

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**THE “JAPA” SYNDROME: MIGRATION INTENTIONS AMONG GRADUATES IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA POST-COVID-19.**

BY

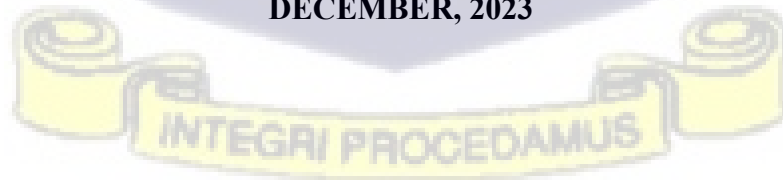
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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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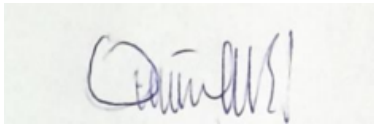
INSTITUTE OF STATISTICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH (ISSER)

DECEMBER, 2023



DECLARATION

I declare that this work is the result of my research under Dr. Michael Kodom's supervision and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university.



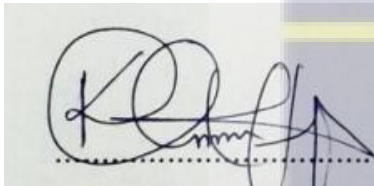
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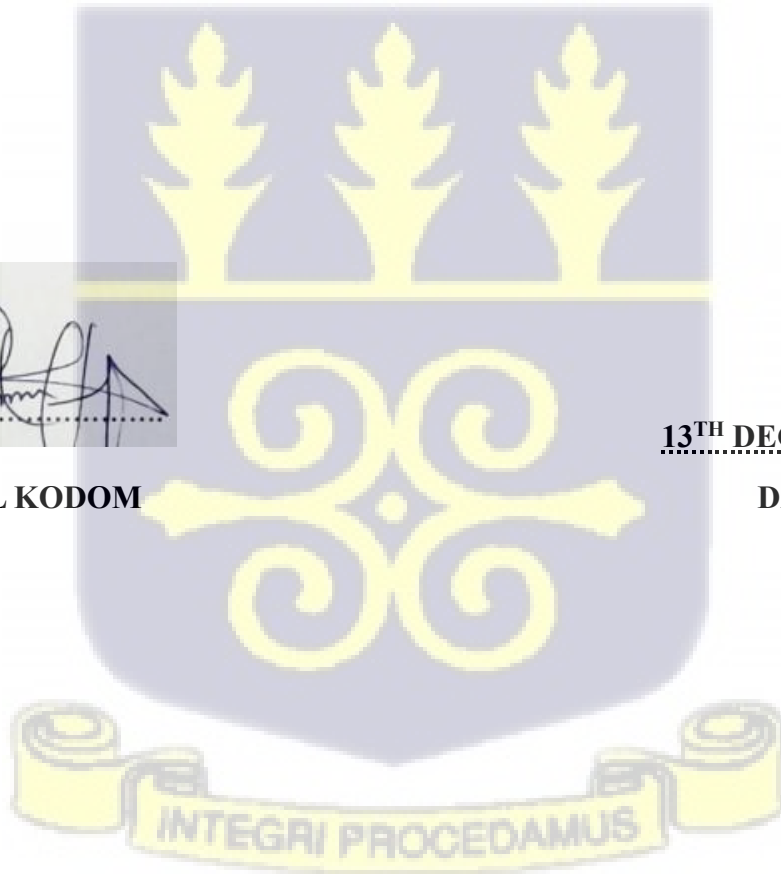
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DATE



DEDICATION

“I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.”

This work is specially dedicated to God Almighty for seeing me through to this successful end.

I also dedicate this work to all Ghanaian youth striving to make it in life. Your efforts shall not be in vain.



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It has been God since day one and I am so grateful to Him for seeing me this far.

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A final thanksgiving to all participants of this research. Thank you for your reception and willingness to contribute to this research.

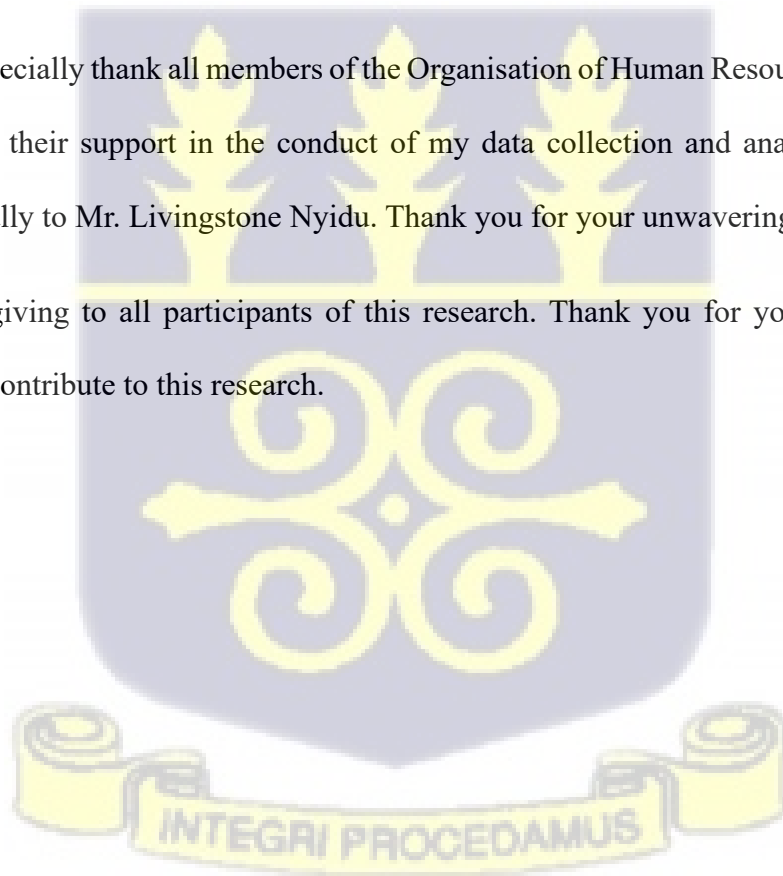


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ABSTRACT

Migration in Ghana is not a recent phenomenon—it has been there for ages. But since colonialism ended, people's mobility both inside and outside of the continent has increased attributive to different factors. The recent advent of COVID poses a threat to influencing the trend of migrations. As such, the main objective is to explore the migration intentions of graduates in the post-COVID era. It specifically sought to understand the post-covid-19 migration intentions of potential graduate migrants; examine the factors influencing their migration intentions; and assess the migration challenges and they mitigate those challenges. Data was collected through a mixed methods approach. The quantitative aspect surveyed 516 graduate students while the qualitative aspect involved an interview with 2 graduate migrants (one male and one female) a focus group discussion with 16 graduate students (8 males and 8 females) in groups of 4. The results show that graduates' intentions to migrate have increased after COVID-19. Most graduates were keen and determined to leave Ghana in search of better lives overseas. The factors influencing their migration intentions included the desire for an improved standard of life, employment opportunities, and potential for further education. Furthermore, the results showed that the major challenge in migrating were financial constraints and stringent visa application processes. The study's conclusions highlight the need for the Ministry of Youth and Employment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to consider the goals, passions, and difficulties faced by young people who aspire to immigrate overseas in creating employment opportunities that can improve the standard of living of the average youth.



CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In an increasingly interconnected world, the phenomenon of globalization has become a significant driver of social, economic, and cultural change. As part of the globalization process, international migration is steadily rising. Although migration has a long-standing history, the 21st century has witnessed unprecedented levels of global migration, driven by various factors such as economic disparities, political instability, armed conflicts, demographic changes, and the pursuit of educational and career opportunities (De Haas, Czaika, Flahaux, Mahendra, Natter, Vezzoli, & Villares-Varela, 2019).

According to the United Nations International Migration Report (2019), 272 million people, constituting 3.5 percent of the global population, resided outside their place of birth in 2019, more than four times the number of migrants in 1960. It is expected that the number of migrants would inevitably rise as the world's population rises if the proportion of foreign migrants stayed constant at its current level of 3.5 percent. In this case, it is predicted that by the middle of the twenty-first century, there will be 343 million foreign migrants (Chamie, 2020).

The International Organisation for Migration reports that 60% of today's international migrants reside in advanced countries such as Australia, Europe, North America, and Japan. South-North flows have dominated recent trends of international migration (Kunwar, 2020). Migration from emerging and low-income developing countries, particularly Africa, to advanced economies, with Europe and North America being the main recipient regions, has been a major driver of recent trends (Adesote & Osunkoya, 2018). These global migration trends keep increasing as humans continue to pursue better living conditions, improved employment prospects, higher wages, and enhanced educational and professional experiences.

The migration of highly skilled personnel from a developing country to a developed country (brain drain) has increased globally with the leap in labour market interdependency (Nakamura, 2021). The history of highly developed nations demonstrates that a nation's economy and future progress are greatly dependent on the efficient hiring and utilization of skilled labour. Several countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), such as Australia and Canada, have had the introduction of systematic selective international migration creating a new opportunity for luring highly talented immigrants (Bulley & Quartey, 2014).

Since the 1990s, African skilled labour has made up the largest group of immigrants who moved voluntarily to the global North. IOM reports that since 1990, an estimated 20,000 doctors, university lecturers, engineers, and other professionals have left the continent annually, both a persistent drop in the skilled workforce and a loss of one-third of the continent's human capital (Boyo, 2013). The United States gains disproportionately from highly skilled African migration, according to data from the World Bank's Global Skilled Migration Database. For instance, according to the Migration Policy Institute, almost half of the immigrants from Africa who currently reside in the country arrived after 2000. Twenty nine percent of high-skilled immigrants from Kenya, 47 percent from Ghana, and 59 percent from Nigeria chose to emigrate to the US between 2000 and 2010s (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012). Around 40 percent of all migrant skilled labourers worldwide are of Sub-Saharan African descent, and each year, it is anticipated that 80,000 managers and 23,000 academic experts work abroad (Banya & Zajda, 2015).

Several pieces of literature have sought to understand the effect of emigration on sending countries- whether brain drain or brain gain (Berger, 2022: Kato & Dadson, 2016: Teye, 2022). Some research works on migration have bordered on the subject of brain drain. However, after examining the motives behind which many of these professionals leave their various

developing nations, concepts like "brain gain" and "brain circulation" then appeared in the literature (Adamba & Quartey, 2016). These concepts hinge on the relative benefits developing countries earned from the emigration of their skilled labour.

The World Bank estimates that more than 250 million migrants from developing nations who move to rich nations send more than US\$ 6 trillion back home (World Bank, 2018). Remittances are one of the key engines for economic growth and raising living conditions in poor nations, which are four times as large as official development contributions from industrialized nations. Emigration is now recognized as a tool for socio-economic development in West African countries following the increased flow of remittances in the last two decades and the understanding that emigration can solve unemployment issues in developing countries (Teye, 2022).

Ghanaians' interest in migration is not a new phenomenon. Ghana has been closely linked to international migration as it was ranked among the top twenty African migrant countries in 2019, with more people emigrating than immigrating (Amoah, Tetteh, Korle & Quartey, 2022 as cited in UN DESA, 2019a & IOM, 2020). Many Ghanaians have relocated to developed cities throughout the 1990s, including, Amsterdam, London, New York, and Hamburg (Black King, & Tiemoko, 2003). A total of 970,714 people left Ghana in 2019, making up about 3.2% of the country's total population. Most migration was intra-regional, with 47.3% of people moving to other West African nations. 20.5% of migrants went to North America, and 29.1% went to Europe. Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America were the top international travel destinations in 2019 (UNDESA, 2019).

Nonetheless, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted global migration patterns, with travel restrictions, economic downturns, and health concerns affecting the mobility of people worldwide (Yaroshenko, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has made the

migration environment even more complex, posing both difficulties and opportunities for graduates seeking to emigrate. In Ghana, the pandemic has highlighted longstanding challenges to migration, including brain drain and limited opportunities for young graduates (World Bank, 2021).

Amidst these challenges, a new migration narrative has emerged in Ghanaian social media, centered around the term "Japa." "Japa" is a Nigerian slang term meaning "to escape" or "to run away." This term has gained popularity on Ghanaian social media platforms, with young people using it to describe their desire to leave the country and seek better opportunities elsewhere. "The goal now is to leave and pray for Ghana", many youths posit on social media channels like X and Instagram. This phenomenon raises questions about the migration intentions of the youth especially graduates in Ghana and the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these intentions.

1.2 Problem Statement

Ghana is facing the challenge of retaining its highly skilled workforce (Kuuyelleh, Alqahtani, & Akanpaadgi, 2022). A significant proportion of graduates from Ghana's universities leave the country each year to pursue career opportunities abroad, which has been identified as a major contributor to brain drain and a significant impediment to the country's development goals (Kwankye, 2018; WHO, 2018). According to Shimeles (2010), 40% of Ghana's tertiary education youth emigrated to an OECD country in 2009. The benefits of remittances against the loss of human resources in literature are still under discussion (Quartey, Setrana & Tagoe, 2020). While remittances from migrants can contribute to the country's economy, the loss of skilled workers to brain drain and the lack of job opportunities in certain sectors remain significant challenges (Kato et. al, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the underlying factors driving the migration intentions of graduates in Ghana and develop policies and strategies that can promote the retention of skilled workers.

Information on how COVID-19 has affected people's capacity and desire to migrate has been absent from this discussion. Such information is scarce because most nations stopped collecting statistics as a result of the outbreak. Although the pandemic led to global economic challenges leading to a lay-off of labour even in developed countries, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic has served as a reminder that the safe and orderly movement of people is essential for maintaining our health, nutrition, and general well-being (World Migration Report, 2022). In a number of developed nations, "migrants" make up a significant proportion of the workforce in industries that are classified as essential (e.g., Fasani & Mazza, 2020; Fernández-Reino, Sumption, & Vargas-Silva, 2020; Gelatt, 2020; OECD, 2020a). Migrants have carried on providing care for the sick and aged, operating grocery stores, and moving goods when nations have been placed under lockdown. According to estimates from the European Union (EU), immigrants make up an average of 13% of workers in important industries, and in some, like mining, building, cleaning, and home care, up to one-third of workers are non-EU citizens (Yaroshenko, 2022). As a result, the post-COVID-19 era in Ghana may witness a surge in migration, driven by factors such as job losses, economic instability, and health risks.

The pandemic has also accelerated the shift towards digitalization and automation, which has increased the demand for workers in certain industries such as information and communication technology (ICT), e-commerce, and healthcare (OECD, 2021). There has hence been an increase in demand for labour in these fields. However, the impact of the pandemic on migration intentions and behaviour of Ghanaian graduates is not yet fully understood, and there is a need to examine the complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors that are shaping people's migration decisions in the post-COVID-19 era.

Due to increased demand for health workers in the wake of the pandemic, brain drain in the health sector has received a high amount of research on the migration intentions of health

professionals in Ghana, relative to other sectors (Adjei-Mensah, 2023). This study is necessary because this migration does not only result in the loss of highly educated Africans and highly skilled professionals, but it also wastes Africa's limited resources allocated to tertiary and higher education, with the anticipated returns on investment rarely materialising. This knowledge gap is significant given the importance of skilled workers in driving economic growth and development in Ghana. With an increasing number of graduates leaving the country in search of better opportunities, there is a concern that the country is losing critical human capital (Graphic Online, 2022). This threatens to exacerbate the existing skills gap and hinder progress toward the achievement of the SDGs, despite efforts by the government to improve industry, innovation, and infrastructure in Ghana. This trend threatens to hinder progress toward SDG 9, ultimately undermining Ghana's economic development. Therefore, there is a need to examine the migration intentions of graduates in all fields.

Considering the above, the research aims to explore the factors that influence the migration intentions of graduates in Ghana post-COVID-19. At both the macro and micro levels, the information currently available points to a substantial correlation between migration intentions and actual migratory conduct, with a lesser correlation for women than for males (Docquier, Peri, & Ruysen, 2014; Tjaden, Auer & Laczko 2019; Creighton, 2013; Chort, 2014). Future migration behaviours may be predicted by looking at migration goals. Understanding migration intentions as impacted by the Covid-19 imposed factors such as lockdowns and travel restrictions would provide a sense of how the aftermath of the pandemic would shape migration in the years to come since migration intentions are more forward-looking than actual movement activity. By examining the "Japa" phenomenon, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of migration decision-making's complex and dynamic nature and assess the influences of the COVID era on the migration intentions of potential graduate migrants from the University of Ghana community.

1.3 Research Objectives

The broad objective is to understand how the advent of Covid-19 pandemic has affected the migration intentions of graduates in post-Covid-19 times in Ghana.

Specifically, this research seeks to:

1. Understand the post-covid-19 migration intentions of potential graduate migrants in the University of Ghana Graduates School Community.
2. Examine the factors influencing the migration intentions of the potential graduate migrants in the University of Ghana Community.
3. Assess the migration challenges and how potential graduate migrants in the University of Ghana Community mitigate those challenges.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the migration intentions of potential graduate migrants in the University of Ghana Graduates School Community in the post-Covid-19 period?
2. What are the factors influencing the migration intentions of the potential graduate migrants in the University of Ghana Graduate School Community?
3. How do potential graduate migrants mitigate challenges faced in their quest to migrate?

1.5 Significance of Study

The research outcomes may assist policy interventions to retain and attract skilled professionals in Ghana by providing valuable guidance. The Government and other Policymakers can customize their initiatives to effectively tackle the factors affecting migration intentions by identifying them. To intervene effectively one must consider providing targeted employment opportunities alongside improving working conditions and enhancing professional development programs while fostering collaboration between academia, industry and government.

Also, it is vital to shape effective higher education policies in Ghana by comprehending the factors that impact migration intentions among graduates. The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations specifically, can design focused interventions based on the study's findings that provide insight into the motivations and considerations of potential graduate migrants. Ghana may cultivate a favourable climate for encouraging graduate participation in national development by harmonizing educational plans with student ambitions and necessities. This will lead to a more prosperous and sustainable future for the nation ultimately.

As a result, this study may open the door for additional investigation into the subject. The results of this study need to be further validated and generalised by conducting relatively sizable research with a different methodology that includes graduates from various Ghanaian cities and regions.

1.6 Scope of Study

This aspect of the research was important to define as it helped to spell out clear boundaries of the area within which the research would be taking place based on evaluations of resources, time and access to relevant data. The University of Ghana, Legon Campus was conclusively chosen as the focused area of this research. This region was selected because it is the first public University in Ghana, as such, it has more varied graduate programmes that attract a lot of graduates into different fields in the institution. Additionally, the population in this study area harnesses people from diverse backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and exposures. Conclusively, the University of Ghana is a hotspot of graduates (highly skilled persons), and the researcher will have a larger accessible population where a larger sample could be drawn.

1.7 Study Limitations

This study tried to incorporate the shortcomings of other research works of being restricted to specific fields by broadening the scope of the research, and also focusing on actual graduates rather than final year undergraduate students. However, the study was not without limitations.

One significant limitation of this study is the potential lack of generalizability of the findings. The migration intentions of graduates in University of Ghana may be influenced by unique factors, such as the school's location, reputation, and the programmes it offers. Therefore, the results of this study may not be applicable to graduates in other schools or on the field with different characteristics and in different geographical regions. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research could consider conducting similar studies in multiple schools or regions to compare and contrast migration intentions across different contexts.

Conclusively, this limitation acknowledges that the study's findings may not be universally applicable and may be specific only to graduates in the University of Ghana community or to graduates with similar characteristics as graduates in the University of Ghana.

1.8 Organization of Study

The research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, which is an introduction, provides background information on the study topic, a problem statement for the research topic, and the research questions and objectives as well.

The second chapter summarises and presents a review of existing literature on the topic. This chapter also develops a theoretical foundation and a conceptual framework for the study.

The third chapter focuses on the study's methodology. This encompasses the research design, a description of the research area, the sampling technique and sample size, instrumentation and data collection, and the method of analysis.

The results and discussion of the study are reported in chapter four. Finally, a summary of the study, conclusion, and suggestions are presented in the fifth chapter.



CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A review of the literature is presented, and existing theoretical viewpoints are examined to settle on one that directly intersects with my study in this chapter. The literature review has been grouped under themes. This chapter includes a specific theory chosen to serve as a starting point from which the researcher presents the research questions. A conceptual framework is conclusively presented below to visualise the researcher's theoretical standpoints within the literature.

2.2 Conceptual Definitions

Defining the concept of migration has become a broad discourse due to varying contributions to the causes of migration. Despite the wide range of research on the subject, it has become more difficult to define. However, some literature seems to agree that migration involves relocating individuals or groups from one geographical location to another to establish a long-term residence (Malmberg, 2021; Van Hear, Bakewell & Long, 2020).

The concept of who a migrant is has also received some attention in the literature. With diverse definitions of who a migrant is, Arango (2017) describes a migrant as someone whose normal life is interrupted in one place to be reorganised in another. Scheel & Tazzioli (2022), also define a migrant as “a person who, in order to move to or stay in a desired place, has to struggle against bordering practices and processes of boundary-making that are implicated by the national order of things” (p. 10). The Oxford Dictionary's definition of a migrant as “a person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work” provides more relevance to this study.

Migration can take place within a country (internal migration) and international migration is said to have happened when national borders are crossed (Purwatiningsih, Sukamdi &

Giyarsih, 2020). Crucial to the migration literature is whether a movement is the decision or choice to move; whether it is forced or voluntary (Boyle, 2009). Significant to recent migration discussions is the conceptualisation of the term “voluntary”. Scholars contend that the term 'voluntary' poses challenges in fully grasping the intricacies of many migrants' experiences. The conventional notion of a 'speculative' economic migrant solely seeking improved opportunities is uncommon, as most employment-related relocations involve contractual arrangements. Furthermore, the term 'voluntary' may wrongly suggest that migrants make decisions in isolation, disregarding the influence of family dynamics, employment circumstances, and political factors that shape their daily decision-making processes. In reality, many migrations are influenced by the decisions of others, even though the ultimate choice rests with the migrant (Boyle, 2009).

The levels of voluntariness of migration serve to differentiate between some groups, such as "refugees", “asylum seekers” and “immigrants”. A refugee according to Sironi, Bauloz, & Emmanuel (2019, p.171) is “A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” They also define an asylum seeker as “an individual who is seeking international protection.” These migrants are arranged according to their rights in the receiving nation.

The majority of a country's citizens' rights apply to the type of migrants known as “immigrants” to the receiving country and “emigrants” to the sending country. This study seeks to narrow its focus more specifically to the “emigrants” group of migrants. An emigrant is defined as “a person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality or usual residence so

that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence” (Sironi et al., 2019: 63). Additionally, emigrants are those who conceive migration desires, make well-planned decisions, and move elsewhere “voluntarily”.

A critical element in forecasting future migration patterns involves examining historical and current migration flows (Ferting & Schmidt, 2005). Consequently, having information about these flows is vital for policymakers to formulate regulations and allocate resources effectively, covering aspects like registration, border control, asylum proceedings, and support for integration (Tjaden et al., 2019). However, a lack of comprehensive data on international migration flows, a concern emphasized by both policymakers and scholars in the literature (Lemaitre, 2005; Laczko, 2016; Willekens, Zinn, & Leuchter, 2017), has led migration stakeholders to rely on survey data regarding emigration intentions as a substitute in the absence of flow statistics (such as Tjaden et al., 2019). Changes in the level of emigration intentions in a specific area or country are regarded as indicators that migration levels may increase in the future.

Bortnyk Didkivska & Tylchuk (2018, p. 49) hence define potential migration as “a psychological readiness of an individual or group to leave a certain settlement (country)”. According to Tjaden et al., (2019, p.38), emigration intentions encompass the "intention, desire, consideration, inclination, plan, or preparation" of an individual to migrate, regardless of whether they have taken any actual steps towards migration. This understanding would subsequently be applied to this study as little variations in diction can have a great impact on the answer of a respondent.

The literature frequently makes a distinction between the factors that encourage both long-term (permanent) migration and transient (short-term) movements (King, 2002; Skeldon, 2012; Cattaneo, Beine, Fröhlich, Kniveton, Martinez-Zarzoso, Mastrotillo, & Schraven, 2019). This

distinction should not, however, overshadow the reality that migration initially intended to be temporary often evolves into permanent relocation, and conversely, what was initially intended as permanent or long-term relocation is sometimes shortened due to various intervening factors at both the sending and receiving ends of the migration process (Agadjanian, Nedoluzhko & Kumskov, 2008).

Many academics have emphasised the conundrum of whether future intents to immigrate could foretell a true decision (Carling, 2014; Cairns & Smyth, 2011; Van Dalen & Henkens, 2008; Cairns et al., 2012). Ajaero and De Wet (2017) argue that migration intentions are a reliable predictor and catalyst for actual future migration, and this is supported by prior research (De Jong, 2000). Tjaden et al. (2019) contribute to the discussion that data on emigration intentions provide a number of benefits, including their comparability and accessibility. Conclusively, "migration intentions data holds advantages connected to both substantive and practical issues" (Ivlevs & King, 2012). People move because they have needs and wants that can't be met where they now live (Aldridge, Nellums, Bartlett, Barr, Patel, Burns, & Abubakar 2018).

2.3 Global Trends of Migration of Labour (Inter-Labour Dependency)

Immigration on a global scale is commonly associated with labour migration, with millions of individuals moving around the world for work, spanning a wide range of occupations from computer programming to manual labour such as harvesting. The process of globalization has intensified human mobility as economic activities have become increasingly interconnected. In 2017, international migrants residing in countries other than their birthplace were 258 million, constituting 3.4 percent of the world's total population (Makina & Mudungwe 2023). Likewise, in 2015, a total of 150.3 million migrant workers were counted globally, as reported by IOM (2018). The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) reported that in 2017, an estimated six out of every ten international migrants were classified as migrant workers. Among these migrant workers, roughly 68 percent were living in high-income countries, and

the majority, about 87 percent, fell within the prime-age adult category, spanning ages 25 to 64.

Governments around the world rely on highly skilled individuals to drive innovation and economic growth, helping them establish a competitive position in the increasingly knowledge-based global economy. Due to aging populations and skill shortages, attracting highly skilled employees has become a top priority for nations worldwide, as highlighted by Chand & Tung (2019).

Highly skilled immigrants from third countries hold particular significance, as many European countries face similar demographic and workforce challenges. Burmann, Perez, Hoffmann, Rhode, & Schworm (2018) note that governments in Europe, in response to demographic shifts and a shortage of skilled labour, are actively implementing measures to recruit economic migrants, particularly those with high levels of training and expertise. As reported by Chand & Tung (2019), the 2018 Global Talent Competitiveness Index identified the United States, Canada, and Australia as some of the top 15 most appealing destinations globally for skilled immigrants. These countries have consistently attracted a significant majority of skilled individuals looking to migrate.

The introduction of systematic selective international migration policies in several Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, notably Canada and Australia, has provided a pathway for attracting highly skilled migrants, as pointed out by Bulley & Quartey (2014). Furthermore, both supranational and national policies are being introduced and implemented to enhance the appeal of European Union (EU) countries as destinations for third countries' highly skilled workers. While a majority of these policies are employment-based, there is a growing trend toward potential-oriented schemes, exemplified by Austria's Job Search Visa. Another potential-oriented policy is the EU-wide directive aimed

at retaining foreign graduates. Since recent graduates represent potential future workers, many countries supplement the EU policy with their own national legislation, as noted by Burmann et al. (2018).

The World Bank's estimates indicate that over 250 million people who migrate from developing countries to developed ones collectively send back over US\$ 6 trillion to their home countries (World Bank, 2018). This substantial amount of remittance surpasses the official development aid provided by developed countries by fourfold. It plays a pivotal role in stimulating economic growth and enhancing living standards in developing nations (World Bank, 2020). While immigrants contribute to the betterment of living conditions in their home countries through remittances, additionally, international migrants play a vital role in meeting the labour demand of developed countries. due to their lower wage expectations. This highlights a labour deficit often observed in developed countries in contrast to developing ones. Consequently, international labour supply is indispensable for both developing and developed countries, although it holds even greater importance for the latter.

2.5 Trends in The Migration of Skilled Labour from Africa

Since the 1990s, a significant number of highly skilled Africans have chosen to emigrate to Western countries, as highlighted by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in 2018. Even after gaining independence, many countries in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa maintained strong ties with their former colonial powers due to established economic relations, as well as cultural and linguistic connections (Nkoko 2022, citing European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2018).

These skilled individuals, who left both government institutions and the private sector, represent a valuable pool of African-trained human capital. Highly skilled migrants encompass not only professionals but also students who have completed their university education. Nkoko

adds that, skilled labour includes students who have chosen to pursue further studies abroad in the hopes of eventually returning to improve their lives and the lives of their families (Nkoko, 2022). Highly skilled labour can hence be seen as anyone who has received higher education, as such, has the ability to be productive.

According to the UN Economic Organization for Migration, between 1960 and 1975, an estimated 27,000 skilled Africans left the continent for developed countries (Nair, 2020; Ngoma & Ismail, 2013). An additional 40,000 people emigrated between 1975 and 1984. For example, around 23,000 qualified academics leave Africa each year in search of better working conditions, and the United States alone employs approximately 12,000 Nigerian academics (Atoungha, 2010).

Teye (2022) citing UNDESA (2018) notes that intra-regional mobility is the dominant form of movement in West Africa, with over 70% of migrants from West African countries relocating to destinations within the sub-region, despite media narratives often suggesting a mass exodus of Africans to the global North.

A significant analysis conducted by Ratha, Mohapatra & Scheja (2011) found that roughly 30 million Africans, which is approximately 3% of the continent's population, have migrated abroad. They also noted that in 2000, one out of every eight Africans with university degrees was living in an OECD nation. Per a report by UNCTAD (2018), there is a growing trend of youth migration in Africa, with a significant portion of the continent's population being under 35 years old. This demographic indicates that young people are a major part of Africa's current migration movements, often driven by the pursuit of improved livelihood opportunities, including better employment prospects and access to quality education (Mlambo & Mpanza, 2019).

2.6 Labour Migration from Ghana

Upon gaining independence in 1957, Ghana faced a significant shortage of skilled professionals, which posed a hindrance to the government's ambitious plans to shift the economy from agriculture-based to industrial. To address this scarcity, the government took the initiative in the late 1950s and early 1960s to sponsor the education of Ghanaian students in countries such as the former USSR, Germany, the UK, and the USA (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000). As anticipated, the majority of these students returned to Ghana after completing their studies, although some chose to remain abroad (Tonah, 2007). However, in the early 1980s, Ghana confronted a series of challenges, including economic difficulties, political instability, political persecutions, and natural disasters.

Anarfi et. al (2010) report that starting in the 1990s, Ghanaians' migration to affluent countries increased significantly, particularly to countries like the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and the USA. By 1996, Ghana had become one of the top ten source countries for migrants to the UK, with approximately 21,500 individuals relocating there between 1990 and 2001. By 2001, the USA was home to around 104,000 Ghanaian immigrants, and Canada hosted roughly 114,400. Notably, a significant portion of these emigrants were skilled professionals. Between 1995 and 2002, approximately 69.4% of medical officers trained in Ghana during that period opted to work abroad. Similar trends were observed for dentists (27.3%), pharmacists (43.3%), medical laboratory technologists (19.5%), and nurses/midwives (19.7%) (Anarfi et al., 2003).

Research has delved into this international labour migration across the Atlantic to Europe, the USA, and Canada (Adepoju, 2005; Anarfi et al., 2000; Tonah, 2007). Additionally, some literature has explored the integration of Ghanaian migrants in Europe (Agyeman, 2011) and their transnational practices involving religion, politics, and economics (Kyei & Smoczynski, 2019; Kyei & Setrana, 2017; Kyei, Setrana, & Smoczynski, 2017).

The Aliens' Compliance Order in 1969, prompted by the CPP's lenient immigration policy and frequent changes in governance without policy continuity, contributed to an economic downturn in Ghana (Awumbila et al., 2008). Consequently, migration became a means to escape deteriorating economic and social conditions. This set the stage for widespread emigration, including professionals like middle cycle schoolteachers, doctors, and university faculty members, who sought opportunities in other prosperous African nations, Europe, and North America. This trend, which persists today, initially emerged as a temporary solution to a crisis but ultimately gave rise to the challenge of "brain drain," signifying the loss of skilled professionals to other countries through migration.

2.6.1 Brain Drain

The concept of "brain drain" gained prominence from the 1970s to the early 2000s, leading to growing concerns among African governments, civil society groups, and development agencies regarding the impact of the massive emigration of healthcare professionals on African health systems, as observed by Teye et al. (2015). The term "brain drain" refers to the movement of medical professionals abroad in quest of improved living and quality of life, more income, access to cutting-edge technologies, and more stable political environments (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005). Teye (2021) pointed out that discussions surrounding emigration and development often suggest that the departure of highly skilled migrants results in brain drain, which has a negative impact on socio-economic development in West Africa.

Berger (2022) added that research from the 1970s indicated that developed nations were effectively depleting the human resources of less fortunate countries. These findings revealed that the emigration of highly skilled individuals could worsen international inequality due to fiscal and other external factors, in addition to information gaps and labour market constraints. Furthermore, these migration effects were detrimental to the home country, affecting its economic growth and welfare dynamics.

As a result, Mangala (2017 as cited by Teye, 2022) characterized highly skilled professionals who migrated to developed nations as "unpatriotic citizens." This label may be justified because patriotism implies a high level of commitment and dedication to one's country, regardless of the prevailing conditions.

2.6.2 Fields of Graduates Migrating

Migrants play a crucial role in growing occupational sectors, particularly in developed countries. In the United States, migrants constitute 22% of new entrants into expanding fields, while in Europe they account for 15%, especially in STEM and healthcare sectors (OECD, 2014). Sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana, face a substantial exodus of skilled professionals across various fields, including healthcare, engineering, education, and law (Ipole, 2018; Machayo & Keraro, 2013). These professionals seek better working conditions and economic opportunities abroad.

In 2018, immigrants constituted 17 percent of the total civilian employed workforce in the United States. However, their representation was significantly higher in occupations typically demanding a college degree. To illustrate, immigrants made up 45 percent of software developers, 42 percent of physical scientists, and 29 percent of physicians (Batalova & Olsen-Medina 2020). College-educated immigrant workers displayed a greater likelihood than their native-born counterparts to be employed in high-tech, scientific, and engineering roles. The Migration Policy Institute also noted that in 2018, 12 percent of college-educated immigrants held positions in computer and mathematics fields, whereas only 5 percent of U.S.-born individuals with similar qualifications did. The leading five occupational categories for immigrant college graduates encompassed management (15 percent), computer and mathematical roles (12 percent), health practitioners and technicians (12 percent), business and financial operations (10 percent), and education and related fields (9 percent).

Furthermore, a report by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in 2015 revealed that approximately 31 percent of Ghanaians in the USA were likely employed in professional or managerial occupations. Some Ghanaians were employed in specialized fields such as law, science, engineering, finance, education, and human resources. According to the report, around 12 percent of Ghanaians in the USA held master's, doctorate, or professional degrees, while 8 percent had a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification. The report also disclosed that about 76 percent of Ghanaians residing in the USA were likely to participate in the U.S. labour force, with an employment rate of 91 percent.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in 2019, the number of Ghanaians living outside of Ghana grew from 716,044 in 2010 to 970,625 in 2019, representing an increase of 26.2 percent. This migration has led to a significant loss of qualified workers who could otherwise be making substantial contributions to Ghana's socioeconomic development, including in fields such as healthcare, education, academia, and scientific research.

2.6.2.1 International Students' Migration

The migration of graduates pursuing further education is a major phenomenon impacting both source and destination countries (Laad & Sharma, 2021). International student mobility has seen exponential growth, rising from 2 million in 1998 to 5.6 million in 2019, with projections to exceed 8 million by 2025 (Böhm et al., 2004; OECD, 2019). English-speaking nations, including the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, remain the most attractive destinations, collectively hosting a majority of international students (UNESCO, 2019). Other popular host countries include France, Germany, and Russia, with China, India, and Nigeria emerging as key source nations.

Efforts to retain international students in host countries post-graduation are increasingly evident. Countries like Australia, Germany, and Canada have relaxed visa policies to integrate graduates into their labour markets (OECD, 2003). For instance, in 2017, 6,500 Ghanaian students studied in China, and during the 2018–2019 academic year, 40,290 students from sub-Saharan Africa enrolled in U.S. colleges, with Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya leading as top source nations (Institute of International Education, 2018).

Focusing on African migration, a significant "brain drain" trend emerged. Between 1960 and 1984, 67,000 African university graduates migrated to industrialized nations, increasing annually by 20,000 since 1984 (Mutume, 2003). From 2008 to 2012, 41% of African immigrants to the U.S. held university degrees. Specific to Ghana, Black, Tiemoko, and Waddington (2003) found that 15% of university-educated Ghanaians migrated to the U.S., with another 10% heading to OECD countries.

Lastly, UNESCO's 2018 Global Education Monitoring Report underscored a notable trend: individuals with tertiary education are five times more likely to migrate abroad than those with only primary education.

2.7 Gender Dimensions

The title "Graduate" is just one aspect of a person's identity, and it comes with both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages in this context are usually based on gender (Bailey & Mulder, 2017). Gender refers to the socially defined roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a particular society deems appropriate for men and women (WHO). As a result, men and women are often treated differently, with women usually facing disadvantages.

The prevailing image of a skilled migrant is typically male, even in policy discussions, where women are often portrayed as accompanying their spouses (Kofman, 2014; Roos, 2013). However, there have been changes in gender-related migration trends. Evolving labour market

dynamics and the increasing participation of women in the global workforce have created more opportunities for skilled female migrants. In fields such as healthcare, women dominate the nursing sector and constitute a significant portion of skilled labour migration from Ghana.

Highly skilled migrants come from various economic and social backgrounds in their home countries, with some having advantages while others face disadvantages. Research by Akamavi & Alwang (2020) suggests that male graduates are more likely to prioritize economic factors, such as higher income potential, as motivation for migration. Conversely, the migration intentions of female graduates are often shaped by broader economic disparities (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). These women may seek opportunities to escape gender-based discrimination and access more equitable economic prospects in foreign countries. However, they may encounter a different set of discriminatory norms in host countries due to their migrant status and gender norms (Bagguley & Hussain, 2007). Balancing employment and family life remains a significant challenge for female highly skilled immigrants to the Global North (Lee Cooke 2007; Liversage 2009).

The attachment to their homeland and the sense of community differs significantly for these two groups. Ghanaian society places a strong emphasis on familial obligations and caregiving roles for women (Atak, 2018). Female graduates face the challenge of managing conflicting pressures between migration and fulfilling traditional roles within their families and communities. As a result, female migrants are more likely to return to their countries of origin.

Dustmann et al. (2019) suggest that male graduates, often having better access to resources and opportunities, may aspire to pursue advanced education or exploit specific job prospects in STEM fields. In contrast, female graduates contend with unique challenges, including societal expectations and family responsibilities (Hagan, 2017). Consequently, they may prioritize migration for educational purposes or to access job markets perceived as less gender biased.

2.8 Perspectives on The Causes of Migration Among Graduates

Numerous studies have endeavoured to elucidate the factors underpinning the emigration of Ghanaians to foreign nations, particularly developed countries. Existing literature on the movement of skilled professionals typically delineates between "push" and "pull" factors influencing migration decisions. The "push" factors encompass circumstances in the home country that impel professionals to seek opportunities elsewhere, while the term "pull" pertains to factors, whether intentional or inadvertent, that attract skilled workers due to destination countries' policies and actions.

Push factors encompass a gamut of challenges, including inadequate funding, limited career prospects, substandard compensation and working conditions, deficient retirement plans, unfavourable work environments, low job satisfaction, managerial inadequacies, civil unrest, and concerns for personal safety. Conversely, pull factors may emerge from heightened demand for skilled labour in industrialized nations, often driven by factors like aging populations necessitating increased care and economic developments rendering professions like nursing less attractive to new entrants. These factors are often compounded by opportunities for further education and career advancement, the allure of renowned medical and educational institutions, higher remuneration, improved working conditions, and increased job availability, often coupled with active recruitment efforts by potential host countries (Naicker et al., 2009; Ipole et al., 2018).

The challenging conditions in Ghana, coupled with unstable economic and political situations in neighbouring countries such as Nigeria and Ivory Coast, gave rise to a new wave of labour emigration, with Europe and North America as the primary destinations (Ceesay, 2017).

Peil (1995) argued that Ghana's economic and educational systems were pivotal drivers of the widespread emigration of Ghanaians, as the country's circumstances offered limited

opportunities for its burgeoning population. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of Ghanaian migration to other West African countries, Europe, and North America was motivated by various factors, including employment, education, and training. Furthermore, Fosu (1992) underscored that the upsurge in Ghana's international emigration during the late 1970s and early 1980s was linked to political instability, marking the onset of large-scale emigration from the country.

Kutor et al. (2021) contend that these issues are chiefly intertwined with the exacerbation of social, demographic, and environmental challenges, such as resource depletion, states' inability to effectively implement their geo-economic strategies, and the emergence of social stratification driven by conflicts of interest and political unrest.

The major factors typically cited for migration invariably encompass poverty, education, and socio-economic determinants. Awumbila et al. (2008) posit that while it is acknowledged that poverty can precipitate migration, the literature often overlooks the fact that migrants are not always the most destitute individuals. This is largely due to the prohibitive cost of international migration, which is often too high for the poorest to bear, implying that most international migrants can afford migration to some extent. The processes and institutions associated with international labour migration, including information gathering, decision-making, preparation, and financial considerations, also influence the propensity to migrate and the potential contribution of labour migration to people's livelihoods (Kunwar, 2021). Challenging the prevailing narrative that poverty solely propels emigration, Teye (2021) argues that reducing poverty, among other policy interventions, may not necessarily lead to a reduction in international migration since "migration itself is an integral part of social transformation and therefore likely to increase as societies develop and more people become educated."

Kunwar (2021) further augments the literature by asserting that as countries attain higher levels of development, emigration tends to decrease alongside an increase in immigration, shifting them from net emigration to net immigration countries. Similarly, in countries with a high and very high human development index, immigrant numbers are typically substantial. In summary, the volume and direction of emigrants and immigrants are contingent on the human development index of a given country.

2.9 Effects of Migration of Graduates

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that migration plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable development, benefiting migrants, their communities, and the global society as a whole. It facilitates the transfer of knowledge and financial resources, ultimately leading to improvements in the lives of communities in their countries of origin. Migration brings forth significant advantages, including the exchange of skills, a bolstered labour force, increased investments, and the enrichment of cultural diversity (IOM, 2023).

The literature on the effects of migration is multifaceted, presenting both positive and negative ramifications for sending and receiving countries. Since the post-Second World War era, temporary labour migration has been advocated as a pathway to development. Studies analysing wage disparities and correlations between income taxation and migration have revealed positive effects, which can either partially or wholly mitigate the consequences of human capital loss (Berger, 2022). In essence, migration contributes to enhancing the quality of life for both migrants and their families.

As noted by Teye (2022), emigration is increasingly recognized as a tool for socio-economic development in West African countries, primarily due to the substantial flow of remittances over the past two decades. This recognition stems from the understanding that emigration can help address unemployment issues in developing countries. Remittances have surged to the

point where they rival or even surpass official development assistance, leading to improved living standards in sending countries.

However, it's essential to consider the perspective presented by Ellerman (2005), who suggests that over time, evidence indicates that remittances alone do not necessarily result in development or sustainable increases in income without further migration. This underscores the complex nature of the relationship between migration, remittances, and development, which warrants further examination.

2.9.1 Positive Effects of Migration (Sending and Receiving Countries)

The positive outcomes for sending countries are significant (Wae-Esor, 2022). These include a reduction in unemployment rates, resulting in cost savings associated with managing unemployment. Moreover, there's an inflow of foreign currency into countries of emigration through migrant remittances sent back to support their families and relatives. This influx of funds substantially contributes to improving the economic conditions of these countries.

The volume of remittances sent by international migrants to their countries of origin has been steadily increasing, with the majority of these funds directed towards low- and middle-income countries (Seema Parveen, 2020). According to the World Bank (2020), the remittances that migrants send to support their families have seen rapid growth over the past half-century. Annual remittances have surged from several billion US dollars in 1970 to over 700 billion US dollars today, surpassing overseas development assistance by a substantial margin.

In 2019, some of the largest remittances were sent to India (\$83 billion), China (\$68 billion), Mexico (\$39 billion), the Philippines (\$35 billion), and Egypt (\$27 billion), in descending order. The primary sources of migrant remittance outflows were the United States (\$68 billion), United Arab Emirates (\$44 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$34 billion), Switzerland (\$27 billion), and Germany (\$25 billion) (Chamie 2020, citing World Bank, 2020).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2018) posits that in countries facing labour shortages, well-managed labour migration can alleviate the scarcity of labour, promote mobility, and contribute to the enhancement of human capital. Receiving countries and businesses also reap numerous benefits from immigration, as highlighted by Otero and Lotta (2020). These advantages include the stimulation of production development due to the substantial increase in the workforce. Additionally, the utilization of immigrant labour, which is often more cost-effective, enhances the competitiveness of products.

Immigration also results in reduced expenses related to training and retraining employees, including those with higher qualifications. It fills vacancies in less prestigious sectors of the economy and decreases the budgetary burden by reducing expenditures on pensions and social benefits. The presence of immigrants in the labour market fosters competition, leading to increased productivity among workers and improved overall production efficiency.

2.9.2 Negative Effects of Migration (Sending and Receiving Countries)

The adverse outcomes for sending countries encompass the loss of some of their most skilled labour resources, which contributes to the aging of their workforce. This loss necessitates increased expenditures to attract highly qualified personnel from within the country, which can be economically burdensome. Furthermore, it diminishes the development potential within the sending country (Carling & Schewel, 2018).

In the case of receiving countries, the negative consequences involve heightened competition in the labour market for resident workers, primarily due to the presence of a less expensive foreign workforce. Additionally, the outflow of currency funds abroad in the form of remittances from immigrants drains financial resources from the receiving country. This can lead to increased expenses for social protection and assistance programs for migrants (Sinha, 2017).

2.9 Covid-19 Pandemic and Migration Nexus.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted international migration systems through travel bans, consular closures, and border shutdowns (Tijan et al., 2022; OECD, 2020). These disruptions raised concerns over a potential increase in irregular migration (Sanchez & Achilli, 2020; Yayboke, 2020).

The pandemic's impact on labour markets was multifaceted. Sectors such as **tourism and hospitality** experienced a decline in job vacancies, while healthcare and technology saw an increase in employment opportunities (OECD, 2021). Additionally, widespread adoption of **remote work** reshaped traditional employment structures. However, the labour mobility impact varied depending on regional COVID-19 prevalence and government responses.

In terms of labour migration, findings by Nakamura & Suzuki (2021) revealed heightened job insecurity globally but no significant rise in migration intentions in developing countries, largely due to the preparation time and costs involved.

An underexplored area is the effect of COVID-19 on the migration of **highly skilled African labour**. Limited data collection during the pandemic hindered insights, though a study on Gambian youth indicated a reduced inclination to migrate (Tijan et al., 2022). Furthermore, European border agencies observed an initial decline in Mediterranean crossings, followed by a rebound later in the year (Bah et al., 2022).

2.10 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Migration is a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon, and it cannot be fully elucidated by a single theory, as highlighted by King (2012). Massey et al. (1993) go a step further, emphasizing the absence of a unified and coherent theory of international migration. Instead, what prevails are a plethora of fragmented theories that have developed independently, often segregated by disciplinary boundaries.

In this context, recent immigration trends and patterns suggest that understanding contemporary migration processes necessitates more than just the tools and perspectives of a single discipline or a singular level of analysis (De Haas, 2021). The study of international migration has been shaped by various academic disciplines, including Economics, Sociology, Geography, Commerce, Law, Political Science, Demography, and Psychology (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). These different standpoints have influenced people differently, making the migration discourse more complex.

Due to the limitations inherent in single migration theories, a combination of theories becomes imperative. This approach combines micro-level and macro-level theories to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing graduates' migration intentions. The micro-level theories assess migration intentions from an individual's perspective whereas the macro-level assess migration intentions from a broader point of view, looking at the economic systems of a country.

2.10.1 Lee's Push and Pull Theory

In this theory, Lee categorizes the factors influencing migration decisions into three main groups: those associated with the place of origin, those linked to the destination, and intervening factors between the two. Lee emphasizes that migration is a complex process influenced by numerous factors, many of which the potential migrant may not have control over. He suggests that people migrate due to a combination of push and pull factors.

Push factors, as explained by Lee, are conditions or circumstances that compel individuals to leave their place of origin. These factors can include issues like ineffective law enforcement, inadequate educational opportunities, limited job prospects, high crime rates, political corruption, and political instability, among others (International Organization for Migration Development Fund, 2017). In contrast, pull factors are those elements that attract individuals

to a particular region. These factors may encompass better wages, improved educational facilities, superior working conditions, and a stable political environment. While the allure of moving to a more developed area may be appealing, Lee notes that there are intervening factors that can affect the decision to migrate. A cultural or environmental element that could make the migrant's journey more difficult could be an intervening hurdle. According to Lee (1966), this could include the separation between the of the source and the destination, inadequate transportation, and immigration rivers, boundaries, mountains, regulations and/or laws, and ethnocentrism. Covid-19 pandemic is hence seen as an intervening variable for this research.

Puschmann (2011, as cited in Mlambo & Adetiba, 2019) suggests that this theory holds historical significance because scholars have relied on it for decades to elucidate the motives behind migration, making it pertinent in the context of this work. Deji (2011) also reinforces the historical relevance of Lee's push/pull model, as it has been a cornerstone in understanding migration patterns since its development in 1966.

2.10.2 Dual Labour Market Theory

This model diverges from the perspective that migration results from individual decisions. Instead, it argues that international migration primarily occurs because of the intrinsic labour demands in industrialized societies. Michael (1979) highlights that the continuous demand from developed nations to support their development agendas is the driving force behind international migration. In essence, this theory suggests that migration is not primarily caused by push factors in sending countries but by pull factors in receiving countries. Push factors typically include low wages and high unemployment, while pull factors involve the essential and unavoidable needs that foreign workers are expected to fulfil in receiving countries.

Furthermore, this theory underscores four key characteristics of industrialized nations that explain their attraction of labour from other countries: structural inflation, motivational issues, economic dualism, and the demographics of the labour supply (Massey et al., 1993).

This theory is relevant to this study as it contributes a broader horizon for the assessment of influences of migration intentions. The social livelihoods of people are determined by their economic status, hence a bigger umbrella of the economic structures of both sending and receiving countries feed into the individual considerations of migration.

2.10.2 Conceptual Framework

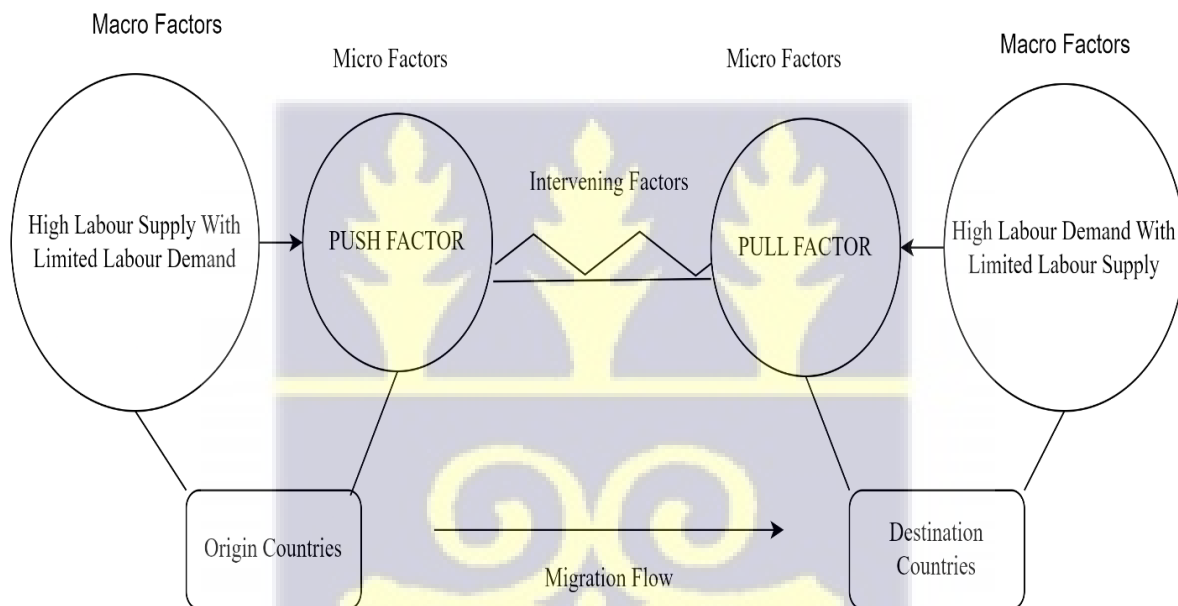


Figure 1: An extension of Lee's push and pull theory to dual labour market theory.

The schema above reflects the relationship between the macro level factors of countries and their relations to micro factors that feed the migration intentions of individuals. The diagram, on the left hand, shows labour market structures in origin countries influences the push factors. On the right hand, it shows the macro factors of larger labour demand feeding into wider opportunities, which are the pull factors that attract individuals' considerations as destinations for migration. In between the two sides are the intervening factors which could be obstructions

to people's migration intentions. This conceptual framework does not explain the entire migration concept. It however, to an extent, gives some understanding as to why graduates may choose to migrate elsewhere.



CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods applied in the research. It covers the research design, study area, target population, sample, sampling methods, data collection instruments and methodologies, as well as data analysis. Additionally, it elucidates the statistical approaches employed to assess the hypothesis and provides insight into the process of examining transcribed interviews.

3.2 Research Design

To accomplish the study's objectives, a mixed-method approach was employed. This approach entails gathering, analysing, and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the comprehension of the research problem (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Creswell, 2005). Within mixed methods, various approaches exist, such as explanatory sequential mixed methods, exploratory sequential mixed methods, transformative mixed methods, embedded mixed methods, and multiphase mixed methods (Creswell, 2013).

Specifically, a sequential explanatory mixed-method design strategy was chosen. This design is a specific type of mixed-methods approach where the research is conducted in two distinct phases: Quantitative data collection and analysis (first phase); and Qualitative data collection and analysis (second phase). The quantitative analysis approach for this research is mainly descriptive. As such, the purpose of the qualitative findings is to explain, interpret, or elaborate on the quantitative results. The sequential explanatory research method is used for this research because it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues (Jick, 1993; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). In this study, the sequential explanatory mixed-method approach will provide a holistic understanding of migration intentions among graduates, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context.

3.2.1 Quantitative Approach

The quantitative approach primarily concentrated on statistical generalization by analysing a substantial number of responses related to demographic characteristics, including age, gender, educational level, and marital status, to understand their influence on migration intentions through survey questionnaires. The respondents used were post-graduate students from various disciplines in the University of Ghana. The use of a quantitative survey was deemed appropriate for measuring these variables as the survey enables the researcher to gather data from many respondents, providing the opportunity to study the migrations across the different characteristics of the population.

As per Bartlett and Vieland (2005), the survey permits quantification and generalization to an entire population when the researcher efficiently samples from that population. Furthermore, it facilitates the collection of extensive data from respondents within a relatively short time frame.

3.2.2 Qualitative Approach

The qualitative aspect of the study involved conducting focused group discussions with four groups of graduates, comprising two male groups and two female groups. Additionally, interviews were conducted with two migrant returnees, one male and one female. These qualitative methods were employed to uncover valuable insights that couldn't be obtained through the quantitative approach.

As Gibbs (2007) contributes, qualitative research is designed to explore the external world and gain an understanding of, describe, and sometimes elucidate social phenomena "from the inside" using various approaches. The qualitative interviews aimed to provide in-depth, detailed, and comprehensive insights into the migration intentions of graduates, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4 Population

The selected population for this study was University of Ghana Graduate Students. This population was chosen because it comprises of people with employable skills (skilled labour). Their pursuit of higher degrees made them highly skilled hence, fit for this study. The population consists of Masters, Executive Masters, Master of Philosophy, and PhD students in different Schools, Faculties and Departments in University of Ghana.

There were no specific exclusion criteria for this population, as all graduate students hold at least a first-degree qualification. Based on enrolment and graduation statistics from the University of Ghana, the total number of graduate students at the time of the study (2023) was 7,353. Therefore, the study's participants were drawn from this total population.

3.4 Sample

The Taro Yamane (1967) sample size formulas cited by Joseph and Kingsley (2016) as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha^2)}, \text{ was used by the author to calculate the sample size.}$$

Where N = sample frame (population), n = sample size, and α = confidence interval. The author chose a margin of error of 5% and a confidence interval of 95%. For this study, N= 7353 and $\alpha = (0.05^2)$

$$\text{Therefore, } n = \frac{7353}{1+7353(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{7353}{18.3825}$$

$$n = 379.362$$

The determined sample size for the quantitative data was initially set at 379 graduates. However, for enhanced statistical robustness and greater variable strength in the analysis, the sample size for the study was intentionally increased to include 500 graduates.

3.5 Sampling Methods

For the quantitative aspect, a simple random sampling approach was employed to sample the participants for the study. This is because all members of the target population were eligible candidates for the study. As such, every member of the graduate school community was a potential respondent.

For the qualitative aspect, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the members of the four focused groups consisting of four members. These four focused discussion groups had two groups made up of for only female participants, and the other two made of only males to purposively have each gender fairly represented in the study. The two graduate migrants abroad were sampled using the snowballing approach.

These techniques were appropriate for this study because they helped in selecting persons strategically to provide important information (Patton, 2007; Anieting and Mosugu, 2017).

3.6 Data Collection Tools and Procedure

This study primarily collected data from primary sources. To accomplish this, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed, utilizing a semi-structured interview guide and a comprehensive questionnaire.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants in focused group discussions, while interviews with graduates residing abroad were carried out via Zoom. The interview structure was carefully designed to align with the study's objectives and research questions. Prior consent for recording the interview sessions was obtained from the participants, and field notes were taken to corroborate the transcribed recordings.

Regarding the quantitative data, the interviewers visited various graduate halls to administer the questionnaires which was distributed using a Google Forms link upon arrival. However, due to the low responses of targeted respondents, prints out of the questionnaires were made to

collect the data. Before doing so, appropriate permissions were obtained. The researcher's presence during this process allowed for immediate assistance to participants who encountered any challenges.

3.7 Data Analysis

The collected data for the quantitative data underwent a thorough review to ensure its completeness and accuracy. Subsequently, the data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for the analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed in the analysis of the data. The use of measures such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations allowed for a comprehensive comparison of all the responses, facilitating meaningful inferences from various indicators, including the employment status, age, and gender. The researcher took measures to ensure that the questionnaire used for data collection was closely aligned with the study's objectives. This alignment was essential to ensure that the questions in the instrument accurately captured the concepts being investigated, following the guidance of Polit and Beck (2017). To enhance the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher also carefully worded all questions to minimize the potential for misunderstandings. Additionally, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted before the final survey to identify and rectify any issues.

The qualitative data analysis involved transcription of recordings from focused group discussions. Field notes and transcribed sections of the interviews were then categorized to identify patterns and themes relevant to the study's objectives. To provide a vivid and impactful representation of the findings, direct quotes from respondents were incorporated, emphasizing their statements rather than drawing potentially inaccurate conclusions. The results were presented using thematic analysis with the aid of the NVivo software. The author employed a triangulation approach, as triangulation is a method that enhances the validity,

reliability, and legitimacy (including credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability) of research findings, as suggested by Lemon and Hayes (2020).

Table 3.1 Summary of study objectives and the analysis methods used.

	OBJECTIVES	METHODS OF ANALYSIS EMPLOYED
1	To understand the pre and post-covid-19 migration intentions of potential graduate migrants and the intended destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive Statistics using frequencies, percentages and mean. • Cross-tabulation
2	To examine the factors influencing the migration intentions of the potential graduate migrants and the relationship with the demographic characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive Statistics using Standard Deviations and Mean • Thematic Analysis
3	Assess the migration challenges and how potential graduate migrants in the University of Ghana Community mitigate those challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive Statistics using frequencies • Thematic analysis

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in ensuring the transparency and well-being of research participants (Akaranga and Makau, 2016). The study prioritized several ethical considerations. In the course of conducting this study, strict adherence to ethical principles was maintained.

To ensure that respondents were not subjected to any form of pressure and fully understood the purpose of their participation, a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives was provided to them in English, given that they were students. Their consent was freely obtained, without any form of coercion.

As a measure of safeguarding the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, pseudonyms were utilized when quoting their responses. Sensitive information like the biodata were collected separately before the focused group discussions. Furthermore, the information and responses provided by the respondents were strictly used for the sole purpose of this study. These ethical guidelines were followed in alignment with the principles outlined by Curtis and Curtis (2011).



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results based on the study's objectives. Qualitative findings embedded in a quantitative analysis is presented since the study employed a mixed methods approach. The quantitative data examined the survey data and presentation of the outcomes whereas the qualitative presents the description of findings of the transcript analysis using NVivo from interviews and discussions with potential migrants, which was done under themes that aligned with the study's objectives.

4.2 Demographics of study participants

4.2.1 Quantitative Study Demographics

The demographic features considered in this research comprise gender, age, field of study, marital status, children they have, employment status, income, relatives abroad, and continent. The subject of gender has received an appreciable amount of attention. In the wake of ensuring gender equality, it was important for this study to assess how different genders were involved in the study's survey. The gender analysis in Table 4.1 shows that many of the respondents (68.4%) were males while the remaining 31.6% were females. This means that respondents of the distribution were unevenly distributed across genders.

The age analysis shows that the majority of the respondents (64%) were early adults as they fell at the age of 28 years. The remaining (36%) were young, middle adults and adults. This shows that the majority of the population was youthful. The age distribution is right-skewed, with a concentration of respondents in the younger age groups, particularly in the late 20s.

In terms of the educational level, the results from Table 4.1 revealed that a large proportion of the respondents (39.1%) were MBA candidates. The remaining (60.9%) were MA, MSc, and MPhil candidates. This shows that the majority of the population were MBA candidates.

Again, the results indicate, 21.0% of the respondents were married, whereas 76.5% were unmarried and 2.5% were separated. Also, the majority of the respondents which was 92.1% had no children, whereas 7.9% who had children were the minority.

The distribution of employment status reveals that a greater portion of the respondents were self-employed, representing 37.0% of respondents, 33.3% being the second largest group of respondents who were employed, and the remaining 29.7% representing unemployed respondents.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

Profile	Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	335	68.4
	Female	164	31.6
Age	20-25	11	2.1
	26-30	516	91
	31-35	66	12.8
	36-40	14	2.8
	41-50	8	1.3
Field of Study	LLB	0	0
	MA	93	17.9
	MSc	73	14.1
	MBA	203	39.1
	MPhil	150	28.9
	PhD	0	0
Marital Status	Married	109	21.0
	Single	397	76.5
	Separated	13	2.5
Employment Status	Employee	173	33.3
	Unemployed	154	29.7
	Self-Employed	192	37.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

From Table 4.2, the majority of the respondents had a relative or relatives living abroad, representing 80.3% of the respondents, and 19.7% of the respondents who had no relative abroad. From Table 4.3, a large proportion of the respondents had, at least, a relative living in Europe, representing 42.8%. Also, 26.6% of respondents had relatives in North America, 6.7% of respondents' relatives were living in Africa and 5.2% of respondents' relatives were in Asia. Adding up, 81.3% of the respondents had at least, a relative in a foreign country. This suggests that people with relatives abroad are more likely to emigrate as well.

Table 4.2 Respondents with Relatives Abroad

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
YES	417	80.3
NO	102	19.7
Total	519	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 4.3 Distribution of the Continent Where Respondent Have Relatives Abroad

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a. Asia (China, India, Japan, South Korea, etc)	27	5.2
b. Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Togo, etc)	35	6.7
e. Europe (UK, France, Germany, Italy, etc)	222	42.8
f. North America (US, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, etc)	138	26.6
Total	422	81.3

Source: Survey Data, 2023

4.2.2 Qualitative Study Demographics

There were eight females and eight males among the sixteen sample respondents for the Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Participants ages varied widely, from twenty-one (21) to forty-one (41) years old, with a mean age twenty- nine (29) years old. The average age of the participants is quite young, suggesting that they are in their prime working years and hence can contribute

to Ghana's development priorities. Participant education levels were high, with just eight out of sixteen individuals pursuing a Master of Philosophy in various disciplines under Business Administration. The remaining eight respondents comprised of three MPhil students in the Science, Two MA students in the Social Sciences, One MBA student in Business Administration, and two MPhil Students in Mathematical Sciences.

All respondents were single except three who were interviewed were married. Out of the three, only two had children, one had one, and the other four. Of the total 16 participants, seven were unemployed, two were self-employed and six were employees. On the participants' income, the highest income was GH 3500 while the lowest income was GH 0.

There were two participants for the interviews for migrants- a male and a female. The male, with the pseudonym Paul, was 23 years old while the female with the pseudonym Albie was 29 years old. Paul was residing in Scotland, United Kingdom and Albie was residing in the United States of America. Both participants were unmarried and had resided in their current destinations for at least, the past year and, counting from the time of the interview. This implies that both participants migrated after the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Paul was pursuing a postgraduate in Business and Management. He also had part-time employment with a monthly income of GBP 600. Albie was pursuing a PhD in Economics. She also had a part-time employed with a monthly income of USD 1900.

4.3 Migration Intentions

4.3.1 Migration Intentions Before and After COVID-19

To understand the migration intentions of potential graduate migrants post-COVID-19, respondents were asked about their migration intentions before COVID-19 and their intentions post the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were also asked about their intended destination countries before and post-COVID-19. These were done to ascertain their migration intentions as influenced by COVID-19. The results are shown in the tables below:

From Table 4.4, it is seen that, the majority of the respondents had intentions to migrate before the Covid-19 pandemic, representing 95.6% respondents, and 4.4% of respondents had no intentions to migrate before the Covid-19 pandemic. After Covid-19, respondents with intentions to migrate were 99.0% of the total respondents, and 1.0% of respondents had no intentions to migrate post the Covid-19 pandemic. It is observed that the number of graduates who intended to migrate before COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 increased by 4%.

Table 4.4 Intentions to Migrate Before and After Covid-19

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
BEFORE COVID-19	YES	496	95.6
	NO	23	4.4
AFTER COVID-19	YES	514	99
	NO	5	1
	Total	519	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

4.3.2 Intended Destinations

From Table 4.5 below, the majority of the respondents had intentions to migrate to North America before the COVID-19 pandemic representing 42.0% respondents, 40.7% respondents for Europe, and 12.9% for Asia. Table 4.5 shows a large proportion of the respondents had intentions to migrate to Europe (44.5%), North America (38%), Asia (11%), and South America (5.6%). It can be seen that during post-COVID-19, a large proportion of the respondents intended to migrate to Europe whereas, before Covid-19, a large proportion of the respondents intended to migrate to North America.

Table 4.5 Continent Where Respondent Had Intentions to Migrate Before Covid-19

	BEFORE COVID Percentage	AFTER COVID Percentage
a. Asia (China, India, Japan, South Korea, etc)	12.9	11.0
e. Europe (UK, France, Germany, Italy, etc)	40.7	44.5
f. North America (US, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, etc)	42.0	38.0
g. South America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, etc)	0	5.6
Total	95.6	99

Source: Survey Data, 2023

4.4 Factors influencing migration intentions before and after Covid-19

Migration as a phenomenon is influenced by a lot of factors. Various researchers have uncovered diverse motivating factors that influence migration decisions. This study explored the factors influencing intended graduate migrants' intentions before and after the COVID pandemic. The factors studied included both COVID-related and non-COVID related factors. These findings are presented subsequently below.

For some factors, there were two levels while others had a single level of response. Hence, a mean which is one (1) and above, signifies a higher level of agreement to being an influencing factor for the migration intentions of graduates before/after Covid-19. The highest mean possible is 2 and the lowest mean possible is 1.

Table 4.6 Factors influencing migration intentions Before and After Covid-19

	Before COVID-19		After COVID-19	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic Factors	1.00	.00	1.02	.14
Social and Cultural Factors	1.03	.16	1.00	.04
Political Factors	1.00	.00	1.00	.04
Security and Safety	1.01	.11	1.00	.04
Education and Opportunities	1.01	.09	1.00	.00
Quality of Life	1.00	.00	1.00	.00
Legal and Migration Status	1.51	.50	1.00	.00
Psychological Factors	1.03	.16	1.00	.04
Global events	1.03	.18	1.00	.00

4.4.1 Economic factors

Economic factors such as income disparities between the home country and the intended country, standard of living, and unemployment have long since been associated with migration intentions. This research shows that financial considerations are a major reason for some graduates' migration intentions. These economic factors constitute employment opportunities and income disparities.

From Table 4.6, the mean of 1.00 indicates that, on average, economic factors were perceived as influential in migration intentions. The standard deviation of 0.00 suggests that there is no variability in responses for economic factors; all respondents rated economic factors as the most influential with no deviation from the mean. The mean of 1.02 indicates that, on average, economic factors were perceived as slightly more influential after COVID-19 compared to

before. The standard deviation of 0.14 suggests a moderate level of variability, indicating some diversity in opinions about the impact of economic factors.

Supplementing our findings with primary sources from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to better understand the economic influences, some of the participants interviewed said they planned to leave Ghana because they could make more money working elsewhere. As a result, many Ghanaian youths feel that working in another country would be more lucrative. The motivation of Kofi Yesu is worth reiterating as it centres specifically on the economic factor:

"... I personally think that even before the COVID, we were facing economic challenges, you understand. So, I mean, those were even part of the influencing factors that were pushing me to migrate. I just believe that the covid even just came to make it so obvious and worsen it, you understand? That is, to fuel my intention to leave the country, you understand ..."

Finally, Josephine, a female voice adds on to validate what has already been shared by the males showing that the economic factors are not gender-based:

"OK for me, like I said. It's the money. Apart from their schooling, it's mainly the kind of opportunities that I would get, and opportunities mean money. The economy there, no matter how affected it has been by COVID, it's still better than what we have over here. So, I would still want to go."

Graduates, based on the above, see migration as a calculated step to close financial inequalities and ensure a more stable future. This opinion of intended graduate migrants isn't misplaced as based on the findings of the two graduate migrants, their income levels have greatly increased.

This is the account of Albie who now earns USD 1900 in the United States even as a student:

"While in Ghana, I worked as a research assistant at the University of Ghana. I lived in a rented apartment in Accra and earned about \$150 monthly. I also sometimes received additional income from research projects that came my way. Currently, I work part-time as a Graduate research assistant on the university campus. The average wage rate for such a job is about \$19 per hour compared to what I used to earn in Ghana, which I think should be about \$3 per hour."

Although the coefficients suggest a direction of association which is corroborated by responses from the FGDs, the lack of statistical significance indicates that the observed effects may be due to random chance.

4.4.2 Social and Cultural Factors

Social and Cultural factors have been associated with people's migration decisions. These factors include indicators such as family ties and cultural identity. From the results in Table 4.6, the mean of 1.03 before COVID-19 suggests that, on average, social and cultural factors were also highly influential. The standard deviation of 0.16 indicates a moderate level of variability in responses. This means that, some respondents may have rated social and cultural factors slightly higher or lower than the average. However, after COVID-19, the mean of 1.00 reflects a slight decrease, suggesting that these factors might be slightly less influential in migration decisions. The lower standard deviation indicates less variability in responses compared to before COVID-19.

Nonetheless, per the responses from the FGDs, family ties were not an inhibition to their migration intentions but a motivation for the migration intentions. Some expressed the desire to migrate to remit funds to their families. Atakora, a 29-year-old MPhil Human Resource Management Student shared this:

"Alright, to talk about my family, they are part of the reasons I want to travel. I want to make them feel like this kind of "home Borger" where I would be sending them dollars and pounds every month. I want them to be happy. I mean, I want to move all my family from Ghana, from extended family to everyone. That is it!"

Also, Amorando shared this:

"Leaving my family behind, also creates new family elsewhere that you can also rely on them. So my attachment to my family is not a deterrent. They will even support me 1001% in trying to leave Because of greener pastures and even if I go there and I earn \$1000 in a month and spend like \$800 as expenses and give \$100 as remittances at the end of every month, it's just like giving the equivalent of 1000 Ghana cedis plus here at the end of every month. And I think that alone, it's a plus. It's better than earning 1000 a year and giving 100 cedis, which wouldn't. Make much sense. So, I think that will be the best."

It was realized that the response from the married participants, especially for JAK who had 4 children was different:

"So, on my part, currently there are some influential factors. One with my family. I think having my 4 kids in Ghana who are also schooling, I will miss my family at any point in time because

I don't think I can currently stay outside for more than a year or two without thinking of coming back to look at how my children or my family is faring. That is one thing that might be delaying my inability to move, but I'd go and if I find the opportunities out there to be very luxurious to my expectation, I can move them to join me or send them enough money to cater for certain basic amenities that.”

Again, the findings showed that those who had no intentions of traveling also had family ties as a contributing factor. Serwaa, a 27 years old MPhil Finance Student shared this:

“... Although things are hard in Ghana, I don't want to travel because I am the last born and the only one with my parents. All my senior siblings are in the US apart from my sister who is in the UK with her family. I feel my parents will be lonely when I leave. Over here too, my siblings send me money so I think I am okay here.”

Adding up, family ties is a good consideration for graduates' migration intentions. Many participants consider their families and the advantages of their migration to the well-being of their families before deciding to migrate.

4.4.3 Political factors

In some literature, political factors have been recognised as having a relationship with people's migration intentions and actual migration. These include political instabilities and government policies in home countries.

From Table 4.6, political factors have a mean of 1.00, indicating that, on average, they were perceived as very influential. The absence of deviation (0.00) suggests unanimous agreement among respondents on the high influence of political factors. There is a small increase in the mean for political factors after COVID-19 (1.00), with a low standard deviation (.04), suggesting relatively consistent responses. Political factors might have a slightly increased influence on migration decisions.

Moses shared this on Government policies' impact on his decisions:

“I had no intentions of traveling outside prior to COVID because although things were bad, they were not that bad. Then COVID struck. The lock-down was necessary and we received some waivers on amenities like water and electricity. After lockdown was when our woes began. This Government... can you believe, our water bills doubled, there were increases in taxes and an inclusion of COVID levies which we are still paying till now. Everything receded

and their excuse is always COVID.... We are youth but not dumb. Other economies have survived and our government has failed in rising to the occasion so I must leave.”

The evidence above suggests that, negative political factors contribute to intended migrants' migration decisions.

4.4.4 Personal Safety and Security

Personal Safety and Security is a notable consideration for people intending to migrate. The mean of 1.01 before COVID-19 suggests that, on average, security and safety factors were perceived as highly influential. The standard deviation of 0.11 indicates a relatively low level of variability, suggesting that responses were fairly consistent. The mean for security and safety slightly decreased after COVID-19, however, and the lower standard deviation suggests less variability in responses.

On the other hand, based on the feedback from respondents, personal safety and security had been a major consideration for most intended migrants. Most participants had assumed an easy street and had no plans or safety measures in mind pending their migration. The female respondents however seemed to have given their safety and security a bit of thought than the male respondents. The following responses are indicative of participants' positions on the subject:

“Personally, I didn't consider the US because of security reasons. Yes, because as for them, it's like their racism is automatically coupled with violence almost all the time. With the UK, it's not my personal experience, I've not gone there, but then there are people that I know there who explained that usually it's words. It's words that they would say to you. You will be hurt but it will pass. But with the US, they are more fistful racists, and I don't think my heart can take it. Just because I look a certain way and then you said something and I spoke back, I end up getting shot? And I'm in someone else's country. Nobody knows me apart from the boss that I work with. Wait, I'm gone. Do you get it? It might probably take months before my people here, to hear that something has happened to me and all of that... no!” (Josephine, 27 years old)

“So, there's a saying that 'there's nothing so better than being in your homeland', but the issue is that even Ghana here, currently, with our security, there's no safety. Because you can arrest someone, and take the person to the police station the next day when you go there to ask the police how far with the case, they'll rather arrest you. Yes, security outside, especially because of the racism, though it is being spoken about but when you go there, it is different. That is one

factor. Yes, that is one fear, but that shouldn't stop you from making money. Yes. So yes, it's a factor. Yes, there is some sort of sense of fear that when you go there, you don't know where any one, security-wise how do you handle all those things? Yes, it's there. There are factors but that shouldn't be reasons to stop me from going. I will go and if I'm supposed to die, I die.” (Moses, 31 years)

28 years old Atakora simplifies his position with this contribution:

“I've considered my security too, honestly, because moving even from Sunyani to Accra alone, not knowing anybody wasn't a joke. And then moving from your own country to a different one, where you know nobody, I mean, even the first fear is: how do you even leave the airport? And then who are you going to see? Where are you going? Is it the hotel? Or... it's a lot. So, I mean, I've considered that but then, it's not a factor, I mean it's like a flash, it comes like once in a while and then you forget. The whole truth, to be honest, we just want to leave this country and have a better life. Thank you.”

Evidence above shows that graduates do consider their personal safety and security in forming their migration decisions. It is, however, not a major factor.

4.4.5 Education and Opportunities

Literature has shown that educational and professional prospects influence people to migrate. Results from Table 4.6, show a mean of 1.01 before COVID-19, suggestive that, on an average, education and opportunities were perceived as highly influential. The standard deviation of 0.09 indicates a relatively low level of variability, suggesting a consistent perception among respondents. From results after COVID-19, the mean had decreased slightly, indicating that education and opportunities may be slightly less influential after COVID-19. The standard deviation is low, suggesting consistency in responses.

Below is Amorando's response shedding light on the educational system abroad as informed by his friends abroad:

“I have friends who are schooling in the US. They tell me that the systems there are different and the lecturers offer help to students for the students to excel. That is not the situation here. Besides the course work is challenging, sometimes the educational systems here and facilities do not help one to get the results he or she desires. Look at what is happening to our second-cycle education. The standards keep falling... I have decided that my PhD is going to be elsewhere other than Africa.”

According to some participants, there were employment opportunities in their desired destinations for migration which was a motivation for their migration intentions. JAK, a 36 years old MA in international Relations and Diplomacy shares his perspective on the subject:

"From the information I have gathered so far from different sources; some personal encounters and others from reliable sources. As a student, I've had the opportunity to meet most of the embassy's representatives in Ghana, and when you ask them about employment there, in their assertions, they make it clear to us that the opportunities there, that if you travelled and you were able to go through successfully you will get a job to do and even further your education. Then aside from that, we have so many other websites like my colleagues spoke about which advertise a lot of jobs. For example, if you go to the Canadian website. There are a lot of adverts looking for young people, people who have not even been to school and if you look at their salaries, it tells you that it's more than a PhD holder in Ghana. The amount is like they are more than PhD holders in Ghana, and these are jobs in hotels, restaurants, and cleaning. Normal jobs."

Similarly, Albie and Paul migrated to the United States of America due to better educational systems. Albie expressed it by saying:

"My primary reason for moving out was to get better training for my doctorate. Two things inspired me: the good training the US gives for graduate studies in economics and the high possibility of full funding as compared to other European countries."

Evidence from the FGDs revealed that the perceived availability of jobs influenced graduates' choice of destination for migration. According to Amorando, a 28 years old respondent:

"... It got to a point in time, countries were advertising for labour. For instance, in Canada, the UK, UK especially now the UK still needs labour, and you will see a lot of brain drain from Africa, Ghana, especially the nurses, and moving to the UK and it's now like the norm. So, I think It's paved the way for most of us to go there..."

The top two preferred destinations were Europe and North America. The analysis of responses revealed that the majority of intended migrants chose Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia as their top preferred countries.

Another respondent indicated that;

"OK. For me, I choose the USA, Australia, and then Canada. USA because there are ready, available jobs and there are opportunities. Canada, because it's quite a calm place to be ... based on information from YouTube, basically those that have migrated, sharing their stories and their experiences, and also reading ... and oh! I have friends and relatives there as well..."
(Afia, 25 years old)

The majority of participants made their choices based on information about better opportunities such as education, and job security, in destination countries as opposed to their current country.

4.4.6 Quality of Life

The quality-of-life factor for this study referred to indicators such as cost of living, infrastructure and services. Before COVID, “Quality of life” had a mean of 1.00, indicating unanimous agreement that it is very influential. The absence of deviation (0.00) suggests a high level of agreement among respondents. The mean and standard deviation are unchanged after COVID, suggesting that quality of life remains a consistent factor in migration decisions.

Similarly, based on responses of intended migrants’ resident countries to their destination countries is a significant consideration for most participants. Per this research’s findings, participants considered their destination countries’ social amenities such as schools and healthcare systems better than their current ones' hence, it was a factor influencing their migration intentions. Jay recounted his healthcare considerations for wanting to migrate:

"For the health care, it's one of the major reasons why I would want to migrate. Our best hospital in this country is in shambles and I'm talking about the Korle- Bu teaching hospital. It is the best in West Africa or something... the best public hospital. They don't even have... I know of an auntie whose son died because the whole of Korle-Bu, they didn't have a defibrillator to restart the guy's heart, you understand? Yes! But when you go to this outside these small clinics, you will have things like that to take care of you. So that is the thing!"

Similarly, Lily, a 30-year MBA student added to the comparison with this input:

"Healthcare systems are just one of the many better amenities outside. Talk of schools, infrastructure, and even eateries. Things are better structured in these developed countries so comparatively; I would choose that over what I have here. I believe there are good facilities here in Ghana but you need money to access them and I also don't have money so going to a private hospital is a luxury rather than a necessity according to my income. So, I would rather to a foreign country where I can access these things relatively easier."

Finally, Joe, a 41 years old health worker and MBA Health Services Management student shares what the root cause of the push factor is:

"With the social amenities, the systems are supposed to be working. That's the most important thing. If the system is not working, how are we going to survive? You could see even the rich

are complaining. Our healthcare system is no good. It's not about money, it's about accessibility. Getting the basic things for you to work. If you've got all the money in the world and you cannot have better social amenities, to work with. How will you be able to stay? So, for me, it is the system. The system is a factor. Because it shouldn't be for you to be rich before you can have access to basic things. It is not that I work in that health in that work. In that sector, things are not OK. So, until that is resolved, things would be the same."

4.4.7 Legal and Migration Status

Legal and migration status under this study referred to one's immigration status. The study sought to understand how one's immigration status had a bearing on his or her migration intentions. The mean of 1.51 before COVID-19 suggests that, on average, legal and migration status was perceived as highly influential. The standard deviation of 0.50 indicates a moderate level of variability, suggesting that opinions on this factor varied among respondents. After COVID-19, there is a significant decrease in the mean (1.00), indicating that legal and migration status might be less influential after the pandemic. The standard deviation is low (0.000), suggesting consistency in responses.

4.4.8 Psychological factors

This factor encapsulated one's sense of belonging and longing for home. Similar to social and cultural factors, psychological factors before COVID-19 had a mean of 1.03, indicating that, on average, they were perceived as highly influential. The standard deviation of 0.16 suggests a moderate level of variability in responses. A slight decrease in the mean after COVID-19 is however observed, suggesting a potential decrease in the influence of psychological factors on migration decisions. This implies that, one's sense of belonging and longing for home is not a major consideration for their intentions to migrate.

Only one female participant (Benedicta) indicated that this could be an influence on her. She however expressed it as a reason she would like to return quickly to Ghana. As such, one's sense of belonging is not a deterrent to migration, but a consideration for return intentions.

4.4.9 Global events

This study further investigated how global events such as economic crises, pandemic and more could be a factor for graduates' migration intentions. Results before COVID showed a mean of 1.03 suggesting that, on average, global events were perceived as highly influential. The standard deviation of 0.18 indicates a moderate level of variability in responses. Global events were perceived to be stable after COVID-19, with a mean of 1.00. The absence of deviation (0.00000) indicates unanimous agreement among respondents.

4.4.9.1 COVID-19 Related Factors

In the wake of the recent pandemic, the researcher sought to understand specifically how the COVID pandemic may have influenced graduates' migration intentions. On inquiring on the reason for the reconsideration, Moses, a 31-year MPhil Management Information Systems student responded he expected certain conditions to change for better but they had not, hence his desire to migrate. He expressed this as quoted below:

"Because I was hoping things were going to change. So, I was hoping that after school, right, they were going to be means of maybe employment or maybe social amenities were going to be available. But after, we realised that nothing was going on and there was no hope that such things were going to happen. So, the urge of migrating for greener pastures is more maximized to go rather than stay here."

In addition to this, Jay, a 21-year-old MPhil Statistics Student also mentioned that his decision was based on the availability of opportunities in his destination country due to the death tolls. He responded as follows:

"Before Covid, I didn't let's say, think of traveling outside but after COVID, Yeah, I want to go because a lot of people have died there. There are now more opportunities available there. So, I like to go and then go and work to earn a living."

The advent of COVID-19 has affected the migration intentions of participants as they shared how the sudden strike of COVID-19 led to lockdowns which affected businesses and exacerbated unemployment. Mansa, a 28-year-old MPhil Finance shared this:

"Before Covid-19, I was working in a bank as a contract staff. I had been on contract for three years before Covid struck. My possibility of being retained was slim then COVID broke out. The bank decided to downsize, and I was affected. I lost my job. It was after that that I decided to pursue a master's programme so I would travel for greener pastures because I struggled to find that banking job which I eventually got through a recruitment agency. My salary was peanuts. I only accepted it initially for the experience I could gain."

Participants acknowledged a degree of COVID-19's influence on their migration intentions as it led to high death tolls, lock-downs that affected businesses and affected people economically. The Covid associated factors such as lockdowns, travel restrictions and downsizing of employees resultantly led to increasing economic hardships as Moses narrates:

"Generally, COVID influenced our economic structure in the country, so that is a paramount reason for migrating because anything that happens, the government is telling us, 'it is because of COVID.' So, if it's because of COVID that we are in this economic crisis, then that is one of the reasons why I have to migrate."

Although there was an acknowledgment of Covid's influence on their migration intentions, the consensus was that the economic challenges pre-existed the COVID-19, however, the advent of the pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, pushing them to migrate. This is accurately put by Kofi Yesu as quoted below:

"... I personally think that even before the COVID, we were facing economic challenges, you understand. So, I mean, those were even part of the influencing factors that were pushing me to migrate. I just believe that the covid even just came to make it so obvious and worsened it, you understand? That is, to fuel my intention to leave the country, you understand ..."

Conclusively, before COVID, there existed some factors that were influencing the migration intentions of graduates. COVID's advent has, however, contributed to an increase in the desires and preparations of intended migrants due to their dissatisfaction with their living standards. This supports the literature on how occurrences can influence migration intention

4.4. 10 Return intentions

One's return decision may be tied to the factor influencing a person's migration decision. As such, the probability that one may return to his or her home country is dependent on what "drove" him or her out.

In Tables 4.7 and 4.8 below, majority of the respondents had intentions to return to Ghana after settling in their chosen country, representing 59.7% respondents. The intended durations of their stays however varied. A large proportion of respondents intended to return after a decade, a second majority also intended to return after at least 3 years but at most 5 years. Although the minority of the respondents, 40.3% of respondents had no intentions to return.

Table 4.7 Respondents with The Intention to Return to Ghana

	Frequency	Percentage
YES	310	59.7
NO	209	40.3
Total	519	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 4.8 Intended Period of Stay before Returning

	Frequency	Percentage
long-term or permanent	61	18.5
After 10 years	161	48.9
After 5 years	4	1.2
Between 3-5 years	102	31.0
Less than 2 years	1	.3
Total	329	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

This study further probed into participants' return intentions as a means of better understanding their factors for migration. The findings revealed that a lot of intended graduate migrants intended to settle and establish themselves in their destination countries. As such, they had little intentions of returning. Below are a few responses from both male and female participants when asked about their return intentions:

“If I'm to settle there, God willing, marry, take my spouse and everything there, it will take a very long time,” (Amorando, 28 years)

“I'm not coming back unfortunately. Unfortunately, I'm not coming back. As sad as it may seem, I earlier stated that my future in this country is bleak.” (Kofi Yesu, 26 years)

"For me. My coming back would depend on a lot of factors. Maybe I'll come for a visit and I'll go back ...maybe." (Adwoa Ampiah, 25 years)

"I have no intentions of returning. Being outside would even save me from marital pressures from home. I'd just settle there and move on with my life." (Faustina, 28 years)

"I don't know how things would be but I intend to get my husband there too so I don't have any reason to travel here. Once I can do that, I may only return for important occasions" (Sarfoa, 32 years)

"I won't return. If I die, they. Should bury me there." (Moses, 31 years)

The position of the intended migrants is also reflected in the responses of the two migrants who have settled in their current countries of residences. Albie shared this:

"Currently, I do not have it in mind to return to Ghana to settle down. My main reason has to do with the better job opportunities and career prospects available for me here in the US or other countries."

In addition, Paul had this to say:

"The only reason I would be interested in moving back to Ghana will be the proximity to family and friends, and also if living conditions get better; which does not look very promising at the moment."

Some people had intentions to return, particularly the married. 36 years old JAK expressed his intention to return with this:

"For me. I have the intention of. Bringing some transformation to Ghana... So, to me, even if I should travel today, the maximum number of years, I prefer to stay out of Ghana must be 10 years and after 10 years I would not think of staying there. Even if I want to go back there, it will be more for a business transaction. So, within those 10 years, I should be able to do hard work, generate what I want and then come and then build upon my businesses in Ghana."

Similarly, Afia shared that her intention is to make money at her intended destination country.

The accomplishment of that would hence necessitate her return. Her very words are quoted below:

"For me, I don't intend to stay there forever. I intend to go there, make money, come back, and start what I can. Let's say from 15 to 20 years."

Sabinus a 23 years old MPhil Political Science Student shared his motivation for his return intentions as such:

"Ghana is bad, but I cannot live in another land forever while my country gets looted by corrupt leaders and unconcerned foreign investors. I intend to get an education and work for a short time, enough to accrue me some wealth then I would return to build my country. My motive for migrating is to learn and not to escape the woes facing my land."

Economic improvement is redundant if it does not reflect in the social living standards of an individual. The responses of the participants all point to one influencing factor, accumulation of resources. Hence, their decisions to return are dependent on their satisfaction with their economic standards above all other factors, even for those who intend to return.

4.5 Challenges to migration

Migration from one country to another is not as smooth sailing as rural-urban migration. As independent as countries are, so are the immigration processes. The more developed a country is, the more stringent its immigration processes are. Participants had different approaches to their migration plans hence their challenges varied however, some basic processes cut across regardless of one's approach, particularly the immigration procedures. In assessing the challenges of potential graduate migrants and the extent to which the challenges could affect their migration intentions, respondents were asked about their migration challenges. The findings are presented below.

Table 4.9 Respondents who have encountered potential challenges to migration.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid YES	491	94.6
NO	28	5.4
Total	519	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

From Table 4.9 above, the majority of the respondents encountered potential challenges to migration. 94.6% encountered challenges to migration whereas the remaining 5.4% respondents, the minority of the respondents had not encountered any potential challenge yet.

To verify the authenticity of the challenges faced by intended migrants, the steps they had taken in pursuing their migration intention was inquired of as presented in Table 4.10. The step with the largest percentage was the application for schools abroad with 28.3%, followed closely by the application or acquisition of passports with 27.6 respondents and next was job hunting for employment opportunities abroad. The others ranked lower than 10% with the writing of proficiency exams ranking lowest. Similarly, some participants of the FGDs expressed intentions to apply for Doctoral schools in their intended destination countries however, only a few had done so. Also, only a few had also applied for jobs outside the country.

These steps give an idea of the extent potential graduate migrants have gone in pursuing their migration intentions and it also validates their claim on the challenges they have faced.

Table 4.10 Steps taken in pursuing migration intentions

	Frequency	Percentage
a. Applied for a passport.	136	27.6
b. Sent applications to schools abroad.	139	28.3
c. Job hunting for employment abroad	129	26.2
d. Made enquiries on immigration processes.	30	6.1
e. Applied for a visa.	42	8.5
f. Studying or writing proficiency exams (e.g., IELTS, GRE etc.)	16	3.3
Total	492	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The immediate Table 4.11 shows several challenges and the extent to which the respondents consider them challenging.

Table 4.11 Responses on Extent to Which the Listed Challenges Would Impede the Migration Intentions of the Respondents.

Challenges	Not at all challenging	Slightly challenging	Moderately challenging	Very challenging	Extremely challenging
Stringent immigration laws and visa restriction	7.04	13.68	35.04	27.04	21.76
Insufficient funds for migration expenses.	0.56	24.64	34.16	36.12	50.12
Strong family obligations or responsibilities in the home country.	27.68	36.84	12.32	9.72	15.04
Lack of proficiency in the language of the destination country.	57.36	21.6	6.08	0	2.72
Fear of cultural differences and difficulty in adapting.	34.68	29.12	15.76	3.28	5.12
Difficulty finding a job in the desired field abroad.	14.56	22.88	19.36	17.28	4.24
Limited access to healthcare or concerns about health insurance.	38.4	27.84	6.88	0	4.64
Lack of social connections or support in the destination country.	21.28	34.24	8.72	6.56	7.6

Source: Survey Data, 2023

50% of respondents indicating that insufficient funds for migration expenses were extremely challenging, this challenge can be said to be the biggest challenge, followed by stringent immigration laws and visa restrictions which scored 21.76%. This finding is corroborated by responses from the Focus Group Discussions.

Participants shared challenges with the visa acquisition procedures based on personal experiences and those of close friends. Moses had a lot to say on this subject:

“The challenges are vast. In Ghana here getting the visa, let's let' just take it step by step. First off, getting a Passport, you apply for a passport, and they will tell you they have the pack and then they have the premium. You pay for the premium that you want. When you go to the premium, they have the VIP in the premium and then we have the VVIP in the premium. When you are done and you are lucky that you've gotten your passport now, then it comes to the process of acquiring even a visa, my sister, my sister, I know what I'm saying. It is hell! Even academically... if you want to go through the education through Scholarship, it is not easy. Before you get a scholarship, you need to submit a bank statement that shows that you have close to, for some banks, you need to have like 75,000 Ghana cedis in your account. Where are you going to get that money from? A colleague of mine just left for France last month. He came and applied through Alliance Francaise. They went through the whole process before; they were going in for the visa Application. Though he had gotten the scholarship, he needed to submit a bank statement that when he went there...the scholarship was just for your tuition. The scholarship does not contain your accommodation and your feeding on arrival...So you need to prove that you have the means to be able to cater for yourself when you go there. And you have to present a financial statement with a certain sum of money and 7500 Ghana cedis, when you take it into euros, it's not that much, but because of our cedis that is why it sounds that huge, and he has to go and buy a bank statement from someone for 118 Euros. That's 18,000Ghana Cedis bank statement. The money is not his ooo. So, they would deposit it into his account. Then he will take it to the embassy to apply. After applying, they will revert the money back and just doing that is 18,000 Ghana Cedis. Just doing that for you is GH18,000...”

After he went on to conclude with his comments, the researcher further probed to inquire whether these costs were normal or they were the cost of express services, otherwise called "protocol". This was what he shared, adding to the stream of challenges:

"If you are going for the normal police report, it's 130 Ghana cedis. It takes six months, and it can extend to 1 year. If you want the premium to be GH1200, one week, which one will you go in for? You won't follow any queue. Yellow fever. The one that you were injected in your family community. When you take it, they'll tell you they don't want that one. They want the international yellow fever card. For that one, you are paying between 200 and 500 Ghana Cedis, which is supposed to be free. You have to bring a land report. Yes, you have to bring a land certificate. UK, you have to bring a land

certificate. You have to bring your rent, if you are renting, you have to bring your rent certificate or rent tenancy agreement. You have to bring your Utility receipt before you can even use that to apply for the residency permit. So, my sister, if you don't have like GH 200,000, you won't go. So, the issue is that if I have that sum of money, why don't I stay here? Now the issue is that there's nothing wrong with staying. But ask yourself. Does society give you that enabling environment to even contain such money? Now let's just say you're trying to operate and open a new small business. Look at the number of taxes you pay. Even registering the business, look at the hassle you need to go through and after that the system, the government does not even allow you to operate well. Now look at the way businesses are collapsing. Just get up today wear NPP attire and sit in front of your store. Once they lose power, you'd lose that shop. So why won't I use that money to go outside I know that even if I have 100 Ghana cedis, it will be protected for me."

In supplement of Moses' account, Benedicta also shared her personal experience as follows:

"For me, I got to school, but then I didn't go because of the money not being there. They were expecting me to have the equivalent of EUR 18,000. Like they were expecting me to have that amount in my account. And then when I got there, they were going to close the account. It's not like those that you can take the statement. They would hold the account and then every month I would have been given the equivalent of €800. That was the cost of living over there, so every month, they would give me some for expenses ...whose account are you going to use for that? I just have to forget so."

Finally, Josephine, a 27years old MPhil Marketing student also shared what she had heard:

"I haven't made any attempts yet because I am looking at finishing first. but some friends have complained about visa acquisition processes... they said it is tedious and you could be bounced even for education purposes so if that could be resolved, it can help."

These challenges of intended migrants could not be fabricated. Based on the findings from the two migrants, Albie summarized her similar experience as such:

"I went to the US by flight; the entire cost of travel should be about \$2500. The funds for my travel came from donations from friends and family and my personal savings. I thought I wouldn't make it because the visa appointment date available as of June 2022 was January 2023. Meanwhile, my school was reopening in August. It was hectic but I closely worked with my guardian throughout the entire travel process."

In summary, a major challenge to the migration of graduates was the monetary requirements involved in the procedures, especially in seeking for express services which impedes their ability to migrate.

4.5.1 Intended ways of mitigating Migration Challenges

Table 4.12 Distribution of Respondent’s Intentions on How They Intend to Mitigate the Challenges.

	Frequency	Percentage %
a. I haven’t thought about it yet.	171	32.9
b. Secure a loan.	66	12.7
c. Solicit help from friends and family.	149	28.7
d. Rely on travel agents.	107	20.6
e. Seek help from high-ranking officials.	14	2.7
Other	12	2.3
Total	519	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

From Table 4. above, 32.9% of the total respondents had not thought about how to mitigate the challenges yet, whereas the second largest proportion (28.7%) chose to solicit help from friends and family.

Similarly, a number of the respondents from the Focus Group Discussions had no plan on how to mitigate the foreseen challenges. Nonetheless, they were still hopeful to migrate amidst the challenges that may come. The migrant respondents from the interview however shared that they relied on their savings and got help from some family and friends.

One person, JAK shared this on how he was going to sell a family property to mitigate his financial challenge of migrating. He expressed it as such:

"If today, I even get someone here who wants to buy my father's Cocoa farm, I am prepared to sell it. So, after selling and making that money, I will not use that money in Ghana. I will go outside and make additional money."

4.5.2 Future of Migration

Covid-19 came with a lot of disruption in the flow of human activities globally. Migration was not left out. Disruptions in economic activities as well as travel restrictions and lockdowns affected the lives of people and have, to an extent, contributed to their choices, per the

responses of participants. in the estimation of the future of migration post-Covid-19, these are what participants had to contribute:

"When you come to Ghana, I will say that we have decided to use COVID as a shade cover. In terms of our poor performances and our inability to expand our economies, the people who were affected by COVID are not complaining about COVID. Look at China's external complaints about COVID-19. Is Italy? Look at the death toll in Italy, are they complaining about it? They are thinking about building their economies. So, to me, it's not about Covid. Even today, if there's another pandemic and there's an opportunity, I would prefer to die outside. And then you come back to Ghana, and they bury you. That one, at least you've made a good name. Frankly speaking, every youth in Ghana now wants to travel because our economy is in shambles and the leaders are deceiving us. If the government does not sit up, there will be no one in Ghana in the next five years." (JAK, 36 years old)

Afia Adoma, a 25 years MPhil Student also shares her thoughts:

"...I don't know if Ghana is doing something about it. If not for a few years to come, I don't know the people who will be left here. Because you'll notice that the skilled ones are the ones leaving. If it's carpenters, the skilled ones are leaving. If they are mechanics, the skilled ones are leaving, so the ones that will be left behind will not have the skill to even pass on to the next generation that is coming up. So, I think if anything, the country should do something about the rate at which they are workforce is leaving or is exiting their country. otherwise, for some time to come. You just notice that you'll be left with the aged and the children who are not adding so much to the economy of their country."

These responses imply that there is likely going to be a shortage of skilled labour in the country in a few years to come if measures are not put in place to better the standards of living of the people, especially the highly skilled persons.

4.6 Discussions

This segment within the chapter delves into the study's results and juxtaposes them with findings from related research in literature.

4.6.1 Migration Intention Before and After Covid-19

This research seeks to understand a critical question that has implications for the country: what are the migration intentions of youth graduates post-COVID-19? Objective one sought to understand the migration intentions by analyzing the changes before and after Covid-19. Based on the result from the quantitative data, the majority of graduates intended to migrate both

before and after COVID-19. This contradicts the findings of the quantitative data where fewer participants intended to migrate before COVID-19 but most intended to migrate post-COVID-19. However, one thing is significant- the number of graduates who intend to migrate post-COVID-19 was the majority in both analyses. Conclusively, the intention of graduate students post-Covid-19 is to migrate. These findings affirm the UNCTAD (2018) report on a growing trend of highly skilled labour emigrating from Ghana. The UNCTAD's report however mentions migrants to be under 35 years, an age limit set for describing youth. The findings however show that even people aged above 35 to 42 also had intentions of migrating. As such, migration of graduates is not restricted to the youth, although they are more likely to migrate. Contrary to this finding a study in Gambia revealed that young individuals associated the pandemic with a reduced inclination to migrate to various destinations (Tijan et. al, 2022). Geographical and economic differences may have contributed to the differences in findings, proof that the findings of this research may not be universally applicable.

4.6.2 Factors for Migration

Literature from the past has centered migration from developing countries to developed countries on the motivation of push-and-pull factors. Push factors encompass a range of challenges, including inadequate funding, limited career prospects, substandard compensation and working conditions, deficient retirement plans, unfavourable work environments, low job satisfaction, managerial inadequacies, and concerns for personal safety. Whereas the pull factors are the opposite of the push factors found in destination countries for migration. This research's findings affirm previous research works that have cited economic factors (such as income disparities and employment opportunities), social amenities, healthcare considerations, and education. Findings on the economic factors showed this was the most influential factor motivating migration intentions as it prevailed before and increased after COVID-19. Findings

from participants in FGDs revealed that, they intended to migrate to make more money elsewhere. This is because, they perceived working elsewhere to be more lucrative.

Another factor for migration that was realised was the Social and Cultural factor. Social and cultural factors, like relationships and cultural aspects, did not show a clear and consistent impact on people's thoughts about migration. Not all respondents who had relatives outside Ghana wanted to join them specifically. Also, attachments to families here was not a major consideration. However, based on the qualitative findings, a major motivation for desiring to travel is to remit funds to family members back in Ghana. For some who do not want to migrate, it is to take care of their families. Most families encouraged and supported their members to travel. For most people, their families were their first point of call in resolving financial challenges concerning migration expenses. Family members collaborated in funding travel expenses for members who got the opportunity to travel. The Ghanaian context of family interdependency was seen at play in the motivations of intended graduate migrants from the findings, a backing to Dako-Gyeke's (2015) findings.

The perceived availability of educational and professional opportunities was found to be another major factor for people's migration intentions. Graduates' intentions to migrate were driven by a comparison of the opportunities they would take advantage of in their destination countries as opposed to what was available in their home country. Advertisements of job availability and educational opportunities on diverse media informed graduates' decisions. This research further proves that Lee's push and pull factors are influenced by larger global structures using the dual-labour theory. Although COVID-19 is an intervening factor in Lee's push-and-pull theory, there is a bigger force of demand and supply at a global level which is influencing migration. Most migrants intend to migrate to various places because they have found that their services are needed.

The destinations of intended migrants were based on the availability of their needs and wants otherwise, the quality of their lives. The availability of social amenities was a strong consideration for intended graduate migrants. Comparing the healthcare structures and systems in Ghana to their destination countries, participants suggested that the quality access was expensive in Ghana unlike the developed countries, a luxury they could not afford. The findings corroborate Kutor et al. (2021) contention that migration decisions are chiefly intertwined with the exacerbation of social, demographic, and environmental challenges, such as resource depletion, and states' inability to effectively implement their geo-economic strategies observed by graduates. As such, most participants chose developed countries as their destinations. Various research works have highlighted OECD countries, particularly North America and Europe as the prime destinations of most African migrants (Ceesay, 2017; Adesote, and Osunkoya, 2018). This research affirms those findings as these two continents remained the top destinations for intended migrants. The third preferred continent was Asia and this could be traced to the fast-developing economies of some Asian countries like China, Japan, and South Korea as posited by Kunwar (2020).

A study by Ipole (2018, citing Machayo & Keraro, 2013) indicated that most graduate migrants were from STEM fields, Healthcare Sectors, and teaching. However, this study shows that the field of the intended migrant was not a factor for consideration as most of the respondents were from the field of Business Administration. Although, being married had a strong negative impact before COVID-19, but its effect diminished after COVID-19. Graduates' marital statuses do not influence their migration intentions. Age also had a negative impact before COVID-19, but a positive impact after COVID-19. Deductively, age is just a number, as most graduates wanted to migrate regardless of their ages.

Based on the demographic of gender, the findings of this research show that gender is not a factor that influences migration intentions. Although females were found to be more inclined

towards migrating than males, the demographics show female participants to be fewer than males. Both male and female participants' migration intentions were shaped by their expected prospects in their intended destination countries as a majority of participants had intentions to migrate. This slightly contradicts research by Akamavi & Alwang (2020) which suggests that male graduates are more likely to prioritize economic factors as a motivation for migration. This difference may be attributed to increased women empowerment and gender mainstreaming in education.

4.6.3 Return Intentions of Potential Graduate Migrants

This research further investigated the return intentions of intended migrants. Triangulating findings from the quantitative questionnaires, the Focus Group Discussions with intended migrants, and the interviews with Migrants, the findings of the qualitative study slightly differed from the quantitative. Per the surveys, most graduates had intentions of returning to Ghana (the difference was 19%). On the qualitative hand, the intentions not to return were the majority and that was corroborated with the decisions of current migrant respondents who also had no intentions of returning. This qualitative finding aligned with findings from Dako-Gyeke (2016). Nonetheless, the quantitative findings revealed that most intended migrants desired to return after at least a decade. This period has implications for human resources as their youthful energy would have been depleted by their return.

4.6.4 Challenges to Migration

Migration is multi-dimensional and the approach to emigration varies. Of the intended graduate migrant respondents who were used for this study, all had no intentions of rigging any international migration procedures by migrating illegally. Their challenges hence bordered on the normal procedures for international migration.

Per the findings, the major challenge to migration was the financial cost that had to be incurred. The costs increased when one needed immediate or urgent delivery of services, otherwise known as express services. More than twice the usual cost of a service had to be incurred in order to speed up the delivery of services such as passport acquisition, and CID reports. The cost of medical tests such as yellow fever and tuberculosis also added to the increasing cost of travel, the cost of flight tickets notwithstanding. All of these make traveling, especially to developed countries very cost intensive. This affirms the findings of other studies that have cited the “high cost of migration” as an impediment to the migration intentions of youth (Setrana & Bekoe, 2023).

4.6.5 Mitigation plans

International migration does not happen in a day. It takes a series of processes to eventually move from one country to another. Based on the responses from the participants, many people do not preconceive how to overcome their perceived challenges. They usually prefer to encounter the challenge first, before devising a plan on how to mitigate it. For the major challenge which is financial difficulties, the options in mitigating this highly hinged on reliance on family and friends, as well as the sale of properties. This implies that the support of family and friends helps in achieving one's migration intentions.

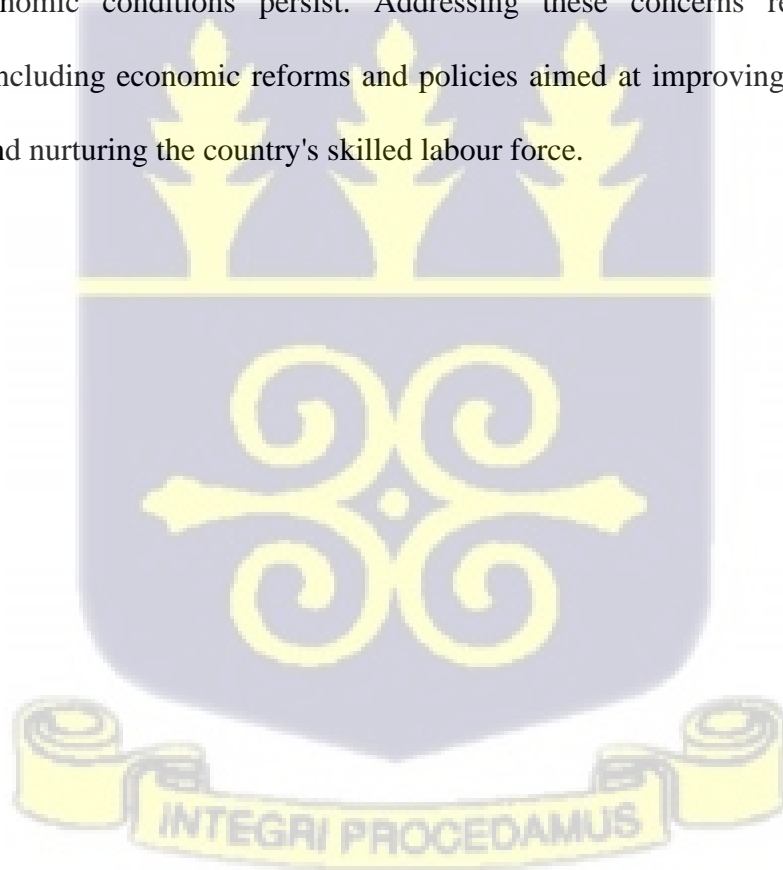
4.6.6 Future of Migration

On the subject of the future of migration in Ghana, the analysis suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about disruptions in global human activities, including migration patterns. Economic challenges, travel restrictions, and lockdowns have influenced people's choices regarding migration. Looking towards the future of migration post-COVID-19, there is a concern about a potential shortage of skilled labour in Ghana.

The viewpoint is that the pandemic has been used as a metaphorical "shade cover" to address existing economic challenges rather than focusing solely on its adversities. Participants express a desire to migrate as a means of seeking better opportunities and escaping economic difficulties and perceived governmental shortcomings.

Additionally, the potential departure of skilled individuals is highlighted as a risk for Ghana's workforce. The concern is that the skilled workforce, including contractors, is leaving, leaving behind a less skilled workforce. This could result in a shortage of skilled labour and a lack of knowledge transfer to the younger generation, impacting the country's economic development.

In conclusion, the discourse suggests that Ghana may face challenges in retaining skilled labor if current economic conditions persist. Addressing these concerns requires strategic interventions, including economic reforms and policies aimed at improving living standards and retaining and nurturing the country's skilled labour force.



CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The concluding chapter of the research offers a recapitulation of the primary findings, conclusions, and recommendations for policy development derived from the study's results.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

5.1.1 Migration Intentions Prior and post covid-19

The study found that migration intentions before and after the advent of COVID-19 were not the same as graduates' intentions to migrate increased post-COVID-19.

The majority of graduate reconsidered their migration intentions and decided to migrate after the COVID-19 pandemic and the halt of travel restrictions. Many also reconsidered their destination continents with the majority deciding to emigrate to Europe, contrary to their prior COVID-19 intentions to migrate to North America. These two continents, nonetheless, remain the two top destinations for most intended graduate migrants.

5.1.2 Factors Influencing Migration Intentions

This research revealed that the motivations behind migration from developing countries to developed countries, are varied, hinging on push-and-pull factors. Economic factors, such as income disparities and employment opportunities, were found to greatly influence migration intentions. However, participants in FGDs primarily intended to migrate for better educational opportunities, well-paid jobs, and better social amenities. The study found that quality healthcare access in Ghana was expensive compared to developed countries, highlighting the exacerbation of social, demographic, and environmental challenges. Social and cultural factors, such as family interdependency and the presence of relatives abroad, also played a role in migration intentions. The perceived availability of educational and professional opportunities was also a factor, with advertisements on diverse media influencing decisions. The destinations

of intended migrants were based on their needs and wants, with developed countries being the top destinations. The study also found that the global demand and supply are influencing migration, with COVID-19 acting as an intervening factor.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on graduates' migration intentions is evident in the study. Despite initial expectations for positive changes post-pandemic, participants found conditions did not improve as anticipated, prompting a stronger desire to migrate. The high death tolls associated with COVID-19, coupled with lockdowns affecting businesses and causing economic hardships, influenced participants' decisions to migrate. While economic challenges pre-existed the pandemic, there's a consensus that COVID-19 exacerbated these issues, becoming a catalyst for increased migration intentions. Overall, the study supports existing literature on how significant events, like a global health crisis, can shape and intensify migration intentions (Bah, Batista, Gubert, & McKenzie, 2021).

Differences in socio-demographic characteristics, specifically age, marital status and gender were found not to determine graduates' intentions whether to migrate or not as shown in other studies. Due to the factors influencing the migration intentions of graduates, many graduates intended to stay in their destination for a long term before reconsidering their migration intentions.

5.1.3 Challenges to migration and intended mitigation Plans.

Mostly, challenges surround mainstream practices of international migration. In this light, financial strains at different stages were identified as the biggest barrier to migration. Also, instant or express services including processing passports and retrieving CIA reports attracted much higher prices which made migration very unaffordable to many youths.

A significant obstacle that surfaced was money, and the methods for getting over it that were found mostly depended on selling personal belongings and getting support from friends and

family. This emphasizes how important social networks and family support are in helping people fulfill their aspirations. However, graduate migrants are more likely to face perceived challenges head-on before devising mitigation techniques, rather than assuming preconceived notions about how to overcome them.

5.2 Conclusion

This research sought to understand the migration intentions of graduates, the factors influencing their intentions and the challenges that impedes their intentions to migrate post-COVID-19. This study concludes by highlighting a significant change in graduates' intentions to migrate between before and after the COVID-19 outbreak started. Following COVID-19, there has been a noticeable rise in the desire to migrate, with a significant proportion shifting from North America to Europe as their preferred destination.

A complex array of factors, including social and cultural aspects, work chances, educational options, healthcare access, and economic considerations, are found to influence migration aspirations. The research emphasizes how important economic variables continue to be, especially when it comes to employment possibilities and income discrepancies as both employed and the unemployed had intentions to migrate. The role of social networks and family support in overcoming financial barriers associated with migration is also emphasized on. Notably, the global economic crises and the effects of COVID-19 show up as factors influencing migration choices. Contrary to popular belief, sociodemographic traits like age, marital status, and gender were found to be insignificant in predicting migration intentions.

The study lastly found that significant impediments arise from challenges inherent in the migration process, including financial stress and expensive charges for basic services. The report highlights the graduates' resourcefulness in overcoming these obstacles, frequently turning to selling personal items and asking friends and family for assistance. The study also

reveals graduates' planning for perceived challenges. Crucially, it highlights how proactive some graduates are in tackling perceived obstacles and coming up with solutions, demonstrating people's tenacity and resolve in following their desires to immigrate and the opposite for some.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted global migration patterns, leading to concerns about a potential shortage of skilled labour in Ghana. The pandemic is perceived as a cover not to address economic issues, with graduates seeking better opportunities. The potential departure of skilled workers, could lead to a shortage of skilled labour and hinder knowledge transfer to younger generations, impacting Ghana's economic development. Strategic interventions are needed to address these concerns.

5.3 Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from the data collected from graduate students in the University of Ghana Community necessitates that the Government and all other stakeholders of migration consider the implementation of the following:

The Government in collaboration with the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) should consider the implementation of an Economic Diversification and Job Creation Initiative to stimulate local industries, especially the agricultural sector that is value chain enhancement (export-oriented agriculture), to attract foreign investment and promote the growth of key sectors. The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) could offer tax incentives, land grants, and streamlined business registration processes to locals especially the youth to ease the financial burden in establishing businesses. This must be done on a large scale to create room for more skilled labour employment opportunities.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Employment, together with other related agencies such as the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) could seek sponsorship for graduates with ground-breaking innovative ideas that could lead to mass employment of other graduates. This would lead to a shift in overdependence on the government and new rise of industrialization and innovation that could further advance the country.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs could launch a Migration Affordability Initiative to subsidize key migration-related expenses. In collaboration with the scholarship secretariat, scholarships could also be floated for more people for specific purposes like education. In return, the beneficiaries would be bound by a contract which would necessitate their return to contribute to key sectors in the country, which would be prepared prior to their return. This initiative can be smoothly run if the Ministry liaises with beneficiaries' destination countries.

With the new wave of remote jobs, highlighted thanks to COVID-19, the National Youth Authority and the Ghana Employers' Association can consider a partnership with companies and employment agencies in foreign companies to recruit skilled labour for remote jobs in developed countries. The aforementioned organisations would do well to negotiate good wages for their employees. This way, the labour would not have to migrate for employment, and the government would be able to earn some taxes on their income earned which could contribute to economic growth.

The above recommendations are not exhaustive in addressing the challenges emanating from this study. As such, further studies would be required to enable stakeholders make better decisions that would serve the interest of graduates, and all citizenry.



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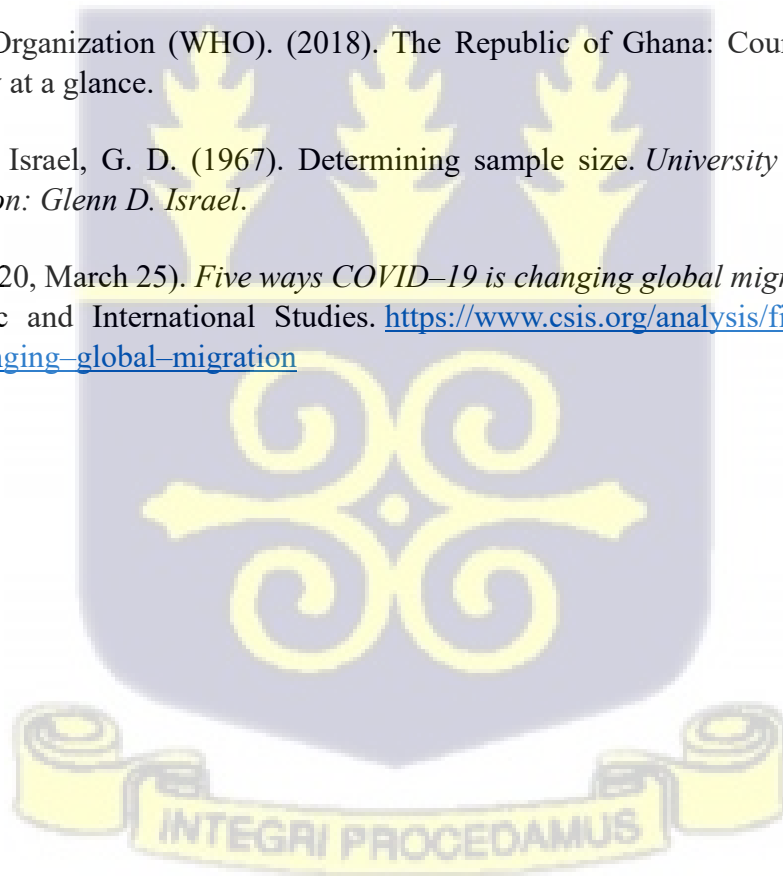
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SECTION B: MIGRATION INTENTIONS POST-COVID-19

9. Did you have intentions of emigrating prior to the Covid-19 pandemic?
 a. Yes b. No

ii. If yes to Q9, which continent did you intend to migrate to?

- a. Asia (China, India, Japan, South Korea, etc)
- b. Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Togo, etc)
- c. Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, Papua Guinea, Fiji, etc)
- d. Antarctica
- e. Europe (UK, France, Germany, Italy, etc)
- f. North America (US, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, etc)
- g. South America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, etc)

10. Do you have intentions of emigrating post the Covid-19 pandemic?

- a. Yes b. No

ii. If yes to Q5, which continent do you intend to migrate to?

- a. Asia (China, India, Japan, South Korea, etc)
- b. Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Togo, etc)
- c. Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, Papua Guinea, Fiji, etc)
- d. Antarctica
- e. Europe (UK, France, Germany, Italy, etc)
- f. North America (US, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, etc)
- g. South America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, etc)

SECTION C: FACTORS INFLUENCING MIGRATION INTENTIONS

11. What factors were influencing your migration intentions prior to the Covid-19 pandemic? (Choose as many as are applicable)

Broad Factors	Sub-Factors	Ticking
Economic Factors	- Employment Opportunities in home country	
	- Income Disparities	
Social and Cultural Factors	- Family Ties	
	- Cultural Identity	
Political Factors	- Political Stability in home country	
	- Government Policies	
Security and Safety	- Personal Safety	
	- Healthcare	
Education and Opportunities	- Educational Opportunities	
	- Professional Opportunities	
Quality of Life	- Cost of Living	
	- Infrastructure and Services	
Legal and Migration Status	- Immigration Status	
Psychological Factors	- Sense of Belonging	

	- Longing for Home	
Global Events	- Events such as economic crises, pandemics, etc.	
Social Networks	- Strength of social connections in home country	

12. What are the factors are influencing your migration intentions post Covid-19?
(Choose as many as are applicable)

Broad Factors	Sub-Factors	Ticking
Economic Factors	- Employment Opportunities in home country	
	- Income Disparities	
Social and Cultural Factors	- Family Ties	
	- Cultural Identity	
Political Factors	- Political Stability in home country	
	- Government Policies	
Security and Safety	- Personal Safety	
	- Healthcare	
Education and Opportunities	- Educational Opportunities	
	- Professional Opportunities	
Quality of Life	- Cost of Living	
	- Infrastructure and Services	
Legal and Migration Status	- Immigration Status	
Psychological Factors	- Sense of Belonging	
	- Longing for Home	
Global Events	- Events such as economic crises, pandemics, etc.	
Social Networks	- Strength of social connections in home country	

13. To what extent has the Covid pandemic influenced your migration intentions?

14. How did you gather information about your preferred migration destinations? (Select all that are applicable)

- a. Online research
- b. Social media
- c. Networking with professionals
- d. Career fairs and events
- e. Consultation with migration agencies
- f. Recommendations from friends or family
- g. Other (please specify) _____

20. How do you intend to mitigate these challenges?

- a. I haven't thought about it yet.
- b. Secure a loan.
- c. Solicit help from friends and family.
- d. Rely on travel agents.
- e. Seek help from high-ranking officials.

INTERVIEW GUIDE (FOR GRADUATE MIGRANTS)

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

1. Gender: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Level of Education: _____
4. Field of Study: _____
5. Marital Status: _____
6. Country of Residence: _____
7. Number of months/ years of residency in current country of residence: _____
8. What is your current employment status?
 - a. Employee
 - b. Unemployed
 - c. Self-employed
 - d. Other (please specify) _____
9. How much income do you earn on a monthly basis? _____

FACTORS FOR MIGRATION

10. Briefly describe your living conditions in Ghana prior to your migration. *{Probe for employment status, housing situation, economic conditions, and income earning skills}*.
11. How did you access information about available job opportunities in other countries prior to your migration?
12. Why did you choose to migrate out of Ghana? *{Probe for push factors}*
13. Briefly describe your migration journey from Ghana to your destination country. *{Probe for mode of transportation, cost of travel, source of funds and the facilitator of the movement}*.

14. What really inspired you about your country of residence? *{Probe for pull factors including opportunities from covid-19}*.
15. Discuss the working conditions in your current country of residence. *{Probe for the specific work in which the respondent was engaged during his/her stay in the country of destination. Probe for the average wage rate in the destination country compared to Ghana}*.
16. Describe the types of work in which your colleagues from Ghana or other African countries are engaged in your country of residence?
17. Would you like to return to Ghana and why? *{Probe for push and pull factors for return migration}*.
18. What were your expectations of the destination country prior to your migration?
19. To what extent have these expectations been met, and will you describe your stay abroad as successful or unsuccessful and why?
20. Are there any additional comments?



INTERVIEW GUIDE (FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH POTENTIAL MIGRANTS)

1. Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves and share their educational qualifications, marital status, and field of study.

Migration Intentions:

2. Ask participants about their thoughts prior to covid-19 and their current thoughts on migrating to another country for employment or further studies within the next two years. (Probe for participants to share their motivations and aspirations behind the potential migration.)
3. Facilitate a discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced their decision to migrate. Encourage participants to share their personal experiences and perspectives.

- b. Ask participants to discuss specific ways the pandemic has affected their thoughts processes and decision-making regarding migration.

4. Influence of non- COVID-19-related Factors:

- a. Discuss with participants the influence of various COVID-19-related factors on their migration decisions. Use the following prompts:

- i. How has the pandemic impacted their perception of job opportunities in potential destination countries?

- ii. In what ways did travel restrictions influence their ability to explore migration options?

- iii. Has the economic downturn and financial uncertainties caused by the pandemic made them reconsider their migration plans?

- iv. Discuss the importance of healthcare and social support systems in potential destination countries in light of the pandemic.

- v. Explore any concerns about personal safety and security in potential destination countries influenced by the pandemic.

5. Information Sources:

- a. Inquire about the sources from which participants gathered information about the impact of COVID-19 on potential migration destinations.

- b. Discuss the reliability of these sources and whether they helped in understanding the situation and making informed decisions.

6. Preferred Destination:

- a. Explore whether the participants' choice of potential migration destinations has been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Encourage them to share their reasons and experiences related to this.)

7. Challenges and Concerns:

a. Ask participants to share the main challenges or concerns they perceive in relation to migrating post the COVID-19 pandemic. Encourage open discussion and exchange of viewpoints among participants.

8. Supportive Factors:

a. Inquire about any specific measures or incentives that potential destination countries could or have provided to alleviate concerns and encourage migration despite the pandemic. (Encourage participants to share their opinions and suggestions.)

9. Future Outlook:

a. Discuss participants' views on how they believe the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the overall migration landscape in the coming years. (Encourage them to share any predictions or insights they may have).

10. Closing:

a. Provide an opportunity for participants to share any additional comments or insights regarding the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on their migration decisions.

b. Thank participants for their active participation and valuable contributions to the discussion.



APPENDIX B

Themes and Sub-themes for the Focused Group Discussion

Themes	Sub-codes
Migration Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intention before Covid • Intentions After Covid • Reconsidering migration • Effect of Covid on migration decision
Non- Covid related factors for migration and sources of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition scholarships • HealthCare consideration • Personal safety and security • Social Support consideration • Sources of information
Preferred Destination and Return intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries intended to travel to • Estimated duration of stay • Reason for the chosen destination • Return Intention
Challenges and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquiring a passport • Applying to schools • Visa Application • Interventions
Future of Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect of Covid on the economy • Impact of Covid in migration years to come

Source: Field survey (2023)

Themes and Sub-themes for the interviews with migrants

Themes	Sub-codes
Before migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment status before migrating • Housing • Income earned • Reason for Migration

Current Country of Residence

- Current Employment
- Expectations for the destination country
- Met Expectations
- Minimum wage
- Types of jobs for Ghanaians

Return intentions

- Thoughts of Returning to Ghana

Migration Journey from Ghana

- Mode of transportation
- Reason for Country Residence
- Source of funds

Source: Interviews (2023)

