

# **JOURNAL OF PLANNING AND LAND MANAGEMENT (JPLM)**

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**VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1  
2019**



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## ASSESSING THE MOTIVATIONS FOR MIGRATION AMONG WEST AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN ITINERANT RETAIL TRADING IN GHANA

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### Abstract

*Though West African itinerant immigrant traders have become an indispensable constituent of the Ghanaian economy, it is as yet unknown what their motivations for migration are in the extant literature. Using a mixed-methods approach, this paper examined the drivers of migration among West African itinerant petty traders in the Accra Metropolis of Ghana. The paper, which was underpinned by the push-pull migration theory, surveyed 779 itinerant immigrant traders and conducted nine key informant interviews. Descriptive and bivariate statistics as well as chi-square were the main analytical techniques used to present the findings. The results indicated that most of the immigrants migrated into the country primarily to hunt for job opportunities. The analysis further revealed that about a third of the immigrants selected Ghana as their preferred destination in West Africa due to the belief that Ghanaians are hospitable people. The practical implications and theoretical contributions of this paper are discussed.*

**Keywords:** Ghana, Migration motivations, Destination selection, Itinerant retail trading, West African migrants

## 1.1 Introduction

Even though literature on West Africa migration has increased over the past few decades, the focus has been on specific ‘crisis migration’ issues such as human trafficking, international refugee flows and irregular migration to Europe for greener pastures (Bruni, Kock, Siegel & Strain, 2017; Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2017; Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). The increased attention on these forms of migration according to Sahel and West Africa Club [SWAC] and OECD (2006), Adepoju (2009) and Litchfield (2018) reflects rather key policy priorities of the developed world in spite of the fact that these forms of migration are relatively small when compared to the volume of intra-West Africa migration.

Notwithstanding the increased recognition that West Africans are migrating to Europe in large numbers, Charrière and Frésia (2017) and World Bank (2018) have observed that the euphoria around West Africans fleeing poverty and migrating to Europe is largely attributed to the media spotlight, which has centred on the number of West Africans travelling through the Sahara Desert to European destinations. Awumbila et al. (2014), Devillard, Bacchi and Noack (2015) and Kirwin and Anderson (2018) have bemoaned that although the scale and scope of migration in West Africa is remarkable it is often misunderstood. In supporting this claim, SWAC and OECD (2006) submit that the officially recorded number of West African migrants residing in OECD countries in the year 2000 were 1.2 million, and it was reported to be seven to ten times less than the number of West African migrants who reside in other West African countries. Similarly, a study by World Bank (2010) revealed that about 4.4 million West African migrants migrated in 2005 to another country of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS). Thus, compared to the overall international migrant stock in Western Africa, South-South migration accounted for more than 50.0% in 2005 (Bakewell, 2009; United Nations Development Programme, 2009; African, Caribbean and Pacific [ACP] Observatory, 2013). It can therefore be argued that the dominant feature of migration in West Africa is intraregional (Shimeles, 2010; Laczko & Appave, 2015; Bello-Bravo, 2015).

In Ghana where this study was carried out for example, the informal share of the workforce rose from 83.9 percent in 2000 to about 86.2 percent in 2010 and this was generally accredited to the influx of West African migrants particularly itinerant immigrant traders from the Sahelian countries (Chen, 2006; Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2013; Awumbila et al., 2014). Regrettably, however, a review of the available literature showed that researches on the

dynamics of intra-West African migration within the region are limited (Bakewell & Jónsson, 2011; GSS, 2012; Yendaw, Tanle & Kumi-Kyereme, 2019). Meanwhile, the drivers of migration in the region are changing over time but have attracted limited scholarly research (GSS, 2013; Kirwin & Anderson, 2018; World Bank, 2018). In the case of Ghana for instance, academic scholarships on transnational migration have largely dwelled on the emigration of Ghanaian nationals to highly developed countries in Europe (Bump, 2006; Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Awumbila, Manuh, Quartey, Tagoe & Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2009; GSS, 2012). With respect to international migration of health and educational professionals in the country for example, many studies have shown that low remuneration, poor working conditions and lack of opportunities for career development are the major factors influencing their migration (Dovlo, 2003; Mensah, Mokdad, Ford, Greenlund & Croft, 2005; GSS, 2013). Moreover, issues concerning the transnational mobility behaviour of Ghanaian market traders have also been theorized with their presence all over the country (Awumbila et al., 2010; Bakewell & Jónsson, 2011; Obeng, 2015).

Nevertheless, researches relating to the motivations for migration and destination choice considerations among West African migrants who reside in Ghana and work as itinerant petty traders are lacking (Yaro, 2008; Jonsson, 2009; Asare, 2012; GSS, 2013). There is particularly a vacuum in the Ghanaian migration literature regarding the underlying drivers of migration among West African migrant entrepreneurs from the Sahelian region of Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger who earn their livelihood through itinerant retailing of wares across the country (Shaw, 2007; Aniegye, 2012; GSS, 2013; Yendaw et al., 2019). To contribute to filling of the above lacuna in the literature of Ghana, this study examines the motivations for migration and destination selection criteria among West African itinerant migrant traders in the Accra Metropolis.

This study makes theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on South-South migration, a very important topic but the least researched aspect of international migration (ACP Observatory, 2013; Esson, Gough, Simon, Amankwaa, Ninot & Yankson, 2016). This study is a case of trying to comprehend the unresolved question as to why people decide to emigrate and to particular destinations in an underdeveloped economic context as Ghana with actors coming from countries of similar level of socio-economic endowments. This study is pertinent because of its policy implication within the West Africa sub-region. For instance,

understanding the main motivations for migration and the factors which determine the destination selection of migrants are useful for designing programmes to manage migration at both areas of origin and destination (Haug, 2008; Goldin, Cameron & Balarajan, 2011; Van Hear, 2012). To make the current study more focused and easier to measure, it was guided by the following research questions: Why do West African itinerant migrant traders emigrate to Ghana and what factors do they consider in selecting Ghana as their ideal destination in the West Africa sub-region? This paper is organized under seven sections: introduction, overview of intra-West Africa migration patterns, theoretical framework, study context and research methodology, results, discussion and conclusions and implications.

## **1.2 Overview of intra-West Africa Migration Patterns**

The term migration is broadly defined as a permanent or temporary change of residence irrespective of the distance involved which could be voluntary or involuntary in nature across administrative or political border (GSS, 2012). Haider (2010), however, noted that migration is a dynamic concept and must be defined within the context of distance and time. In this study, therefore, migration is used to mean those movements between countries usually from other West African countries to the Republic of Ghana for a minimum period of one year. In the view of Anarfi (2005), Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa [SIHMA] (2014) and Bello-Bravo (2015), human mobility in West Africa is a common feature and has had historical pre-eminence over Eastern and Central Africa. In the available literature on migration in West Africa, two main migratory patterns are documented over the years. The first is what is referred to as 'North-South' stream, which typically occurs amongst coastal countries (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria), while the second is the one that takes place among countries in the Sahelian North (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) and the coastal countries to the south. The latter is highly dominant and Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire continue to serve as major destinations to populations from the Sahelian region due to the availability of economic opportunities in those countries (GSS, 2012; Yendaw et al., 2019).

According to GSS (2013), Agyeman and Setrana (2014) and Olaosebikan and Adeyinka (2014), the main characteristic of migration in West Africa is that the migrants are generally young and male dominated. Even though the contemporary literature on West Africa migration suggests a growing trend in independent female migration in the region, the fact remains that most females who embark on long distance migration still do so in the company of their spouses

or relatives (Aniegye, 2012; Yendaw et al., 2019). Anarfi and Kwankye (2003), Piper (2005) and the United Nations Population Fund (2006) further noted that the majority of migrants in the region are likely to be unmarried males and that if married; they are likely to migrate without their spouses. The literature also indicates that most intra-regional migration flows are seasonal by nature (Charrière & Frésia, 2008; Adepoju, 2010; Food and Agricultural Organization, 2016). Thus, the huge mobility of people in West Africa is mainly ascribed to the effects of seasonality on the ability of rural dwellers to earn the real income that their families require to subsist and get ahead (Bello-Bravo, 2015). In confirming this view, Charrière and Frésia (2008) and Yendaw et al. (2019) observed that due to erratic rainfall patterns in the Sahelian region, seasonally limited livelihood opportunities and food scarcity over a period of seven to eight months persist. Consequently, many people from the Sahelian countries adopt migration as a strategy to mitigate harsh living conditions (Painter, 1992).

According to Anarfi (2005) and GSS (2012), each year, hundreds of thousands of young men from the Sahelian region of Benin, Chad, Mali and Niger migrate to major cities along the coast in the south to engage in itinerant petty trading activities and the Accra Metropolis remains one of their major destinations. These young men in the view of Konseiga (2005) and GSS (2013) may reside in the coastal countries from four to eight months or even years searching for work to earn cash. Painter estimated that about six to sixteen percent of the total population of Niger are affected each year by seasonal migration to more developed centres in the forest and coastal areas to undertake itinerant retailing of wares along. Painter, Anarfi and the GSS further noted that males from the Sahelian countries who are usually without formal education engage in this yearly migration from ten to fifteen years in their entire lifetimes. For Anarfi and Kwankye (2003) and GSS (2013), this pattern of migration has become a life ritual for many rural dwellers in the Sahelian north.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

Although migration is as old as humanity itself, theories and empirical generalizations about migration are fairly new (Massey et al., 1993). One of the earliest strides at theoretical systematization in the field of migration theory was by Ravenstein (1889) and pursued further by Lee (1966) who inspired the formulation of the 'Push-Pull' factors of migration. The push-pull theory of migration is, therefore, one of the most commonly known theoretical concepts in migration research, implicit in economic models of migration, for the explanation of factors,

which predispose people to migrate to a particular destination (Eboraka & Oyefara, 2016). The premise of Lee's argument is that the migration process is governed by four key elements: factors associated with the area of origin (minuses), factors associated with the area of destination (pluses), intervening variables such (e.g. social networks, knowledge of destination, receptivity and attitude of nationals of prospective destinations, language, shared colonial & migration experiences, cost of travel, immigration laws among others) and the personal characteristics of potential migrants such as country of origin, age, sex, marital status, occupation, household dynamics and so on (Figure 1).

From the standpoint of Lee (1966), the decision to migrate and choice of destination are based on the rational calculus of the individual on the conditions or opportunities in origin places, relative to conditions and expectations in the prospective destinations. Similar to what has been postulated in the bright light theory of migration, Lee (1966) admits that even though the socio-economic, political and environmental circumstances at the area of origin and destination are necessary conditions for out-migration of potential migrants, there are however not sufficient enough to trigger the actual out-migration. In Lee's view, the final decision as to whether to migrate or not and to which destination are a function of various intervening variables and personal characteristics of the prospective migrants involved (Figure 1). For instance, while people who are well educated with the necessary skill sets are more likely to contemplate migration to better their lots elsewhere, an area with lower level of socio-economic development could adversely affect the human capital development of non-migrants resulting in their inability to undertake certain types of migration such as international migration (Sjaastad, 1962). With this background, the study hypothesised that the motivations for migration among West African itinerant migrant traders are significantly influenced by their socio-demographic characteristics such as area of origin, sex, age and so on (Figure 1).

**Origin Push Factors and Destination Pull Factors**

**Environmental Drivers**

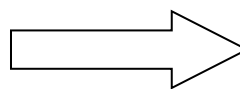
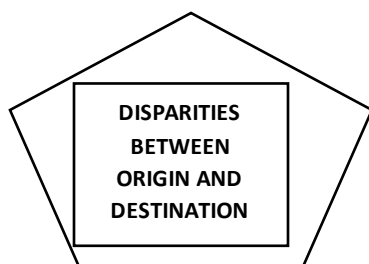
Climate change e.g. rising temperatures, erratic rainfall and hazards

**Political drivers**

Governance, stable democracy and conflicts among others

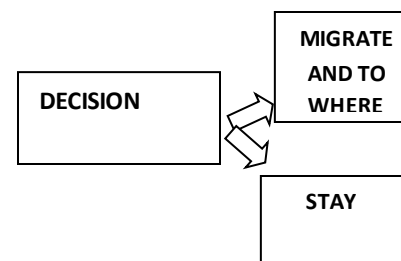
**Individual/Family characteristics**

Age, sex, education, occupation, marital status, household size, citizenship, and religion among others



**Demographic Drivers**

Population size, density, population and structure



**Socio-cultural drivers**

Absurd cultures, education, family reunification, marriage, divorce etc

**Economic drivers**

Joblessness, job opportunities, high incomes, challenges in rural and agriculture sector e.g. low yields

**Intervening factors**

Social networks, knowledge & receptiveness of destination area, language, shared colonial & migration experiences

Figure 1: Push-pull migration theory  
Source: Adopted from Lee (1966)

The main adherents of this theory describe push factors for migration as unfavourable demographic (e.g. population size and pressure on farmlands), socio-cultural (e.g. limited social services, absurd cultures), economic (e.g. lack of income generating opportunities), political (e.g. conflicts, bad governance and lack of freedom) and environmental factors (e.g. exposure to hazards, poor ecosystem services including low agricultural productivity of farmlands, food and water security) which drive people out of their areas of origin. The pull factors (Figure 1) on the other hand, are depicted as the favourable economic (e.g. availability of industrial jobs and business opportunities, good incomes), socio-cultural (e.g. family reunification, for marriage, improved social services), historical/political (e.g. shared colonial experiences and migration history, good governance and stable democracy) and environmental conditions (favourable climatic and ecosystem services) at the place of destination which lure potential migrants to emigrate.



Situating the fundamental assumptions of the Push-Pull theory in the West African migration context, countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and West African demographic giant, Nigeria for some years now have been facing serious socio-economic, political and environmental challenges leading to major economic meltdown and conflicts in those countries. In many of these countries for instance, amongst the reasons for migration is the fragile political state and climatic factors, compounded with an ailing economy, thus causing unemployment and a host of other challenges (Bach, Carles & Kin-Armbrust, 2010; GSS, 2012; Aniegye, 2012; Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2017). Moreover, widespread inequalities in the distribution of wealth in many West African countries such as Niger, Benin, Mali and Nigeria with huge differences between the few wealthy and the many poor may have pushed many West Africans itinerant migrant traders out of their countries to seek better prospects outside, with Ghana serving as an El Dorado to many (Adepoju, 2005; Olsen, 2011; GSS, 2012).

On the pull factors on the other hand, Ghana has been touted as a welcoming and peaceful country with a stable political terrain (Adepoju, 2010; Awumbila et al., 2014). It has a steadily growing economy and favourable investment policies, which have attracted many investors into the country (GSS, 2012). For instance, the government of Ghana has made giant strides by creating a conducive business environment particularly in the informal sector through the establishment the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre and the Ghana Free Zones Authority. These developments continue to serve as enticements to many immigrants including West African migrants seeking better lives (GSS, 2013; 2014). The availability of basic amenities in Ghana such as potable water, good roads and stable power supply has further attracted many West African immigrants into the country (Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2017). From the foregoing reviews, it is obvious that the Push-Pull theory has adequately provided the needed context for understanding the motivations for migration amongst immigrants and has therefore been adopted as the theoretical framework guiding this study.

#### **1.4 Study Context and Research Methodology**

This study was executed in the Accra Metropolis [AM], the administrative capital of the Republic of Ghana (GSS, 2013). The choice of AM (Figure 2) as the setting for this study was largely due to the fact that it is the most developed City with more established migrant flows in Ghana and where most commercial activities are undertaken (GSS, 2012; Yendaw et al., 2019). Accordingly, it serves as the major destination for most West African immigrants in the

country (GSS, 2012). Moreover, AM has numerous manufacturing industries, oil companies, financial institutions, telecommunication companies as well as tourism, education and health institutions. The availability of these infrastructure and other opportunities continue to draw people from all parts of the country and beyond to transact various businesses including West African itinerant migrant traders (GSS, 2013; Yendaw et al., 2019). For example, results from the 2010 Population and Housing Census [PHC] showed that over 21.0% of Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS] nationals reside in the Greater Accra region (the highest in the country) and the metropolis hosts the largest percentage of these immigrants (GSS, 2013, 2014).

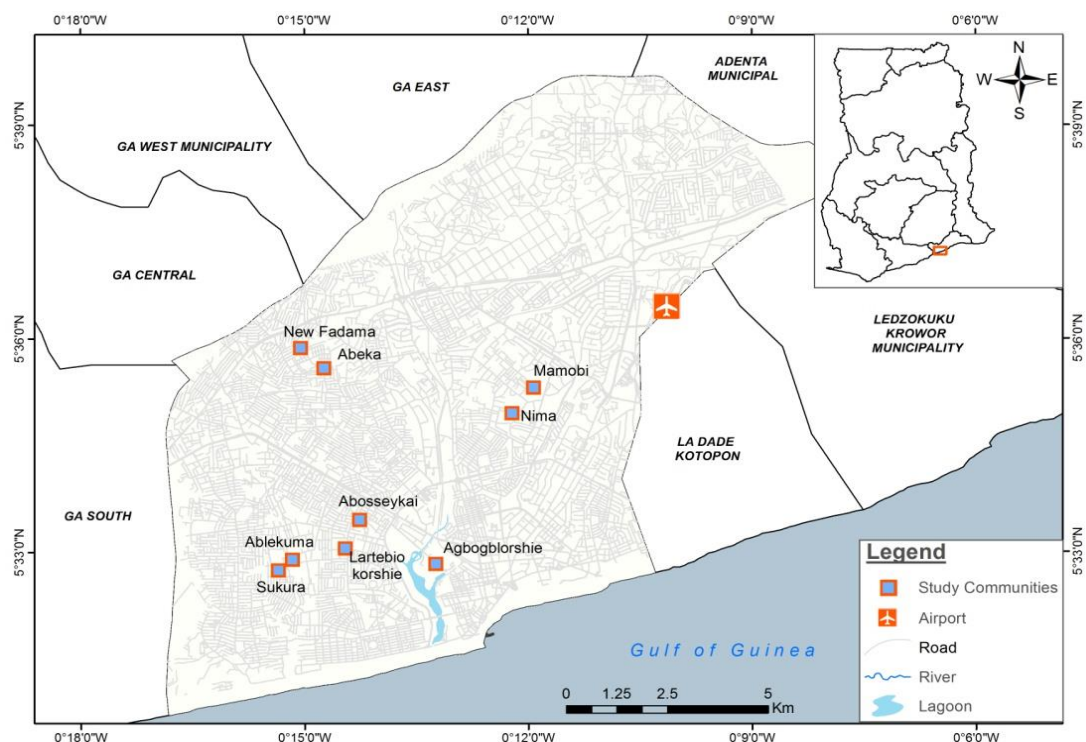


Figure 2: Map of Accra Metropolis showing the study sites

Source: GIS Unit of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning (2017)

This study was part of a large-scale investigation carried out by the researcher in 2017 in the AM. The quantitative dominant concurrent nested mixed methods approach was used. As regards the status and integration of the study, it was largely quantitative both at the data collection and the analysis stages with the qualitative data playing a supportive role. In line with the current research approach, the data for the study were derived from a survey and in-depth interviews. The data collected and used for this aspect of the study included: the socio-

demographic characteristics of the immigrants, their motivations for migration and destination choice considerations. In this study, while motivations for migration are conceptualized as the various factors which push or pull people out of their countries of origin to other countries, destination choice/selection considerations are depicted as the individual factors which influence a prospective migrant to choose a particular country as his or her preferred destination.

The target population for the study consisted West African migrants who were engaged in itinerant petty trading as their main livelihood activity in the AM. The inclusion criteria for this study involved two issues. The first was that the immigrant ought to have involved in itinerant petty trading for at least one year or more. The second issue was that the immigrant ought to have not been a dual national, naturalized foreign citizen or a national by marriage. This one-year bench mark was used in selecting the immigrants since the UN classifies people who reside in countries of destinations for one year and above as permanent migrants and considers those who stay less than one year as temporary migrants. The benchmark in the sample selection widened the sampling frame of the investigation.

Owing to the built-up and congested nature of the study area, nine communities with the highest concentration of West African itinerant migrant traders were purposively selected and used for the study. These communities were Abeka, Ablekuma, Abossey Okai, Agboghloshie, New Fadama, Lartebikorshie, Sukura, Nima and Mamobi. The role of these communities as major residential locations of itinerant West African migrant traders has similarly been confirmed by a number of studies (GSS, 2014; Serbeh et al., 2015; Yendaw et al., 2019). Considering the complexities in generating representative samples of mobile and hard to identify populations like immigrants, the snowballing technique was adopted to create a sampling frame of 842 itinerant traders from the nine study sites outlined. The main objective was to prepare a frame for a random sample selection due to lack of statistics on the immigrants at the time of the survey. However, given that the study was largely quantitative by design coupled with the fact that the resources needed for the study were available, the entire sample frame of 842 was investigated.

With respect to the qualitative dimension of the study, nine leaders of the immigrant retailers who had adequate information about their migration to Ghana were purposively chosen and interviewed. The interviewees were representatives of the immigrant traders (one from each of

the study sites) who were responsible for the protection and coordination of their itinerant retail activities in the study communities. Interview schedule and in-depth interview guide were used to collect the data. The interview schedule helped because the questions were worded in the English Language as most West African migrants in informal trading activities in Ghana are not well educated enough to read and understand the English Language (GSS, 2012), particularly those who originated from Francophone countries. The instruments were administered by the researcher and four trained field assistants who could communicate in some of the local languages (e.g. Asante Twi and Ga), French and Hausa which are the dominant languages spoken among the immigrant traders.

The IDI guide and the interview schedule were structured under three main themes. The first theme solicited responses on the socio-demographic characteristics of the immigrants (sex, country of origin, age, marital status, education, religious affiliation, house hold size and previous occupation) while the second theme examined the motivations for their emigration. The last theme elicited information on the factors, which influenced the immigrants to select Ghana as their preferred destination in the West Africa. The instruments were pre-tested in the Kumasi Metropolis [the second most preferred destination of West African migrants in Ghana] to evaluate their face and content validity. The actual data collection began on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 through to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017. All protocols involving community entry were conscientiously observed with opinion leaders (assembly members and the immigrant leaders) who then served as focal persons throughout the study and helped the research team contact the selected respondents for the survey.

Data from the interview schedule and interview guide were first validated (by reading through the responses) to ensure they were accurately filled and completed. Afterwards, it was noticed that out of the 842-interview schedule administered, 779 of them were found suitable for processing and analysis, representing a response rate of 92.5%. The survey questionnaires were serially numbered and keyed into SPSS (version 21) for further processing and analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 was calculated to ascertain the quality/reliability of the survey data prior to the analysis. The 'member check' approach (through participant validation feedback) was also used to authenticate the narrations obtained from the in-depth interviews. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyse and present the data. As regards the descriptive analyses, frequency distributions, percentages, cross-tabulations were the main

method of data reporting. Likewise, chi-square was used to test the hypotheses stated in the study. Chi-square for instance was used because the variables involved were categorical. The rationale, therefore, was to ascertain whether the key explanatory variables such as the socio-demographic characteristics of the immigrants had any influence on their migration motivations. Data from the IDI guides were transcribed verbatim and manually analysed. The direct quotations from the patterns that emerged from the analysis were adopted in the presentation of the findings. Ethical clearance with protocol identification number (UCCIRB/CHLS/2016/23) was obtained from the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board before the study began.

## **1.5 Results**

### **1.5.1 Socio-demographic characteristics**

Table 1 showed that most of the immigrant traders were from Niger (42.2%) and Mali (22.6%) while the least (1.1%) came from other countries. In terms of sex composition, the majority of them (89.1%) were males. As regards their age distribution, over six out of ten (61.5%) of the immigrants were aged between 20-29 years while the least (7.1%) were in the age category of 40-49 years. Table 1 also suggests that about 60.0% of the immigrants were single and over a sixth (66.7%) of them were without any formal education. The analysis further indicated that 97.0% of the immigrant traders were Muslims and about 42.5% of them had household sizes of between one to four members. It was again discovered that about 65.0% of the immigrants were farmers prior to their migration to Ghana (Table 1).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics**

Socio-demographics	N	Percent
Country of origin		
Benin	39	5.0
Burkina Faso	32	4.1
Mali	176	22.6
Niger	329	42.2
Nigeria	146	18.7
Togo	49	6.3
Other	8	1.1
Sex		
Male	694	89.1
Female	85	10.9
Age (completed years)		
<20	89	11.4
20-29	479	61.5
30-39	164	20.0
40-49	55	7.1
Marital status		
Never married	462	59.3
Married	294	37.7
Widowed	13	1.7
Divorced/Separated	10	1.3
Educational attainment		
No formal education	520	66.7
Basic education	188	31.1
Secondary/tertiary	16	2.2
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	23	3.0
Islam	756	97.0
Household size		
1-4	335	42.5
5-8	250	32.6
>8	194	24.9
Occupation before migration		
Artisan	9	1.7
Trading	150	19.3
Services	50	6.4
Farming	505	64.8
Unemployed	58	7.4
Other	7	0.9

Source: Field survey, 2017

### 1.5.2 Migration Motivations

In the extant literature, the evidence on what exactly motivates people to migrate still remains inconclusive (De Haas, 2011). Accordingly, this section sought to examine the underlying

factors responsible for the migration of the immigrants studied. Table 2 revealed that most (37.7%) of the immigrants travelled into the country to seek job opportunities followed by low agricultural productivity at their places of origin ensuing from adverse environmental conditions (21.5%). The least motivation for migration among the immigrants were those who emigrated for adventure reasons (3.9%).

A bivariate analysis of the data (Table 2) indicated a statistically significant relationship between migration motivations and country of origin ( $\chi^2=618.07$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Whereas Malians were more likely to migrate to seek job prospects in Ghana (45.5%), their Burkinabe counterparts were more likely to emigrate due to failures in agricultural productivity emanating from adversative environmental conditions at their places of origin (35.2%). Similarly, while Nigerian immigrants had the likelihood of migrating because of high-income earnings (28.9%), adventure purposes (6.7%) and insecurity reasons (13.9%), their compatriots from Togo (22.5%) were more likely to migrate due to family-related considerations.

A significant association was also established between sex and motivations for migration ( $\chi^2=137.84$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). The analysis (Table 2) indicates that while males were generally likely to migrate for jobs hunt in Ghana (42.4%), their female counterparts mostly migrated due to low agricultural yields resulting from unfavourable environmental factors at their places of origin (30.1%). Whereas males largely migrated with the hope to earn high incomes (16.6%), their female counterparts emigrated due to family reasons (16.5%). A significant relationship was equally found between age and motivations for migration and this was significant at ( $\chi^2=401.37$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). In terms of age distribution, the results showed that whereas immigrants who were aged (40-49 years) mainly migrated because of low agricultural productivity emanating from unfavourable environmental factors at the place of origin (50.0%), those who were 20-29 years were lured by job opportunities in Ghana (43.0%).

Table 2 further indicated a significant association between educational attainment and migration motivations ( $\chi^2=342.15$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). While immigrants who had higher education (secondary/tertiary) were more likely to migrate for high-income earnings (35.0%), their counterparts with lower education [basic education] (48.0%) were more likely to out-migrate because of work opportunities at the destination (Table 2). Further, it was noticed that those who had no formal education (20.3%) mostly migrated because of low agricultural yields resulting from inauspicious environmental conditions (Table 2).

**Table 2: Migration motivations by socio-demographic characteristics**

Variables	Migration motivations							Chi-square
	N	Adventure	Jobs	High Income	Family	Insecurity /conflicts	Env'tal factors	
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
Motivations	1989	3.9	37.7	15.8	13.1	8.0	21.5	
Origin country								$\chi^2=618.07$ P=0.000
Benin	98	2.0	35.7	20.4	14.3	7.1	20.4	
B. Faso	88	0.9	31.8	15.0	15.9	1.1	35.2	
Mali	378	2.6	45.5	14.3	17.7	5.0	14.8	
Niger	797	3.5	39.6	15.4	12.0	6.8	22.6	
Nigeria	495	6.7	17.8	28.9	9.7	13.9	23.0	
Togo	111	3.6	39.6	11.7	22.5	6.3	16.2	
Other	22	5.5	22.7	18.2	10.1	9.1	34.4	
Sex								$\chi^2=137.84$ p=0.000
Male	1797	2.1	42.4	16.6	10.3	8.3	20.3	
Female	192	1.6	38.3	8.3	16.5	5.2	30.1	
Age in yrs.								$\chi^2=401.37$ P=0.000
<=20	1474	9.0	34.4	17.6	11.1	4.7	23.3	
20-29	475	6.5	43.0	10.3	19.6	4.8	15.8	
30-39	30	6.7	30.0	16.7	13.3	6.7	26.7	
40-49	10	5.1	21.0	0.7	9.3	13.9	50.0	
Education								$\chi^2=342.15$ P=0.000
No educ.	1474	7.7	37.4	17.6	11.1	6.0	20.3	
Basic	475	1.5	48.0	15.3	14.6	4.8	15.8	
Sec./Ter.	40	25.0	12.5	35.0	12.5	10.0	5.0	
Marital status								$\chi^2=265.32$ P=0.000
Married	615	1.5	14.0	10.1	47.0	5.4	22.0	
Single	1317	5.2	33.3	18.9	12.6	9.3	20.7	
Widowed	24	37.5	4.2	8.3	38.0	0.5	12.0	
Divorced	33	1.1	18.2	3.0	39.4	8.0	30.3	
Religion								$\chi^2=85.65$ P=0.000
Christian	53	3.8	37.7	13.2	9.4	3.8	32.1	
Islam	1930	4.0	21.2	15.9	13.2	8.1	37.6	
Previous occu.								$\chi^2=446.79$ P=0.000
Artisan	182	0.8	31.0	18.2	13.6	9.1	27.3	
Services	22	6.6	25.8	20.3	12.1	15.9	19.3	
Farming	1295	7.9	21.2	15.1	14.0	4.5	47.4	
Trading	375	2.1	38.9	15.2	12.5	6.9	24.3	
Unemployed	98	1.0	58.2	19.4	5.1	1.0	15.3	
Other	17	0.2	41.0	11.8	17.6	1.4	28.0	

B. Faso = Burkina Faso; Sec.=Secondary; Ter.= Tertiary; Occu. = Occupation

A statistically significant relationship was again found between marital status and incentives for migration ( $\chi^2=19.67$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). As shown in Table 2, whereas most of the never married category migrated because of job search in Ghana (33.3%), their colleagues who were married predominantly migrated due to family considerations (47.0%). Table 2 also indicates that



immigrants who were divorced migrated the most for adventure reasons (37.5%). Additionally, religious affiliation was significantly related to the migration motivations of the immigrants ( $\chi^2=85.65$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). While over a third (37.7%) of the immigrants who were Christians travelled generally to pursue job avenues in Ghana, their Muslim counterparts largely migrated as a result of low agricultural productivity (37.6%) resulting from perilous environmental influences at origin. Finally, the immigrants' occupation prior to their migration showed a statistically significant effect on their migration motivations ( $\chi^2=446.79$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). While those who were unemployed prior to their migration were more likely to migrate to seek job opportunities in Ghana (58.2%), those who were farmers prior to their migration (Table 2) mainly migrated because of low agricultural yields ensuing from unfavourable environmental factors (47.4%).

Evidence from the qualitative dimension of this study reaffirmed the survey findings in Table 2. An in-depth interview carried out with leaders of the immigrant traders revealed that lack of employment opportunities and low agricultural productivity resulting from perilous environmental factors at origin namely erratic rainfall patterns and poor soils compelled them to travel to Ghana. In explaining the issues further, two of the interviewees from Niger and Burkina Faso made these remarks:

In Niger, it is very difficult to find jobs. You know the economy back at Niger is too small and very bad as compared to Ghana. Hmmm! Let me tell you, even those with higher education in Niger are struggling to secure jobs. With this, you can see that those of us who are uneducated cannot survive the hardship in Niger without moving out to try our luck elsewhere [45-year old interviewee from Niger]. I was engaged in farming back in Burkina Faso. But it got to a point where things became hard for the family and me. We could barely feed owing to persistent poor harvests resulting from bad weather and erratic rainfall patterns. In fact, the environment in Burkina Faso no longer supports any form of farming. Our farmlands are not fertile for large-scale agriculture unless you have enough cash to invest on farm inputs like fertilizer. My brother, as a jobless man with family depending on me what do I do? The only alternative left for me then was to join my friends here in Ghana to work and support the family back home. [36-year old interviewee from Burkina Faso].

Further deliberations with 39-year and 34-year olds interviewees from Mali and Nigeria respectively provided further contexts to the migration incentives among the immigrants

surveyed. Similar to the previous submissions, drives such as low-income earnings and family unification were stated as their main motives for migrating to Ghana. In clarifying the issues, the interviewee from Mali made these revelations:

“You know the economy in Mali is not as robust as Ghana and so earnings is not that good. I was a petty trader in Mali but the issue is that you work for a whole day and earn very little from your labour. Seriously, the business environment in Mali is abysmal compounded by very high municipal taxes. So, I moved here because Ghana is better in terms of income earnings” [39-year old interviewee from Mali].

The second interviewee had this to say about his migration to Ghana: “Actually, I migrated here (Ghana) to join my fiancée who had been working in Ghana for the past two years.” [34-year interviewee from Nigeria].

### **1.5.3 Destination Choice Considerations**

As regards factors, which influenced the immigrants’ destination selection, Table 3 indicates that most of them chose Ghana as their preferred destination due to the belief that Ghanaians are welcoming people (32.1%). Cultural affinity (4.0%) however emerged as the least criterion the immigrants considered in their choice of destination. Significant variations were found between the immigrants’ socio-demographic characteristics and the factors, which influenced their choice of destination. With respect to country of origin, Table 3 shows that Malians (41.2%) were dominant among those who selected Ghana as their preferred destination due to the belief that Ghanaians are hospitable people. The results further reveal that while Burkinabes (58.3%) chose Ghana as their ideal destination mainly because they have strong migration networks, their Nigerian counterparts rather selected Ghana as their preferred destination due to political stability/peace (46.3%) and language similarity (16.2%). The results further indicated that with the exception of cultural affinity (5.0%) and language considerations (10.2%), it was noticed that females were predominant among those immigrants who selected Ghana as their preferred destination due to the availability of strong migration networks (32.9%), political stability/peace (31.1%) and hospitality of Ghanaian nationals (33.8%). As regards age, the results (Table 3) showed that whereas those who were aged 20-29 years (45.0%) chose Ghana as their preferred destination because of the hospitality of Ghanaian people, it was realised that a higher proportion of their counterparts who were less than 20

years (29.3%) selected Ghana as their preferred destination because they have strong migration networks in Ghana.

Over a third (36.0%) of those who were aged 40-49 years chose Ghana as their favoured destination due to the presence of peace/stability in Ghana. Table 3 further revealed that while 30.8 percent of the immigrants who were widowed selected Ghana as their preferred destination because they had key migration networks and the country's political stability (peace), the majority of their counterparts who were married (36.1%) chose Ghana as their ideal destination because they regard Ghanaians as welcoming people. It was discovered that while a higher percentage of those immigrants without formal education (29.4%) selected Ghana as their favourite destination because they have established migration networks, their compatriots with basic education (45.0%) chose Ghana as their ideal destination due to Ghanaian receptiveness (Table 3). Concerning religious affiliation, a higher proportion of Christians (37.0%) chose Ghana as their number one destination due to their perception that Ghanaians are kind people (Table 3).

Table 3: Destination choice considerations by socio-demographics

Variable	Reasons for choosing Ghana as destination					
	N	Networks Presence	Peace	Ghanaian Hospitality	Culture Affinity	Shared Language
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Factors considered	1957	26.9	28.1	32.1	3.8	9.1
Country of origin						
Benin	82	42.7	29.3	22.0	4.9	1.2
B. Faso	48	58.3	20.8	16.7	4.2	0.0
Mali	354	21.2	29.9	41.2	2.3	5.4
Niger	836	26.1	28.6	33.0	3.6	8.7
Nigeria	499	24.4	46.3	7.5	5.6	16.2
Togo	121	33.9	27.3	33.1	1.7	4.1
Other	17	35.3	41.2	17.6	5.9	0.0
Sex						
Male	1738	26.1	27.7	31.9	4.1	10.2
Female	219	32.9	31.1	33.8	1.4	0.9
Age						
Less than 20	1422	29.3	27.1	27.6	4.2	11.8
20-29	491	20.2	30.5	44.8	2.4	2.0
30-39	30	23.3	30.0	33.3	10.0	3.3
40-49	14	28.6	35.7	35.7	0.0	0.0
Marital status						
Married	742	24.7	32.3	36.1	2.3	4.6
Single	1155	28.1	25.2	29.4	4.9	12.4
Widowed	26	30.8	30.8	30.8	3.8	3.8
Divorced	34	32.4	29.4	35.3	0.0	2.9
Education						
No education	1422	29.3	27.1	27.6	4.2	11.8
Basic edu.	491	20.2	30.5	44.8	2.4	2.0
Sec./Tertiary	44	25.0	31.8	34.1	6.8	2.3
Religion						
Christianity	71	25.4	31.7	36.5	4.8	1.6
Islam	1886	27.0	27.9	31.9	3.8	9.4

B. Faso = Burkina Faso    Sec= Secondary

The evidence obtained from the qualitative study, equally buttressed these quantitative findings as shown in Table 3. During an in-depth interview with leaders of the immigrant retailers, it was unanimously agreed among the interviewees that Ghanaian hospitality and political stability (peace) were the key factors, which influenced their choice of Ghana as their desired destination in West Africa. In corroborating this claim, this was how one of the interviewees summarised it saying:

Look, although Nigeria is closer to my country (Benin), I chose Ghana over Nigeria. Why because the Nigerian people are rowdy and less friendly especially their security personnel. Moreover, unlike Ghana, there is no stability in Nigeria because of the recurring civil and religious turmoil in that country. As for Ghana, I can tell you for a fact that If you are well behaved as an immigrant you wouldn't encounter problems with their authorities. What I can say is that the prevailing peace in Ghana makes it much easier for many foreigners to do business and that's why I decided to choose Ghana over other West African destinations. [41-year old interviewee from Benin].

The qualitative excerpt below from another interviewee at Agbogbloshie community in the Accra Metropolis further reinforced how Ghanaians hospitality and political stability (peace) motivated his choice of Ghana as his preferred country of destination:

I have visited several countries like Cameroun, Benin and Niger. But I finally decided to relocate to Ghana to settle because Ghana has a stable democracy. In Ghana, when even a policeman or soldier mistakenly hits you he or she says sorry. As for Ghana, I always feel like I am at home. Nobody in Ghana makes you feel like you are a foreigner. [28-year old interviewee from Nigeria].

## **1.6 Discussion**

This section of the study presents a critical examination of the survey and the qualitative results and situates the key findings that emerge within the extant body of literature. This study suggested that a mixture of both origin and destination factors accounted for the out-migration of the immigrants. These factors included: hunting for job opportunities, low agricultural productivity at origin, high-income earnings, family reasons, conflicts/insecurity at origin and adventure to gain exposure. However, the study showed that hunt for job opportunities followed by low agricultural productivity were the main drives for their out-migration. The fact

that most of the immigrants migrated because of job opportunities contradict what Hunters and Skinner (2001) have found among itinerant immigrant entrepreneurs in Durban, South Africa, where most of them left their countries of origin mainly because of political insecurity such as civil war, political violence, and ethnic or religious conflicts. The above findings however resonate with the fundamental postulations of the Push-Pull theory (Figure 1) and GSS (2012), which hypothesized that repellent origin forces together with attractive destination factors are the main causes for the migration decisions of most migrants. These findings further buttressed the pioneering work of Ravenstein (1889), which suggested that migration is induced primarily by rational economic motives of relative benefits between migrants' areas of origin and destination. Moreover, the revelations from both the survey and the qualitative narratives further concur with what Kirwin and Anderson (2018) have discovered among West African migrants where economic benefits such as jobs opportunities were cited as their primary motivation for migrating across the Mediterranean region.

Further analysis of the data indicated a statistically significant association between the immigrants' socio-demographic characteristics and their motivations for migration. This exposé goes to support the key tenets of the Push-Pull framework, which stated that the characteristics of prospective migrants (e.g. area of origin, sex, age, marital status) have the proclivity to influence their migration decisions. Concerning the immigrants' country of origin, for example, the results showed that Malians were more likely than their counterparts to migrate to pursue job opportunities in Ghana. This could be explained by Mali's geographic location (i.e. the Sahelian region), which does not offer convenient climatic conditions for viable agricultural production (Painter, 1992; GSS, 2012). It is thus possible that low agricultural productivity as evidenced in both the qualitative narrations and the quantitative findings might have triggered the out-migration of Malians to the current destination for alternative livelihoods to mitigate harsh living conditions as indicated in the literature by Charrière and Frésia (2008) and Yendaw et al. (2019). This is likely to be the case because as found in the survey, most of the immigrant traders were farmers prior to their out-migration (see Table 1).

It was found that more males than females emigrated because of job opportunities which buttress the assertion made by Agyeman and Setrana (2014) and Yendaw et al. (2019) that males are the breadwinners of their families across many cultures in Africa and hence, more

likely to leave their spouses and families behind and migrate for improved livelihood options. Contrary to the above findings, it was observed that females were dominant among those who left their areas of origin because of family-related reasons (Table 2), which reinforce the findings of Piper (2005) and the United Nations Population Fund (2006) that women generally migrate to join their parents or spouses while men mostly migrate for improved economic opportunities. The current revelation further resonates with what Morokvasic (1984), Anarfi et al. (2003) and GSS (2012) indicated that women generally migrate for family-related reasons including the desire to get married or join their husbands, social constraints, low rights and lack of protection against domestic violence. It is, however, imperative to indicate that in the contemporary times, women can no longer be entirely viewed as associational migrants as was the case in the past few decades. This is because many women in contemporary times migrate independently of their spouses and families to seek improve job opportunities to support their families back home (Bach et al., 2010; Agyeman & Setrana, 2014). However, the above findings where women were dominant among those who travelled for family reasons was anticipated because in the African context, familial roles of women are such that they are sometimes compelled to migrate to join their spouses at their destinations or migrate with the intention of getting husbands (GSS, 2012; Yendaw et al., 2016).

Similarly, age was significantly related to the immigrants' migration motivations. For instance, whereas immigrants who were younger ( $\leq 20-39$  years) largely migrated to pursue job opportunities, their counterparts who were older (40-49 years) migrated mainly because of low agricultural yields due to adversative environmental factors at their places of origin. These revelations corroborate the literature on migration and livelihood studies which indicated that young people are mostly affected by unemployment and hence more likely to travel to economically endowed locations to better their lots (Anarfi et al., 2003; Olaosebikan & Adeyinka, 2014). It was revealed that while a higher percentage of those immigrants with no formal education and with basic education migrated to seek job avenues in Ghana, their colleagues who attained higher education (secondary/tertiary) emigrated largely for higher income opportunities. The present findings where immigrants with higher education migrated for higher earnings ambitions could be attributed to their level of human capital development since the literature suggests that people who are highly educated are more likely to seek higher returns to their human capital compared to those with no or lower educational standards (Sjaadstad, 1962; GSS, 2012). Moreover, those immigrants with no or lower education might

have migrated to pursue job opportunities possibly because they lacked the needed skill set or formal training to qualify for formal sector jobs at their areas of origin even if they existed at all.

The analysis further revealed that whereas immigrants who were never married (singles) tend to migrate generally for jobs hunt, those who were married had the tendency for migrating because of family reasons. These revelations are said to be in consonance with the existing literature on migration which suggested that people who are unattached are less restricted by economic and socio-cultural obligations and therefore more likely to migrate to seek improved job opportunities in some cases to acquire the needed resources to settle down such as marriage (Abdul-Korah, 2006; GSS, 2013). It emerged from the study that while a higher proportion of those immigrants who were unemployed prior to their departure migrated to hunt for jobs, their counterparts who were previously farmers left their areas of origin largely because of declines in agricultural productivity emanating bad environmental conditions. The current evidence where those who were unemployed migrated for job opportunities in Ghana go to support what Adepoju (2005), GSS (2012) and FAO (2016) had indicated that three countries (Ghana, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire) are the main economic zones of prosperity and employment generation for migrants in the West Africa. Moreover, given that most of the immigrants who were previously farmers migrated because low agricultural productivity might be attributed to the adverse effect of climate change as indicated.

It was found that most of the immigrants chose Ghana as their preferred destination in West Africa generally because of the belief that Ghanaians are hospitable people. These revelations rebut findings by Hunters and Skinner (2001) where a large portion of foreign retail traders chose Durban in South Africa as their preferred destination because they considered it to be a nice place (beautiful city), often after hearing so from their networks. These findings are, however, in tandem with what has been espoused in the Push-Pull theory of migration that the destination choices of prospective migrants is influenced by key intervening variables such as knowledge and the receptivity of the destination area.

As regards the immigrants' countries of origin and preference for Ghana however, it was found that while Malians had the likelihood of selecting Ghana as their preferred destination because of the hospitality of Ghanaian people, their Nigerian counterparts were more likely to select



Ghana as their ideal destination due to political stability/peace and shared language between the two nations. This evidence where Nigerian immigrants were dominant among those who chose Ghana as their preferred destination because of the country's political stability/peace and shared language could be attributed to the recurring insecurity situation in some parts of Nigeria owing to the activities of Militants like Boko Haram and the fact that both Nigeria and Ghana are Anglophone nations (Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2017).

The analysis further revealed that with the exception of cultural affinity and shared language; female immigrants were more than their male counterparts who chose Ghana as their preferred destination due to the receptiveness of Ghanaian citizens, political stability/peace and availability of migration networks. The current findings from both the survey and the qualitative study were awaited because the literature on migration points to the fact that female migrants are more vulnerable compared to males in the migration process and therefore more likely to migrate to destinations where they are sure of available networks and safety (GSS, 2012). Level of education also demonstrated to be a significant predictor of the immigrants' destination choice. While a large percentage (29.3%) of the immigrants with no formal education selected Ghana as their ideal destination because they had adequate migration networks, their counterparts who had formal education (i.e. basic, secondary/tertiary education) chose Ghana as their preferred destination due to the hospitality of Ghanaian people. This finding was expected because immigrants with no formal education may lack the ability to read and understand the socio-cultural lifestyle of a particular destination area through formal sources such as the Internet as compared to those with formal education. It is thus not out of place that most of the immigrants with no formal education relied on migration networks for information and selection of their destination.

### **1.7 Conclusions and Implications**

Contemporary research pertaining to the motivations for migration and destination choice considerations among West African itinerant migrant traders in Ghana and the West African sub-region as a whole appeared veiled. Hence, the aim of this study was twofold: first, assess the main drivers of migration among West African itinerant migrant traders in the Accra Metropolis and second, understand the key determinants of their choice of destination. Based on the key findings obtained from the study, the study concludes that the main drivers for migration among the immigrants were economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental

factors. Nevertheless, the main motive for their out-migration was economic-related with job hunt been their overriding incentive. The study concludes that the immigrants' preference for Ghana as their destination was premised on the belief that Ghanaians are hospitable people. These findings from the study underscore the need for governments in sister countries (through the Economic Community of West African States programme on youth entrepreneurship and empowerment) to consider investing more of their resources on jobs creation for young people in order to stem the persistent out-migration of their human resources. This is fundamental because the phenomenon could have serious development ramifications not only for the origin countries but also on the host countries.

Moreover, considering that most of the immigrants travelled to the current destination to pursue job opportunities, the study recommends that all Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs] aimed at providing economic support for itinerant immigrant traders in West Africa should implement such projects at their places of origin and not at the destination. This is because as revealed in the study, it is the economic deprivation at home, which compelled them to migrate more than anything else. Similarly, the study recommends that future research projects on the drivers for migration and destination selection criteria among West African itinerant migrant traders should be replicated nationwide in other regions of the country in order to draw comparative analysis and generalization for the entire country. Academic research could be carried out on each of the identified drives of migration among immigrants. This would help unveil the relative importance of each of the factors, which contributed to their out-migration. Future researches attempting to understand the contemporary causes for migration and destination choices of prospective migrants ought not preclude issues of destination, origin, intervening, and individual level factors.

### **1.8 Acknowledgments**

The authors appreciate the effort made by all opinion leaders and immigrants in the study communities who despite their busy schedules made this research work a success by paving the way for the research work to be carried out without a hitch. The authors are also thankful to all the field assistants from University of Ghana, who assisted with the survey data collection.

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