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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

**UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTION OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION AMONG THE  
YOUTH IN THE BONO EAST AND WESTERN REGIONS**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is entirely my original work and has not been submitted either in part or in whole for the award of a degree at the Ghana Institute of Journalism or any other institution, except for the works which were consulted and have been duly referenced. This research was done by me, Betsey Naa Korlei Osuteye, under the supervision of Dr. Etse Sikanku.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the memory of my beloved aunt, the late Mrs. Charlotte Sarah Akyeampong, who had become my biggest fan in my adult life; and to my mother, Mrs. Regina Elsie Osuteye for her love and encouragement throughout the academic exercise.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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I appreciate the friendships formed in this period – Emma Aku Obiri, Mabel Anekera, Kingsley Aboagye and all my classmates for their resilience throughout the period of study.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

CSOs – Civil Society Organizations

EUTF – European Union Trust Fund for Africa

FGDs – Focus Group Discussion

IOM – International Organization for Migration

MMP – Missing Migrant Project

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

Irregular Migration - refers to when people cross borders without proper authority and documentation and approved route to do so.

Stowaway – to leave your country of origin through a dangerous means, usually through hiding in the bunker of a commercial ship.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
DEFINITION OF TERMS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	viii
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3 Objectives of the Study	3
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Theoretical Background	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Methodology	6
1.8 Delimitation of the Study	8
1.9 Chapter Disposition	8
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Theoretical Review	12

2.3 The Concept of Irregular Migration	13
2.4 Routes of Irregular Migration	14
2.5 The Socio-Economic Situation in Ghana and Migration	15
2.6 Campaigns and Their Effectiveness	16
2.7 Chapter Summary	18
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 Introduction	19
3.2 Research Approach	19
3.3 Research Design	19
3.4 Research Methods	21
3.5 Sources of Data	21
3.6 Sampling	22
3.7 Data Collection Instrument	23
3.8 Chapter Summary	23
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1 Perceptions of Irregular Migration	24
4.2 How People Engage in Irregular Migration	25
4.3 Social and Economic Factors Influencing Migration	27
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>29</b>
5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations	2

## **ABSTRACT**

For some time now, the news of some Ghanaians getting stranded in Libya or Kuwait, or other countries; as well as the reports of maltreatments and harassment of some Ghanaian youth in some countries is becoming more and more rampant. These youths mostly embark on such journeys irregularly, using unapproved channels and live in these host countries without the right legal documentation, which is why they often endure ill treatments meted out to them.

One may wonder why such able-bodied youth will want to leave a peaceful country like Ghana through such dangerous routes. There have been a lot of education through the use of documentaries among other media about the dangers of irregular migration, and yet, many Ghanaian youths brave the journey. Could these interventions be lacking something essential?

This study explored the perception of irregular migration among potential migrants, returned migrants and people from their communities in two of Ghana's regions (Western and Bono East) to understand why they did what they did, while trying to understand their frustrations and the passions that these youths are driven by.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The issue of irregular migration is a very worrying situation. As at 2015, there was an estimated population of 244 million migrant globally, which constituted 3.3% of the global population and an increase from an estimated 155 million people in the year 2000 (2.8% of the world's population). Though this forms a very small minority of the global population, it is said to be increasing numerically and proportionally and at a greater rate than anticipated (IOM, 2018).

A study conducted by the Afrobarometer concluded that a third of Africans want to migrate. The report, which was carried by the March 28<sup>th</sup> 2018 edition of the Ghanaian Times unveiled that the major reasons for migration is usually to escape poverty and economic hardship, which confirms similar findings in the World Migration 2018 Report (Ghanaian Times, 2028). Incidentally, the continent-wide study (carried out in 34 countries) found that most Africans would like to migrate to other African countries, whereas Europe and North America were the preferred destinations for those considering migration outside the continent. This confirms the view of Delali Margaret Badasu, Former Director at the Center for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana that “Every young person looks up to migration, as an ultimate goal, its deep rooted in their minds”.

Irregular migration refers to when people cross borders without proper authority and so, violating the conditions of entry into another county (Duvell, 2006). The journey irregular migrants undertake can be dangerous and life-threatening. Irregular migration, by its nature, could lead to hardships that result in loss of lives in the chosen routes such as the desert, in ships or the on Mediterranean Sea. The IOM's Missing Migrant Project (MMP) reported that 7,927

migrants, representing 26% more than the 2015 number, went missing or died in 2016. The number of missing or dead migrants attributed to the Mediterranean Sea alone accounts for over 60% and increased by 36% in 2016. (IOM, 2018) The reality of irregular migration, with accompanying socio-economic costs, makes any intervention to curb it a vital one.

Ghana has over the years risen to join the ranks of migrants flooding Europe's southern shores. Statistics from the IOM on irregular migration indicates that approximately 5,636 Ghanaian migrants arrived in Italy by boat in 2016. This was up 27% from the previous year (IOM, 2018). This makes Ghana an outlier among other Sub-Saharan African countries with high numbers of migrants. There is no war in Ghana, and there are very few ethnic flare-ups or religious feuds occurring, thus, it leaves very little justification for such rates of irregular migrations except for the fact that many Ghanaian youths are influenced by friends, family and recruiters to seek greener pastures in the West. In other words, poverty is a major push factor in the quest to migrate.

Poverty, lack of jobs and general economic hardships, coupled with unmitigated desire of the youth for the European lifestyle are some of the major reasons why the young people consider irregular migration with the objective to reach Europe via unapproved means as their major chance at making ends meet in life. The youth, including some parents and guardians see migration as the only hope to escape poverty and misery. Although the youth may be somewhat aware of the dangers involved in irregular migration particularly travelling via the desert, most of them will still dare to travel in droves daily through the desert in an attempt to get to Europe. This is because successful irregular migrants are hailed by the society, while unsuccessful

irregular migrants are seen as adventurous and courageous, although some of the returnees are seen to have failed.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

There is no doubt that the youth know that irregular migration is a life-threatening venture and yet, they continually embark on the journey. Getting them to reconsider the journey of irregular migration must be done with tact. Simply saying to an ambitious youth “don’t go” will rather arouse their curiosity. This will immediately diminish the potential impact of the message being carried across, no matter how powerful the construct. This is consistent with the findings of Alpes & Sorenson, 2015.

Indeed, Van Bommel (2015) showed that aspiring migrants in Ghana are very aware of and acknowledged the risks involved in irregular migration but still decide to leave. Faith, prayers and a strong belief in God are seen as factors that could minimize the probability of adverse outcomes.

Very little is known about why the Ghanaian youth are embarking on this journey from their own perspective. This could be the reason why the several communications against irregular migration has not successfully stripped the Ghanaian youth off the aspiration of travelling to Europe, through the desert and the Mediterranean Sea. Undertaking a study that will help understand the problem, as well as the need state, the pain points and the mind-set of the target population. This will bring to bear the true nature of the dangerous journey to all community stakeholders, as well as the potential migrants themselves. This will ultimately save a lot of lives,

as it may result in stripping some youth off their illusion that the grass is greener and so get them to work harder at home. The study will also highlight some of the opportunities back at home.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objective of the study is to explore the perception of irregular migration among the youth of the Bono East and Western Regions.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To determine people's perceptions on irregular migration.
2. To identify the common means of migration among the target population.
3. To determine how the social environment and cultural practices influence irregular migration.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are people's perceptions on irregular migration?
2. How do people engage and participate in irregular migration?
3. To what extent do social processes and contextual factors like social norms, values, behaviours and cultural practices influence irregular migration?

### **1.5 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The modernization theory, whose development has been linked to American Social Scientists in the 1950s suggests that cultural and information deficit lie underneath development problems.

Under this theory, third world countries are seen to lack the necessary culture and institutions to move into the modern stage; and that modern culture is directly linked to economic and political development.

This theory is directly linked to the problem of irregular migration in the sense that, in a country like Ghana, where our culture relatively is beginning to open up to innovation, the grass will always look greener on the other side. And through the internet and social media, the youth are more likely to identify and seek better rewarding economic opportunities overseas, and thus want to go there.

The communities where irregular migration is prevalent are the less developed communities within the country. This somewhat validated the assertion of the modernization theory because the potential migrants are looking for some economic and social opportunities that are not available in their geographic locations.

According to Castles and Kosack (1972), migration has become a structural necessity in response to the need for Western culture. The youth are exposed to a foreign taste, thanks to the internet and the television; and they desire that lifestyle which they have witnessed from afar. This is likely to be one of the push factors.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

A number of campaigns targeted at reducing irregular migration have failed because they included elements of telling the target what to do or not do or used scare-tactics. These are likely to trigger defensive reactions from the target and cause them to stop listening as a result. This is described as the “counter-arguing” effect, as evidenced by (Moyer-Guse, 2008). These campaigns have often countered the IOM’s position, that campaigns should not threaten or

command their audience to stay in their country but should provide them with balanced and factual information (IOM,1999, p.19).

Knowing that the range of factors that combine to drive our targets' behavior are complex, the study seeks to fully understand the target(s), their motivations and need-states, which will be a prerequisite to gleaning an impactful target insight. The study will seek a fuller understanding of the dynamics of irregular migration, trying to know what makes it so alluring to the target, or why it is so persistent.

In future, the findings of this study can be helpful to communication agencies and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in the migration space to couch strategies and campaigns that will truly be representative of the people, their interests and their core beliefs. And thus, contributing to effective and sustainable awareness raising campaigns in the future.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

Data for the study will be collected mainly through stakeholder interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

Data from stakeholders will be collected using semi-structured phone interviews with key informants. These informants will include Officials of the IOM, staff of District Assemblies in the target communities, Migration-related NGOs and CSOs. The researcher will inform all key informants of the pending interview and provide them with a guide in advance; thereby allowing each key informant to become familiar with the issues to be explored and maximize the productivity of the interview time.

Community level data collection will be carried out in some of the hotspot communities within the Bono East and Western Regions to solicit information from key stakeholders. Due to the current lockdown situation in some parts of the country arising from COVID-19 containment measures, the researcher will liaise with a representative in the regions to collect the data. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will be extensively utilized during these community engagements, especially when engaging with the young people, comprising potential migrants and returnees. Structured interview guides will be used to elicit data during the FGDs. The FGD will enable the researcher to obtain first-hand information on the perspectives of the target community members on irregular migration. Areas of enquiry will be in line with the research questions already listed above.

The participants of the FGDs will include:

- Potential migrants comprising Youth and young adults (between the ages of 15 and 35) – categories of people considered at risk (either because of age, employment, revenue-making activities, geographical location, access to services, etc.). These include students, commercial drivers, artisans including carpenters, mechanics, etc.
- Returnees – mostly returnees provided with voluntary return assistance by IOM under the return programme and that of the EUTF project
- Opinion leaders, NGOs and Assembly Members, Women and Youth Groups, Religious Leaders constituting the second audience will be another group of participants in the study

## **SAMPLING**

The target number of respondents is 30. Efforts will be made to sample women in order to capture their views as well and provide a gendered balance. Since the focus is on engagement

with respondents, the study hopes to gather a maximum of 10 people per session to ensure that every side of opinion is covered in depth during the interaction.

Mixed method sampling strategy will be used to select the respondents to take part in the various community engagements. The purposive sampling strategy will be used to select participants from the primary and secondary audience depending on their knowledge of irregular migration while the convenience random sampling will be employed to select the young people (between 15 to 35 years), who will be made up of both potential migrants and returnees. The purposive sampling approach would be used in selecting the 10 stakeholders while the convenience sampling approach will be used in selecting the 20 young people. To ensure that both groups of respondents are sampled for the FGDs, the researcher will collaborate with the CSOs that work on the returnee re-integration programmes in each community.

Also, during the key informant interviews, the researcher will ask the community leaders their views on the areas in the town particularly noted for migratory activities (or the suburbs where most potential migrants and returnees hail from). The list gathered from the CSOs and the community leaders will then be compared and two areas that have been mentioned by both groups selected.

It is evident that Ghana is losing a chunk of her able-bodied youth to this social problem of irregular migration. While some efforts are being made to help reduce this menace, it is imperative to get it right, for the message to resonate with the potential migrants. This is why this study seeks to examine the need to explore what the 'appropriate communication method' will be, and at the same time seek to bring out the need to understand the core reasons why the youth are migrating irregularly, in order to properly raise awareness of irregular migration in Ghana.

## **1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

It would have been ideal to conduct the study across other regions, since irregular migration is not peculiar to the Bono East and Western regions. However, these regions are known to be where the most people leave the country from, according to the IOM, hence, a good place to start from.

## **1.9 CHAPTER DISPOSITIONS**

The research will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will focus on the background and introduction of the study, in addition to the research objectives, the research questions and the significance of the study. Chapter two will delve into existing literature on irregular migration. The third chapter will show the methodology that was used in this study. The fourth chapter will present and discuss the data that has been successfully collected. And the fifth chapter will focus on a review of the study objectives, while presenting the summary of the research outcome, and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, focus was placed on the background of the study, and a description of the research problem, as well as the scope and significance of the study. This second chapter will review literature on the findings and opinions of some migration scholars with regards to the concepts of migration and irregular migration, routes of migration, as well as irregular migration campaigns have been implemented in the past, and how effective they have been to change the minds of potential migrants. This chapter will also shed light on the theoretical basis of the study.

Looking at the fundamental history of human beings, some scholars have argued that migration is a natural human experience. According to McNeil and Adam, (1978), migration is an intrinsic instinct that drove humans in search for food, resources, and to conquer more territory. They also stressed that population movements have been the carriers of innovation.

Despite these known realities, there are concerns about the actual prospects and value of migration to migrants, particularly as migrants have less economic securities and are known to work in precarious work conditions. For instance, at the London Paralympics for September 2012, there was a single Albanian athlete, a hand- biker. The biker, like many others, migrated to Italy in the 1990s, and worked in the informal sector on construction sites. One day, he fell off a scaffold and damaged his spine, becoming a paraplegic. (Bauböck, 2001). This story brings to

light the apparent nature of ‘mature’ economies and their use of cheap migrant labour. It also shows the danger and the insecurities of the work done by migrants overseas.

For more than twenty years, Stephen Castles and Mark Miller have told us that we live in the ‘Age of Migration’ (Castles and Miller 1993, 2009): a period during which international migration has accelerated, globalised, feminised, diversified and become increasingly politicised. In addition to this, the latest figures from the United Nations Population Division inform us that, as of 2010, there were 214 million international migrants in the world – that is to say, people residing in a country different from that of their birth. If all these migrants were put in a country of their own, it would be the fifth largest in the world! (UNPD, 2010) But while we may be in the “Age of Migration”, many millions would want to migrate, but are prevented from doing so the right way, either by their own poverty which isolates them (they do not have a passport, and/or cannot pay for the ticket to travel) or because of the political and institutional barriers to their movement. One of the ironies of globalisation is that whilst goods, capital, knowledge, entrepreneurship and the media are free to flow across borders, the other crucial factor of production which is labour, is not. On the whole, people are less free to migrate now than they were years ago.

In Ghana, the Bono, Bono East, Ahafo, Western and Western North Regions have the highest percentage of irregular migrants, according to the IOM. Some of the youth in those areas usually drop out of secondary school or leave after secondary school, to risk the irregular journey across the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea, in the hope of reaching Europe. “Some are successful, others are not – discovering that instead of lucrative employment, they face terrible hardships, including death.” (IOM, 2018).

These point to the fact that there is no better time than now to seek to understand why the potential Ghanaian irregular migrant wants to leave the shores of our beautiful country.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The concept of migration is too complex to be explained with one theory (Arango, 2018). In agreement with this assertion, this study will focus on the elaboration likelihood model and the modernization theory.

The *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM), also known as the *Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) is a process theory which borders on attitudinal change. It was propounded by John Cacioppo and Richard E. Petty in the 1980s (Kruglanski et al., 2012). The model illustrates how stimuli is processed, elaborate on their usage and impact on behaviour change. While people carry out their daily routines, people can be persuaded by something they've seen, or read, or even listened to. The ELM theory brings to bear how people's attitudes can change through a persuasion message. From this model, the *central* and *peripheral* routes are the two main routes to persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The *central route* refers to when persuasion results from a person giving careful thought to the strong points of a piece of information or message. In this case, the receiver of the information or message actively weighs all the dimensions of the information. Consequently, ELM assumes that whatever attitude change that occurs is likely to be enduring, and can even predict how the individual will behave. (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)

In line with this theory, many Ghanaian youths who travel irregularly do so from information they have received from people in their circles, and what they see or hear on the media. They long for the 'better' western life that has been glorified in the media. However, the youth are

more likely to carefully make a choice of the journey after considering the possible mishaps on the way. From this theory, irregular migration among the youth of Ghana is a well thought through decision that is made when the advantages of the journey seem to outweigh the disadvantages.

The *modernization theory*, whose development has been linked to American Social Scientists in the 1950s suggests that cultural and information deficit lie underneath development problems. Sub-Saharan countries are seen to lack the necessary culture to move into the modern stage; and that modern culture is directly linked to economic and political development (Castles et al., 2012).

This theory is directly linked to the problem of irregular migration in the sense that, in a country like Ghana, where our culture relatively is beginning to open up to innovation, the grass will always look greener on the other side. And through the internet and the media, the youth are more likely to identify and seek better rewarding economic opportunities overseas, and thus want to go there.

The communities where irregular migration is prevalent are relatively the less developed communities within the country. This somewhat validates the assertion of the modernization theory because the potential migrants are looking for some economic and social opportunities that are not available in their geographic locations.

According to Castles and Kosack (1972), migration has become a structural necessity in response to the need for Western culture. The youth are exposed to a foreign taste, thanks to the internet

and the television; and they desire that lifestyle which they have witnessed from afar. This is likely to be one of the push factors.

### **2.3 THE CONCEPT OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

Irregular migration refers to when people cross borders without proper authority and so, violating the conditions of entry into another country (Duvell, 2006). According to the world migration report by the International Office of Migration, irregular migration is the “movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country”.

The term irregular migration also refers to when people enter other countries with false documentation, or through unauthorized points of entry. The term also includes those who travel right, but their documents become invalid along the way (IOM, 2011).

Transit migration refers to when migrating people enter a national territory en route to another country. They may spend some period of time to work and pay for the next phase of the journey, or simply to organize themselves for the journey ahead. The migrants however leave the transit countries to an onward destination. (Duvell, 2006).

### **2.4 ROUTES OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

There are various routes by which the youth reach North America and Europe irregularly. Some go by sea, by land or even by air. The journey can be divided into two phases: *Trans-Saharan* and *Trans-Mediterranean*. The trans-Saharan journey lasts for months and is usually made in the bucket of pick-ups or in large trucks. They make a lot of stops en route and stay in migration hubs in some countries along the way (Transit Migration). While in transit, some work to make

some more money to continue the journey, or simply to organize themselves for the rest of the journey.

There are a number of routes, but majority of the migrants enter the Maghreb region from Agadez in Niger. From there, they usually move to Saba in Libya or Tamanrasset in Algeria. (Barros et al., 2002; Brachet, 2005; Collyer, 2005).

From their various transit points in Northern Africa, they proceed to make the next phase of migration- the trans-Mediterranean migration to Europe. From Morocco, they usually enter Spain. From Tunisia, they usually go to the Italian Islands and from Libya to Malta and Italy (Carling 2007; De Haas 2006).

The journey costs a substantial amount of money to undertake. On the average, a migrant must have between \$800 and \$1200 to undertake the journey. This amount is seen as an investment by those who brave the journey, looking at how much more they can easily make when they reach Europe. The money is used to pay for bribes, fees for smugglers or “connection men”, transportation and for their personal upkeep (Lahlou, 2005).

The next phase, the Trans-Mediterranean migration is usually done with inflatable boats. Going across the Mediterranean without a captain and no proper vessel is not the only danger these migrants face. They usually have fences to scale at the Spanish and Malta borders. Some of the migrants also try to swim across the ocean, with the hope of being rescued as refugees.

## **2.5 THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN GHANA AND MIGRRATION**

A significant percentage of Ghana’s population keep migrating. According to Twum-Baah et al., (1995) about 1.5 million Ghanaians were living in other countries. By 2014, that figure had increased to 3 million. In 2014, the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (the Italian National Statistical

Institute) had estimated that about 51,602 Ghanaians were living in Italy, with a 1,000 of them arriving in the year 2014.

About 76.6% of the population who are 15 years and above have had some form of formal education. There is still a lot of effort put in place by the government to ensure that more and more people get access to formal education. These efforts include the GET Fund, the FCUBE, the school feeding programme, and most recently, the Free SHS system.

Ghana has had a stable democratic governance for over 20 years, and the GDP seems to be growing steadily. These conditions leave a person wondering why the Ghanaian youth will want to leave the country. It is estimated that approximately 300,000 young people enter the job market annually. Just 2%, or about 5,000 persons, get employed in the formal sector (Ulandssekretariatet, 2014). This shows that there is a clear case of unemployment and underemployment in Ghana. And when there seems to be no job opportunities for the youth, they will move to find jobs. It is clear that a lot of Ghanaian youth migrate for economic reasons (Quartey, 2006).

Some other reasons that entice the youth to leave the shores of the country are that they are enticed by the seemingly luxurious lifestyles of returnee migrants such as the ability to buy a car, buy a piece of land, start a building project, as well as the respect accorded to returnee migrants and their families. As a result of all these, the youth see a trip to Europe as a dream come true and will take measures to make it to Europe at all cost, no matter how perilous the journey.

## **2.6 CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS**

Behavioral Change Campaigns against irregular migration attempt to “shape public attitudes, values and behavior in the hope of reaching a desirable outcome (Weiss & Tchirhart, 1994). These campaigns use multiple media channels including TV, radio, billboards and posters, as well as seminars and town hall meetings. (Schloenhardt & Philipson, 2013). Unlike other public education campaigns like sanitation campaigns, issues of migration are not as simple. This is because, campaigns do not remain the only source of information the targets have. While the campaigns on irregular migration are running, alternative stories of hope and success abound from relatives, community members, and even co-workers (Atkin & Rice, 2012).

Many of such campaigns have been run to raise awareness and provide information on the dangers of irregular migration, but their effectiveness remains questionable as the number of people who undertake irregular migration seems to be rising. One of the reasons is that the messaging is seen to be inconsistent, when they are funded by the receiving countries who want to deter people from going over. They are however packaged as humanitarian, to prevent the loss of human lives on the journey.

Another reason why such campaigns don't seem to have achieved much is because they have generally focused on the negative side – the dangers of the journey, the difficult living conditions of people who travel irregularly as well as the stricter policies of the receiving countries. The underlying message usually seeks to suggest that travelling without the right documentation leads to exploitation and failure (Heller, 2014). One recent campaign is the “AWAKE MIGRANT” campaign which was jointly launched by the IOM and the Italian Ministry of Interior in July 2016. One of the campaign elements was a testimonial video that featured people who have successfully made it to Italy through the Mediterranean sharing the hardships they endured on the way, including physical and sexual abuse.

These campaigns seem to have failed because they relied on certain assumptions. The first assumption is that potential migrants lack information, hence the need to show them the difficulties they are bound to encounter on the way. Studies however show that they are fully aware of the likely dangers and yet choose to go (Alpes & Sorenson, 2015).

Another such assumption is that the potential migrant will trust the information which these campaigns carry, as against what they have learnt from their social circles and from the media. It was also reported by Alpes & Sorenson (2015) that migrants will readily discard any information that will deter them from achieving their dreams.

There is also the assumption that fear can scare potential migrants to the point that they will abandon their aims. Van Bamel, (2015) points out that the aspiring migrants in Ghana do acknowledge the possible risks and dangers on the way but their faith, prayers and belief in God overrides the possible adverse outcomes, coupled with the right preparations and the right social ties abroad.

Again, such campaigns to raise awareness of irregular migration usually assume that the journey is solely an individual decision. Irregular migration has social and cultural underlying situations. Most of the time, people leave to guarantee the survival of a whole group, such as a whole extended family, through remittances. According to Mbaye (2014), some see the culture of migration, as a rite of passage.

## **2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter attempts to examine existing literature relating to migration and irregular migration.

It also analyses various literature relating to some behavioural change campaigns targeted at irregular migration and how effective they have been. The next chapter will focus on the methodology that will be used in carrying out the research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Various literature relating to this thesis was examined in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the focus will be on the methodology that will be used in conducting this research. This will include the research approach, design, population, as well as sampling and administration procedure.

#### **3. 2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Researchers aim to build on and test theories in two ways- either *inductively or deductively*, according to Neumann (2006). This study will employ the deductive approach, which tests the soundness of existing approaches and theories, while the inductive approach sheds light on new theories (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2012)

#### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design refers to the researcher's main plan that directs him in the steps he takes to answer his research questions. The research design could be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory. (Saunders et al., 2012).

Descriptive research design seeks to throw light on, bring out the details or simply identify what exists. By this, a phenomenon is more aptly described than previously (Fox & Bayat, 2007).

With this design, the researcher must present the findings as they are. He is unable to manipulate the variables. (Ethridge, 2004).

It is used to discuss the behavior, attributes and habits of the target population, and can also be used when describing, explaining or validating research findings.

The explanatory approach, also known as causal research is employed to establish the relationship between cause and effect – thus, it is used to ascertain the degree of how and if one phenomenon affects the other. This approach seems more clearly defined well-structured than the rest. (Zikmund et al., 2012)

Exploratory research, like the name implies, launches the researcher on a fact-finding, probing mission where he tries to uncover a subject that may be new to him. Zikmund et al. (2012) explain that this kind of research doesn't intend to provide conclusive solutions to issues, but to shed more light on an issue. This implies that at a certain point, the researcher should be open to the possibility of having to change the direction of his research should new insights be revealed (Saunders & Thornhill, 2012)

The Exploratory design enables the researcher to discuss his chosen topic in detail. Some studies are of the view that this research design should be used as an initial study, which will lead to in-depth studies, and can assist in choosing a more definite research design, sampling and data collection method to be used (Singh, 2007). It is often used to explore new areas of study, on which little or no previous research has been done (Brown, 2006).

For this study, the researcher will make use of the descriptive research design. This is because the topic seeks to delve into perceptions of the youth regarding irregular migration. This design lends itself to delving into habits and behaviours and what influences them.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

The main research methods are qualitative and quantitative. Each of these two methods has a unique way of data collection and analysis. Some researchers, however, choose combine the two methods in a study.

Quantitative methods, make use of mathematical calculations and symbols in different formats. Very often, they employ the use of close-ended questionnaires and measure the mean, mode and median, etc. (Creswell, 1994). One advantage of the quantitative method is the possibility of collecting data in a shorter period, as compared with the qualitative methods. The method also yields itself to an easier comparison of findings (Creswell,1994).

Contrary to the quantitative methods, qualitative methods do not make use of numbers. This method is more closely linked with feelings, sound, words, emotions and other elements that are usually not easily measurable. This method allows for a more in-depth level of understanding into issues. Qualitative methods make use of open-ended questionnaires, focus groups discussions, observation, interviews, game or role-playing, etc. (Creswell,1994).

This study will mainly be qualitative, making use of focus group discussions as well as telephone interviews.

### **3.5 SOURCES OF DATA**

When a researcher collects data by himself for a study, the data gathered is known as Primary data. This means that the data is collected from first-hand sources. On the other hand, when the data used for a study is sourced from already existing information gathered by other individuals or from sources other than himself, it is known as secondary data (Gill& Johnson, 1997).

The data used in the preliminary stages of this research ahead of field research has been secondary in nature, and drawn on the findings of reports and other published material. The data from the field component of this study is classified as primary data since it will be collected by the researcher. And since some parts of the country are currently under partial lockdown due to the coronavirus, the researcher will employ the services of a research assistant to organize the focus group discussions. The assistant will be trained through video call sessions with the researcher, and provided with the necessary support and documentation to ensure that the research is conducted in an ethical manner and conforms with the use of consent, adequate information and documentation. There will also be the remote participation of the researcher in the focus groups where the internet access permits.

### **3.6 SAMPLING**

The ideal sample size will be a total of 30 respondents. Efforts will be made to sample women in order to capture their views as well. Since the focus is on in-depth engagement with respondents, the study hopes to gather a maximum of 10 people per session to ensure that every shade of opinion is covered in-depth during the interaction.

Mixed method sampling strategy will be used to select the respondents to take part in the various community engagements. The purposive sampling strategy would be used to select participants from the primary and secondary audience depending on their knowledge of irregular migration while the convenience random sampling would be employed to select the young people (between 15 to 35 years), who will be made up of both potential migrants and returnees. The purposive sampling approach would be used in selecting the 10 stakeholders while the convenience sampling approach would be used in selecting the 20 young people. To ensure that both groups

of respondents are sampled for the FGDs, the researcher will collaborate with the CSOs that work on the returnee reintegration programmes in each community.

Also, during the key informant interviews, the researcher will ask the community leaders about their views on the areas in the town particularly noted for migratory activities (or the suburbs where most potential migrants and returnees hail from). The list gathered from the CSOs and the community leaders will then be compared and two areas that have been mentioned by both groups selected.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT**

A qualitative data tool will be employed to elicit in-depth information from community stakeholders as well as returnees and potential migrants on irregular migration including:

- Local knowledge and understanding of irregular migration
- How the communities engage/ participate in irregular migration
- Social processes and contextual factors e.g. social norms, values, behaviours and cultural practices that influence irregular migration

A focus group guide will be used in the focus group discussions.

### **3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter shows the systematic approach used in this study. It employs a mixed method through focus group discussions and interviews with the relevant target.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 PERCEPTIONS ON IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

It became evident during the data collection that, most of the target returnees and potential migrants were highly aware of the dangers associated with irregular migration especially, through the Sahara Desert. Poverty, lack of jobs and general economic hardships, coupled with unmitigated taste of the youth for the European lifestyle is what gives the young people the desire to travel to Europe at all cost, for a chance to make it in life. They had all heard, to some extent, how dangerous the journey could be, that they could be attacked and robbed or killed; that they will be overloaded in tracks and can fall off in the desert and die; that there could be snakes and wild animals on the desert. Yet, many of the sampled returnees and the potential migrants, expressed their readiness to brave the journey citing, limited employment opportunities as the major reason.

The respondents maintained during the FGDs that most of them lacked the necessary technical skills and the educational qualification to secure decent jobs. The participants had mainly attained BECE/WASSCE certificates from the basic level of education, which is usually not enough to secure a decent job in Ghana. More than half of the participants in the FDGs had undertaken irregular migration before, with the host country mostly being Libya, although they had intended on reaching Europe. Most of the participants were currently unemployed. Among those employed, the exact occupational engagements varied from auto mechanic, driving, cleaning, farming, fishing to masonry. The rest included metal fabrication/installation, store

keeping, pupil teaching, trading and phone repairs. Farming was however the most popular means of employment.

It was evident that the principal reason for undertaking irregular migration is to raise enough money to better their lives, and the lives of their family. This accounts for why some returned migrants will still want to undertake the journey again, despite all they know about the journey. Friends were the main source of travel information for the youth. While friends influenced their travel decisions, travel agents, particularly in Takoradi, facilitated the actual travel. A good number of the returnees are willing to undertake the journey again.

Among the respondents who have never travelled before, about 50% were aware of the dangers of irregular migration, while the rest were unsure of the dangers involved in travelling irregularly. This calls for further awareness raising among these young people who are usually unaware of the dangers of irregular migration or oblivious to its dangers.

The youth including most parents see irregular migration as the only hope to escape poverty and misery. Although the youth were found to be extremely aware of the dangers involved in irregular migration, particularly travelling via desert, most of them will still dare to travel in droves daily through the desert in an attempt to get to Europe. Successful irregular migrants are hailed by the society, unsuccessful irregular migrants are seen as adventurous and courageous. Those who lose their life at sea and on the desert are celebrated as heroes as they are perceived to have died for a worthy cause.

## **4.2 HOW PEOPLE ENGAGE IN IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

Friends are the main source of travel information for the returnees, while a relatively small percentage get their travel information from ‘travel agents’, who do not tell them the actual conditions of the journey. A few others got their travel information from family members, who have been on the journey before. Where travel agents facilitated the journey of irregular migration, it was obvious that friends influence their travel decisions before the agents’ step in to facilitate the process.

One unique finding was the fact that most of the returnees from the Western and the Bono East regions mobilized funds for their journeys by engaging in strenuous menial jobs. Largely, the participants revealed that migrants from Takoradi engage in menial jobs including trading in scrap metals, loading of cocoa beans at the Port while majority of the irregular migrants in the Bono East mobilize savings from the peasant farming activities.

It became evident that irregular migrants in the target regions i.e. Western Region spend a minimum of GHs 6,500 to a maximum of GHs 15,000 on their journeys depending on the route used and agents involved. Their counterparts in the Bono East spends approximately GHs1, 500 and GHs 5,000 to fund their migration activities. The difference in the amounts used in the two regions were observed to be the massive use of travel agents in the Western Region and the limited usage of same in the Bono East Region.

Occasionally, the irregular migrants are supported by their families through either the sale of family property such as land or loans from financial institutions. Besides, there are agents who pre- finance the trips with the hope that, the irregular migrants will pay back when they arrive in Europe. Some of the migrants also have friends and family members in Libya who encourage them to mobilize the initial funds for the trip, which in the average case is GHs2, 500 and them

make the trip to Agadez, with the promise that they (i.e., their benefactors in either Libya or Europe) will facilitate their trip from Agadez to Libya and beyond. Thus, the funds utilized by the participants, is normally higher than the amount mentioned. In some few instances, the young people travel with whatever savings they have mobilized and then use the precarious situation they encounter along the route to coerce family members to send monies to them.

The most common route used is from Techiman, through Northern Ghana to Burkina Faso. Then they continue through Mali to Niger. From Niger, some proceed to Algeria or Morocco, while most of them go to Libya. From Libya, Algeria and Morocco, the migrants try to make it across the Mediterranean to Europe.

#### **4.3 SOCIAL PROCESSES AND CONTEXUAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

The irregular migration phenomenon in the Western region, and Takoradi in particular is underpinned by some socio-cultural factors. There appears to have been a long-standing habit of the indigenes who travel to Europe via unapproved routes including the Sahara Desert and as “Stowaway”, which dates back to about 1928 when the Takoradi Harbour was constructed. Known as the Harbour city, Takoradi became a vibrant economic hub occasioned by the arrival of foreign ships and the attendant influx of European sea men. Residents, especially, the youth were recruited as sea men to the neighbouring countries, while others secured employment as labourers either casually or on a permanent basis. The cultural effect was the blanket assimilation of the European culture by residents especially the youth. With the assistance of expatriate ship workers, migration to Europe regularly became common in the Western region. However, the implementation of the divestiture programme by the erstwhile PNDC government, accounted for

the loss of jobs of the indigenes who worked at the harbour on both casual and permanent bases in the early 1980s. Life in Takoradi became extremely difficult financially as the major source of livelihood, according to the participants, eluded them, which forced them to migrate, whether through regular or irregular means.

Irregular migration with the objective to reach Europe via unapproved routes was perceived to be a major chance at making ends meet in life. Essentially, the practice of migration has existed in Takoradi for a long time, but only got exploded in the 1990s. Again, the seemingly opulence and affluent lifestyle displayed by the successful irregular migrants upon return, added impetus to the craze among the youth to travel abroad through irregular means.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and analysis, irregular migration to Europe is considered a norm among the target audience in the Western and Bono East Regions to the extent that deaths of irregular migrants are attributable to fate. Irregular migrants in the target communities put their lives on the line to earn an enviable title of “Burger” or “Libya Burger” usually conferred by community members.

Changing this wrong perception among the indigenes will require sustained sensitizations. Possibly, selected returnees should be trained and engaged to sensitize their contemporaries in the regions. This is because it was revealed during the FDGs that, the target audience, being the returnees and the young potential migrants, identifies more with their colleagues and will likely listen to them.

It is also envisaged that the beneficiary communities should be supported to own the fight against irregular migration through the design of local solutions. It is worth mentioning that, after participating in the FDGs, the participants, i.e., the traditional authorities, the religious leaders, assembly members among others expressed their readiness to partner in interventions that will work towards curbing irregular migration in the communities. Consequently, it is recommended that effort should be made to support creation of Community Based Organizations in the communities to help in the sensitizations within their communities.

Since most of returned migrants, in particular, maintained during the FDGs that they lacked the necessary technical skills and the educational qualification to secure decent employment which

forced them to migrate, it will be beneficial if the government or Civil Society Organizations can secure funds to equip the unemployed youth in the migration prone areas with Technical or Vocational skills as well as the financial support to start their businesses, it will in the long run contribute to curbing irregular migration.

It is evident that the youth who migrate irregularly usually have to work very hard to save money for their respective journeys. It will be helpful if the Business Advisory Centers in the Municipal Assemblies offer business advisory and entrepreneurial training for the teeming youth in the target regions. This is to ensure that the energies and savings of the youth are channeled into profitable ventures. However, to succeed in this direction, the focus should not only be on the individuals but also close associates and family members as in some cases, the decision to migrate irregularly, is taken in collaboration with close relations.

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**APPENDIX**  
**FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

**Background**

1. Gender

Male  Female

2. How old are you?

Below 15 yrs  B/n 15-19yrs  B/n 20-24yrs  B/n 25-29yrs

B/n 30-34yrs  Above 35 yrs

3. Educational Background

No formal Education  Dropped out  Completed Primary school

Completed JHS  Completed SHS  Graduate

Post Graduate  Others (Specify).....

4. Marital status

Single  Married  Divorced  Separated

Co-habiting  Others (Specify).....

**A. Local knowledge and understanding of irregular migration**

1. How do you understand irregular migration?

2. Have you migrated before?
3. Do you know someone who has migrated irregularly before?
4. What could have motivated you or others to migrate?
5. Do you consider irregular migration risky? Why?

**B. Social processes and contextual factors**

1. What social norms would you say promote irregular migration in your community?
2. What societal values would you say promote irregular migration in your community?
3. What behaviours and cultural practices influence irregular migration in your community?
4. What do you suppose is the major underlying factor for irregular migration in this community?

**C. People's perceptions on irregular migration**

1. If you had the opportunity between starting your own business and migrating, which would you choose? Why?
2. If you had to choose between an average paying job in Ghana and migration, which would you choose? Why?
3. Between those who work in your community and those who migrated, which is more respected/ admired? Why?

**D. How communities engage and participate in irregular migration**

1. How do migrants raise funds to travel?
2. To what extent is the community involved in their fund-raising activities?
3. How does the community react when funds are raised for the pursuit of a business venture?
4. Is the community supportive when funds are being raised for educational purposes?
5. How does the community react when migrants are unsuccessful in their travel plans?
6. How easy or difficult is it to reintegrate once a returned migrant?