

# Factors Responsible for Youth Migration to the City: The Case of Ghana

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## Abstract

One of the major concerns in Ghana, like in most developing countries today, is how to manage the influx of youth migration from rural north to cities in urban south; in search of opportunities and a better life. The present study was undertaken generally for the purpose of investigating the causes of rural-urban migration of youth from northern Ghana to southern Ghana, with a view of providing insights into the growth, direction, and continuation of internal migration flows in Ghana. More specifically, the aim of the study was to investigate the pull factors influencing in-migration; to investigate the push factors influencing out-migration and to recommend policy and programme interventions for strengthening support programme activities for migrants. The study, therefore, attempts to answer the following questions: What are the push factors affecting out-migration? What are the pull factors affecting in-migration? What policy and programme interventions can help strengthen support programme activities for migrants? The study involved a cross-sectional survey conducted with a total of 89 respondents randomly selected from the list of beneficiaries of a NGO programme in Tamale in Ghana, through questionnaire-based interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. Results show that major factors triggering migration in the northern sector comprise a complex mix of pull and push factors which include learning vocation, social amenities, freedom, general poverty, inability of parents to play their roles, poor job availability in the rural areas. The study suggests that the Government should find more innovative strategies to empower rural communities in other forms of income generating activities such as providing access to skill training and micro-credit facilities that could give better livelihoods to parents and support for families in especially rural areas in Ghana.

## Keywords

Ghana, Migration, Non-governmental Organizations, Pull Factor, Push Factor, Tamale, Youth

Received: November 4, 2015 / Accepted: November 19, 2015 / Published online: January 17, 2016

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## 1. Introduction

Migration forms an important part of the lives of many young adults around the world. Nowadays, in numerous areas and particularly in regional and remote areas, rural-urban migration of young adults is normalized and expected [1]. Numerous attempts have been made over the years by social scientists and policy makers to fully understand the processes of migration and its implications for social development. It has been argued that the outcome of human migration

patterns and processes brings more rapid changes to the social, economic, political and other systems at both the homeland of the migrants and the destinations than any other phenomena of the human geography of those environments [ibid.]. Thus migration remains a global phenomenon and is one of the most important features in recent years. Human migration is deeply embedded in both history and present functioning of modern society. In the past, people have

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migrated or sought to migrate from regions that are afflicted by poverty and insecurity to more prosperous and stable parts of the world. For more than a century now, no single phenomenon in the world has been dominant or as consistent as the process of migration, associated in large part, with the process of modernization [2]. Following the thinking of Foucault [3], Sassen [4], Massey [5], Taylor [6] - anthropological critiques of contemporary social analysis, I will argue that migration is a response of human being to economic, social, demographic and physical forces in the environment. In other words, most population movements are conditioned by desires to satisfy certain human needs or by the threat of discomfort.

Migration like some other social phenomenon is difficult to define. Ogden [7] asserts that although simple definitions of this geographical phenomenon are possible, in practice migration as a social phenomenon is sometimes made more complex by a number of factors including; the variety of movements involved; the scale at which it occurs and difficulties over sources for their study. Nevertheless, proper definition of this phenomenon is relevant in identifying appropriate intervention strategies [8].

In a study Long [9] realised that an element mostly shared by most definitions of migration connotes a permanent or semi-permanent change of usual residence. He noted that migration occurs when an administrative boundary is crossed. This approach is desirable in that it eliminates many movements of short duration such as vacations, visit with relatives, employment at temporary or transitory worksites and other forms of spatial movements that do not constitute a change of residence. Admittedly, there are difficulties of distinguishing between seasonal movement and more permanent residential relocation. However, there is no completely satisfactory way of overcoming the limitations of recognizing only one usual residence or recording various seasonal movements as special forms of migration.

Nonetheless, using the concept of only one usual residence eliminates many seasonal movements. Also, he noted that in operationalizing the concept of migration, the period of time over which to measure movement is equally relevant. Thus, migration should reflect residential relocation over some significant period of time. However, he emphasized that an interval that is too long is likely to miss some characteristics of migrants; as it may be very different from time of moving. On the other hand, an interval that is too short may blur distinction between short-term movement and permanent changes that characterize migration.

Moreover, Long (ibid.) argued that the minimum distance travelled is very significant for distinguishing between migration and purely local (short-distance) moves. Migration

is more disruptive, often involving many other types of changes like job relocation and alteration in network of friends. However, local moves may entail alterations in daily routines or habits such as commuting and shopping. Nevertheless, distance may be only part of the distinction between local moves and migration, and the degree of which distance reflect the disruptiveness of a move may decline over time with advancement in transportation and communication.

Migration may be classified, based on attributes such as timing, direction and reason for migrating [7]. Some common types of migration are based on origin and destination of migrants. This includes internal migration such as rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-urban, urban-rural or international migration when the migrants move from one country to another. In addition, migration could be classified based on the motivations and causes underlying movements. Thus it could either be forced or involuntary migrations which include slave trade, trafficking in human beings, ethnic cleansings, refugee movement and other migrations which are due to political or religious pressure.

On the other hand, such movements could be free or voluntary based on economic or social factors such as labour, retirement or the opportunity for educational advancement. One kind of human migration related to timing is seasonal migration. This is a temporary short-term labour migration that corresponds with the change in season. This is quite different from a permanent move from which the migrant may never return. Standing [10] argued that rural-urban migration could be a temporary measure. He asserts that migrant labour moves to the city for a season with the aim of returning when their services are needed in the rural area or if they fail to secure reasonable source of employment and income. Thus such movement is for a period of time in response to labour or climate conditions such as farm labourers working in cities off-season.

Ogden [7] observed that the process of migration from country side to large city is often not direct, but follows a stepping-stone pattern, or may be seen as composed of series of steps or stages of movements. For instance, rural residents migrate to local town; then to the regional capital, and only later to the largest cities or metropolises; a phenomenon known as step migration. However, in recent times improved information flows and public transportation often inspire people to move directly from distant rural areas to the very largest cities. Moreover, migration could be part of a sequence of previous moves by household member or friend to the same destination. According to Darkoh and Rwonmire [1], migration may occur as a search for an opportunity to improve one's lot in life. In this case the area of destination exerts a pull on the migrant. However, migration also occurs

as an escape from unfortunate social or economic conditions which constitute an expulsive push. In short, the pull factors are associated with the destination area whereas the push factors are associated with the area of origin [6, 1]. West Africa, for example, has a long history of population mobility, both regionally and internationally. A few decades ago, it was estimated that a third of West Africans live outside their village of birth. Data suggest that contemporary West African migrants are found in significant numbers around the world, with major consequences for poverty [11].

A demographic phenomenon which has relevance to the present study is migration in Ghana. Notably, migration is one of the three mechanisms, the other two being fertility and mortality through which a population change size. Models of Darkoh and Rwonmire [1] provide an important framework for understanding the rural-rural migration described by Addae-Mensah [12] in relation to Ghana. He noted that in the face of climate-related environmental change such as the decline of productive agricultural land, rural residents may be forced to migrate in search of work. He cited examples from Ghana, where residents of dry rural areas in the north are likely to migrate to rural regions in the south with greater rainfall. In this way, migration may be a long term response to the threat of recurring drought.

Various studies suggest that rural-urban migration could be part of a collective household survival strategy, especially in developing countries. Here, migrants are resolute in their commitment to family members, and urban employment opportunities available to migrants are fewer. In this case, reason for migrating is more tilted towards being part of a household survival strategy than an individual action. This could also serve as a means of diversifying household income and employment [13]. In view of Hadlund and Lundahl [14], to compensate rural households for output lost by rural-urban migration, many rural families become entirely dependent on remittances from kinsmen residing in urban centres, and such remittances do seldom take place. Yap [14] points out that in Africa and Southern Asia, though not in Latin America, the typical rural-urban migrant was found to be young, better educated than the average rural resident, and predominantly male. He further argued that migrants tend to move to places with higher income than their origin. The above quotation summarizes some of the most important determinants of rural-urban migration in Less Developed Countries which invaluablely facilitate the process of urbanization. The attraction of the cities is manifold; nevertheless, economic factors undoubtedly play an important role.

With regard to the benefits of urbanization, Hedlund and Lundahl [14] observed that migration is a mode of escaping internal social conflict within the rural environment. They asserted that this frequently emerges as a result of the

incidence of adultery, theft and political dissension in small villages where social control is stern and nobody is anonymous. Similarly, they argue that by transferring idle or low productive labour from agriculture and related activities in the urban industrial sector will lead to increase in both rural and urban per capita income. Furthermore, in assessing urban unemployment in less developed countries indicated that rate of rural-urban migration continue to exceed the rate of urban job creation, and do surpass greatly the capacity of both industrial and urban social services to absorb this labour. A similar study carried out by Jolly et al. [16] found that in the third world, employment in the modern sector in general does not expand fast enough. Bromley [17], in a similar study observed that substantial unemployment can often be found in the cities, and many of those who have jobs are occupied with extremely poorly paid informal sector activities that yield only a minimal standard of living.

Agnelli [18], commenting on the bleakness of the rural life indicated that there are few areas where the rural poor are convinced that the future of their children lies in the countryside. She noted that opportunities for economic advancement in the rural areas are almost non-existent. She cited factors such as slender profit margins, unsuitable farming methods, vagaries of the weather and risk of pest, may all contribute in making farming a hazardous way of life in many rural areas in Less Developed countries. According to her, rural life compares unfavourably with the enticing glamour of cities, which hold out the promise of further education, higher earnings and more varied activities. She argued that industry is perceived as being more flexible and less seasonal than agriculture. Also, physical links provided by modern transport have made moving easier and information about urban opportunities more widely available.

Long [9] was of the view that people migrate from urban centres to rural areas due to factors like desire to spend growing leisure time around rural recreational centers made accessible by better transportation. Similarly, he also identified growing numbers of retirees who opt for rural settings as retirement locations, as well as shifts of many kinds of jobs to less urban settings, together these factors might lead to urban-rural migration. As a matter of fact, Abdulai [19] found out that policy reforms initiated in 1983 by the Ghana government altered the domestic terms of trade in favour of the rural sector. He noted that a survey by the Ghana Statistical Service suggest a significant reverse migration from urban to rural areas after the reform was initiated.

With regard to factors that account for urban-urban migration, Long [9] indicated that factors such as job transfer, search for job and taking a new job with prospects of earning a better living or attending a new school, getting closer to relatives, or to seek for change in climate all precipitate such movement.

He noted that some of these factors are secondary reasons for moving, and represent personal values. These include desire to live near relatives or to achieve a climate preference. He concluded that generally surveys of reasons for moving have not provided firm evidence for or against the widespread notion that reasons for moving have changed over the last several decades in favour of noneconomic motives. These include desire to move to places with comfortable climate or where other quality-of-life amenities exist.

With reference to the works of Beauchemin et al. [20], there are more to internal migration in Ghana than just movement from rural to urban areas. As a result, in recent times, more attention has been given to other forms of internal migration, such as rural-rural, urban-urban, and urban-rural migration. Rural-rural and urban-urban, while less common, appear to be more important than previously believed in Ghana. Similar studies have emphasized that retirement, returning to care for the family or farm, and economic crises such as an increase in the price of crude oil, which can hit harder in cities than rural areas, all contribute to this type of migration flow.

## 2. Problem Statement, Aim and Research Questions

Literature generally suggest that migration is one of the three mechanisms, the other two being fertility and mortality, through which a population changes size. With regards to the classification of migration-stream based on origin and destination of migrants, there are basically two major types of migration: Internal migration - which consists of rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-urban, urban-rural, and External migration - when the migrant moves from one country to another. History of emigration in Ghana indicates that from pre-colonial times up to the late 1960s, Ghana enjoyed economic prosperity and was destination to many migrants from neighbouring West Africa countries [21]. During this period, international migration from Ghana involved relatively small number of people most of whom were students and professionals moving to the United Kingdom and other English speaking countries [22]. After the mid 1960s however, Ghana witnessed economic crises and this obviously made Ghana less attractive to both foreigners and citizens. As a result, lots of Ghanaian professionals including teachers and lawyers travelled outside the country in search of jobs.

Long before colonisation, movements of migrant labour in Ghana were strongly determined by the distribution of economic opportunities. Essentially, labour migration is considered as economically motivated spatial mobility which is accentuated by the labour needs of the modern economy. Until recently, internal labour migration in Ghana has mainly been related to the development of her natural resources

particularly in agriculture. The analysis of population census reports, as far back as 1970, indicates that about 57% of male workers and 47% of female workers were enumerated at places outside their places of birth. Uneven development in Ghana since colonial domination has been a major cause of rural-urban migration.

Recent studies have demonstrated that even though out-migration from rural areas all over the country to the few cities in the south has become the norm, the situation is very pronounced in the three northern regions of Ghana and is becoming a major public concern. Studies have identified, for example, that many communities in northern Ghana face sizeable losses as a result of the net outflow of youth due to out-migration [23]. The gradual (and in some cases, marked) decline of youth populations in rural areas, therefore presents considerable challenges to many Ghanaian rural communities. In addition to the short-term impact associated with a reduced workforce, declining youth populations in northern Ghana also negatively affects the supply of entry-level workers and the long-term health and vitality of rural communities.

Various factors, including the quest for jobs and the desire to enjoy modern facilities like good schools, electricity good water, etc. have been cited as possible pull factors responsible for the situation. Many have argued that the upsurge of unemployment, parental neglect, and the gradual breakdown of social support networks in rural areas, especially have led to the phenomenon of large numbers of young people migrating into the cities to live on the streets. Some of these young people become deviant, marginalized and isolated from society and thus become prone to crime and violence.

The situation has generated a number of population, poverty and environmental problems in the target cities of these migrants. Migrants are exposed to environmental health risks because of pollution from domestic and, especially, indiscriminate disposal of human excreta and refuse, choked drains and pools of standing water. The rising number of street children is one of the most disturbing symptoms of the wider economic and social problems within Ghana. In all the major cities in Ghana, these stranded migrant children of school age roam the streets, market places, and lorry parks, during school hours. Though not all street children are without a home or a family, most street children encounter many hazards in their daily lives in the streets. Basic needs such as accommodation, food, and health are often not met.

Thus the unique situation that underscores the influx into these cities creates the situation in which all the categories of the poorest of the poor could be found in these urban areas. These may include young girls who are running away from forced marriages, or Female Genital Mutilation in their rural families and other adverse cultural practices, including those who

elope from neighbouring regions and the hinterlands certainly find room and anonymity in the havens of the city. But these cities hardly have the capacity to meet the needs of these stranded youth. Most of these therefore suffer multiple dimensions of poverty simultaneously.

Perhaps one of the major concerns in Ghana, like in most developing countries today, is how to manage the influx of adolescents into the cities in search of opportunities and a better life. In line with the problem statement, the principal objective of this study is to study the causes of rural-urban migration of youth from northern Ghana to southern Ghana, with a view to provide insight into the growth, direction, and continuation of internal migration flows in Ghana. More specifically, the aims of the study were: to investigate the pull factors influencing in-migration; to investigate the push factors influencing out-migration and to recommend policy and programme interventions for strengthening support programme activities for migrants. A study like this is necessary for addressing a number of questions, including the following: What are the push factors affecting out-migration? What are the pull factors affecting in-migration? What policy and programme interventions can help strengthen support programme activities for migrants?

### 3. Justification of the Study

Although many social scientists have invested much time in researching migration in Ghana, our knowledge about migration patterns, the decision-making process involved in migration, and the consequences of migration for both individuals and communities are still inadequate. This is due partly to the methods and the data which have been utilized in these studies. A substantial amount of migration research has been based on census data. In such studies, migration is related to structural variables such as employment factors, community size, age and sex ratios, etc. Social psychological variables are thus ignored since these are not found in the census data. In addition, such studies cannot deal with multiple or multi-stage moves. On the other hand migration studies which utilized the survey method are based mainly on quantitative approaches. Such surveys capture the picture of only small areas of concern. For the explanation of the process of migration (rather than the measurement of migration flows), registration systems, censuses, and/or multi-purpose surveys alone do not seem to offer sufficient information. Special migration surveys utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches should form a valuable addition for purposes of explanation. Literature has confirmed that ethnographic methods are most appropriate in trying to understand the perceptions, meanings and experiences attached to social events [23].

In addition, contextual data are crucial for understanding the causes of migration, since not only individual or household perceptions and circumstances may influence migration, but so do local circumstances like socio-cultural practices, social security etc. Clearly, while the impact of the migration of young adults in the areas they have left and have moved to have received considerable attention in both political and academic arenas, there is a need for more research utilizing the triangulation of research methods that address the cultural meaning of migration and the importance of the migration process for young people themselves. The need for such in-depth exploration focusing on the experiences of migration of young adults from the northern part of Ghana to Southern cities in Ghana cannot be overemphasized if we are concerned about strategic planning for social development.

### 4. Theoretical Perspective

The principal objective of this study is to study the causes of rural-urban migration of youth from northern Ghana to southern Ghana, with a view to provide insight into the growth, direction, and continuation of internal migration flows in Ghana. The analysis of a social phenomenon like migration requires a perspective that incorporates certain features of both a Rational (especially econometric model) and a Functionalist Model.<sup>1</sup> The Rationalist perspective holds that men plan consciously and take into account not only their successes but also their recognized failures. In this light we should be focusing on the decision-making process in migration.

A series of models and theoretical frameworks have sought to synthesize the decision-making process at the micro-level. Among these, the Value-Expectancy Model developed by De Jong and Fawcett [13] is appealing to these purposes. The framework involves, in essence, the specification of personally valued goals which are to be met by out-migration, and the expectation of achieving these goals in alternative destinations. The elements of the individual's value system, motivation, life cycle events or stage, aspirations, available information and - in the case of repeat migrants - past experiences become crucial determinants. Where the decision to migrate is expected to contribute substantially to the attainment of specified goals - a subjective assessment - then, the potential migrant is encouraged to make the move. De Jong and Fawcett [26] specified the general goals and Amin [24]: values to include wealth, status, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, affiliation, and morality [25].

This dynamic view of migration assumes that voluntary migration is the result of a *rational decision* and a purposeful

<sup>1</sup> See an appraisal of these two models from Herbert Simon [55], *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1956), pp.128-130).

behaviour by the individual. Viewed in this way, the volume and direction of migration thereby reflects the diversities of opportunities and regional imbalances in development. A high rate of migration is therefore associated with considerable inequalities in the rate of population growth, and in economic structures but differ in comparative advantages to absorb manpower. However, other scholars emphasizing the Functionalist Model outside the realms of econometric model have argued that migration does not occur in isolation: it is usually accompanied by changes in various facets of the society – economic, religious, political, family, education and health social institutions. Sociologists and social anthropologists for example have insisted on the integration of socio-psychological and economic factors as explanatory variables for migration. They argue for a wider perspective and approach that includes not only data at the micro-level (through survey data collection) but also macro-level contextual data for studying the causes, and effects of migration in both sending and receiving destinations [11].

Marxist analysts (Amin, Piche and Gregory,<sup>2</sup> Mellassioux, Van Binsbergen,<sup>3</sup> among others) have also challenged the traditional economic approach that views the migrant as an individual decision maker, even within the household context. Their preposition is that analysis should go beyond the micro-level to the macro-level considerations and explore the effects of the economic structure, socio-economic and political contexts on the distribution of resources and access to productive opportunities. Such a discussion, they insist, must also go beyond the prevailing situation at the time of the migration and explore the historical structural contexts that cumulatively have impacted on creating or exacerbating social class and marginalized some people. Thus this approach regards migration as a logical outcome of the incorporation of developing countries into the capitalist system. The causes of migration, they argue, are fundamental and require a restructuring of the society and economy.

In looking at the various perspectives, it is clear that a system-oriented approach provides the most all-round framework for a programme of data collection and analysis for a study like the one I envisage. Within such an overall approach, partial theories focusing on the determinants of decision-making, the shaping and functioning of networks, the environmental, political, ethnicity and institutional contextual factors at the origin and destination points that precipitate the *migration of the youth from the northern area to southern*

*cities in Ghana*; exploring the risks and dangers associated with internal migration for migrants themselves; how migrants and their families seek to reduce or cope with these risks, and the relation between the local government, NGOs and other relevant organizations and migrant workers and their families – can be applied. It is therefore important to consider the topic from a more open and multi-disciplinary point of view. In this sense therefore a system-oriented perspective that takes an overall view of the contribution of these various perspectives shall guide the discussions in this study.

## 5. Material and Methods

### 5.1. Description of the Study Area

#### 5.1.1. Northern Ghana

The Northern Region, the largest region in Ghana shares boundaries with Brong Ahafo and Volta Regions of Ghana in the South, and Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana to the North. The land is generally flat and is well drained by a number of rivers including the White Volta and the Black Volta. The Region lies within the Guinea Savannah ecological zone and therefore has a uni-modal climate with one rainy season (April-October) and one dry season (November-March). The average annual rainfall ranges between 900-1000 mm. Large fluctuations in annual rainfall are experienced throughout the region [28]. Maximum temperatures occur towards the end of the dry season, with minimum temperatures being recorded in December and January. The Northern Region is made up of savannah woodland, characterized by scattered trees and short grasses. The vegetation has been modified substantially by human activity [13, 28].

According to Population and Housing Census (2000) [29], the Northern Region has about 9.6% of the total population of Ghana. It added that in 1960 the region had a population of 531,573, which increased to 727,618 in 1970 and then again rose to 1,162,645 in 1984, representing a growth rate of 3.4%. This was the highest among the regions in the country and exceeded the national average of 2.6%. In the 2000 Population and Housing census the region recorded a total population of 1,820,806 with a growth rate of 2.8%. Though there has been a steady decrease in the growth rate since 1960, the region still has the biggest average household size of 7.4 [31]. In general terms, apart from some few industrial establishments and market centres in the Tamale Municipality, there are no big business activities carried out in the Region. Much of the economic activities are related to farming and trading in foodstuff and other farm produce [30, 28].

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people in the region.

2 Amin, S. [27]: "Introduction" in Amin, S. (ed.) *Modern Migration in Western Africa*, Oxford University Press.

3 Gerold-Scheepers T.J.F.A. and Van Binsebergen, W.M.J. [5wor] "Marxist and Non-Marxist Approaches to Migration in Tropical Africa", in W.J.M. Van Binsebergen and H.A. Meilink (eds) *Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society. African Perspective: 1978/1*. Africa Studiecentrum, University of Leiden.

Majority of the people (about 73%) are small scale/subsistence food crop farmers [28] though a very insignificant percentage could be described as commercial farmers. Cultivated crops include groundnuts, millet, guinea corn, and yam among others. Generally, foodstuffs are in abundance during harvesting period but are sold out for cash at the farm gate resulting in scarcity by mid-year. Consequently there is high incidence of malnutrition with its attendant problems especially among children under 5 years as well as pregnant and breastfeeding mothers [ibid.]. Apart from crop production, individual families also rear animals such as goats, sheep, cattle and pigs. Unfortunately, these are only used to supplement family income during the lean season.

The records suggest that the poorest areas of Ghana are the savannah regions of the north, where many rural poor people face chronic food insecurity.<sup>4</sup> In the northern part of Ghana, poverty often has a hold on entire rural communities. Livelihoods are more vulnerable in the three northern regions, and all the members of the community suffer because of food insecurity for part of the year. The three poorest regions, the North, Upper East and Upper West, occupy the parts of Ghana bordering on Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Togo. In the Upper East region almost nine out of ten people live in poverty. More than eight out of ten people in the Upper West region are poor. In the Northern region, poverty affects seven out of ten people, and slightly less than half the population of the Central region is poor [32].

Throughout Ghana, rural people cope with poverty in various ways, finding individual solutions to the problem. Men take off-farm employment, women carry on small-scale trading, and families reduce cash spending, which may mean taking children out of school. Among the causes of rural poverty, according to the government's poverty reduction strategy paper, are low productivity and poorly functioning markets for agricultural outputs [28]. Small-scale farmers rely on rudimentary methods and technology and they lack the skills and inputs such as fertilizer and improved seeds that would increase yields. Because of erosion and shorter fallow periods, soil loses its fertility, posing a long-term threat to farmers' livelihoods and incomes. Increasing population pressure leads to continuous cultivation in the densely inhabited Upper East region and a shorter fallow period in the Upper West region, causing further deterioration of the land [33]. The northern region is endowed with rivers and other water bodies. These include River Oti, Nasia, Daka, Nabogu, White Volta and Black Volta. There is good flow of water from these rivers, which provide potential site for irrigation and dam construction. However, there is currently little use made of these resources.

<sup>4</sup> Problems with the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food to all people on a regular basis [56].

### 5.1.2. Southern Ghana

Southern Ghana refers to the coastal zone dominated by Accra-Tema and Sekondi-Takoradi; and a middle zone, dominated by Ashanti region with Kumasi as its capital. The southern zone is regarded as the most industrialized and urbanized area in the country. This zone has been the hub of internal migration since the beginning of the last century. This study would focus on Accra in Greater Accra region and Kumasi, in the Ashanti region.

## 5.2. Methodology

The methods of this study were largely based on qualitative research methodology from the social sciences [34, 35]. Data for this research were derived from both primary and secondary sources: The former (primary data) was generated mainly through personal face to face interviews [see 13] with area chief, key informants, structured questionnaire survey, participants' observation and focus group discussions (FGDs) with selected members of the local community on their views on migration [37, 38, 39, 40]. Interviews with local community members (i.e. with the area chief followed by key informants) were made first followed by interviews with the youth migrants (current and returned migrants) in the origin areas in the north.

Secondary data was largely obtained through the analysis of various documents relevant to the study. This entailed working through internet services, review of records and documents, and generally combing through literature for the relevant materials to serve as the background for the discussions [34, 36, 41, 40]. It also includes institutional reports, records and papers which provide baseline information for the study. The institutions from which the secondary data were collected are directly involved in Children welfare/child rights such as UNICEF and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ghana.

## 5.3. Data Analysis

In this research, data processing and analysis were done using Epi. Info software [42, 43, 44, 45, 46]. Calculation of the percentages was used as a tool of analysis for interpreting the qualitative information collected from the respondents. Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed from the local language by an expert. The expert then translated the transcription into English. The validation was done by another expert independent of the first person. All other qualitative data collected were collated manually and were useful in the text to explain some of the major findings. Textual analysis has been mainly used to analyse written texts, but this term has also been associated with both the analysis of transcribed talk and written texts (propaganda leaflets, newspaper articles etc.) (see 47, 48).

## 6. Results

This chapter gives a descriptive analysis of the findings drawn from the questionnaire and the interviews held. Tables and graphs are used to summarize the findings. Below are the results of the analysis of the data:

### 6.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics

#### Sex of respondents

The survey covered a total of 89 respondents. Results essentially indicated a preponderance of female adolescents (79%) as against 21 percent males (Fig. 1).

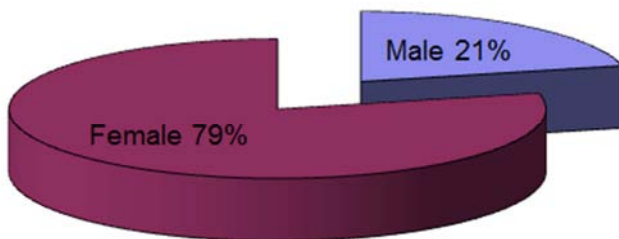


Figure 1. Sex of respondents.

It is interesting that more females than males were involved in the study. This is because literature generally shows that more males are prone to migrate out than females and in a typical patriarchal society like the northern part of Ghana where early marriage is very common, one would have expected only few females to migrate into the city.

#### 6.2. Age

The age distribution of respondents is considered very important in this study especially because it may help in establishing the needs of the age group most involved as well as in drawing innovative programmes that could meet the needs of those involved. The age distribution of respondents is shown in Fig. 2.

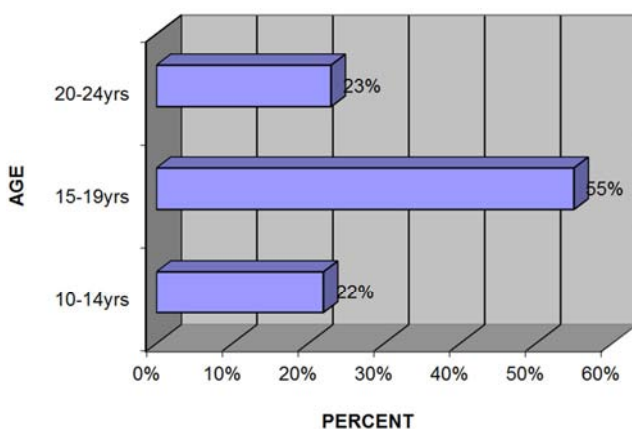


Figure 2. Age of respondents.

The chart shows that all respondents interviewed were

adolescents.<sup>5</sup> Certainly this does not mean that migrants into the city are of this age group only. What this chart establishes though is that a large proportion of migrants are usually young adolescents<sup>6</sup> who should have been in school or learning a trade and still under the control of their parents. Unfortunately, most of these have broken away to work for themselves. The Figure reveals that adolescents aged 15-19 years are more likely than young adolescents (10-14years) and older adolescents (20-24 years) to be involved.

### 6.3. Highest Educational Level

Given the ages of respondents, efforts were made to find out the educational level they attended before migrating. Fig. 3 gives a summary of the findings.

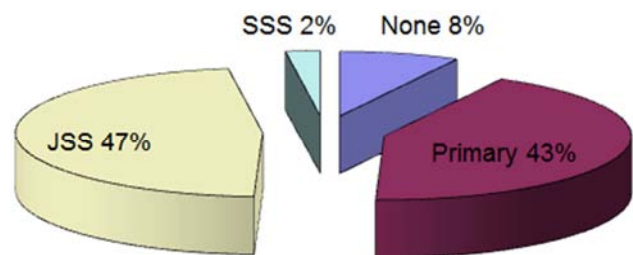


Figure 3. Educational background.

SSS = Senior secondary school; JSS = Junior secondary school

The above figure suggests that most respondents left school mid stream. Quite a sizeable proportion either went through primary level only (43%) or to Junior Secondary School (JSS) (47%) before migrating from home.

A follow-up question sought to find out reasons why respondents did not continue school or why some did not even go to school. Findings show that majority (79%) who were girls did not go to school or continue schooling in their communities because of lack of parental support. Many noted that either their parents could not afford the basic necessities like school uniform, or learning materials like pens and pencils for school. This is unfortunate because in order to promote education for all children, irrespective of the background, the government has made basic education free in Ghana. Knowing the peculiarities of the northern part of Ghana, the Government, in addition to free education has also instituted a School Feeding Programme to provide a meal a day for pupils in basic schools. Perhaps this may explain why only few of these children (8%) had never been to school. We may say that perhaps the strategy of the school feeding programme combined with the free education policy in Ghana has yielded much in keeping young people even in the rural

<sup>5</sup> The Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (Ghana Health Service) defines adolescence as those aged 10-24 years.

<sup>6</sup> Ghana Health Service: Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy defines Adolescence as those aged between 10 and 24 years.



areas in school at least to the basic level of education. Others (23%) said their parents asked them to stop schooling so as to serve as “house maids” or “house boys” for relatives in the city.

Data also show that 20 percent of respondents left home because, for them, the city is a better alternative to the boredom in rural communities. The city, they noted, is devoid of some of the cultural pressures like forced or early marriage, farming and herding. This group craved for individualism which goes with anonymity in the city where no one is

particular about control by elders and chores that support the good life of mainly the adults sometimes at the expense of the development of the child.

### 6.4. Factors Contributing to Rural-Urban Migration

#### Pull Factors

In line with the theories of migration, efforts were made in this study to find out what factors act as pull factors in attracting young migrants to the cities (e.g. Tamale) (Fig. 4).

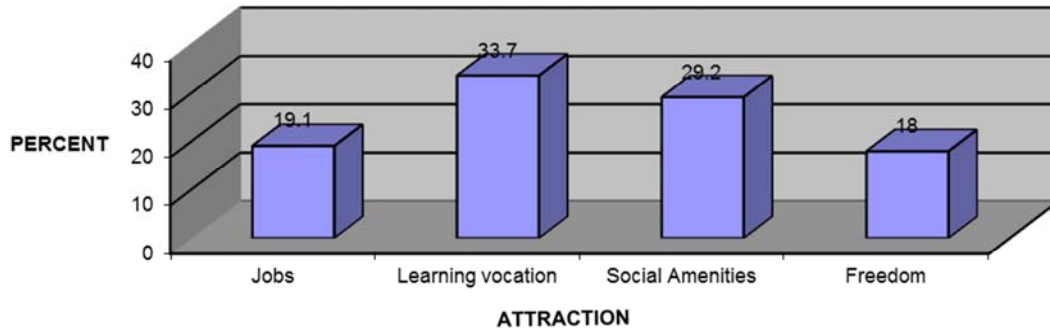


Figure 4. The principal attraction of young migrants to Tamale municipality.

More than half of the young migrants interviewed (about 53%) said they are attracted to the municipality of Tamale because of the opportunities for learning vocations or earning money which could help them sustain themselves and even their parents and other siblings.

However, others (29%) are attracted by the “social amenities” including TV reception, good cinema halls, good houses, and streets. Availability of jobs has been cited by 19 percent of respondents and 18 percent of respondents said young people in the city enjoy comparatively more freedom than those glued to the aprons of the family in the village.

Clearly the main factors leading to the influx of young people into the city are linked to the comparatively deplorable living conditions in the rural areas of the northern sector of the country. Findings show that coming to the streets is a function of the poor environment in these areas and a search for means of survival.

On the other hand, respondents also have aspects of city life that they are not quite enthused about. Some respondents (28%) noted that some suburbs of the Tamale municipality have been noted for political conflicts, violence and crime. Others (10%) said the ghettos in the municipality lack social amenities like good drinking water, toilet facilities, street lighting, and good schools.

### 6.5. Push Factors

Respondents were asked to indicate the main precipitating factor that made them to leave home (“push factor”) and come

to the city of Tamale (Fig. 5).

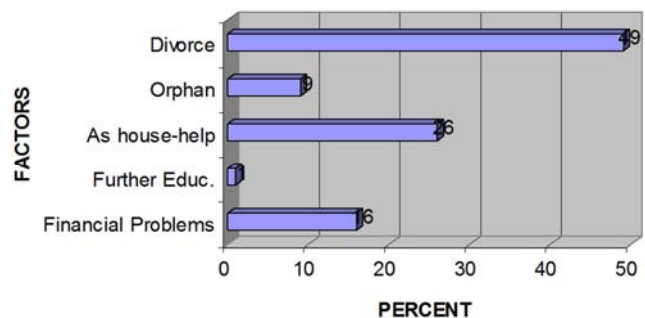


Figure 5. Main factors responsible for youth migration to the city as indicated by respondents.

Quite a sizeable proportion of respondents (49%) said divorce of parents created instability in their homes with serious implications for the children. However 26 percent were sent to the city to work as house-helps and others (16%) left home because their parents were unable to cater adequately for them because of poverty. Some children (9%) had to leave home because they were orphaned and only 1 percent moved out of their home for further studies in the city. A closer look at Figure 5 suggests that essentially 99 percent of respondents came to the streets because of poverty and inability of parents or guardians to cope with the upkeep of their children or children left behind where parents were deceased. Thus divorce and the death of parents (58%) have grave implications since children hardly receive the necessary emotional and economic support in such situations. The situation leads to neglect, irresponsibility and indifference.

## 7. Discussion

### *Factors determining youth migration to the city*

We have explained as background to the study that modernization, especially due to urbanization and formal education are underlying factors for the rapid social change that precipitate the exodus of rural people into the cities. Social and cultural dispositions in the northern part of Ghana have over the years also served as main push factors for persistently more and more influx of people from the rural areas of the northern area especially to these few cities.

The push factors comprise factors within the northern region that motivate people to migrate. The data suggest that essentially majority of respondents came to the cities because of poverty and inability of parents or guardians to cope with the upkeep of their children or children left behind where parents were deceased. Thus divorce and the death of parents have grave implications since children hardly receive the necessary emotional and economic support in such situations. The situation leads to neglect, irresponsibility and indifference. It is clear that the extended family system and the family obligation to look after those orphaned is gradually breaking down even in these traditional, patriarchal societies. In general, poverty levels and divorce have been implicated in disintegrating the family in Ghana [49]. This finding is also in conformity with other studies that observed that parental neglect, divorce, and the death of a parent pushes many children to migrate [50].

Literature suggests a low level of formal level jobs within the region encourages the youth to migrate to the cities in the south. The region lacks private enterprises, e.g. industries to absorb people, hence the subsistent agricultural system becomes the major source of employment for many categories of people. Besides famine is an annual event in the region. The short rainy season covering about five months of the year from May to September, results in a prolonged off season period during which farmers remain largely idle. During this period young people seek occupations elsewhere. They often move to cities in particular where they engage in various temporary jobs for the period. The few dug-outs in selected communities which were expected to open opportunities for dry season gardening and animal rearing are not only inadequate but also dry out.

Majority of the young migrants in study area indicated that cities are perceived as places of limitless opportunities for learning vocations or earning money. It is clear that being aware of the deplorable state of poverty in their home, many young people see migration into the city as the main option for them to break the vicious cycle and “change their destiny”. This finding also confirms the findings of other studies that the

need to access sufficient earnings to live on, buy tools and pay for an apprenticeship has been a strong determinant of youth migration from the north [see 50]. The records suggest that the poorest areas of Ghana are the savannah regions of the north, where many rural poor people face chronic food insecurity.<sup>7</sup> In the northern part of Ghana, poverty often has a hold on entire rural communities. Livelihoods are more vulnerable in the three northern regions, and all the members of the community suffer because of food insecurity for part of the year. A few numbers of young school leavers and school disengaged youth migrate to urban areas to further their education.

While one or more of these factors are likely to draw youth to the urban areas, the migration of young people from the rural areas to the urban areas is linked to a number of other factors known as pull factors. The study shows that young people migrate to cities and towns in order to experience modern life styles and to enjoy the relatively better conditions of the cities and towns such as travelling in taxis, potable water, modern toilets, paved streets, and beautiful buildings. They want to attend night clubs, eat out and wear fancy cloths and hair styles.

As mentioned earlier, northern region is largely a rural area without modern facilities or infrastructure such as entertainment outlets, electricity, roads, potable water, good educational facilities and health services. Some young people travel out of the region in other to experience the modern living that is absent in the communities. Cities are also perceived as areas of easily available jobs, high paying jobs, fast ways of making money, easy access to social amenities and beautiful things to see and enjoy in southern Ghana make them particularly attractive to young people. These results are consistent with findings of Boswell and Crisp [2] who also found that for more than a century now, no single phenomenon in the world has been dominant or as consistent as the process of migration, associated in large part, with the process of modernization. The relatively mild weather conditions fostered by the two times a year rainy season and the milder dry spells are preferred to the harsh weather conditions of the north.

The literature reviewed suggest that factors triggering migration in the northern sector comprise a complex mix of political, social and economic conditions which include; human rights violations, persecution of minority groups, armed conflicts and generalized violence. Related to these are socio-economic conditions like – mass poverty, lack of employment opportunities, inadequate welfare, education and social services, environmental degradation, and demographic

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<sup>7</sup> Problems with the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food to all people on a regular basis [57].

growth creating a surplus labour. It is obvious that there is high out-migration in the northern region and this has implications for the region. Firstly, the young and energetic ones who can contribute to the development of the region all move out leaving the sick and elderly. For instance, the agricultural sector is severely affected since the elderly cannot contribute significantly to food production in the region. Secondly, the situation has also affected the construction industry since the elderly cannot work in the industry. Migration also has its own attendant health implications.

The landless youth who find it difficult to obtain land for farming on their communally owned land, flee to the towns and urban centres in search for non-agricultural occupations such as house help. Since the youth generally detest and frown at working as paid farm labourers in their own communities for social reasons, they see out-migration as a better option. The exodus of large numbers of youth from Ghana's rural north to cities and towns in south is also sparked off by a number of different socio-cultural factors such as large family sizes, social obligations and belief systems and practices. The highly pro-natal northern societies lay emphasis on the number of children one is able to produce. Many parents are directly or indirectly putting pressure on their children to marry early and reproduction continues until nature takes its course. This explains why family sizes are large and with the limited land space some have to seek better fortunes elsewhere. In some cases, young people are obliged into marriage with lack of the necessary resources and have to travel to seek support. In other cases, some also travel to work for money that can help in dowry funds and family care.

In many parts of the northern sector of Ghana, marriage of girls occurs at a much younger age than boys and conventional opinion encourages women to see their future as being centered on the home and family rather than on a career. This situation reinforces gender inequalities and poverty among the female folk. Reproductive roles such as food processing, provision of fuel and water, as well as caring for the family, especially young children are completely left to women. But women also farm and work like men to earn a living for the family. These dual roles place a huge workload burden on females generally, which often affect the health and nutritional status of females and children. No doubt some mothers create opportunities for their daughters to escape this drudgery and make a better future for themselves by running away to the city before they are forced into marriage.

On the other hand however, the emergence of the migration of young girls into the cities is of recent occurrence. The northern sector of Ghana is a prototypical rural patriarchal society where subordination of women to men is enshrined, and where domestic labour and child care, early marriage, bearing and caring for children, food preparation, water and fuel collection,

shopping, and housekeeping are the main stay of women. Hitherto, females stay back and males migrate out to the cities. Against this background, girls who run away from home to the streets of the city therefore must have strong reasons for doing so. One of the major push-factor here is early marriage. Girls are "given into marriage" at very early ages sometimes through betrothal, to men sometimes the age of their fathers.

In discussing the type of migrants, Anarfi [52] observed that, formerly, migrants were mainly males who were likely to be unmarried and had at least basic education; in recent times however, females have also been moving in large numbers. The female migrant is likely to be younger and less educated than the male [53]. Thus the migration of rural youth to larger areas has long been documented as the major means of population redistribution in Ghana and in other parts of Africa [54].

Responses received from focus group discussion show that the exodus of youth from north to cities in the south appears to be inextricably linked to the unusual climatic /weather condition: This finding also confirms findings of Dickson and Benneh [33] who found that the northern region experiences very challenging weather conditions with socio economic consequences; the long dry season compromising the cold, windy, and dry harmattan, hot and humid heat period present diseases such as influenza, pneumonia and other respiratory diseases. Closely related to climatic/weather condition is the problem of limited agricultural activities. The climatic/weather conditions make it impossible for the active employment of the majority of people, who engage in agricultural activities, to support themselves all year round.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendation

### 8.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, it could be stated that a large proportion of migrants are usually young adolescents between the ages of 10-24 years who should have been in school or learning a trade. Those who decide to migrate are driven from their home communities by an overwhelming predominance of push factors over pull factors. Results indicate three major factors that lead to the youth migration phenomenon; namely: Chronic poverty, inability of parents to play their roles; increasing population and poor job availability in the rural areas as well as the collapse of the cultural family support system that served as the cushion against disaster and odds.

### 8.2. Recommendation

Against the background of the findings and discussions, the following are the main recommendations of this study. It is recommended that the Government should find more

innovative strategies to empower rural communities in other forms of income generating activities that could give better livelihoods to parents and support for families in especially rural areas in the north. This should certainly be done along side with modern family planning programme activities so as to enable parents to have the number of children they know and want in accordance with their resources. It is recommended that more small-scale studies of this nature should be done in various communities on the issues related to push-pull factors for migration of young people into the cities. In this way, findings of such studies could be made available to NGOs and the other Agencies for implementation of programmes.

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