ahead of its neighbors, attracts ECOWAS citizens to cross over into our territories (A Teacher in Hamile, 14 September 2024).

Another participant indicated:

> The West Africa sub-region has about 3% of its citizens living in extreme poverty. This category of people struggles to access the basic things that make life better. They are mostly malnourished and suffer from some diseases they may not be aware of. They survive on the little things they can lay their hands on. They are exposed to lots of atrocities as they embark on their journeys to make ends meet (An Officer at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), 30 July 2024).

One particularly striking finding relates to the performance of Ghana's economy and its ability to reduce poverty. Interview data suggest that Ghana's economy has experienced consistent growth, characterized by a stable macroeconomic framework and a relatively high GDP per capita in comparison to other member states of ECOWAS. This finding shows that Ghana's economic environment attracts ECOWAS migrants in search of improved economic opportunities, as individuals facing dire circumstances are often driven to leave their places of origin when local

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conditions deteriorate beyond a certain threshold of tolerability. Some have argued that migration, in its various forms, is fundamentally a reaction to similar underlying factors: the allure of opportunity and the impetus of severe poverty (UNDP, 1994). For many, the urgency of escaping poverty is as significant as the desire for better living conditions in affluent regions. The decision of migrants and key informants in this study to remain within their home countries or to seek opportunities elsewhere in Ghana is largely influenced by the constraints surrounding international migration and the supportive role of established networks (Adepoju, 2006).

Some participants have said that a country like Ghana offers hope to ECOWAS citizens living in poverty because Ghana is relatively better off than their home countries (Awumbila et al., 2018). The pull factor for these individuals is a country like Ghana that can provide better opportunities. They prefer to travel to Ghana, a country that is largely making progress in reducing poverty and improving the lives of its citizens compared to their home countries.

5.2.2 Unemployment

Unemployment is another significant factor driving migration in the West African sub-region. Interview data show that current evidence suggests unemployment is a key trigger for migration within the ECOWAS region. Nine participants noted that the rapidly growing and more educated populations in ECOWAS urgently need jobs, which are mostly available in developed countries. They argued that the lack of jobs in poorer countries pushes people to migrate to wealthier countries (Adepoju, 2006; Vecsey, 2018), such as Ghana. They emphasized that many West African economies are mainly informal, leading to high outmigration rates as people seek better economic opportunities in more developed ECOWAS countries like Ghana. One of the key informants did not hesitate when asked why young people are often the most affected by unemployment, which influences their migration behavior.

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He had this to say:

> Unemployment is prevalent in the West African sub-region. It is not easy for the youth who want a better system to enable them to realize their dreams. Some of the international agreements that most of these countries have signed up to have limited their autonomy in addressing unemployment challenges (A member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Parliament of Ghana, 4 September 2024).

To this participant, high levels of employment are often associated with greater peace within countries (Okafor, 2015). Indeed, dating back to about two decades ago, Nigerian unemployed youth were reported to have encountered challenging decisions: whether to pursue vocational training, engage in agriculture, or continue their education, but only to find themselves among the many job seekers wandering the streets in search of even the most modestly paid positions for extended periods (Adepoju, 2006). Through migration, however, informants narrated that these same young individuals have traded a state of hopeless misery for one that offers the potential for improvement. They believe that some of these unemployed youth from Nigeria have found their way into Ghana, recognizing Ghana as the lower-middle-income country that it is, with consistent economic growth and a desirable destination for skilled labor migration and economic integration within the ECOWAS region (International Organization for Migration, 2020). This assertion is well-supported by Yaro (2008), who notes that Ghana's abundant natural resources have drawn numerous citizens from other ECOWAS countries, who are attracted by the additional labor required to exploit these resources. Consequently, many resource-rich areas in Ghana, including the mining and agricultural sectors, have become increasingly influenced by migrant activities.

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5.2.3 Pursuit of Better Employment Opportunities

Among the factors influencing migration behavior, variations in economic development and employment opportunities across ECOWAS countries significantly shape migration patterns. This has become necessary due to the scarcity of job prospects and limited career development opportunities, combined with inflation and high unemployment rates across West Africa. As a result, these factors greatly impact the hopes and decisions of many migrants regarding their livelihoods (OECD, 2022). However, many migration scholars have noted that migration trends can be linked to a range of structural issues, including inadequate labor market information, internal conflict, political instability, and supply and demand imbalances, among other factors (El-Aynanoui and Ibourk, 2016). In this context, Ghana, which boasts a relatively stable and growing economy, acts as a magnet for migrants from neighboring countries seeking better employment opportunities. It is also a country where migrants can find employment in agriculture, mining, construction, and services, as reported by a key informant.

> Artisans such as masons, carpenters, tilers, painters, and others in the construction sector are increasingly being joined by our brothers from Togo. Their crafts are very beautiful and modern. They are very common to encounter in our part of the country because of our proximity to them. We are constantly building and renovating our old properties, so we now hire them for their services. A unique aspect of them is that they complete their work on the exact date they initially give. They tell us that Ghana is their home because there is a steady market for them (A Female Teacher based in Aflao, 6 August 2024).

Echoing similar sentiments, a participant asserted:

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> The arrival of skilled migrants can serve as a source of cheap labor to the host country (Ghana), or at least it allows them to complement the available skills. So, they fill the vacuum created by the shortage of personnel in their host countries. This serves as a blessing to such countries in some instances since it reduces the burden they faced some time ago (Director of Research, Migration Unit, the Ministry of Interior, 22 August 2024).

Another participant also indicated:

> There is a serious problem in our retail business for us, the local people. Nigerians have taken over our markets despite our local laws preventing foreigners from getting involved in the retail business. They know how to do business better than we do because they come from Nigeria and have huge capital. We are in Ghana and struggle to get loans to boost our businesses. They have gradually made their goods very appealing to ordinary Ghanaians because they sell at lower prices (A businessman based in Accra (GUTA executive), 12 July 2024).

The growing focus on seeking better employment opportunities continues to drive both internal and international migration. Ghana is a key destination for migrants within the sub-region, mainly because it is a lower-middle-income country that offers relatively more opportunities in both formal and informal employment sectors (Awumbila et al., 2018). For this reason, the growth of industries such as oil and gas in Ghana has created new jobs and opportunities, attracting both local and international migrants (Awumbila et al., 2008; Yeboah et al., 2020). For example, the economic stability and growth observed since the early 2000s have further fueled Ghana's migration trend, as people seek to benefit from the job opportunities created by these economic

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improvements (Anarfi et al., 2003). As a result, citizens of ECOWAS member countries are increasingly encouraged to migrate to Ghana, as they are drawn, according to one informant, by the prospect of better opportunities than those available in their home countries.

Eight participants observed that local traders in Ghana have persistently expressed their discontent and organized large-scale protests against foreign participants in the petty trading industry (Adjavon, 2013). According to these participants, such apprehensions are frequently exacerbated by the perception that the influx of migrants may lead to the marginalization of indigenous individuals. Additionally, the participants believe that the traders have occasionally attributed the challenges they face to immigrants, citing issues of inequitable competition and instances of violent confrontations involving migrants (Kandilige et al., 2022). Consequently, this situation has resulted in recent heightened tensions between Ghanaian local traders and migrants from other ECOWAS member states.

5.2.4 Favorable Business Environment

A favorable business environment was identified as an important driver by 17 participants. Ghana's stability within the ECOWAS region serves as a magnet, attracting citizens from other member states and creating a positive environment for business with various stakeholders. According to some participants, this stability has helped establish business protocols with industry players who can align their operations with Ghana's current policy trends in adoption and implementation. The regulatory framework in place ensures that the activities of all involved are managed fairly, without giving preferential treatment to any single entity. Several participants reported that this creates a balanced platform for interested parties to engage in trade. Additionally, as some social commentators have observed, Ghanaians benefit from the skills and financial resources brought in by entrepreneurs from other ECOWAS countries, especially Nigeria (Ibourk, 2020). For this

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reason, it is important to recognize that immigrants play a crucial role in boosting the financial growth of Ghana.

The above point was made known by a key informant:

> People prefer to invest in Ghana rather than other places because of the rule of law, the fact that you can do business, and the country's peaceful nature. A lot more people prefer to come to Ghana (Senior Immigration Officer, Research Department, Immigration Headquarters, Accra, 19 August 2024).

Another participant echoed similar sentiments:

> Ghana's economic environment attracts people from other ECOWAS states to come and establish businesses here. The policies in Ghana may have some reservations for Ghanaians, but that does not prevent ECOWAS from plying their trade here. This land provides a ready market for the services of the people who troop in (A member of the migration team at GIZ, 24 July 2024).

What the quotations above imply is that Ghana's economic growth and high demand for labor have made it a key destination for migrants from the ECOWAS region (Quartey, 2009). This influx, according to a participant, has positively contributed to Ghana's economic development, creating opportunities for migrants seeking better living conditions (Siaw et al., 2016). He noted that generally, Ghana permits ECOWAS citizens to work within its borders, with a particular emphasis on facilitating the migration of skilled workers. He provided examples of Ghana's business environment, including the financial sector, which has seen many enterprises owned and operated by ECOWAS nationals, and several Nigerian financial institutions have successfully opened branches in the country as a result (Kandilige et al., 2023).

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5.3 Social Factors

Social factors are another key element influencing migration behaviors within the ECOWAS region. Interviews with thirteen participants in the field revealed that social factors are significant reasons why people migrate. The issues discussed by these participants under these broad social factors category are vital needs that people cannot do without. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the third level is belongingness and love. This insight helps us understand that social needs are a major driving force for many migrants to Ghana. To put this into perspective, it is well established that colonial partitioning and the Balkanization of the African continent failed to account for the social integration and structures of its citizens. One result of this approach was that many African citizens lost their kinship ties and family connections. In other words, because of the continent's partitioning, many ECOWAS citizens are now separated from their roots and family ties, living in one country while their families are in another. Some participants have reported this disintegrated social situation as one of the main reasons ECOWAS citizens move across neighboring countries to socialize and reconnect with their families.

The rationale for ECOWAS citizens moving to Ghana is influenced by a multifaceted array of socio-economic factors, notably inequality and inadequate social infrastructure in their home countries. These individuals seeking to relocate to Ghana, which offers a comparatively better social system, are pursuing equal opportunities and enhanced social services.

5.3.1 Inequality

Seven participants reported that inequality remains a pressing concern in many ECOWAS countries. They emphasized that inequality acts as a major catalyst for migration within ECOWAS, especially to Ghana (Yeboah et al., 2020). They stated that the gap between the wealthy and the poor is significant in these societies. Although there has been notable progress in reducing poverty

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across various sectors of the region, many individuals still live in poverty. According to key informants, this situation results from policies that are insufficient in addressing the social equity needs of ordinary citizens. They argued that social developmental inequality within ECOWAS member states has led citizens from less developed countries to migrate toward more developed countries, where they can access better social amenities. While these efforts are ongoing, several global public health challenges, including the pandemic, have impacted the social gains achieved. Some participants noted that the recent COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of many ECOWAS economies and their inability to meet citizens' social and economic needs.

This statement was captured by an informant as:

> Issues of inequality must be critically assessed and addressed to help the affected citizens in the ECOWAS region. The situation is dire to the extent that the ordinary citizen struggles to get the necessities of life (A member of the migration team at GIZ, 24 July 2024).

In their attempt to explain the effect of inequality in the ECOWAS region, some participants opined that inequality in several ECOWAS countries has hindered citizens from attaining a higher quality of life. They maintained that the lack of access to existing opportunities within a given ECOWAS country significantly impedes the development of its population. Consequently, this motivates citizens to move to access equal opportunities elsewhere. This point was summarized by a participant as that there is a pressing need for individuals to relocate to countries that can provide the equal opportunities that they are currently lacking. The interplay of economic inequalities, social disparities, and the relative stability of Ghana was reported by participants to motivate individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to seek migration in pursuit of enhanced living

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conditions and a better future. Interview data suggest that numerous individuals embark on migration journeys in search of better economic prospects, improved living standards, and access to social services that may be deficient in their countries of origin (Yeboah et al., 2020). In stark contrast to many ECOWAS countries grappling with pronounced inequality, Ghana is regarded, particularly in the eyes of participants, as more socially, politically, and economically stable. This stability fosters an appealing environment for migrants aiming for better living conditions and opportunities (Aikins, 2024). Furthermore, it was reported by participants that Ghana's open and liberal society acts as a significant pull factor, drawing ECOWAS citizens to migrate in hopes of achieving equality and an improved quality of life.

5.3.2 Poor Social Infrastructure

Six participants explained that the desire for better social amenities significantly influences migration patterns, especially among younger groups. The participants claimed that such social infrastructure acts as a strong pull factor. This view is well supported by migration scholars. For example, recently, migration experts like Teye (2022) have emphasized that access to essential services, including transportation, electricity, clean drinking water, housing, healthcare, educational institutions, and other social welfare provisions, has been a key motivation for people moving to Ghana. Additionally, participants reported that Ghana's strong educational system is considered more advanced and recognized with certification than that of many neighboring ECOWAS countries. This educational infrastructure attracts students and families from other ECOWAS countries in search of better educational opportunities for their children (Awumbila et al., 2008). Notably, prominent institutions in Ghana, such as the University of Ghana (UG), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University for Development

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Studies (UDS), and the University of Cape Coast (UCC), have attracted students from various West African countries who are now pursuing higher education and vocational training.

This point was echoed by an informant as:

> We realize that even before independence and around independence, most of these Pan-Africanists or Pan-African people, those who championed Pan-Africanism, had their education in Ghana. It has continued till now, and ECOWAS citizens from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and other French-speaking countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina, and Togo. They come to Ghana to educate themselves in the English language (Senior Immigration Officer, Research Department, Immigration Headquarters in Accra, 19 August 2024).

Another participant had this to say:

> People see Ghana as a place where they can have good educational and health facilities within the sub-region. So, some people come for what we call 'health tourism' to treat themselves and get good medical care (An Officer at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), 30 July 2024).

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However, a few participants expressed concerns about the pressure that would likely build up on the educational and social infrastructure in Ghana, due largely to the influx of migrants into the country.

According to one participant:

> The influx of migrants puts pressure on the already existing insufficient services that we have, like hospitals and schools, which are being stretched.

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> There is already serious pressure on our health workers, who are attending to the many Ghanaians who need medical attention (A member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Parliament of Ghana, 4 September 2024).

It is instructive to note that Ghana's 1992 Constitution enshrines the right to public primary and secondary education for all children within the country, irrespective of their migration status. To be clear, in August 2017, the Government of Ghana initiated one of the most comprehensive educational policies in Africa, and even beyond: the Free Senior High School Policy. This educational policy eliminates school fees for all senior high school students in public senior high schools. According to the 2022 Human Development Index (HDI) report, Ghana is classified in the medium development category, achieving a score of 0.60. This score reflects social infrastructural improvements, including access to quality education, healthcare, and reliable electricity. Interestingly, participants have also noticed these improvements and even said that it is largely because of Ghana's social infrastructure that citizens of ECOWAS states, lacking similar resources, have taken Ghana as home.

Similarly, participants also suggested that poor human development records and inadequate human security in many ECOWAS countries are other reasons why migrants prefer Ghana as a destination country. For instance, among 191 countries assessed based on health, education, and income by the HDI, Burkina Faso (ranked 184th), Mali (186th), and Niger (189th) are positioned in the lowest decile as of 2022. These ECOWAS countries have dropped more than 20 places since 2010 (UNDP, 2022), suggesting that the aspiration for improved social infrastructure, particularly in terms of educational opportunities, appears to motivate individuals (Schurmann et al., 2022).

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5.3.3 Family and Social Networks

The interview data also reveal that 29 participants pointed out that social integration is a crucial factor that significantly impacts migration patterns throughout West Africa. They believe that the connections formed through ethnic affiliations also affect the destinations chosen by migrants (Teye, 2022). They indicated, however, that the historical mad rush for Africa and the subsequent division of the continent overlooked this essential social dynamic. Overall, insights gathered from various participants indicate that family and social networks are instrumental in shaping migration trends in West Africa. Thus, family reunification has emerged as a key driver of migration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). According to key informants, over time, ECOWAS citizens have relocated to specific areas to reconnect with family members and establish new households. For example, many Ewes from Togo frequently migrate to the Volta Region of Ghana to live and work alongside their relatives (Awumbila et al., 2018; Teye, 2022).

Talking along similar lines, an informant explained:

> We prefer to come to Ghana because of our close ties. We were told from childhood that we have some extended family members in this country. So, we decided to trace them after we were given some details about them and the place(s) where we could find them. We did not struggle to locate them when we got here. Our relatives here have also connected us to a community made up of our countrymen. Living in this country has been smooth due to our connections now (Togolese migrants in Aflao, 7 August 2024).

It has emerged from the above quotation that established social networks play a crucial role in facilitating migration by providing essential information, resources, and support to newcomers, thus improving the mobility of individuals both within and outside Ghana (Awumbila et al., 2008).

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The presence of family connections in the destination area acts as a major pull factor for individuals (Schurmann et al., 2022). These networks often help new migrants adjust to their environment and find employment, thereby continuing the cycle of migration. According to participants, these dynamics contribute to citizens of other ECOWAS member countries migrating to Ghana. These social networks serve as a bridge between local populations and migrants, easing integration into Ghanaian society. Through these networks, people are drawn to Ghana mainly because of the presence of many relatives, a welcoming environment, available job opportunities, and a sense of safety and belonging (Mixed Migration Center Research Report, 2021).

5.4 Environmental Factors

Global conversations and discourse on the environment have gained prominence in recent years. Notably, discussions about climate change and its impact on the ecosystem have taken center stage in many academic and policy circles. In line with this thinking, 30 participants raised concerns about how climate change and other environmental issues have caused people to migrate from their countries of origin to Ghana.

Across many participants, Ghana has emerged as a prominent destination for migrants from neighboring countries within the ECOWAS region. They cited several reasons for this. But key among them is the comparatively stable political and economic landscape, alongside the presence of job and educational prospects in Ghana's urban centers (Spencer et al., 2022).

While these factors are important motivators for migration within the ECOWAS region, it is also crucial to consider the influence of environmental factors, such as natural disasters and droughts, on migration patterns. Some participants have reported that these environmental indicators force individuals from ECOWAS member states, especially those vulnerable to famine, droughts, and

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environmental degradation, to seek refuge in Ghana, a country with better environmental and climatic conditions.

5.4.1 Natural Disasters

Natural disasters play a crucial role in shaping the migration behaviors of citizens within the ECOWAS region. Part of the reason for this is due to the multifaceted and multidimensional environmental challenges faced in the sub-region. This point was succinctly recognized by 6 of the participants. According to them, the pursuit of safety and economic stability has served as a primary motivator for migration among ECOWAS citizens, where the interconnections between conflict, poverty, and ecological instability have become increasingly pronounced (Raleigh, 2011). They maintained that migration has emerged as an exit strategy for individuals to escape the detrimental impacts of natural disasters, offering access to new opportunities and resources. They opined that the daily occurrence of strong winds, heavy rainfall, severe flooding, and pest infestations, such as locust swarms, has intensified life-threatening conditions for affected communities. According to them, these adverse impacts and circumstances often result in unemployment and the erosion of livelihoods, compelling individuals to relocate to areas within ECOWAS that offer more sustainable living conditions. Furthermore, they emphasized that natural disasters have exacerbated climatic and environmental changes in a significant way, thus having a profound effect on food security and the sustainability of livelihoods, and thereby acting as a significant push factor for migration as individuals seek more stable environments, such as Ghana (IOM, 2021).

A key informant explained this point in his own words:

> Natural disasters are uncontrollable events in our lives. The era of climate change has exposed us to lots of environmental challenges, including natural

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> disasters. They happen at the individuals' blindside, making it difficult for them to control the situation (A senior officer at the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), 29 July 2024).

From the above statement, it is clear that natural disasters have significantly disrupted the livelihoods of individuals, particularly those engaged in agriculture, mining, and fishing. In response to these devastating impacts, many affected individuals have opted to relocate, either temporarily or permanently, to regions and countries that offer new opportunities and are less susceptible to such disasters (International Center for Migration Policy Development, 2022). Within the West African context, Ghana stands out as one of the few countries that remains largely unaffected by natural disasters and famine, thereby avoiding the challenges faced by more vulnerable ECOWAS countries. It was reported by some participants that Ghana's relatively stable political and economic environment has positioned it as a preferred destination for citizens of ECOWAS seeking refuge from the adverse effects of natural disasters and calamities. Ghana's inherent advantages in climate resilience and adaptation capacity further enhance its appeal for those looking to mitigate the impacts of environmental crises (Gyimah et al., 2020). This position that Ghana finds itself in, according to a key informant, has encouraged many ECOWAS citizens from disaster-prone countries to migrate to Ghana in search of a more stable living environment.

5.4.2 Droughts

Interview data indicate that adverse climatic conditions, mainly affecting the Sahelian region, especially in countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, significantly influence individuals' decisions to relocate to Ghana. Three participants reported that this issue has made it harder for Sahelian countries to grow crops, improve livestock productivity, and secure enough food and water for their animals, putting their food security at risk. Seasonal migration, in particular, was

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mentioned repeatedly by eight participants. According to these participants, herders and farmers have long been migrating to Ghana from Sahelian countries. They explained that a main reason for this migration is severe food shortages, worsened by ongoing famine and droughts (Aniche et al., 2021). As a result, farmers and herders feel forced to move from the Sahelian regions to a relatively more prosperous country like Ghana.

Expressing similar sentiments, a key informant explained:

> Ghana has a cool temperature with a manageable irrigation system in most farming communities. Farmers can cultivate their mostly seasonal crops at the right time. They can also provide animal feed (hay) and water for their livestock (Senior Officer at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), 30 July 2024).

It is worth noting that the above statement aligns well with the conclusions drawn by other social researchers (Agyei and Clottey, 2007; Attoh and Ishola, 2021). These social observers have noted that due to the scarcity of income-generating opportunities in many African countries, numerous impoverished farmers had to leave their homes and livelihoods in search of survival and conducive climatic environments in neighboring countries (Adepoju, 2006). According to an informant, such circumstances have provided strong incentives for people from the Sahelian region to migrate south to Ghana. They move to Ghana to work in agriculture and find other jobs during the off-farming seasons (Agyei and Clottey, 2007). While these are significant insights, it is equally important to state who the beneficiaries of these endeavors are. According to some participants, the central and southern regions of Ghana have benefited immensely from the stable climatic conditions that facilitate agricultural and pastoral activities. Additionally, they opined that recent developments in the northern regions, such as the construction of dams, have enabled local farmers

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to irrigate their fields. According to some observers, this new infrastructure has enabled farmers and herders to traverse the landscape in search of grazing areas for their livestock (Attoh and Ishola, 2021).

5.4.3 Availability of Natural Resources

In responding to the question on the influence of famine and droughts on migration behaviors, more than five interviewees re-echoed that point that during the colonial period, the extraction of natural resources, the establishment of commercial agriculture, and the expansion of significant coastal cities such as Accra and Tema established the foundation for migration systems, many aspects of which persist today (Dick and Schraven, 2021). For these participants, Ghana is rich in natural resources, including minerals like gold, diamonds, manganese, iron ore, and bauxite, as well as cocoa, timber, and fertile agricultural land. Historically, these resources have made Ghana an attractive destination for neighboring countries. The effective and efficient exploitation of these resources has necessitated various types of skilled labor. The local population alone cannot meet the labor demands, prompting the need for additional workers to alleviate the burden. As not all West African countries possess these resources, citizens from other countries with minimal resources often migrate to Ghana in search of employment opportunities and access to these valuable assets. Furthermore, Ghana draws labor migrants from Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Togo, and Benin to its mining and agricultural sectors (Awumbila et al., 2014).

During a focus group discussion, this point was emphasized:

> Ghana's natural resources have always attracted our counterparts from other ECOWAS countries. Their numbers increase any time we declare that we have discovered new resources. They are now working on our farms and plantations, taking care of our livestock, and others are also involved in the recent escalation

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> of 'galamsey' (illegal mining) activities (A community leader in Sampa, 18 September 2024).

In contrast, a key informant expressed anger and frustration at what some ECOWAS migrants are doing in Ghana. To him, these migrants have taken Ghana for granted and have therefore interpreted Ghana's hospitality and warm wishes as a sign of weakness. Thus, they are doing whatever they like in the country:

> Some refugees who took cover in Ghana during civil wars in their countries have taken over our resources. They have taken our leniency to be our weak point. They came to settle here, and you can see the mess they have caused. They now tend to be landlords and are now selling parts of our lands (Senior Officer, Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS), based in Sampa, 18 September 2024).

Even though mining and cocoa cultivation in Ghana have consistently attracted migrants from the West African sub-region, the expansion of resource frontiers aimed at enhancing cocoa production in the central and western regions of Ghana has facilitated unimpeded migration into the country, resulting in significant internal circular migration and the influx of migrants from other ECOWAS countries (Yaro, 2008). We have already noted that since the colonial period, citizens of ECOWAS have been drawn to Ghana to exploit its natural resources (Yaro, 2008; Kandilige et al., 2023). Likewise, in recent years in Ghana, the discovery of oil in commercial quantities has raised important questions surrounding the scarcity of skilled labor. This has necessitated reliance on neighboring ECOWAS countries that possessed the requisite expertise in this field (Awumbila et al., 2018).

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5.4.4 Favorable Climatic Conditions

11 participants reported that climate change and environmental degradation have emerged as critical factors driving human mobility in West Africa. To them, these environmental conditions have exacerbated existing trends of labor migration and led to increased forced displacement (Dick and Schraven, 2021). Consequently, individuals are compelled to seek refuge in more favorable countries within the ECOWAS region, including Ghana. The harsh environmental conditions have significantly impacted agricultural productivity and the availability of forage and water for livestock, forcing long journeys to access these essential resources. Consequently, Ghana is regarded as a relatively accessible destination where migrants can find livelihoods and a safe space for their livestock and farming activities.

This point was emphasized by a participant:

> The favorable weather conditions in Ghana attract migrants from the Sahelian regions to move to Ghana. Due to increased heat caused by climate change and weather patterns, they travel south to Ghana in search of greener pastures. Essentially, that is what they used to do, mainly during the dry season. However, recently, many of them are traveling permanently (A local businesswoman in Hamile, 14 September 2024).

In all intents and purposes, the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather and climate events have increased, triggering floods, droughts, and heat waves. These factors, according to some participants, will continue to drive migration in West Africa (Ghana Immigration Service, 2023). Improved climatic conditions are often identified as environmental incentives that attract individuals to relocate (Schurmann et al., 2022). In the era of global warming and increased heat waves, Ghana provides a safer environment for its neighbors in the West African sub-region. The

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relatively calmer weather conditions in Ghana have become an incentive and attraction to its neighbors in search of a better climate.

In contrast, the violence stemming from climate change between herdsmen and farmers is on the rise, and this trend seems to be underreported (ICMPD, 2022). The interactions between Fulani herdsmen and farmers have also had a detrimental impact on socioeconomic development in certain areas that receive migrants, such as Agogo and Shai-Osu-Doku (Kandilige et al., 2022). In Ghana, these herdsmen travel from as far as Niger and Mali, leading to heightened tensions and conflicts with local agricultural producers (Clottey, 2007).

5.5 Religious Factors

Religious factors emerged as a reason for some ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana during the data collection process. It is quite significant in West Africa. Many West Africans hold their religious practices in high esteem and want to preserve them wherever they find themselves.

5.5.1 Subculture tolerance

Religious beliefs and practices are significant motivators for individuals to migrate within the West African sub-region, though they may not be the primary driving force. Minority religious communities often seek refuge in stable and peaceful environments during periods of instability and uncertainty in their home countries. The 1992 constitution's Chapter 5 ensures that citizens are afforded fundamental human rights, which encompass the freedom of religion. In Ghana, individuals are permitted to adhere to and practice any religious faith (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). The country's liberal framework has facilitated an environment where citizens can welcome migrants without apprehension regarding their cultural backgrounds.

It was revealed in a focus group discussion:

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> Ghana is the ideal country for anyone in West Africa. I believe many people would like Ghana as their country of origin. This country is so open that anyone can observe their religious beliefs wherever they find themselves without any fear of intimidation. No one has ever confronted us for practicing our religious faith and culture since we have been in Ghana. The people are very tolerant of other foreigners who are here with us. We feel safe and will continue to do our best and always pray for the good of Ghana (Migrants from Burkina Faso and Niger, in Hamile, 16 September 2024).

There is an absence of state-sponsored discrimination against any specific identity group, whether religious or ethnic (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). The liberal framework in Ghana has fostered a society characterized by greater tolerance and inclusivity towards individuals from diverse backgrounds. A harmonious relationship exists between Ghanaians and migrants from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Host communities have shown a willingness to accommodate these migrants without any significant issues arising. Reports indicate that there is no tension between local populations and the foreign communities that have settled among them (Mixed Migration Center Research Report, 2021). These migrants help address existing labor shortages and typically arrive in manageable numbers, mitigating concerns that host communities may feel overwhelmed. This dynamic is an attractive factor for ECOWAS citizens considering migrating to Ghana, as established social networks facilitate their integration into Ghanaian society.

5.5.2 Evangelical and Missionary Works

Historically, Ghana has played an important role in spreading the Christian faith since its encounter with the original Evangelical agents and missionaries in the pre-colonial era. This has given Ghana

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the mileage to be attractive enough to pull other ECOWAS citizens who may be interested in the works of the Christian faith.

Ghana hosts Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches, such as the Church of Pentecost, International Christ Gospel Church (ICGC), and the Redeem Church of God, among others. These churches also train individuals from other parts of ECOWAS before sending them to their home countries or other areas of West Africa to help spread their religious beliefs.

A participant asserted that:

> Ghana is a country of many things. It has helped to develop several Christians across West Africa. Some of the well-established men of God in West Africa were either trained in Ghana or trained by a Ghanaian. The churches have done their best in creating that conducive atmosphere that conforms with the national laws, so trainees do not have any problem during their stay in Ghana (An Officer at the Small Arms Department, Hamile, 14 September 2024).

Ghana has progressively enhanced its human resources and infrastructure through various religious initiatives. The society in Ghana is characterized by a profound religiosity, with the rise and prominence of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches playing a significant role in this aspect (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). The proliferation of these new religious institutions, particularly within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, has notably influenced migration trends within the country (Okyerefo, 2019). As a largely Christian country, Christian community members have made concerted efforts to establish state-of-the-art facilities that facilitate the dissemination of the gospel throughout West Africa. Consequently, Christians from other ECOWAS countries frequently travel to Ghana to further their spiritual development.

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5.5.3 Religious Festivals

The researcher found that citizens of ECOWAS migrate to Ghana to participate in various celebration festivals, such as Hogbetsotso, the Yam Festival, and Zendo Glimetotoza, all of which take place in the Volta Region. These festivals commemorate significant historical events from the past, serving to acknowledge the evolution of specific tribes from ancient times to the present and to pay homage to the deities for their protection throughout history. During these occasions, individuals travel from distant locations to reconnect with family and friends they may not have seen for extended periods. Additionally, other ECOWAS citizens journey to Ghana to join their relatives in the festivities, contributing to the event preparations. These celebrations not only play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage but also offer a valuable opportunity for ECOWAS citizens to engage with and learn about the rich cultural practices of Ghana (Ayesue et al., 2020).

As pointed out by a migrant:

> Ghana is my second home. I come here every year to celebrate and observe the festival. It reminds us of the roles of our ancestors in shaping our future. My family's head in Togo always delegates me to come to Ghana ahead of time to help get things done before the festival. So, I liaise with the family members in Ghana and Togo to ensure that everything is done accordingly for a successful celebration (A Togolese migrant in Aflao, 7 August 2024).

Religious festivals play a vital role in the lives of those involved. A key reason why ECOWAS citizens migrate to Ghana is the opportunity to participate in the country's diverse religious celebrations. These festivals reflect deep spiritual beliefs and customs passed down through generations, offering a glimpse into Ghanaian culture (Doe et al., 2022). The events, which include both elaborate ceremonies for deities and spirits and more reflective rituals, are highly significant

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to the ECOWAS community. They help preserve cultural identity, strengthen social bonds, and reconnect individuals with their spiritual roots. Ghana's welcoming environment and cultural diversity have established it as a popular destination for ECOWAS citizens eager to engage in these religious festivities, as the country's openness and respect for different faiths foster an atmosphere that supports the celebration and preservation of these traditions.

These festivals, deeply rooted in tradition and history, attract several individuals from the surrounding region keen to engage with the distinctive customs and practices that characterize Ghanaian culture (Collins, 2004). The appeal of Ghana's religious festivals has significantly contributed to the influx of ECOWAS citizens into the country. These occasions not only provide a rich and immersive cultural experience but also play a crucial role in safeguarding and promoting the country's vibrant heritage. This acts as the pull factor that draws them to Ghana.

5.6 Challenges faced by ECOWAS Migrants in Ghana

Within migration discussions in West Africa, Ghana is described as an origin, transit, and destination country. For this study, the researcher focuses on Ghana as a destination for ECOWAS citizens. Ghanaian hospitality helps citizens of ECOWAS states settle and integrate into society easily. Despite the many benefits ECOWAS citizens enjoy in Ghana, they face several challenges in adapting to society. Below are some of the challenges highlighted.

5.6.1 Improper Documentation

Interview data suggests that a lack of proper documentation poses a significant challenge for ECOWAS citizens residing in Ghana. This problem is largely due to some migrants entering the country through unauthorized routes. Many of these individuals do not take the necessary steps to regularize their status, even when they exceed the legally permitted three-month duration of stay (Mixed Migration Center Research Report, 2021). Additionally, these migrants often neglect to

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renew their documentation promptly. Furthermore, this problem is compounded by the involvement of certain border officials who intentionally hinder migrants and extort money from them.

A participant captures this problem by revealing that:

> Sometimes, possessing the required documents rather serves as a hindrance, and the people are delayed unnecessarily by unscrupulous border officials who require or demand unofficial payments for the privilege of crossing the border, even though it's a right that the ECOWAS free movement protocol should guarantee (An Immigration Officer in Hamile, 14 September 2024).

One of the critical challenges lies in the complexities involved in standardizing immigration procedures and documentation (Awumbila et al., 2018). The specific documentation requirements can differ markedly across countries, often failing to correspond with the travel documents specified in the ECOWAS protocols. Several ECOWAS member states have not yet adopted the ECOWAS card, with only Ghana, Senegal, and a few others making notable advancements in this area. The implementation of the Ghana Card serves to differentiate between Ghanaian citizens and foreign residents, which may influence access to the labor market and associated outcomes (Kandilige et al., 2022). Consequently, migrants may experience restricted access to government services, including law enforcement and other public resources (Mixed Migration Center Research Report, 2021). This scenario constitutes a significant obstacle for migrants and potential migrants aiming to explore opportunities in Ghana.

5.6.2 Policy Limitations

It was revealed that Ghana implements a range of policies aimed at managing and regulating migration, which are aligned with the fundamental principles of the West African sub-region and

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the African Union's migration framework. The Immigration Act of 2000 stipulates that foreign nationals seeking employment in Ghana must first secure a work permit from the Ghana Immigration Service (Kandilige et al., 2022). However, domestic legislation often prioritizes the interests of local citizens, leading to restrictions for migrants in their efforts to settle and integrate into Ghanaian society. This is particularly evident in the realm of business, where migrants frequently do not enjoy the same rights as citizens, especially regarding participation in the retail sector. This exclusionary policy is predicated on the reality that a significant proportion of Ghanaians, estimated at up to 80%, are employed in the informal sector. To protect job opportunities for the majority of the working-age demographic, competition from foreign nationals is prohibited (This Nation, 2021).

Furthermore, immigrants have limited access to essential services such as public healthcare and secondary education; as noted by Ibourk (2020), only 13.8% of immigrants in Ghana can access secondary education.

As found in the fieldwork:

> Jobs in the retail sector are to be done by only Ghanaians, but you mostly see these ECOWAS citizens doing the same job. This has led to several misunderstandings and problems between the local people (traders) and their counterparts from the neighboring countries, especially Nigeria (A businessman based in Accra, GUTA executive, 12 July 2024).

A major issue hindering the realization of the potential for free movement is the discrepancy between national legislation and the ECOWAS protocol. Member states have instituted protectionist legislation and actions that restrict citizens of other ECOWAS countries from

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employment in certain sectors, such as public service, security, and informal sector activities such as trading (Awumbila et al., 2014).

Foreign nationals residing in Ghana, including individuals from ECOWAS member countries, are barred from employment within the security sector (Awumbila et al., 2014; Awumbila et al., 2018). Furthermore, the Ghana Investment Promotion Center Act of 2013 (Act 865) explicitly restricts migrants from participating in various economic activities, such as petty trading, operating taxis, managing beauty salons or barber shops, printing recharge cards for telecommunications subscribers, producing exercise books, supplying retail sachet water, and selling finished pharmaceutical products (Awumbila et al., 2018; Kandilige et al., 2022).

5.6.3 High Cost of Living

Ghana, as a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has experienced impressive economic growth in recent years, achieving an average annual growth rate of 5.1% by 2023, which exceeded the average of 3.9% for lower-middle-income countries in Africa (Aikins, 2025). However, this rapid progress has brought considerable challenges, particularly for ECOWAS nationals living in the country. A significant issue is the high cost of living, which has placed a substantial strain on these individuals.

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In comparison, Ghana has a relatively high cost of living compared to its peers in the sub-region. This high cost of living leads many migrants to voice complaints. Migrants from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Togo report a high cost of living and an unstable pricing system. These countries implement a fixed price mechanism that regulates the prices of goods and services, positively influencing the cost of living.

Ghana's free market system does not fully accommodate this type of price control system. Moreover, Ghana presents a different scenario for these ECOWAS citizens. Prices for goods and

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services continue to rise over time. Stakeholders charge varying prices for their commodities despite operating within the same market. There is no price mechanism to regulate such practices, which adversely impact the cost of living in Ghana. Residents require more money to purchase the essentials they need.

A migrant asserted:

> The prices of goods and services in Ghana are not stable. You buy something today and go back tomorrow to buy the same thing at an increased price. They will tell you things are being increased; prices of food and services are always increasing (A migrant from Burkina Faso in Hamile, 16 September 2024).

The cost of living in Ghana poses considerable difficulties for ECOWAS citizens living in the country. The country has been grappling with a cost-of-living crisis, highlighted by an inflation rate that soared to 54.1% in December 2022, an increase from 50.3% in November 2022 (Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2024). Food prices have risen by 30.7%, alongside a significant increase in energy costs (Birches Group, 2022). This inflationary trend severely undermines the purchasing power of migrants, many of whom are already facing financial hardships. The repercussions of the rising cost of living for ECOWAS citizens in Ghana are extensive. Increased expenses can exacerbate poverty levels, contribute to health inequities, and place additional strain on an already burdened healthcare system (Ofori-Asenso et al., 2016). Migrants who move to Ghana in pursuit of a better quality of life often find their aspirations thwarted. Instead of enjoying improved living conditions, their limited financial resources are primarily allocated to essential needs such as food, housing, and other necessities. These various aspects of the cost of living significantly influence their daily experiences and overall quality of life.

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5.6.4 Accommodation

Accommodation represents a considerable obstacle for ECOWAS citizens living in Ghana, affecting their capacity to establish themselves and assimilate into the local community. Migrants with no close family connections encounter significant difficulties in securing adequate housing in Ghana. Upon their arrival, these individuals often face financial instability, rendering them unable to afford or rent suitable accommodations. This situation frequently leads to feelings of unease and anxiety regarding their housing circumstances. Additionally, certain property owners possess varying attitudes towards migrants and their activities in Ghana, which influences their reluctance to lease their properties to these individuals.

A highly perceptive participant noted:

> Some property owners still have bad perceptions about foreigners living in Ghana due to their previous experiences. This makes it difficult for them to rent out their properties to them. They struggled to secure a place when they first come to Ghana (A Senior Officer at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), 15 July 2024).

An interviewee stated:

> Most of them are not able to acquire very decent accommodation. They live on marginal lands. Some of them also live along railway lines. Others become squatters in marshy areas and wetlands. These are areas normally reserved for the government (A Senior Officer at the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), Headquarters, Accra, 29 July 2024).

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A critical element influencing the housing challenges faced by ECOWAS citizens in Ghana is the existing economic and socio-political landscape of the sub-region. Additionally, the informal and predominantly unregulated rental market in Ghana creates conditions that may leave ECOWAS citizens vulnerable to landlord exploitation (UNHCR-IFRC, 2020). The prevalent 'advanced rent system' poses significant hurdles (Arku et al., 2012). Many ECOWAS citizens are confronted with considerable difficulties in obtaining decent housing, which are further intensified by societal stigma. Landlords often impose higher rental rates on non-nationals or outright refuse to lease to them. This form of discrimination aggravates the housing challenges for ECOWAS citizens, restricting their options and compelling numerous individuals into unstable living conditions (Bluett and Davy, 2020). Consequently, this predicament complicates their lives, as their aspirations are hindered by obstacles to integrating into Ghanaian society.

5.6.5 Hostility and Discrimination

Some migrants experience positive interactions with local citizens, often without any awareness of their nationality. These individuals foster a welcoming environment that facilitates the settlement and integration of migrants into their new communities. However, there exists a less visible aspect of Ghanaian society that is not widely recognized. This includes instances of discrimination, hostility, and exclusionary remarks directed towards individuals from other ECOWAS countries, which often occur discreetly rather than in public view. During times of crisis, some citizens may unjustly blame foreigners for various issues. The increasing number of migrants has been associated with a rise in criminal activities, including kidnapping, armed robbery, money laundering, and the distribution of counterfeit goods in Ghana (Awumbila et al., 2018). Additionally, some individuals use local languages as a means to express exclusionary sentiments covertly, a phenomenon that was highlighted in a recent group discussion.

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A migrant noted:

> Personnel from the local assembly exploit us. They insult us and overcharge us when they come around for their taxes. They sometimes forget we understand the local language to some extent (A migrant from Burkina Faso in Hamile, 16 September 2024).

A highly perceptive participant noted:

> Discrimination is always there. Even though the Fulani people were born and bred in Ghana, some of them faced discrimination in the issuance of ID cards, health insurance cards, opportunities in education, and everything else. Discrepancies are there (A Senior Officer at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), 15 July 2024).

A participant noted the following:

> Then we also have our issue of illegal activities, cyber fraud, prostitution, and kidnapping, among others. All these things have been associated with foreigners. I am saying that because if you pick 10 people engaged in cyber fraud, you have more than 70% foreigners. Of the kidnapping cases that we have witnessed, about 30% or 40% of them were foreigners. That is why I am basing it on that (An Immigration Officer based in Sampa, 18 September 2024).

An interviewee stated:

> We hardly heard about serious crimes before the 1990s. But things started changing in the early 1990s due to the influx of migrants coming into Ghana.

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> Their arrival brought many negative issues. They have managed to teach our local people these harmful things. Now, we have radicals from neighboring countries living among us. Some even come to recruit our people to join them (A businessman based in Accra (GUTA executive), 12 July 2024).

Migrants face discrimination despite regional agreements that explicitly prohibit such practices against citizens of ECOWAS (Teye et al., 2015). This discrimination largely stems from the perceptions and misconceptions that local populations hold regarding individuals from other ECOWAS countries. The situation has been exacerbated in various regions, where migrants have increasingly become targets of violence and mistreatment, particularly during times of economic distress (Yaro, 2008). Consequently, negative societal events are often unjustly attributed to these migrants within their communities (Kyereko, 2018). As highlighted by Awumbila et al. (2014), the presence of international treaties and national laws aimed at preventing discrimination in member states does not fully mitigate the issue. Certain rights and privileges remain exclusive to nationals, leaving foreign nationals, including those from ECOWAS, without access to these entitlements. This reality has significantly hindered the ability of many migrants to assimilate into Ghanaian society.

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5.6.6 Language Barriers

There cannot be successful communication without using a common medium (language) to express oneself. Migrants living in Ghana do not entirely limit themselves to a particular place. They prefer to go to other parts of Ghana when they settle and integrate into the society. This is because of the open system policy and practices in Ghana. This makes it possible for anyone residing in Ghana to move freely without any restrictions, except in places where the state has imposed a curfew due to security reasons.

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A participant alluded:

> A French-speaking person will prefer to go to Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, or Burkina Faso rather than come to Ghana. A clear example is when Liberia had issues, they preferred to come to Ghana rather than to stay in other neighboring countries because of the language barrier. Migrants from Francophone West Africa who cannot speak any English struggle to integrate well into the Ghanaian society (An Immigration Officer in Sampa, 18 September 2024).

A migrant averred:

> Many Ghanaians love their local language. Ghana is one of the few countries that appreciates the local language. You will remain a foreigner till you can speak any of the local languages. You will be sidelined because you cannot speak it (An Ivorian businessman, based in Sampa, 18 September 2024).

Language matters when people attempt to express their ideas and hopes (Black et al., 2022). Communication is an important part of our daily activities when it comes to human mobility. There is a need to have a common language to bring about effective communication between the locals and migrants. Migrants who go beyond the border communities and 'Zongos' (settler communities) to other parts of Ghana face challenges because they cannot speak the local languages there. The indigenes are mostly curious to know where they originate from before they interact with them (Kyereko, 2018).

A significant language barrier exists, as most individuals from French-speaking countries lack proficiency in English (Teye et al., 2015). This situation arises from Ghana's geographical proximity to countries where French is the predominant official language. The inadequate

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command of the local language(s) can hinder the capacity of ECOWAS migrants to secure employment in the formal labor market. For example, numerous graduates from Togo residing in Ghana are unable to communicate in English, the country's official language (Awumbila et al., 2014).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presents empirical results using the push-pull framework to explain why citizens of ECOWAS migrate to Ghana. Five clusters of drivers emerged. First, political factors, including government oppression and recurring instability in parts of the sub-region, drive people out, while Ghana's relative stability and democratic governance attract them. Second, economic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and the search for better job opportunities and a favorable business climate, consistently motivate movement to Ghana. Third, social factors, including inequality, deficits in social infrastructure, and the attraction of Ghana's education and health services alongside family and social networks, shape both the decision to migrate and migrants' settlement choices. Fourth, environmental factors, such as natural disasters, droughts, and broader climate stress, continue to displace populations from the Sahel toward Ghana, where comparatively less exposure and resource-linked opportunities exist. Fifth, the study identified challenges that make integration harder: documentation obstacles, restrictive policies, high living costs, housing shortages, xenophobia, discrimination, and language barriers.

Beyond listing these drivers and challenges, the findings also highlight important dynamics. Migrants do not move simply in response to poverty, instability, or climate stress; they also act on aspirations, networks, and perceptions of Ghana as a safe and opportunity-rich destination. At the same time, the evidence shows that migration is not cost-free. Integration difficulties undermine some of the potential benefits of migration for both migrants and host communities. These findings

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suggest that Ghana's role as a migration hub is shaped by both attraction and ambivalence. While Ghana offers stability, opportunity, and openness, it also imposes barriers that reflect national interests, policy inconsistencies, and social tensions.

In summary, the chapter demonstrates that Ghana is a key destination within the ECOWAS subregion. A mix of structural push drives migration and pull factors, and is shaped by lived experiences of opportunity and restriction. The following chapter provides a detailed discussion of these findings, placing them within the wider migration literature and examining their implications for Ghana, ECOWAS, and migration governance more broadly.



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CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analyzed empirical findings on why citizens of ECOWAS migrate to Ghana. Migration in the ECOWAS region is a complex phenomenon shaped by political, economic, social, environmental, and religious factors observed during data collection. While the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement promotes cross-border mobility, the lived realities are more intricate than policy texts imply. This chapter presents the study's findings in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature, with a focus on Ghana's Fourth Republic since 1993. It then examines how the push and pull theory helps explain these dynamics and what intervening challenges hinder mobility and settlement.

6.1 Drivers of ECOWAS–Ghana Migration in the Fourth Republic

6.1.1 Political Dynamics of Push, Pull, Obstacles, and Net Effect

Across ECOWAS, political instability, repression, and conflict push people from their homes. Coup attempts and unrest in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Togo, and Senegal have generated fear, disrupted livelihoods, and led to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons and refugees. Some interview participants emphasized the role of violent extremist groups, electoral violence, and weak governance in Sahelian states in the migration to Ghana. As one explained, "We had to leave our country of origin and seek shelter in a different country… There were uncertainties surrounding our future due to the oppressive system back home" (Burkinabe migrant, Hamile, 16 September 2024). The UNHCR and other sources cited by participants document surges from the Sahel in periods of

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acute insecurity. In the year 2023, fatalities resulting from political violence in the central Sahel surged by 38%, while civilian casualties escalated by more than 18% (ACLED, 2024).

Ghana's uninterrupted democratic practice since 1992, characterized by repeated peaceful transfers of power, constitutional protections, and a vibrant civic space, creates a predictable political climate. Officials and migrants alike described Ghana as a sanctuary of peace and respect for human rights. "Ghana's stable political environment and democratic governance make it an attractive destination…" (Director of Research, Migration Unit, Ministry of Interior, 22 Aug 2024). Another noted, "Ghana is seen as an island when it comes to peace in the West African sub-region" (IOM Senior Officer, 8 August 2024). Participants highlighted the functioning legislature, active courts, and space for civil society to challenge government decisions.

National policy does not always align with regional commitments. While Ghana participates in ECOWAS free movement, certain domestic policies restrict migrants, including specific limitations on retail trade, security-sector employment, and administrative burdens related to residence and work authorization. Political factors influence migration in two ways: instability and repression in origin countries push people out, while Ghana's democratic stability, rights-based approach, and relatively open civic space attract them. The overall effect is a strong political pull toward Ghana, shaped by selective policy restrictions that influence how migrants can engage in economic and civic activities.

6.1.2 Economic Dynamics of Push, Pull, Obstacles, and Net Effect

Economic difficulties remain one of the most consistent push factors shaping migration across the ECOWAS region. Widespread poverty and unemployment, and limited economic diversification in member states, drive people to seek opportunities elsewhere. Participants emphasized that young people are particularly vulnerable to these constraints, facing bleak prospects in their home

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countries due to the inability of states to generate adequate employment. As one member of parliament observed during interviews, “Unemployment is prevalent… The youth want a better system to enable them to realize their dreams” (Foreign Affairs Committee, 4 September 2024). Poverty was repeatedly identified as a trigger by both officials and migrants themselves, with one teacher in Hamile stating, “The poverty levels in most of these West African countries are so bad…” (14 September 2024). These testimonies reinforce wider evidence that many ECOWAS citizens view migration as a necessary strategy for survival and upward mobility.

Against this backdrop, Ghana emerges as a relatively attractive destination for much of the mobility across the sub-region. As a lower-middle-income country with a comparatively diversified economy, Ghana offers opportunities across agriculture, mining, construction, services, and an expanding oil and gas sector. Participants pointed to steady demand for skilled artisans from Togo, cross-border traders from Burkina Faso and Togo, and Nigerian participation in entrepreneurship and finance. Migrants described how they often complement local skills, help fill labor shortages, and contribute to the expansion of sectors such as construction and retail. For many, Ghana is perceived as a country where hard work and determination can lead to improved livelihoods and, in some cases, upward economic mobility.

Nevertheless, economic integration in Ghana is not without obstacles. Ghana’s Investment Act and retail-trade protections restrict foreign participation in certain low-capital economic activities, such as petty trading, transportation, and small-scale retail. These limitations have generated conflicts, particularly with Nigerian migrants, as local traders frequently accuse them of unfair competition. In several instances, authorities have enforced retail restrictions and even closed Nigerian-owned shops, highlighting the tensions between national economic protectionism and regional commitments under the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol. Beyond these legal constraints,

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migrants also face significant structural challenges. Cost-of-living pressures, inflation spikes, currency depreciation, and high housing costs all reduce the value of migrant earnings and place many in precarious positions. These issues limit not only their capacity to remit income back home but also their ability to sustain dignified living conditions in Ghana.

The net effect is a pattern of South–South labor mobility that is simultaneously durable and fragile. On the one hand, economic hardship in origin states intersects with perceived opportunities in Ghana to create a strong pull for migrants seeking better livelihoods. On the other hand, the benefits of this migration are contingent upon access to particular sectors, clarity and consistency in the enforcement of regulations, and the affordability of basic living conditions. Put differently, Ghana's economy remains an important magnet within the sub-region, but the capacity of migrants to fully capitalize on its opportunities depends heavily on how structural constraints and policy frictions are managed.

6.1.3 Social Dynamics of Push, Pull, Obstacles, and Net Effect

Inequality and uneven social infrastructure across most of the ECOWAS region function as strong push factors for migration. Many citizens lack consistent access to quality education, healthcare, housing, water, electricity, and transportation systems. These deficits not only constrain opportunities for self-improvement but also undermine long-term prospects for upward mobility. Participants consistently emphasized that the absence of adequate schools, reliable medical facilities, and affordable housing in their home countries motivated relocation to places where such services are more accessible. The structural gaps in social infrastructure thus create conditions where migration becomes a rational response to inequality.

Ghana's educational and healthcare institutions operate as recognized regional hubs and serve as key pull factors. Participants repeatedly highlighted the appeal of universities such as the

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University of Ghana (UG), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Cape Coast (UCC), and University for Development Studies (UDS), which attract students from across West Africa. For Francophone students, the opportunity to pursue English-medium study in Ghana provides additional value, enhancing their employability across Anglophone and Francophone contexts. Similarly, Ghana's healthcare system functions as a destination for health-seeking mobility. Migrants travel to access services perceived as more reliable than those in their countries of origin. Ghana's Pan-African traditions and its historical role in African independence movements also reinforce cultural and educational ties, creating symbolic and practical pathways for migrants seeking better opportunities.

Family and ethnic connections strongly structure the routes and destinations of migration, shaping both who moves and where they settle. Participants pointed to the mobility of Ewe communities across the Ghana–Togo border and the family ties of Sahelian migrants as key examples. These social networks reduce risk, spread vital information about jobs and housing, provide initial shelter, and accelerate integration into host communities. As one group of Togolese migrants in Aflao explained, "We did not struggle to locate them when we got here… Living in this country has been smooth due to our connections now" (7 August 2024). Such accounts highlight how networks convert migration from an uncertain aspiration into a feasible and sustainable reality.

At the same time, migration driven by social aspirations is not without challenges. Participants noted that receiving communities sometimes experience pressure on schools, hospitals, and other public services due to increasing inflows of migrants. In addition, language barriers pose recurring difficulties for Francophone migrants in Anglophone Ghana. Limited English proficiency not only hinders access to formal-sector employment but also complicates communication in schools,

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clinics, and public offices. These obstacles can undermine the very advantages that drew migrants to Ghana in the first place, leaving some vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization.

6.1.4 Environmental Dynamics of Push, Pull, Obstacles, and Net Effect

Environmental stress emerged from the data as a major driver of migration within ECOWAS, particularly in the Sahel and other fragile ecologies. Participants linked floods, storms, and drought to both seasonal and permanent migration patterns. Climatic variability undermines agricultural productivity, reduces available pasture, and exacerbates water insecurity. Farmers experiencing crop failures and herders struggling with diminished grazing land often seek alternatives further south, where conditions are perceived to be more stable. These movements reflect how environmental shocks and long-term degradation function as strong push factors, compelling individuals and households to leave increasingly uninhabitable or economically unviable zones.

By contrast, Ghana's relatively favorable agro-ecological conditions serve as consistent pull factors. Participants highlighted the country's diversified rural economy, investments in irrigation schemes, and stable rainfall patterns as attractions for migrants from the drought-prone Sahel. Natural-resource frontiers in cocoa and gold have historically drawn regional labor, while more recent discoveries of oil and gas have created demand for skilled workers. Migrants see Ghana not only as a refuge from environmental stress but also as a place where natural resources and economic opportunities are accessible in ways unavailable at home. Environmental migration, however, also generates new issues. Several participants pointed to herder-farmer tensions in districts such as Agogo and Shai-Osu-Doku, where competition over land and water has produced disputes and, at times, violence. Migrants who turn to artisanal and small-scale mining, often operating outside the law, face legal risks and community hostility. Such activities accelerate environmental degradation — particularly the destruction of rivers, farms, and forests — and

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provoke backlash from residents who perceive migrants as intensifying ecological decline. These challenges underscore that environmental migration can transform from an adaptive strategy into a source of conflict and vulnerability.

Overall, environmental shocks and impact push people out of vulnerable zones, while Ghana's comparatively stable climate and resource endowments pull them in. Yet the net effect of environmental migration depends heavily on how well conflicts are managed, how effectively environmental regulations are enforced, and whether alternative livelihoods can be provided to reduce competition over land, water, and natural resources. Without these measures, the benefits of environmental migration risk being undermined by conflict and ecological stress, leaving both migrants and host communities vulnerable.

6.1.5 Religious Activities

People migrating to engage in religious activities surfaced in the fieldwork as an important but often underexplored pull factor shaping migration to Ghana. Several interview participants consistently pointed to the country's religious freedom, vibrant Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements, and a broader culture of tolerance as major attractions. Ghana's reputation as a place where one can openly practice their faith without intimidation stands in sharp contrast to conditions in some ECOWAS countries, where sectarian conflict or state restrictions limit expression. For many, migration is motivated not only by material prospects but also by the desire to live in an environment that affirms spiritual identity. Churches and other religious institutions act as anchors for newcomers, offering both spiritual community and practical support. Several participants noted that congregations provide education through church-run schools, health outreach services, and even economic empowerment programs that create pathways for integration. Evangelical and missionary activities, often transnational in nature, reinforce these

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linkages by connecting migrants to networks that span the sub-region. Religious festivals such as Hogbetsotso and the Yam Festival were also highlighted as cyclical drivers of mobility, bringing kin and co-ethnics together across borders for cultural and spiritual celebration.

These religious pulls frequently operate through pre-existing social networks, as migrants are introduced to churches or religious communities by relatives and friends. Such networks ease the process of finding housing, securing jobs, and adapting to the social fabric of Ghana. Religion thus functions not only as a spiritual draw but also as a social infrastructure that facilitates settlement, amplifies other pull factors, and helps migrants navigate the challenges of relocation.

6.2 Intervening Obstacles in Migration

While political, economic, social, environmental, and religious factors combine to make Ghana a favored destination within ECOWAS, participants repeatedly emphasized that migration is not seamless. Many obstacles, which are legal, economic, social, and cultural, shape the migrant experience, often complicating integration and limiting the benefits that free movement was designed to deliver. These frictions emerged in multiple domains.

6.2.1 Documentation and Border Governance

Despite ECOWAS protocols that guarantee entry, residence, and establishment, migrants reported bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining residence and work permits. Participants reported complex, costly, and protracted procedures that leave many in an irregular status. Land-border crossings were highlighted as sites of harassment and unofficial payments, with border officials inconsistently accepting ECOWAS travel certificates. The requirement to present yellow fever vaccination certificates, when poorly communicated or unmet, created further delays. Migrants who overstayed the initial three-month entry period without regularizing their status faced

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compounded risks, particularly in accessing government services or formal-sector employment—several noted reliance on intermediaries to navigate the system, often at exploitative costs.

6.2.2 Policy Inconsistencies and Market Access

Tensions between Ghana's national legislation and ECOWAS provisions on free movement of persons were repeatedly evident in the data. Ghana's Investment Act reserves portions of the retail trade and other low-capital sectors for nationals, while security and public service employment are also closed to non-citizens. These restrictions, intended to protect local livelihoods in an economy dominated by informality, generate conflicts with migrant traders, particularly Nigerians, and have led to periodic shop closures and diplomatic disputes. Participants observed that the contradictions between ECOWAS commitments and domestic law create confusion, leaving migrants uncertain about their rights and vulnerable to arbitrary enforcement.

6.2.3 Cost of Living and Price Instability

Migrants identified the rising cost of living as a pressing challenge. Participants emphasized sharp increases in the prices of food, transportation, energy, and rent. Currency depreciation was viewed as particularly damaging, as it amplified the cost of imports and eroded purchasing power. Migrants employed in low-wage or informal segments of the economy struggle to meet basic needs, let alone remit money home. Inflation shocks reduce the scope for saving or upward mobility, creating financial precarity even for those who find employment. The depreciation of the cedi and recurrent inflation spikes were described as structural barriers to stable livelihood improvement.

6.2.4 Housing Constraints and Discrimination

Housing emerged as a particularly acute friction in urban centers such as Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi. Rapid urbanization has driven up demand far beyond the supply of affordable housing.

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Migrants described the burden of advance-rent requirements, sometimes two years' payment upfront, and weak regulatory enforcement that leaves tenants exposed to exploitation. Reports of landlords refusing to rent to foreigners, charging higher rates, or evicting tenants arbitrarily were common. Many migrants are pushed into informal settlements, marginal lands, or unsafe dwellings without reliable access to water, sanitation, or electricity. Such conditions deepen migrants' vulnerability and complicate long-term settlement.

6.2.5 Discrimination, Crime Perceptions, and Social Stigma

Although Ghana is widely regarded as hospitable, participants highlighted recurrent experiences of discrimination. Language-based slurs, subtle forms of exclusion, and narratives that associate migrants with crime circulate in certain communities. Nigerians and Fulanis were most frequently mentioned in accounts linking migrants to fraud, robbery, or kidnapping. These perceptions, whether accurate or not, shape public attitudes and intensify social stigma. Second-generation migrants reported particular difficulties in securing identity documents such as the Ghana Card or voter ID, which left them feeling excluded from full membership in Ghanaian society. Such barriers not only impede access to services but also perpetuate intergenerational marginalization.

6.2.6 Language Barriers

Language differences further complicate integration. Francophone migrants often face significant challenges in English-dominant Ghanaian institutions and labor markets. Limited proficiency constrains access to formal-sector jobs and makes it difficult to interact with employers, service providers, and state officials. Outside of border communities and Zongo settlements, the absence of shared languages heightens social distance and fuels misunderstanding. Participants indicated that these barriers delay adjustment and force many migrants into informal or ethnic enclave economies, narrowing their opportunities for social and economic mobility.

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6.3 The Interaction between the Drivers of Migration

The findings from this study demonstrate that the drivers of migration within ECOWAS rarely act in isolation. Instead, they interact in patterned ways that generate cumulative and self-reinforcing effects. Migration to Ghana is not simply the outcome of discrete push and pull forces, but of their interdependence, mediated by networks, institutions, and opportunity structures that magnify or reshape their influence. This recognition, that drivers are synergistic rather than additive, constitutes a core contribution of this thesis.

One of the clearest patterns is the synergy between political and economic drivers. Coups, repression, and conflict in origin countries depress local economies, disrupt livelihoods, and reduce public investment, creating unemployment and poverty that directly feed into economic push factors. Participants consistently highlighted that instability in countries such as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso undermines not only security but also job opportunities, accelerating outward mobility. Ghana's relative political stability and diversified economy combine to reinforce pull factors, producing a migration dynamic in which political collapse at home directly channels workers and entrepreneurs toward Ghana's more resilient markets.

Social networks emerge as crucial intermediaries between intention and action. Family ties, ethnic connections, and established communities reduce search costs, provide access to housing and employment information, and cushion the risks of relocation. In this way, social capital magnifies the impact of political and economic drivers by lowering barriers to entry. A young person considering leaving Niger or Togo for Ghana is far more likely to act if relatives or co-ethnics are already established in Accra, Kumasi, or Tamale. Networks thus do not only transmit information; they institutionalize migration pathways and transform structural pressures into realized movement.

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Environmental pressures operate as threat multipliers rather than stand-alone causes. Drought, floods, and resource scarcity not only undermine agricultural incomes but also intensify competition over land and water. This heightens conflict risks between herders and farmers and deepens existing political instability. In this way, environmental shocks reinforce both economic and political push factors, layering vulnerabilities that make Ghana's more favorable ecological conditions particularly attractive. The interplay of environmental degradation with poverty and conflict shows why migration flows from the Sahel cannot be understood through single-factor explanations.

Religious and civic tolerance also function as integrative mechanisms. Ghana's reputation for religious freedom and open civic space increases the likelihood that migrants who arrive will remain, invest in skills, and embed themselves in communities. Churches and religious festivals not only provide spiritual sustenance but also weave migrants into the social fabric, creating durable connections that sustain future flows. By offering a hospitable context for settlement, Ghana turns temporary or survival migration into long-term integration.

Taken together, these dynamics show that migration drivers shift from being additive to synergistic. Economic hardship, political instability, environmental stress, and social inequality do not simply stack on top of one another; they interact through networks and institutions to create compounded pressures and opportunities. Standard push and pull accounts tend to list drivers but understate how policy context, lived experience, and networked settlement produce reinforcing effects that shape both who moves and how integration unfolds. By explicitly foregrounding these synergies, this thesis contributes a more dynamic understanding of migration in West Africa and extends push and pull theory beyond static listings of drivers to an appreciation of how they operate together in practice.

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6.4 Implications for Push and Pull Theory and Ghana's Migration Policy

The findings of this study demonstrate the usefulness of the push and pull theory in capturing the broad motivations and drivers behind migration in the ECOWAS region, but they also highlight the need for several refinements that extend its explanatory power. First, intervening institutions must be incorporated into the analysis. Migration does not occur in a frictionless environment. Rather, documentation regimes, border practices, and market rules mediate how push factors are converted into actual movement and how pull factors translate into realized opportunities. Without accounting for these institutional mediators, push and pull analysis risks overstating the ease of mobility and understating the role of governance structures in shaping outcomes.

Second, the theory needs clearer incorporation of cumulative causation, emphasizing how initial movements set in motion processes that sustain and expand future migration. Prior settlement reorganizes the risks and returns for subsequent movers by lowering search costs, spreading information about jobs and housing, and absorbing the risks of entry into a new society. Family ties, ethnic networks, and religious communities, therefore, play decisive roles in transforming abstract opportunities into concrete and sustainable movement. Incorporating these network effects provides a more dynamic account of how flows persist and expand over time rather than treating migration as a series of discrete, individual decisions.

Third, environmental change should not be conceptualized as a standalone factor but rather as a "threat multiplier" that interacts with economic and political drivers. Drought, floods, and resource scarcity destabilize agricultural livelihoods, intensify conflict over land and water, and exacerbate poverty and insecurity. These layered effects suggest that environmental pressures must be understood as amplifying and restructuring existing drivers rather than being analyzed in isolation. Together, these refinements move push and pull theory beyond static listings of drivers toward a

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relational theory that captures how institutions, networks, and environmental dynamics interact to shape both movement and settlement. This constitutes one of the theoretical contributions of the thesis.

The findings also show concrete lessons for Ghana's migration policy. The first implication is the need to align national laws with ECOWAS protocols while at the same time safeguarding local livelihoods. Ghana's Investment Act and retail trade restrictions are designed to protect domestic traders, but they sit uneasily alongside the country's obligations under the ECOWAS free-movement protocol. Clarifying sector-specific access and enforcement rules would reduce the ad hoc conflicts and diplomatic tensions that currently characterize this policy space. A second implication is the importance of reducing documentation problems. Standardizing land-border procedures, fully operationalizing ECOWAS travel documents, and clearly communicating health requirements such as yellow fever vaccination certificates would ease the burden on migrants. Expanding lawful pathways for residence and work authorization would, in turn, reduce irregularity and the exploitation associated with reliance on informal intermediaries.

Ghana also faces the challenge of mitigating cost-of-living and housing pressures that affect both migrants and citizens. Inflation, currency depreciation, and rising rents undermine livelihoods, while exploitative practices in the rental market push migrants into unsafe and overcrowded housing. Stronger enforcement of rent regulations, incentives for the supply of affordable rental housing, and tenant protections that explicitly include non-citizens would reduce vulnerability and enhance integration. Similarly, investments in language bridging and credential recognition are needed to address the disadvantages faced by Francophone and Lusophone migrants. Limited English proficiency and unrecognized qualifications prevent many from accessing formal labor markets and better-paying jobs. Expanding language programs and creating transparent pathways

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for vocational upgrading would improve access to higher-quality employment and support integration into Ghana's economy.

Finally, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening local conflict management and environmental regulation. Farmer-herder disputes and the destructive effects of illegal mining show how environmental pressures intersect with migration to create local tensions. Effective conflict resolution mechanisms, together with the enforcement of environmental regulations and the development of alternative livelihoods, would ease pressure on local communities and reduce hostility toward migrants. At the same time, Ghana's strong traditions of religious tolerance and civic engagement provide important opportunities for policy. Religious institutions and civil society groups already play a central role in supporting migrants through orientation, health outreach, and social integration. Formal partnerships with these actors could enhance service delivery, build trust, and expand Ghana's migration governance capacity.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the empirical findings in light of the push and pull theory and the broader comparative and theoretical literature. Migration from ECOWAS states to Ghana during the Fourth Republic is driven by a complex interplay of political, economic, social, environmental, and religious factors. Political stability and democratic governance remain the most consistent pull, particularly when set against recurrent coups and violent conflict in the Sahel. Economic opportunity, though uneven, provides pathways for migrants to engage in Ghana's diversified economy across agriculture, mining, construction, services, and trade. Social networks, family ties, and educational and health institutions convert intention into feasible migration and facilitate settlement. Environmental pressures, especially floods, droughts, and resource competition, act as push forces in origin countries and are mediated by Ghana's relative ecological stability and

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resource endowments. Religious freedom and Ghana's reputation for tolerance further consolidate its attractiveness, often working through social networks that provide both spiritual and material support.

At the same time, the chapter demonstrated that opportunity does not translate directly into well-being. Intervening obstacles, ranging from documentation hurdles, border harassment, and policy inconsistencies to inflation, high living costs, housing discrimination, xenophobia, and language barriers, frustrate migrants' capacity to stabilize their lives. These frictions highlight how institutions and practices shape the translation of broad structural drivers into actual migration decisions and lived outcomes.

A central contribution of this study is to show that drivers operate synergistically rather than additively. Political crises deepen economic distress, environmental shocks magnify resource competition and conflict, and social and religious networks not only lower the risks of movement but also lock in pathways for sustained migration and settlement. Standard push and pull accounts often present drivers as discrete variables, but the findings here reveal how they interact dynamically in context. This insight underscores the need for theoretical refinements that bring institutions, networks, and cumulative causation to the center of analysis.

For Ghana, these findings carry significant policy implications. Migration cannot be managed solely through border enforcement or trade regulation; it requires a policy mix that reduces frictions while maintaining protections for citizens. Aligning national laws more clearly with ECOWAS commitments, strengthening local conflict management, addressing cost-of-living pressures, and leveraging religious and civic networks as partners are all critical steps toward balancing opportunity with inclusion.

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In summary, this chapter has illuminated both the drivers that sustain Ghana's role as a key migration hub in West Africa and the frictions that complicate the integration of migrants. The evidence suggests that migration flows will remain robust so long as the combined effect of political stability, economic diversity, social networks, environmental pressures, and religious tolerance outweighs the obstacles. The next chapter draws together these insights to conclude the thesis. It elaborates the theoretical contributions of the study, outlines concrete recommendations for Ghana and ECOWAS, and reflects on how the findings advance scholarship on migration and policy in Africa as well as directions for future research.



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CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by offering an overview of the main findings, reflecting on their theoretical implications, and drawing out the policy lessons that emerge for Ghana, ECOWAS, and the broader migration studies literature. The main objective of this research was to explain the factors that account for the migration of citizens from ECOWAS member states to Ghana under the Fourth Republic. The study has been concerned not only with identifying the underlying drivers of migration but also with explaining the interplay of political, economic, social, religious, and environmental factors that sustain mobility in the West African sub-region.

The main research question is to examine the factors that account for ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana and the challenges they face during their stay in Ghana?

The specific research questions are as follows:

i. In what ways do political instability and oppression cause ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana?
ii. How do poverty and unemployment increase the likelihood of ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana?
iii. What role has inequality and poor social infrastructure affect the future migration behavior of ECOWAS citizens?
iv. To what extent do natural disasters and droughts drive citizens of the ECOWAS to Ghana? In other words, do natural disasters in other ECOWAS countries contribute to migration in Ghana?

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v. What are the major challenges facing these migrants in Ghana?

To answer these questions, the study drew on the push and pull theory of migration, adapted from Khalid and Urbanski (2021), which provided a conceptual framework for analyzing multiple causal factors across political, economic, social, and environmental domains. The choice of this theory was deliberate because existing migration theories, such as neoclassical economics, dual labor market theory, world-systems theory, or assimilation frameworks, are often tailored to American or European contexts and do not sufficiently account for the complexities of migration in regions like West Africa. The push and pull theory, while broad, allowed the study to integrate multiple factors in explaining why Ghana is a unique destination for migrants.

The overarching objective of this research is to examine the underlying factors that account for the citizens of the ECOWAS to migrate to Ghana and the challenges that they face while living in Ghana. In other words, the study seeks to understand the factors that shape the decisions of ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

i. To examine how political instability and oppression cause ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.
ii. To assess the extent to which poverty and unemployment increase the likelihood of ECOWAS citizens migrating to Ghana.
iii. To ascertain how inequality and poor social infrastructure affect ECOWAS citizens' future migration behavior to Ghana.

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iv. To determine whether natural disasters and droughts compel ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana.

v. To explore the major challenges facing these migrants in Ghana

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

7.1.1 Political Drivers

Political stability emerged as one of the strongest pull factors influencing migration to Ghana. Since the return to multiparty democracy in 1992, Ghana has conducted eight successful elections and witnessed four peaceful alternations of power (2000, 2008, 2016, and 2024). This continuity has fostered confidence in state institutions, expanded the political space for civil society, and supported relatively liberal migration policies. The perception of Ghana as a peaceful and predictable polity resonates strongly with migrants who often originate from countries marked by contested elections, authoritarian practices, or violent political transitions. In several interviews, migrants emphasized that their decision to relocate was not merely about economic opportunity but about escaping insecurity, political harassment, and the threat of persecution in their home countries. Ghana's reputation for respecting human rights, openness to regional integration, and commitment to the ECOWAS free movement protocols has consolidated its image as a safe place to live. In this sense, Ghana's democratic record and political institutions serve not only as pull factors but also as a counterweight to the instability, repression, and weak governance that act as push factors elsewhere in the region.

7.1.2 Economic Drivers

Economic factors were also decisive in shaping migration flows. Unemployment, underemployment, and widespread poverty in many ECOWAS states pushed individuals to seek alternative livelihoods in Ghana. By contrast, Ghana's relative economic opportunities, even in the

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face of periodic downturns, acted as a strong pull. Migrants pointed to opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors. While some looked for jobs in construction, services, and agriculture, others were drawn to Ghana's vibrant petty-trading and small-scale enterprise environment. Ghana's relatively open regulatory system, which allows both nationals and non-nationals to establish businesses, made it particularly attractive for entrepreneurial migrants hoping to escape cycles of poverty at home. In several cases, participants described Ghana as a place where "hard work pays," contrasting this perception with the stagnation and limited prospects they experienced in their countries of origin. Thus, while economic hardship served as a push factor, Ghana's reputation as a hub of opportunity, where migrants could earn, invest, and remit, operated as a significant pull.

7.1.3 Social Drivers

Social drivers were equally central to migration decisions. On the push side, oppression in some ECOWAS states was cited as a reason for leaving. On the pull side, social networks and family ties proved invaluable in making Ghana a preferred destination. Many ethnic groups, such as the Ewe, Mande, and Fulani, straddle borders, making it easier for migrants to integrate linguistically and culturally. Shared food practices, languages, and family ties reduced the costs of settlement and provided immediate social support, ranging from housing to job opportunities. In addition, migrants highlighted the role of religious life in attracting them to Ghana. The country's reputation as a hub for missionary training, the freedom to practice religion without persecution, and the opportunity to participate in festivals such as Hogbetsotso and the Yam Festival created spiritual and cultural incentives for mobility. Taken together, these social and cultural continuities meant that migration to Ghana was not experienced as a leap into the unknown but as a movement within a familiar social and cultural landscape.

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7.1.4 Environmental Drivers

Environmental pressures also featured prominently in shaping migration choices, especially for participants from the Sahelian states. Droughts, desertification, declining soil fertility, and recurrent food insecurity served as strong push factors. These conditions undermined agricultural livelihoods and intensified competition for scarce resources, prompting individuals and households to seek more sustainable environments. Ghana's comparatively favorable ecological conditions acted as a pull, offering opportunities for farming, herding, and related economic activities. The extractive sector, particularly mining, was also cited as a magnet for migrants. Some participants acknowledged their involvement in galamsey (illegal small-scale mining), which, despite its risks, offered higher immediate returns than subsistence farming at home. As a result, environmental challenges not only pushed people out of vulnerable regions but also intersected with economic opportunity structures in Ghana.

7.1.5 Migrants' Challenging Experiences in Ghana

Although migrants generally described their experiences in Ghana positively, particularly noting Ghanaian hospitality, tolerance, and relatively flexible migration laws, they also confronted significant challenges that limited their ability to thrive. The most pressing challenges included:

- High cost of living, especially in urban centers such as Accra and Kumasi, migrants reported difficulties in affording housing, food, and services, which strained their livelihoods.
- Language barrier is another notable challenge. While some migrants benefitted from shared languages (e.g., Twi, Ewe, Hausa), others struggled with communication, which hindered access to services and integration into local communities.

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- Migrants occasionally faced discrimination and hostility in workplaces or neighborhoods, sometimes linked to perceptions of competition for jobs or businesses.
- Although the ECOWAS framework provides for free movement, in practice, many member states have not fully implemented the ECOWAS Passport or Identification Card system. This left some migrants vulnerable to harassment at borders and challenges in securing legal residence.

Despite these challenges, most migrants reported feeling "at home" in Ghana, citing its political openness, culture, and economic opportunities. Nonetheless, the barriers they faced highlighted the uneven realization of ECOWAS free movement protocols and the need for stronger institutional and policy responses to ensure that migrants can fully benefit from regional integration.

7.2 Conclusion

This thesis has examined the drivers of migration in the West African sub-region, with Ghana as the main destination country under the Fourth Republic. The findings confirm that migration within ECOWAS is not a new or isolated development but a long-standing phenomenon rooted in the region's political, economic, social, and environmental realities. Political instability, unemployment, poverty, repression, and environmental pressures continue to push citizens away from their countries of origin, while Ghana's relative political stability, economic opportunities, and cross-border social networks act as strong pulls that attract migrants across its borders.

In concluding on the first research question, the study has shown that Ghana's political stability and democratic governance serve as a pull and push factor for ECOWAS migrants in Ghana. This is because the sound political climate ensures that ECOWAS migrants' rights and freedoms are largely protected in Ghana. In addition, while Ghana has long witnessed several episodes of

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ECOWAS migration, in recent years, there has been an influx of ECOWAS migrants entering the borders of the country to escape oppressive regimes within the sub-Saharan region. For instance, some ECOWAS migrants from Burkina Faso had to flee their country to Ghana due to uncertainties about their future because of government oppression. Furthermore, Ghana's long-standing democratic system of government, its political leadership, and the welcoming nature of its citizens continue to push and pull ECOWAS migrants to Ghana. Moreover, Ghana's vibrant and open civic space attracts ECOWAS migrants as it enables political actors and other stakeholders to use state institutions, including the judiciary, to register their discontents and grievances, something that is difficult to achieve in some West African countries. For instance, an Ivorian businessman expressed the view that in Ghana, it is common to see citizens, private and political actors playing key roles in politics. In this regard, state institutions are called upon to act according to the law and dispense justice based on due process and equality before the law.

In concluding on the second research question, the thesis has shown that while economic policies of some ECOWAS member states are inadequate to reduce poverty, Ghana's relative economic development serves as a pull and push factor. For instance, evidence of ECOWAS migrants' experiences in Ghana showed that some can meet their basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, as well as nutritional supplements. Similarly, the high unemployment rates across the ECOWAS sub-region have pushed migrants to Ghana, where they now reside and have found gainful employment opportunities to meet their economic needs. Likewise, Ghana has recently witnessed the proliferation of artisans such as painters, masons, carpenters, and tilers. These ECOWAS migrants are looking for better employment opportunities through their work as they display modern and aesthetic crafts. Lastly, Ghana's favorable business environment attracts ECOWAS migrants looking to do business in a business hub like Ghana. In this regard, the free economic

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environment and business policies in Ghana allow ordinary Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians alike to register, acquire licenses, and start a business without unnecessary interference.

In concluding on the third research question, the thesis has shown that inequality gaps must be critically assessed and addressed within the ECOWAS region. Although there are ongoing efforts to deal with the challenges of inequality, the inability of ECOWAS governments to address inequality challenges leaves ECOWAS migrants with no choice but to migrate to Ghana, where they can meet their basic needs. Similarly, Ghana has long been identified as an education hub for ECOWAS migrants. Earlier post-independent leaders, including Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Sir Dawda Jawara of Gambia, studied in Ghana. It is therefore not surprising that this trend has continued as ECOWAS migrants from Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Cote d'Ivoire access Ghana's improved social and educational infrastructure. Lastly, social networks and family relationships between Ghana and its neighbors serve as pull and push factors to ECOWAS migrants. In this regard, the close ties between Ghana and its neighbors, such as Togo, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire, pull migrants to Ghana as they follow up on their family members who reside in Ghana.

In concluding on the fourth research question, the thesis has shown that although natural disasters are sometimes uncontrollable events in our lives, Ghana's disaster management preparedness policy has enabled it to push and pull ECOWAS migrants. Furthermore, Ghana's cool temperature and adequate irrigation system across major farming communities allow ECOWAS migrants and farmers to cultivate seasonal crops throughout the year. Similarly, the availability of natural resources in Ghana attracts ECOWAS members looking for farm and non-farm work. Recently, the discovery of oil and the increase in gold prices globally have seen many ECOWAS migrants relocate to Ghanaian communities where galamsey and oil exploration activities are ongoing.

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Finally, due to increased heat in the Sahelian region caused by climate change and weather patterns, many ECOWAS migrants relocate to Ghana to enjoy the favorable climatic conditions that Ghana has to offer.

In concluding on the fifth research question, the thesis has shown that many ECOWAS migrants do not possess the proper documentation while living in Ghana. Furthermore, ECOWAS migrants face policy limitations. This is because jobs in the retail sector, by law, are reserved for Ghanaians; yet many ECOWAS migrants in Ghana find themselves in those trading spaces, which sometimes lead to conflict and unrest. There is also the problem of the high cost of living due to the unstable prices of goods and services in Ghana, which pose a challenge to many ECOWAS migrants. Moreover, acquiring decent accommodation in Ghana is a challenge for ECOWAS migrants. The implication is that many ECOWAS migrants end up accessing accommodation in marshy areas and squatter settlements. For instance, because landlords and property owners hold negative perceptions about ECOWAS migrants, they are unwilling to lease their property to them. Consequently, many ECOWAS migrants are being surcharged. Lastly, many French-speaking ECOWAS migrants find it difficult to integrate into Ghanaian society as they cannot communicate well in English. Although estimates show that around 31 to more than 60 percent of Ghanaians speak English, the variety of ethnic groups in the country also means that there are different local dialect speakers. As ordinary Ghanaians love their local language, many ECOWAS migrants risk being sidelined because they do not speak or understand the local language.

The study makes two main contributions. Theoretically, it shows that the push and pull theory, while valuable for structuring analysis, requires contextual adaptation to capture the complexities of West African migration. Institutions, governance quality, and border management practices emerge not simply as mediating variables but as decisive forces shaping migration, settlement, and

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integration. Empirically, the study identifies concrete lessons for Ghana and ECOWAS, ranging from strengthening the enforcement of regional migration protocols and improving border governance to addressing discrimination, enhancing infrastructure, and investing in data systems for more effective migration management.

In conclusion, this thesis highlights that migration in West Africa is an important part of regional life. Recognizing its persistence, multicausal nature, and embeddedness in social and political structures is the first step toward developing governance frameworks that are humane, practical, and coordinated throughout the region. By integrating institutional and policy reform, West African countries can transform migration from a perceived burden into a driver of regional resilience and integration.

7. 3 Contributions to Knowledge

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study affirm the continuing relevance of the push-and-pull theory while also demonstrating the importance of adapting it to West Africa's institutional and regional contexts. Migration within ECOWAS cannot be explained solely by the promise of higher wages or employment opportunities, as some classical theories suggest. Instead, this study shows that the political environment, governance quality, institutional arrangements, and border management practices are equally decisive in shaping migration outcomes. For many participants, decisions to move were as much about escaping repression, weak governance, or ecological vulnerability as they were about economic opportunity.

Three major contributions of the push and pull theory of migration emerge from this research. First, the study highlights the multi-causal nature of migration decisions. Rather than being driven by a single factor, migration is shaped by the dynamic interaction of political, economic, social,

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and environmental variables. For example, the pursuit of economic opportunity cannot be understood apart from Ghana's political stability, while environmental pressures such as drought frequently intersect with poverty and governance failures. This shows the strength of the push and pull theory in accommodating multiple determinants, while also showing that these determinants interact in complex and often overlapping ways.

Second, the study demonstrates the institutional embeddedness of migration processes. Institutions do not simply mediate between push and pull factors but also function as independent factors that shape outcomes in their own right. Immigration services, border regimes, and the uneven implementation of ECOWAS protocols directly influence who moves, how they move, and under what conditions they can settle. The role of travel documents, whether ECOWAS passports, national ID systems, or permits, shows that institutional capacity and enforcement can either enable or constrain mobility.

Third, the study highlights the importance of regional context. The West African context adds dimensions that are often underdeveloped in Euro-American theories. In this region, social networks, cross-border ethnic continuities, and environmental pressures play a central role. Family ties, languages, and cultural affinities mean that migration is not experienced as entry into a foreign society but as movement within a broader social and cultural community. At the same time, environmental challenges such as desertification, drought, and food insecurity act as persistent push factors in the Sahel, shaping mobility patterns in ways that Western theories, typically focused on labor markets or assimilation, have not fully captured.

In summary, these findings suggest that while the push and pull theory remains valuable, it requires contextual adaptation to reflect the realities of migration in West Africa. Greater attention must be given to institutional governance, environmental vulnerability, and regional socio-cultural

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dynamics, which are not peripheral but central to understanding migration in developing-country contexts.

7.3.2 Empirical Contributions

This study makes three empirical contributions. First, it contributes to the emerging literature on the factors that motivate people to move from one place to another. In particular, the study contributes to the extant literature on the causes or drivers of intra-regional migration in West Africa. In doing so, this study provides empirical evidence on the factors that account for citizens of the ECOWAS region migrating to Ghana, as well as the challenges they face while living there. While the existing literature provides anecdotal evidence of the motivations behind intra-regional migration, it focuses on the economic and political drivers (Adepoju, 2009; Aryeetey, 2018). To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to document the multi-causal variables of intra-regional migration, including political, economic, social, religious, and environmental factors from a sub-Saharan African perspective.

Second, the study contributes to the literature by providing a conceptualization of the push and pull factors that profoundly shape the relocation behaviors of ECOWAS migrants. As part of the empirical contributions, the study conceptualized an eight-part typology of underlying drivers to migration research categorized into: i) political instability/stability; ii) government oppression/democratic governance; iii) unemployment/employment; iv) poverty/business opportunities; v) poor social infrastructure/access to social services; vi) inequality/social networks; vii) natural disasters/available natural resources; and viii) droughts/favorable climate. This typology provides a rich conceptual perspective on the discourse on the motivating factors that shape intra-regional migration within the ECOWAS region.

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Finally, this research provides empirical evidence on the challenges that ECOWAS migrants face while living in Ghana. The analysis in this study suggests that the formal legal, institutional, and regulatory frameworks, including the ECOWAS protocol and other international conventions, have limitations in practice as they are unable to practically deal with the contemporary challenges that they face in the destination countries. For instance, this research provides insights into how domestic legislation often prioritizes the interests of local citizens, thereby restricting migrants' efforts to settle and integrate into Ghanaian society. The evidence presented in this thesis has the potential to engender discourse on the expansion of the legal and institutional frameworks that undergird intra-regional migration.

7.3.3 Methodological Contribution

Methodologically, this study adds to knowledge in three significant ways. First, the originality of this thesis is strengthened by the methodology's uniqueness in understanding how political and socio-economic characteristics shape ECOWAS migrants' relocation behaviors to Ghana. In particular, while the majority of migration research in Ghana and other developing countries draws on a variety of data sources and approaches, including surveys and experimental designs, isotope and genetic profiling, systems-thinking and transnational frameworks, multi-isotope and biocultural integration, I adopt an interpretivist perspective to qualitative research methods. In doing so, this research sheds light on the most widely used method of researching ECOWAS migrants. In particular, the use of a qualitative research design informed by an interpretivist perspective to studying ECOWAS migrants' relocation behaviors to Ghana demonstrates the methodological originality of this thesis. This thesis, therefore, advances our understanding of the methodologies for studying ECOWAS migrants' relocation behaviors to Ghana rather than using

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solely quantitative or mixed methods. In doing so, I have demonstrated the importance of methodological purism or monism in migration research.

Second, the thesis extends the literature on methodological options for the study of ECOWAS migrants through the adoption of interpretivism in a way that explicitly links analysis of the political and socio-economic variables in seeking to understand the underlying factors that drive ECOWAS migrants to relocate to Ghana. I have also sought to affirm the importance of understanding both the reality of ECOWAS migrants' relocation behaviors and the challenges they face while living in Ghana, in the quest to understand multi-causal mechanisms influencing their movements and the challenges that come with the movements, which are often directly overlooked. Participants' socially constructed understanding of this reality provides useful insights into the underlying factors that cause ECOWAS citizens to migrate to Ghana; however, it only represents a partial reality due to its pluralistic view of reality rather than a single, objective view. This study, therefore, calls for the application of interpretivism in migration research.

Finally, at a more practical level, the detailed methodological approach discussed in Chapter Four has shed light on ways to access and research ECOWAS migrants in contexts where accurate and reliable data are unavailable. This study has highlighted that, in the absence of a comprehensive database on ECOWAS migrants, it is possible to rely on migrants at various entry points and border towns for important sources of information in understanding the underlying factors that drive them into host countries and away from their home countries. An important methodological contribution of this research is the ability to solicit information from ECOWAS migrants, including those from Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, etc., from 1993 to the present, for three border towns spanning Ghana's southern (Aflao), middle (Sampa), and Northern (Hamile) belts. Soliciting data on the multi-causal variables that drive migrants' relocation behaviors is rare in most migration

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research. For this reason, the data collected provides a useful source of information that can aid future migration studies.

7.4 Recommendations

7.4.1 Recommendations to the Ghana Government and Policymakers

The Ghanaian case provides several important policy implications with relevance not only for Ghana but also for ECOWAS as a whole and for international partners engaged in migration governance. These lessons cut across institutional reform, infrastructure, social cohesion, and data management, and together they point toward the need for a more coordinated and humane regional migration regime.

First, the Ghanaian government should strengthen its democratic governance and political environment to ensure that ECOWAS migrants enjoy the necessary safety and protection they need while living in Ghana. This is necessary to ensure that the rights and freedoms of residents in Ghana are well protected without any major abuse. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen governance regimes because, to achieve a high level of democratic credibility and political stability, both citizens and migrants need to view the political environment as being primarily free and fair and resilient enough to accommodate the views and grievances of every person within the political system.

Second, there should be adequate accommodation for citizens and migrants living in Ghana. To this end, the government should construct more affordable housing schemes and make them readily available to low and medium-income earners, including ECOWAS migrants. For instance, the government should review the National Affordable Housing Program to ensure that more housing units are established within the shortest possible time. This can be done if the government partners

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with domestic and international private developers who have the financial and technical capacity to be engaged in development projects of such magnitude and enormity.

Third, the government should ensure that ECOWAS migrants who take undue advantage of the free healthcare services and violate the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) are dealt with under the law. The influx of ECOWAS migrants continues to put pressure on the already existing, insufficient health services infrastructure in Ghana. Empirical evidence shows that ECOWAS migrants tend to take vital health resources away from some Ghanaians who are in dire need of medical attention. For this reason, it should no longer be enough for the Ghana Health Service, for example, not to report migrants who take the law into their own hands and abuse the health facilities and services provision. Instead, health professionals should be emboldened to report any infractions caused by migrants to the state security agencies and also see to it that the culprits are arraigned and prosecuted regardless of which neighboring country they come from.

Fourth, to prevent ECOWAS migrants from continuously engaging in illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining, such as galamsey activities and by extension polluting the water bodies, air quality, and forest reserves in Ghana, the government should compel ECOWAS migrants not to participate in economic activities that are destructive and counterproductive to the environment and mineral resources of Ghana. One of the ways to successfully achieve this is to enforce the Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act, 2019 (Act 703). Act 703 is one of many key regulations in the mining sector that is expected to regulate the behaviors of actors, but unfortunately, it has seen weak enforcement over the years to such an extent that many wonder if there are indeed laws that guide the behaviors of mining agents in Ghana.

Finally, there is a need to review and amend certain local policies. For instance, the government should take a second look at policies that restrict ECOWAS migrants from entering the trading

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spaces reserved for Ghanaians. Over the years, the entry of many ECOWAS migrants into Ghanaian trading spaces has led to sustained conflicts and misunderstandings between migrants and ordinary Ghanaians. The Ghana Investment Promotion Center Act, 2013 (Act 865), for instance, governs both domestic and foreign investments to ensure transparency and accountability in the investment environment. The Act explicitly restricts migrants from trading in several economic activities, including petty trading, operating taxis, managing beauty salons and barbering shops, printing recharge cards for telecommunication subscribers, producing exercise books, supplying retail sachet water, and selling finished pharmaceutical products. Yet, ECOWAS migrants have found themselves in those trading spaces, and this has resulted in some form of economic dispossession and marginalization. It is in this light that the government is called upon to review Act (865) to expand its scope, as well as the various actors involved, to include ECOWAS migrants. This way, there would be a high probability that some form of consensus and common ground would be formed between ECOWAS migrants and citizens in local trading spaces in Ghana.

7.4.2 Recommendations to ECOWAS countries and their governments

First, member countries of ECOWAS should prioritize security reforms and maintain a certain level of stability and political freedom in their countries. One way to achieve this is to implement the ECOWAS protocol on the Free Movement of People, Residence, and Establishments (A/P.1/5/79). Another way is to partner with NGOs and civil society to ensure that these groups and others continue to advocate for a peaceful coexistence between governmental and non-governmental sectors, as well as ensure that diverse groups are well represented in the governance processes.

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Second, there should be a massive investment in the informal sectors, including retail, trade, manufacturing, agro-processing, and the non-farm work sectors. Due to ongoing challenges facing governments, including the recent COVID-19 Pandemic, and the emergence of certain key non-governmental actors in the state, philanthropy has been pushed as one of the ways in which developing country governments could mobilize funding to offset budget deficits. It is instructive to note that ECOWAS governments should be mindful of international agreements and protocols to which they become signatories because most of these agreements tend to limit their ability to address key challenges within their countries. In addition, some of these agreements come with conditionalities that put pressure on governments to cut down certain expenditures, including putting a freeze on public sector employment.

Finally, ensuring border security is critical to addressing challenges of porous borders, as well as ECOWAS migrants using unauthorized border routes as points of entry from one ECOWAS country to another. For many decades now, the issue of weak border security across the ECOWAS region has occupied the attention of policymakers and academics alike. To date, there has not been any sustained measures to deal with the problem. Some have even gone ahead to suggest that the weak border security challenges across many ECOWAS countries have now assumed the status of a "wicked problem" with no long-term solution in sight. For this reason, ECOWAS leaders and governments need to collaborate and coordinate resources, personnel, and logistics to mitigate this canker and to ensure that the movements of people across the ECOWAS sub-region are secured.

7.4.3 Avenues for Future Research

This study points to several promising directions for future scholarship on migration within West Africa. First, there is a need for comparative case studies that extend beyond Ghana to include other ECOWAS member states. By examining both Anglophone and Francophone countries,

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scholars could explore how differences in political regimes, legal traditions, and institutional capacities shape migration flows. Such comparative research would illuminate why certain states are more effective in implementing ECOWAS migration protocols than others and how divergent political trajectories influence both the drivers and governance of migration.

Second, future research would benefit from the adoption of mixed-methods approaches that combine the depth of qualitative inquiry with the breadth of quantitative analysis. While this study has highlighted the value of interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis, future work could integrate these with large-N surveys or longitudinal datasets. Such designs would enable researchers to measure patterns across a broader population while still capturing the lived experiences and meanings attached to migration decisions. In doing so, mixed-methods studies could offer more robust assessments of both the causes and the impacts of migration in the sub-region.

Third, greater attention should be directed toward the impacts of migration on sending countries. Much of the literature, and indeed this study, emphasizes the conditions and experiences in receiving states. However, migration also reshapes the social, economic, and political landscapes of countries of origin. Future work could examine the role of remittances in household survival and local development, the effects of out-migration on labor markets and skills availability, and the political consequences of brain drain or diasporic engagement. Understanding these dynamics is critical for a balanced account of migration's implications across the region.

Fourth, there is considerable scope for research at the intersection of migration, environment, and climate change. Environmental pressures such as drought, desertification, flooding, and soil degradation are already shaping migration in the Sahel and beyond, but their interaction with political, social, and economic drivers requires closer examination. Future studies could assess

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how climate-induced mobility interacts with governance failures, weak infrastructure, or conflict, and whether migration serves as an adaptive strategy or exacerbates vulnerability. This line of inquiry is particularly urgent as climate variability intensifies across West Africa.

Finally, future research should explore the nexus between human rights and policy harmonization. A critical area of investigation is how ECOWAS states incorporate international human rights frameworks, such as the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, into national law, and why compliance varies significantly across countries. Scholars could examine the gap between ratification and implementation, the political factors that shape states' willingness to uphold international commitments, and the consequences of legal inconsistencies for migrants on the ground. Such work would not only contribute to academic debates but also provide actionable insights for policymakers striving to make migration more humane and orderly.

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

July 1, 2024

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Dear Sir/Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

I write to introduce to you **Mr. Kwame Boateng,** a PhD student at the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, with student ID No. **10393327.** As part of the requirements for the completion of this programme, students are required to write and submit their dissertation. The title of his research is **"Migration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Perspective from Ghana's Fourth Republic."**

I would appreciate it if you could assist him with the necessary information on the above-mentioned subject. Please be informed that the information you volunteer will be required for academic assignment and will be treated as highly confidential. I am grateful for your cooperation and participation. You may contact Mr. Boateng via email at kboateng005@st.edu.gh or his telephone number: **0246450883.**

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Seidu M. Alidu
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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Appendix 2: Interview Guide for ECOWAS Migrants

TITLE: DRIVERS OF MIGRATION: HOW POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS SHAPE ECOWAS MIGRANTS' RELOCATION BEHAVIORS IN GHANA

Introduction

I am a PhD final-year student from the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana. I am collecting data as part of my PhD program, which will be used to write my thesis. I invite you to share your knowledge and experience on Migration within the Economic Community of West African States with me openly and honestly. The insight you will share with me will be used for the thesis and subsequent academic publications. The information you will provide me will be treated with strict confidentiality, and you will not be identified in any way in my thesis unless you expressly wish so. Electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file, and the university will be the custodian of the data. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to leave the interview at any time without a reason.

Section 1: General Understanding of Migration in ECOWAS

1. What is your understanding of migration?
2. What is your opinion on migration in Ghana and West Africa?
    - Can you share your understanding of the migration patterns within ECOWAS during Ghana's Fourth Republic?
3. What are the primary reasons that encourage migration within the ECOWAS region?
    - At what period is the peak of migration within ECOWAS if you look at the trend?

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4. How have migration trends within ECOWAS evolved over the years, particularly during Ghana's fourth republic?

Section 2: **Causes and Impacts of Migration**

5. What factors drive migration within the ECOWAS region during Ghana's Fourth Republic?
6. Can you identify the primary pull factors that attract migrants from other ECOWAS member states to Ghana during this period?
7. How do these push and pull factors vary across different ECOWAS member states?
8. What are the major impacts of migration on both the sending and receiving countries within ECOWAS during this period?
9. How has migration within the ECOWAS during Ghana's fourth republic affected migratory communities in both sending and receiving countries?
10. What do you think about the role of free movement protocols and trade agreements in influencing migration patterns within ECOWAS?
11. How has economic activities in Ghana affected the patterns of migration, particularly the influx of skilled workers from other ECOWAS countries?

Section 3: Perspectives of ECOWAS Migrants

12. Could you share the experiences and challenges migrants face within the ECOWAS, particularly those involving Ghanaians, during the Fourth Republic?

13. How do migrants perceive the support and opportunities available in both the sending and receiving countries within ECOWAS?

Section 4: Potential Solutions and Future Outlook

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14. In your opinion, what measures can be taken at the regional level to address the challenges associated with migration within ECOWAS, specifically in Ghana's fourth republic?

15. How do you envision the future of migration within the ECOWAS, and what steps can be taken to ensure its positive impact on member states?



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Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Government Officials

TITLE: DRIVERS OF MIGRATION: HOW POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS SHAPE ECOWAS MIGRANTS' RELOCATION BEHAVIORS IN GHANA

Introduction

I am a PhD final-year student from the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana. I am collecting data as part of my PhD program, which will be used to write my thesis. I invite you to share your knowledge and experience on Migration within the Economic Community of West African States with me openly and honestly. The insight you will share with me will be used for the thesis and subsequent academic publications. The information you will provide me will be treated with strict confidentiality, and you will not be identified in any way in my thesis unless you expressly wish so. Electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file, and the university will be the custodian of the data. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to leave the interview at any time without a reason.

Section 1: General Understanding of Migration in ECOWAS

1. What is your understanding of migration?
2. What is your opinion on migration in Ghana and West Africa?

- Can you share your understanding of the migration patterns within ECOWAS during Ghana's Fourth Republic?

3. What are the primary reasons that encourage migration within the ECOWAS region?

- At what period is the peak of migration within ECOWAS if you look at the trend?

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4. How have migration trends within ECOWAS evolved over the years, particularly during Ghana's fourth republic?

Section 2: **Causes and Impacts of Migration**

5. What factors drive migration within the ECOWAS region during Ghana's Fourth Republic?
6. Can you identify the primary pull factors that attract migrants from other ECOWAS member states to Ghana during this period?
7. How do these push and pull factors vary across different ECOWAS member states?
8. What are the major impacts of migration on both the sending and receiving countries within ECOWAS during this period?
9. How has migration within the ECOWAS during Ghana's fourth republic affected migratory communities in both sending and receiving countries?
10. What do you think about the role of free movement protocols and trade agreements in influencing migration patterns within ECOWAS?
11. How has economic activities in Ghana affected the patterns of migration, particularly the influx of skilled workers from other ECOWAS countries?

B. Perspectives of Government Officials

12. What policies and initiatives have the government of Ghana implemented to manage and regulate migration within the ECOWAS in the Fourth Republic?

13. How does the government collaborate with other ECOWAS member states to address the challenges related to migration during this period, and what have been the outcomes, if any?

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14. How has Ghana's membership in ECOWAS influenced its migration policies, particularly regarding the free movement of persons, right of residence, and establishment?

Section 4: Potential Solutions and Future Outlook

15. In your opinion, what measures can be taken at the regional level to address the challenges associated with migration within ECOWAS, specifically in Ghana's fourth republic?

16. How do you envision the future of migration within the ECOWAS, and what steps can be taken to ensure its positive impact on member states?



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Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Community Members

TITLE: DRIVERS OF MIGRATION: HOW POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS SHAPE ECOWAS MIGRANTS' RELOCATION BEHAVIORS IN GHANA

Introduction

I am a PhD final-year student from the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana. I am collecting data as part of my PhD program, which will be used to write my thesis. I invite you to share your knowledge and experience on Migration within the Economic Community of West African States with me openly and honestly. The insight you will share with me will be used for the thesis and subsequent academic publications. The information you will provide me will be treated with strict confidentiality, and you will not be identified in any way in my thesis unless you expressly wish so. Electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file, and the university will be the custodian of the data. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to leave the interview at any time without a reason.

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Section 2: **Causes and Impacts of Migration**

5. What factors drive migration within the ECOWAS region during Ghana's Fourth Republic?
6. Can you identify the primary pull factors that attract migrants from other ECOWAS member states to Ghana during this period?
7. How do these push and pull factors vary across different ECOWAS member states?
8. What are the major impacts of migration on both the sending and receiving countries within ECOWAS during this period?
9. How has migration within the ECOWAS during Ghana's fourth republic affected migratory communities in both sending and receiving countries?
10. What do you think about the role of free movement protocols and trade agreements in influencing migration patterns within ECOWAS?
11. How has economic activities in Ghana affected the patterns of migration, particularly the influx of skilled workers from other ECOWAS countries?

C. Perspectives of Community Members

12. From your observations, how have communities in Ghana been affected by the influx of migrants from other ECOWAS countries during the Fourth Republic?

13. What are the prevailing attitudes and perceptions of Ghanaian communities toward migrants from other ECOWAS countries?

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Section 4: Potential Solutions and Future Outlook

14. In your opinion, what measures can be taken at the regional level to address the challenges associated with migration within ECOWAS, specifically in Ghana's fourth republic?

15. How do you envision the future of migration within the ECOWAS, and what steps can be taken to ensure its positive impact on member states?



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Appendix 5: List of Participants and Interview Schedule

No.	Border Town	Designation	Date of Interview	Interview Duration
1.	Accra	GUTA Executive	12 July 2024	33:43
2.	Accra	Programs Officer (Security and Border), CDD-Ghana	15 July 2024	41:17
3.	Accra	PhD Candidate (Center for Migration Studies, UG)	15 July 2024	31:09
4.	Accra	Migration Officer, GIZ	24 July 2024	39:54
5.	Accra	Senior Officer at the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO)	29 July 2024	39:41
6.	Accra	Assistant Officer at the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO)	29 July 2024	32:11
7.	Accra	Junior Officer at the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO)	29 July 2024	31:06
8.	Accra	An Officer at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)	30 July 2024	-

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9.	Accra	An Officer at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)	30 July 2024	-
10.	Aflao	A Community Leader	6 August 2024	50:13
11.	Aflao	A Unit Committee Member	6 August 2024	50:13
12.	Aflao	Female Teacher	6 August 2024	50:13
13.	Aflao	A Local Businessman	6 August 2024	50:13
14.	Aflao	A Driver	6 August 2024	50:13
15.	Aflao	A Senior Immigration Officer	6 August 2024	50:13
16.	Aflao	Togolese Migrant	7 August 2024	49:09
17.	Aflao	A Junior Immigration Officer	7 August 2024	49:09
18.	Aflao	A Member of the Health Unit at the border	7 August 2024	49:09
19.	Aflao	Togolese Migrant	7 August 2024	49:09
20.	Accra	Senior Officer, International Migration for Migration (IOM)	8 August 2024	32:04
21.	Accra	Assistant Officer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)	8 August 2024	30:46
22.	Accra	Senior Immigration Officer (Headquarters)	19 August 2024	56:22
23.	Accra	Director of Research, Migration Unit, Ministry of Interior	22 August 2024	48:03

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24.	Accra	A member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Parliament of Ghana	4 September 2024	46:38
25.	Hamile	An Immigration Officer	14 September 2024	48:24
26.	Hamile	A Teacher	14 September 2024	48:24
27.	Hamile	A Local Businesswoman	14 September 2024	1:09:23
28.	Hamile	An Officer at the Small Arms Department	14 September 2024	48:24
29.	Hamile	Okada Rider	14 September 2024	48:24
30.	Hamile	A migrant from Niger	16 September 2024	48:24
31.	Hamile	A Burkina Faso entrepreneur	16 September 2024	48:24
32.	Hamile	A Provision Shop Operator	16 September 2024	48:24
33.	Sampa	A Senior Immigration Officer	18 September 2024	45:50
34.	Sampa	Community Leader	18 September 2024	45:33

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35.	Sampa	An Immigration Officer	18 September 2024	45:33
36.	Sampa	Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS)	18 September 2024	45:33
37.	Sampa	An Ivorian Businessman	18 September 2024	45:33
38.	Sampa	A Member of the Small Arms Department	18 September 2024	45:33
39.	Sampa	A Member of the Health Unit at the border	18 September 2024	45:33
40.	Sampa	A Member from the Local Assembly	18 September 2024	45:33
41.	Sampa	A Shop Owner	18 September 2024	33:19
42	Sampa	Food Vendor	18 September 2024	33:19
43.	Accra	Senior Lecturer, Center for Migration Studies, UG	16 October 2024	36:34