



**EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANTS IN GHANA: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

BY

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT – DISSERTATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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This Project Work has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Project Work laid down by the Institute of Journalism under the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC-IJ)

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated first and foremost to the Almighty God, whose grace, wisdom, and strength have guided me through every step of this journey. Without His divine favor, this work would not have been possible.

I also dedicate this work to my entire family for their unwavering love, prayers, and encouragement throughout my academic pursuit. A special dedication goes to my father, Mr. John Edward Ababio, whose guidance, sacrifice, and steadfast belief in me have been an enduring source of inspiration. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the lived experiences of immigrants residing in Accra, Ghana, focusing on their motivations for migration, levels of satisfaction, challenges encountered, and coping strategies. Using a qualitative, phenomenological research approach, the study draws insights from semi-structured interviews conducted with adult immigrants from ECOWAS countries who have lived in Accra for at least one year. Participants shared narratives that revealed complex motivations driven by economic hardship, unemployment, insecurity, and political instability in their home countries. Ghana's relative peace, political stability, and infrastructural reliability emerged as key pull factors. Despite these advantages, immigrants reported facing challenges such as high living costs, limited access to housing and public services, and discrimination in employment and social interactions. Nevertheless, many demonstrated resilience through entrepreneurship, community solidarity, and participation in informal networks that provided social and emotional support. The study concludes that while Ghana's open regional policies facilitate migration, gaps remain in integration and institutional support. It recommends strengthened policy implementation, anti-discrimination measures, and community-based integration programs to enhance immigrant well-being and inclusion.

Keywords: Migration, Immigrant Experiences, Accra, Integration, ECOWAS, Social Capital, Resilience

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Migration is a defining feature of the 21st-century global order, driven by economic inequalities, political unrest, and environmental changes. Millions of people are increasingly crossing borders to seek protection, economic opportunities, and improved standards of living (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020). While much of the discourse has historically focused on North-bound migration, South-South migration particularly within the African continent has gained prominence, both as a survival strategy and a tool for regional development.

Across Africa, intra-regional migration is widespread and largely facilitated by legal frameworks such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Free Movement. This protocol grants citizens of member states the right to enter, reside, and work in any other ECOWAS country without the need for a visa (Adepoju, 2010). Despite the existence of this legal foundation, immigrants across the region still face challenges such as inconsistent enforcement, xenophobic attitudes, and barriers to essential services.

Ghana has increasingly become a key destination for immigrants due to its democratic stability, sustained economic growth, and commitment to regional cooperation. As a result, the country has evolved from being primarily an origin state to a host nation for migrants, particularly those from Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire (Awumbila, 2017; Anarfi & Kwankye, 2020). These migrants are often attracted by Ghana's relative peace, business opportunities, and urban infrastructure.

Most immigrants enter Ghana through the ECOWAS Free Movement framework and settle in urban centers such as Accra. The city offers job prospects, especially in the informal sector for instance, construction, petty trading, and domestic services where labor demand is high, though typically unregulated (Mensah, 2021). Many immigrants express satisfaction with the sense of safety, the welcoming social climate, and the comparative economic opportunities Ghana provides. Some are able to send remittances home, gain new skills, or access markets that were unavailable in their home countries.

Nonetheless, these positive outcomes are counterbalanced by significant challenges. Administrative hurdles, such as difficulty acquiring residence permits and the lack of legal support, remain major obstacles. Many immigrants remain undocumented due to complicated registration processes and poor awareness of their rights under ECOWAS protocols (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019). As a result, they become vulnerable to police harassment, arbitrary detention, and exploitation. Language barriers, particularly among Francophone immigrants, compound access issues in healthcare, legal services, and education. Although public systems in Ghana theoretically offer basic services to all, affordability, discrimination, and linguistic exclusion deter many immigrants from seeking necessary support (Yaro et al., 2019). Cultural alienation is also a reality for many immigrants who, despite living in religiously or ethnically similar environments, find themselves excluded from local governance and community networks (Owusu, 2022).

Gender dynamics further shape the immigrant experience. Female immigrants, often concentrated in domestic labor, face disproportionate exposure to gender-based violence, limited legal protections, and exploitative work conditions. Their experiences are underreported in both academic and policy circles, limiting targeted interventions (Oucho & Crush, 2001).

Despite these barriers, many immigrants exhibit remarkable resilience. Ethnic networks, informal associations, religious institutions, and diasporic communities serve as coping mechanisms and sources of support. Some immigrants achieve upward mobility through entrepreneurship and community integration, highlighting the importance of social capital in navigating urban Ghana. Given this complex interplay of advantages and difficulties, it is crucial to explore the lived experiences of immigrants not merely through a deficit lens, but with a balanced understanding of both their struggles and successes. Accra, as Ghana's capital and a key destination for immigrants, provides an ideal site to investigate these dynamics. By focusing on what draws immigrants to Ghana, the challenges they face, the strategies they use to overcome them, and the benefits they derive, this study seeks to inform inclusive migration policies that protect rights while promoting integration and social cohesion.

1.1 Problem Statement

International migration has intensified globally, yet research efforts remain uneven, particularly in host countries such as Ghana where immigration has increased significantly over the past two decades. While much of the global discourse on migration tends to spotlight movements toward the Global North, comparatively little empirical attention is given to intra-African migration, especially in relatively stable, democratic, and economically growing countries like Ghana (de Haas et al., 2020). This oversight has created a gap in understanding how immigrants experience life in these emerging destinations.

In West Africa, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement has facilitated regional mobility, enabling citizens of member states to live and work across borders. Nevertheless, the practical implementation of these protocols in Ghana is often inconsistent, leading to complex and uneven experiences for immigrants. Many encounter bureaucratic hurdles in acquiring documentation,

legal recognition, or access to state services (Adepoju, 2010). These challenges are compounded in urban centers such as Accra, where most immigrants settle in pursuit of economic opportunities. While the city provides employment potential, particularly in the informal sector, it also intensifies vulnerabilities related to housing, labor exploitation, and limited healthcare access (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2020).

Despite these constraints, many immigrants cite benefits to living in Ghana. The country's relative political stability, safety, and open economic environment make it an appealing destination compared to conflict-prone or economically unstable neighboring states. In Accra, some immigrants report improvements in income, personal safety, and freedom, and benefit from the support of ethnic networks, religious communities, and informal associations that help mitigate initial settlement hardships (Owusu, 2022).

However, barriers remain. Immigrants frequently lack legal protections, leaving them exposed to exploitation and arbitrary treatment, especially in the informal labor market (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019). Language barriers and xenophobic attitudes further restrict their ability to access education, healthcare, and government programs. Social integration is uneven, with some immigrants thriving while others face cultural exclusion and marginalization (Mensah, 2021).

Despite their growing numbers and contributions, immigrants in Ghana remain underrepresented in research and public discourse. Few empirical studies provide a holistic understanding of their lived experiences balancing the opportunities they find with the structural and social obstacles they encounter. There is also limited exploration of how immigrants themselves perceive their integration, satisfaction, and the effectiveness of support mechanisms from both state and non-state actors (Mensah & Bosiakoh, 2022).

This study addresses this critical knowledge gap by exploring the full spectrum of immigrant experiences in Accra from motivations for migration and sources of satisfaction to everyday challenges and institutional shortcomings. Using a qualitative, narrative-driven approach, the study aims to generate context-specific insights that can inform inclusive migration policies and contribute to the development of urban systems that are more responsive to immigrant needs and potential.

1.2 Research Aim

This study aims to explore and document the experiences and challenges faced by immigrants living in Ghana.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the motivations that drive immigrants to settle in Accra, Ghana.
2. To assess the overall satisfaction levels of immigrants regarding their living conditions in Accra.
3. To examine the challenges commonly experienced by immigrants in Accra.
4. To explore strategies through which government and other stakeholders can improve immigrants' experience in Accra.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What motivates immigrants to migrate and settle in Accra, Ghana?
2. How satisfied are immigrants with their living conditions in Accra?
3. What are the challenges immigrants face in Accra?
4. How can government and other stakeholders improve immigrants' experience in Accra?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses a critical gap in migration literature by focusing on the lived experiences of immigrants in Ghana, a relatively stable host country in West Africa that has received less empirical attention compared to countries in the Global North. By exploring both the benefits and challenges encountered by immigrants in Accra, the study moves beyond policy or economic analysis to present a human-centered understanding of migration. Second, the findings have the potential to inform evidence-based policy reforms on immigration, labor protection, access to public services, and urban integration. For civil society and non-governmental organizations, the study provides valuable insights into the practical needs, aspirations, and resilience strategies of immigrant communities, thereby guiding targeted interventions. Finally, the research contributes to scholarly discourse on South-South migration by offering a grounded, context-specific analysis from the perspective of a host country, helping to reshape how immigration is theorized and governed within the West African sub-region.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is geographically restricted to Accra, the capital city of Ghana, which hosts a significant population of immigrants from ECOWAS member states. The research targets adult immigrants who have resided in Ghana for a minimum duration of one year, ensuring that participants possess sufficient lived experience to provide informed perspectives. The study seeks to examine the factors that influenced their decision to migrate to Ghana, their level of satisfaction with life in Accra, the challenges they encounter, and the roles played by governmental and community actors in addressing these challenges. While the findings are specific to the context of Accra, they are expected to offer valuable insights for broader discussions on immigrant integration in other urban areas of Ghana and within the West African sub-region.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study may be limited by language barriers, especially when interviewing non-English-speaking immigrants. Additionally, undocumented immigrants may be hesitant to share their experiences due to fear of exposure or reprisal. The study's qualitative nature may limit its generalizability but offers rich, contextual understanding.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study, presenting the background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, significance, scope, and limitations. Chapter Two reviews related literature, examining theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the study design, population, sampling, and data collection methods. Chapter Four presents the research findings and analysis. Chapter Five concludes with a summary, implications, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the topic by outlining the significance of immigration into Ghana and the need to explore the challenges faced by immigrants. It established the research problem and articulated the study's aim, objectives, and questions. The chapter also outlined the scope, significance, and limitations, setting the foundation for a deeper exploration in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews relevant literature to deepen understanding of immigrant experiences in Ghana, particularly in Accra. It covers theoretical foundations, conceptual definitions, empirical evidence, and constructs a framework for interpreting migrants' integration, challenges, and strategies. This chapter draws upon recent scholarly works published within the last eight years to ensure relevance to contemporary dynamics.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Understanding the lived experiences of immigrants in Ghana requires a theoretical foundation that captures both the constraints imposed by institutions and the dynamic social systems that migrants rely on. This study adopts two complementary theoretical lenses namely, the Structuration Theory and Social Capital Theory to explore how immigrants negotiate structural barriers and leverage social networks in urban Ghana.

2.1.1 Structuration Theory

Structuration Theory, developed by Anthony Giddens (1984), provides a robust framework for examining the dynamic relationship between individual agency and social structure. Giddens posits that while individuals are shaped by societal rules and norms, they also possess the capacity to act independently and, in doing so, can transform those very structures. This duality is particularly relevant in migration contexts, where legal, institutional, and socio-cultural frameworks simultaneously constrain and enable migrant behavior.

In the case of immigrants in Accra, this theory allows for an analysis of how they navigate Ghana's socio-political systems while actively influencing them. For instance, migrants from ECOWAS countries operate within the framework of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, which

grants them the right to live and work in member states. However, inconsistent enforcement and bureaucratic inertia often limit access to legal documentation and social services (Yeboah, Kandilige, Bisong, & Garba, 2021).

Giddens' distinction between rules and resources further enriches this framework. “Rules” refer to the formal and informal guidelines that govern behavior, such as immigration laws, work permits, and cultural expectations. “Resources” include both material assets and social connections. In Ghana, immigrants often lack access to formal resources (e.g., legal aid or bank credit) but compensate through informal ones like ethnic associations and religious groups (Teye, 2022).

Structuration Theory also accounts for how immigrants both reproduce and challenge existing systems. For example, undocumented migrants participating in the informal economy may perpetuate unregulated labor systems, but at the same time, their entrepreneurial activities can reshape those sectors, influencing job creation and urban dynamics (Dotsey, 2018). This interplay illustrates how migrants contribute to the transformation of urban labor and social systems in Accra.

Moreover, this theoretical approach highlights the temporal evolution of immigrant experiences. Migrants' interactions with structure are not static; they evolve as individuals gain new knowledge, networks, and access to resources. This dynamic perspective is consistent with the lived experiences of many immigrants in Ghana, who gradually integrate into society despite initial exclusion (Bosiakoh & Tetteh, 2019).

The theory is particularly useful in explaining gendered experiences of migration. Female migrants, for example, often confront structural barriers in domestic labor markets but exercise agency through informal negotiations, workplace solidarity, or religious participation.

Structuration Theory thus facilitates an intersectional understanding of how gender and migration intersect within structural constraints (Garba & Yeboah, 2022).

One of the strengths of Structuration Theory lies in its rejection of deterministic views of structure. It affirms the capacity of individuals to innovate, adapt, and resist, even within constrained environments. This perspective aligns well with this study's focus on resilience and positive coping mechanisms among immigrants in Accra (Yendaw, 2022).

In addition, Structuration Theory's applicability to qualitative research makes it a suitable foundation for this study, which employs narrative and in-depth interviews to explore immigrant experiences. The theory supports an empirical strategy that captures not just what immigrants do, but how they understand and shape their social realities.

By bridging macro-level institutional analysis and micro-level individual behavior, Structuration Theory allows for a holistic exploration of immigrant life in Accra. It explains how migrants engage with formal governance systems while simultaneously developing informal practices to survive and thrive.

Ultimately, Structuration Theory is highly applicable to this study as it encapsulates both the structural barriers and the human agency that define immigrant experiences in Ghana. It provides a lens to understand how migrants negotiate their place within a complex and often exclusionary urban system, offering insights into both systemic limitations and migrant-led transformations.

2.1.2 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory offers a complementary perspective, focusing on the role of networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity in facilitating social and economic participation. Introduced by Bourdieu (1986) and expanded by Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000), this theory argues that individuals derive benefits from social relationships, which can act as informal safety nets and sources of opportunity critical for migrants operating outside formal state structures.

In the Ghanaian context, immigrants often form tightly knit communities along ethnic or national lines, such as Nigerian Igbo traders or Francophone Muslim groups. These communities provide crucial resources like housing referrals, employment connections, and access to rotating credit associations (Bosiakoh & Tetteh, 2019). For new arrivals, such support can make the difference between hardship and stability.

Putnam's (2000) distinction between bonding and bridging social capital is especially useful. Bonding capital refers to networks within homogeneous groups, offering solidarity and protection. Bridging capital connects migrants to diverse groups, including host communities and institutions, enabling broader integration. Migrants in Accra often start with bonding capital and gradually acquire bridging capital as they become embedded in the local urban fabric (Teye, 2022).

Social Capital Theory also highlights the crucial role of religious institutions. Many migrant communities center around churches or mosques that offer not just spiritual guidance but also legal support, language classes, and emergency aid. These institutions serve as informal governance bodies and facilitate trust-building within and across communities (Garba & Yeboah, 2022).

A notable strength of this theory is its empirical relevance. It offers measurable constructs such as network density, frequency of interaction, and perceived trust, which can be captured through ethnographic and interview data. This makes it compatible with the qualitative approach of this study, which seeks to document migrant perceptions and practices (Yeboah et al., 2021).

Moreover, Social Capital Theory explains differential outcomes among migrants. While two migrants may face similar legal and economic challenges, one with stronger community ties may experience better housing, higher income, or greater social inclusion. This variability in experiences is a central theme in the current study of immigrants in Accra (Yendaw, 2022).

The theory is also useful for understanding resilience. Migrants often establish community savings groups, labor unions, or welfare associations as coping mechanisms. These networks substitute for weak formal protections and enable upward mobility, especially in the informal economy (Adam, Trauner, Jegen, & Roos, 2020).

However, the theory also acknowledges potential downsides. Tight in-group networks can lead to exclusion of others, reinforce stereotypes, or limit access to new opportunities. In the Accra context, some immigrant groups may remain socially isolated, leading to cultural misunderstandings or xenophobia (Dotsey, 2018). Recognizing these limitations allows for a more balanced policy response.

Social Capital Theory also serves as a diagnostic tool for evaluating migration policy. If policies do not recognize the informal systems that migrants rely on, they may fail to reach intended beneficiaries. This theory encourages policymakers to integrate existing social structures into formal support programs (Teye, 2022).

Finally, the theory is well-suited for this study's goal of humanizing migrant experiences. It shifts the narrative from migrants as passive recipients of aid to active agents of community-building and innovation. In doing so, it aligns with broader calls for inclusive urban governance and socially just migration policies (Bosiakoh & Tetteh, 2019).

In summary, Social Capital Theory provides an invaluable framework for analyzing how immigrants survive, adapt, and even flourish in the face of adversity. It complements Structuration Theory by focusing on interpersonal networks and cultural integration, offering a comprehensive lens to understand the lived experiences of immigrants in Ghana.

2.2 Review of Concepts and Key Issues

2.2.1 The Concept of Migration

Migration is broadly defined as the movement of people from one geographical location to another, often across political or administrative boundaries, for various reasons including economic, social, political, and environmental factors (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014). Globally, migration has been shaped by both voluntary pursuits such as employment and education, and forced displacements due to conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. Contemporary international migration is increasingly complex, involving diverse migration flows, types, and trajectories, with implications for development, human rights, and global governance (Mohammed, 2022).

From a global policy standpoint, the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) reflects a landmark consensus to enhance international cooperation on migration governance (UN, 2018). The GCM underscores that migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for sustainable development, yet it also acknowledges the vulnerability of migrants when exposed to irregular routes and weak protections. Consequently, international discourse has moved toward balancing border control with human rights safeguards.

Migration theories have evolved to explain the dynamics of these movements. The neoclassical theory views migration as a function of wage differentials between regions (Harris & Todaro, 1970), while the new economics of labour migration emphasizes household decisions aimed at risk diversification (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Meanwhile, the world systems theory and dual labour market theory emphasize structural and historical drivers of migration tied to global capitalism and labor segmentation (Massey et al., 1993).

In Africa, migration is primarily intra-continental and driven by regional economic inequalities, conflict, and shared colonial legacies. Many African migrants move within the continent, a trend often termed “South-South” migration (Bakewell, 2009). Despite this, African migration is

frequently misrepresented as predominantly oriented toward Europe or North America, neglecting the continent's rich history of internal mobility. The African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa aims to harmonize regional approaches to migration while emphasizing human rights and economic integration (African Union, 2018).

Colonial and post-colonial transitions have significantly influenced African migration patterns. The artificial borders created during colonialism fragmented ethnic groups and traditional trading routes, forcing people to move across new state boundaries. In the post-independence era, economic hardship, civil wars, and environmental degradation have continued to shape both internal and cross-border migration trends (Adepoju, 2010).

Migration in West Africa, in particular, is supported by protocols such as the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, which grants member state citizens the right to enter, reside, and establish economic activities in other member states. This legal framework has spurred significant cross-border movement, though implementation remains uneven due to state-level regulatory differences (Ukaegbu, 2020).

In Ghana, migration has historically been both inward and outward. Internal migration from rural to urban areas has accompanied national development efforts, while international migration has seen Ghanaians moving abroad for education, work, and family reunification. Simultaneously, Ghana has become a destination for immigrants from neighboring countries due to its relative political stability and economic opportunities (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2009).

Ghanaian migration discourse has generally focused on emigration and remittances from the diaspora, which have been framed as essential to national development. However, internal migration especially rural-urban migration and immigration into Ghana are receiving growing

academic interest, particularly in relation to urban planning, labor, and social cohesion (Awumbila, 2017).

Migration in Ghana also intersects with urbanization and informal economies. In cities like Accra and Kumasi, migrants both domestic and foreign form the backbone of labor in construction, trade, and domestic work. However, this growth has placed pressure on urban services and planning frameworks, often leaving migrant communities underserved and marginalized (Yaro, Codjoe & Sward, 2019).

Moreover, migration is increasingly gendered in the Ghanaian context. Female migrants, including those from other West African countries, often take up roles in domestic work and petty trading. These occupations expose them to vulnerabilities such as sexual exploitation, job insecurity, and lack of access to legal redress (Oucho & Crush, 2001).

Despite policy frameworks, gaps remain in Ghana's capacity to manage migration effectively. Challenges include weak data systems, poor coordination among agencies, and limited political will to enforce migrant protections. National discussions often lack grounded insights into the lived experiences of migrants themselves (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019).

Therefore, understanding the concept of migration, particularly in relation to South-South dynamics and local realities is essential for shaping inclusive policy and academic discourse. It is in this context that this study situates itself, seeking to explore the migration phenomenon from the perspective of immigrants residing in Ghana's urban centers.

2.2.2 Understanding Immigration

Immigration refers to the process by which individuals move into a country other than their own with the intention of residing, working, or settling permanently or temporarily (Mohammed, 2022).

Globally, immigration is driven by both "push" factors such as war, poverty, or environmental degradation and "pull" factors like employment, safety, and education. In recent decades,

immigration has grown more diverse in terms of origin, destination, and legal status, challenging traditional models of border control and citizenship (Castles et al., 2014).

Immigration plays a critical role in the global economy. Migrants contribute to host countries through labour, entrepreneurship, taxes, and innovation. For example, in high-income countries, immigrants often fill labor shortages in sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and construction (OECD, 2020). Nevertheless, immigration is frequently politicized and associated with security threats or cultural dilution, especially during times of economic crisis or social unrest (Dustmann & Preston, 2007).

Global policy frameworks, such as the Global Compact on Migration (GCM), urge countries to manage immigration through legal, safe, and humane means. The GCM emphasizes that immigrants, regardless of status, have rights that must be respected and that integration policies are essential for social cohesion (UN, 2018). However, implementation across countries remains inconsistent, with national politics and xenophobia often dictating immigration policies.

In the African context, immigration is primarily regional. Many African countries are both sources and destinations of migration, resulting in complex flows that challenge simplistic assumptions about immigration as a “North-bound” process (Flahaux & de Haas, 2016). African immigrants tend to move to neighboring countries with similar cultural and linguistic ties, often for seasonal or informal work, trade, or refuge.

Immigration within Africa is shaped by regional mobility frameworks. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, adopted in 1979, permits citizens of West African states to enter, reside, and establish in other ECOWAS countries without a visa (Adepoju, 2010). Although a progressive model on paper, immigration enforcement and immigrant rights remain uneven across member states, with some countries erecting unofficial barriers that violate the spirit of the protocol.

African immigrants often face informal exclusion in host countries. While they contribute significantly to the economy, they tend to occupy low-wage, informal sector jobs with limited access to legal protections, healthcare, and education. Discrimination based on nationality, language, or ethnicity compounds these disadvantages and weakens integration outcomes (Bakewell, 2009).

Ghana has increasingly emerged as a destination country in West Africa. Due to its democratic stability, improved infrastructure, and liberalized economy, it has become attractive to immigrants from Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo, Niger, and Côte d'Ivoire (Awumbila, 2017). Many of these immigrants arrive through formal ECOWAS mechanisms or via informal routes, settling in urban areas such as Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale.

In Ghana, immigration is predominantly male-led but increasingly includes women and children. While many immigrants engage in small-scale trading, construction, and domestic labor, a growing number are involved in agriculture, transport, and service industries. These contributions are essential to Ghana's urban and rural economies but are rarely acknowledged in public discourse or national development frameworks (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2009).

Immigrants in Ghana face multiple layers of exclusion. Despite legal permission to reside and work under ECOWAS protocols, many lack proper documentation due to administrative delays or misinformation. This undocumented status increases their risk of exploitation and restricts access to public services such as health care and legal support (Yaro, Codjoe & Sward, 2019).

In addition to legal and institutional barriers, social attitudes toward immigrants in Ghana are mixed. While some communities embrace immigrants as neighbors and coworkers, others view them as competitors for scarce jobs or public resources. These sentiments, often fueled by

economic hardship and political rhetoric, can result in xenophobic discrimination or social exclusion (Owusu, 2022).

Nationally, immigration policy in Ghana remains underdeveloped. The Ghana Immigration Service focuses mainly on border control and security rather than integration. Existing migration strategies lack provisions for immigrant welfare, civic inclusion, or structured integration programs. This has created a disconnect between regional mobility rights and local realities (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019).

Given these challenges, there is a pressing need to better understand immigration into Ghana not merely as a security or economic issue, but as a human experience with social, political, and cultural dimensions. This study contributes to that need by investigating immigrants' lived realities in Accra, providing insights into how immigration is navigated on the ground.

2.2.3 Conceptualising Emigration

Emigration refers to the act of leaving one's country of origin to settle in another, either temporarily or permanently (Mohammed, 2022). Globally, emigration is influenced by both macro-level structural factors such as global inequality, conflict, and climate change and micro-level personal motivations like family reunification, educational aspirations, or career advancement (de Haas et al., 2020). Emigration is often framed in policy as both an opportunity and a risk, with emphasis placed on managing its impact on development, brain drain, and diaspora engagement.

High-income countries are typically the main destinations for emigrants, especially from low- and middle-income countries. Migration from the Global South to the Global North has attracted considerable attention, especially in relation to remittances, labor shortages in receiving countries, and concerns about immigration control (OECD, 2020). Emigrants are key contributors to their

countries of origin through remittances, skills transfer, and transnational networks (Ratha et al., 2019).

The role of remittances in sustaining households and economies in sending countries has been extensively documented. Globally, remittances exceeded \$650 billion in 2022, surpassing foreign direct investment in many low- and middle-income countries (Ratha et al., 2014). These financial flows contribute to poverty reduction, education, and health outcomes, although their long-term developmental impacts remain contested in the literature.

In contrast to the Global North, South-South emigration where migrants move from one Global South country to another is less studied but significant. Many emigrants from one developing country choose to settle in another due to geographical proximity, cultural ties, or regional agreements such as those found in Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Bakewell, 2009). These movements challenge dominant narratives of emigration that assume a North-bound trajectory.

In Africa, emigration is both a legacy of colonial labor systems and a response to postcolonial instability. African emigrants typically move within the continent or to Europe and the Middle East. Political unrest, economic hardship, and limited employment opportunities continue to drive emigration from countries such as Sudan, Eritrea, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe (Flahaux & de Haas, 2016). These trends are also gendered, with increasing numbers of women emigrating independently for domestic work or informal trading.

The African Union and several regional bodies have recognized the importance of managing emigration effectively. The African Union's Migration Policy Framework calls for improved data systems, rights protection for emigrants, and diaspora engagement for development (African Union, 2018). Nonetheless, national governments often struggle to support emigrants adequately once they leave, leading to exploitation, statelessness, or deportation in destination countries.

In the West African sub-region, emigration often occurs within ECOWAS, where citizens enjoy the right to free movement, residence, and establishment. However, lack of harmonization in implementation results in inconsistent treatment of emigrants. Some West African emigrants face arbitrary detentions, denial of work rights, or extortion in host countries, despite legal protections under the ECOWAS protocol (Ukaegbu, 2020).

Ghana is both a source and host country for migrants. Historically, Ghanaians have emigrated to the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and other European countries, with notable migration waves occurring in the 1980s and early 2000s during periods of economic instability and political unrest (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2009). Over the years, Ghanaians have also emigrated to other African countries, particularly Nigeria, Libya, and Côte d'Ivoire, for work and trade.

Remittances from the Ghanaian diaspora form a significant part of the national economy. In 2022, remittance inflows into Ghana reached over \$4.5 billion, contributing to household income, investment, and consumption (Ratha et al., 2014). Despite this, emigration has also led to challenges such as brain drain, especially in critical sectors like healthcare, education, and engineering (Quartey, 2010).

Ghana has sought to manage emigration through policy initiatives like the Diaspora Engagement Policy and the establishment of the Diaspora Affairs Bureau. These efforts aim to harness the potential of Ghanaian emigrants for national development by encouraging investment, knowledge transfer, and return migration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration, 2019). However, such efforts often focus on highly skilled emigrants and underrepresent the experiences of irregular or undocumented Ghanaian emigrants.

Socially, emigrants from Ghana are often perceived positively due to their financial contributions and international exposure. However, families left behind may suffer emotional strain or face

challenges managing remittances effectively. Moreover, emigrants returning to Ghana may struggle with reintegration, reverse culture shock, or job mismatch (Awumbila, 2017).

In sum, emigration is a multifaceted phenomenon with both costs and benefits for origin countries like Ghana. While policy often emphasizes remittances and diaspora capital, a more nuanced understanding of emigrant experiences and outcomes—both abroad and upon return—is crucial. This review provides a foundation for contextualizing immigration into Ghana, which now complements the country’s historic role as an emigration source.

2.2.4 Factors Motivating Immigrants to Migrate and Settle in Ghana

Migration motivations are shaped by complex interactions between structural forces and personal agency. Theories such as Lee’s push-pull model (1966) help explain why people leave their origin countries (push factors) and why they are attracted to specific destinations (pull factors). Globally, push factors include poverty, unemployment, conflict, and natural disasters, while pull factors include job opportunities, political stability, better services, and social networks (de Haas et al., 2020).

Beyond economic drivers, migration can also be triggered by environmental degradation and climate change, especially in agrarian societies. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2022) reports that climate-related disasters displaced over 30 million people globally in 2021 alone. Meanwhile, human security and the desire for personal freedom, especially for women and marginalized groups, have increasingly become key motivators in migration decisions (Mohammed, 2022).

At the individual level, migration decisions are often influenced by life-stage, gender, education, and access to information. Younger people with secondary education are more likely to migrate, particularly when exposed to urban lifestyles and digital media depicting better opportunities

abroad (Bakewell, 2009). Social networks also play a critical role; information from relatives or friends abroad reduces uncertainty and eases the cost of migration.

In the African context, motivations for migration are often tied to regional inequality, post-colonial underdevelopment, and political instability. Many African migrants move within the continent seeking jobs, peace, and opportunities for their children. For example, regional migration to South Africa and Ghana is driven by relatively stronger economies and perceptions of stability (Adepoju, 2010).

West Africa, in particular, experiences high levels of intra-regional migration under the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol. Countries like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria are common destinations due to their economic and political profiles. Migrants are often driven by the failure of their home countries to provide jobs, peace, or education. These regional patterns suggest that migration is as much about escaping hardship as it is about seeking dignity and inclusion (Flahaux & de Haas, 2016).

Ghana stands out in the sub-region as a preferred destination. According to Awumbila (2017), its relatively peaceful democratic environment, respect for human rights, and steady economic growth have made it attractive to immigrants from Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Ghana is also seen as an entry point to broader opportunities in West Africa or even internationally.

In urban centers such as Accra and Kumasi, the informal economy provides opportunities for low-skilled immigrants in trading, domestic work, construction, and transport. These sectors require little formal education or legal documentation, which lowers the entry barriers for immigrants (Mensah, 2021). As such, many immigrants are pulled by the promise of economic survival, even in unregulated sectors.

In addition to economic motives, Ghana's cultural and linguistic similarities with neighboring Francophone countries make settlement easier for some immigrants. Shared West African religious beliefs, cuisines, and social practices help ease integration. For example, Muslims from Niger or Burkina Faso may find comfort in existing Islamic communities in Ghana (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2009).

The concentration of regional institutions and NGOs in Accra also serves as a pull factor. Some immigrants come in search of international support, humanitarian aid, or education scholarships. The city's status as a diplomatic hub provides a platform for legal recognition, employment with international agencies, or access to refugee protection mechanisms (Owusu, 2022).

However, not all immigrants are drawn by choice. Some are forced to flee from violent extremism in northern Nigeria, armed conflict in Burkina Faso, or political instability in Togo. These forced migrations blur the line between immigrants and refugees, complicating classification and policy responses (Yaro, Codjoe, & Sward, 2019). Ghana's perceived safety becomes a decisive pull factor under such circumstances.

Despite the challenges of adjusting to life in Ghana, many immigrants express optimism about their future. This is partly due to the relative freedoms in Ghana's civil society, opportunities for social mobility, and the presence of vibrant West African immigrant communities. The hope of long-term stability, coupled with resilience strategies such as informal savings groups and ethnic associations, reinforces their decision to stay (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019).

In sum, immigrants choose Ghana for a combination of economic, social, political, and personal reasons. While regional frameworks like ECOWAS provide the legal basis for mobility, it is often Ghana's informal economy, relative peace, and social inclusivity that motivate settlement. These

insights are crucial for understanding the push and pull dynamics that influence immigrant flows into urban Ghana.

2.2.5 The Level of Satisfaction of Immigrants in Ghana

The concept of immigrant satisfaction refers to how content immigrants are with their living conditions, social inclusion, and access to rights and opportunities in host countries. Globally, immigrant satisfaction has been linked to factors such as job quality, access to housing, legal status, social acceptance, and healthcare (Berry, 2005; Ager & Strang, 2008). Studies from North America and Europe show that satisfaction is higher among immigrants who receive institutional support and who are not subject to systemic discrimination (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Immigrant satisfaction is also shaped by pre-migration expectations. Research suggests that when immigrants perceive their new environments as meeting or exceeding their expectations economically, socially, and politically they report higher satisfaction (Safi, 2010). On the other hand, unmet expectations regarding employment, security, or inclusion can lead to dissatisfaction, withdrawal, or return migration.

Studies from Europe further show that legal status plays a central role in determining satisfaction. Immigrants with regularized status, those with residence permits or citizenship tend to feel more secure and satisfied, while undocumented immigrants report feelings of fear, exclusion, and vulnerability (OECD, 2020). Similarly, immigrants with access to family reunification, education, and social services tend to express higher satisfaction.

In the Global South, especially in emerging economies, research on immigrant satisfaction is limited but growing. Studies in Latin America and Southeast Asia indicate that urban migrants often base their satisfaction on access to work and housing rather than formal legal status,

reflecting the predominance of informal economies in these regions (Mohammed, 2022). Satisfaction is also influenced by the presence of co-ethnic networks and cultural familiarity.

In Africa, immigrant satisfaction varies widely depending on the host country's economic performance, social cohesion, and political openness. Countries with relatively peaceful environments such as Botswana, Ghana, and Kenya are reported to have higher levels of immigrant satisfaction compared to conflict-affected or authoritarian states (Adepoju, 2010). However, access to rights and services remains a significant challenge for many immigrants across the continent.

West Africa's ECOWAS region theoretically provides free movement and rights to all citizens of member states. Yet, in practice, many immigrants report dissatisfaction due to bureaucratic delays, harassment, and limited access to public services in host countries (Flahaux & de Haas, 2016). The contradiction between legal frameworks and on-ground enforcement affects satisfaction levels across the region.

Ghana is often cited as one of the more welcoming environments for immigrants in West Africa, but satisfaction levels remain mixed. Some immigrants report being content due to peace, stable governance, and relative economic opportunities compared to their countries of origin (Awumbila, 2017). Others, particularly those working in informal sectors, express dissatisfaction due to income insecurity, housing issues, and lack of social protection.

A study by Yaro, Codjoe, and Sward (2019) found that immigrant satisfaction in Ghana was closely tied to employment stability and the ability to maintain social connections with their home countries. Immigrants who had formed community networks or were part of religious or ethnic associations tended to report higher satisfaction levels, as these networks helped mitigate social isolation.

Language and cultural familiarity also affect satisfaction levels. Francophone immigrants in Ghana often face language barriers that limit their ability to access services or participate in community life, resulting in lower satisfaction (Mensah, 2021). Conversely, immigrants from countries with shared languages or religions (e.g., Hausa speakers or Muslims) may integrate more easily and report better experiences.

Legal and institutional barriers also impact satisfaction. Although immigrants from ECOWAS countries are entitled to live and work in Ghana, lack of awareness or poor implementation of the protocol leads to fear of deportation, arbitrary arrests, or denial of services, reducing their sense of belonging (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019).

Despite these issues, some immigrants express satisfaction with the freedom and safety they experience in Ghana compared to conflict-prone home countries. This includes freedom from violence, access to basic services, and the ability to engage in small-scale economic activity without constant fear (Owusu, 2022). These gains, although modest, are often sufficient for immigrants to prefer staying in Ghana over returning home.

In summary, immigrant satisfaction in Ghana is shaped by a mix of economic opportunity, social integration, legal recognition, and cultural fit. While many immigrants find stability and peace in Ghana, systemic challenges such as informal labor conditions, language barriers, and weak enforcement of ECOWAS rights continue to affect their overall well-being and sense of inclusion.

2.2.6 Socio-Economic and Cultural Challenges Immigrants Face in Ghana

Globally, immigrants often face socio-economic and cultural challenges that hinder their integration into host societies. These include unemployment, underemployment, language barriers, discrimination, housing insecurity, and limited access to health and education services (Ager &

Strang, 2008). Cultural adaptation difficulties, such as unfamiliarity with new norms and values, also contribute to social exclusion and emotional stress (Berry, 2005).

Immigrants in the Global North frequently occupy low-wage, high-risk jobs in informal sectors, even when they are highly qualified. This mismatch between skills and employment opportunities, referred to as “brain waste,” often results from legal restrictions, recognition issues, and xenophobia (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Furthermore, cultural misunderstandings and negative stereotypes reinforce marginalization and limit upward mobility.

A major socio-economic barrier for immigrants is access to basic public services. Studies in North America and Europe highlight systemic challenges in accessing affordable healthcare, quality education, and housing. For undocumented immigrants, these challenges are even more acute due to fear of detection, lack of documentation, and exclusionary policies (OECD, 2020). Language and bureaucratic hurdles further limit their participation in public life.

In the Global South, immigrants face similar or more severe socio-economic and cultural challenges, albeit with less institutional support. In countries with limited welfare infrastructure, immigrants often compete with locals for scarce resources, leading to heightened tension and xenophobia (Mohammed, 2022). Informal employment dominates immigrant livelihoods in developing countries, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Across Africa, the informal economy is a major site of immigrant labor. Immigrants often engage in street vending, construction, artisanal work, and domestic service sectors that are poorly regulated and lack social protections. These precarious conditions contribute to poverty cycles and social exclusion (Adepoju, 2010). Additionally, cultural and linguistic diversity within Africa can fuel interethnic tensions and misunderstandings, especially in urban settings.

Intra-African immigrants also face discrimination and scapegoating, particularly in times of economic hardship. Media narratives and political rhetoric in some countries portray immigrants as threats to national security or as burdens on social systems (Crush & Ramachandran, 2014). These narratives shape public attitudes and foster policies that restrict immigrant rights, despite the economic contributions of migrant workers.

In West Africa, the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol grants rights to citizens of member states, but these are often undermined by local laws and practices. Immigrants may be harassed by police, extorted at borders, or denied access to services despite having legal permission to reside and work in host countries (Ukaegbu, 2020). These contradictions create insecurity and undermine regional integration goals.

In Ghana, immigrants particularly those from neighbouring West African countries encounter multiple socio-economic challenges. Many work in the informal sector under harsh conditions, earning low wages with no job security. They are often excluded from formal financial services, social protection programs, and affordable housing options (Awumbila, 2017). These limitations reduce their quality of life and hinder long-term settlement.

Cultural challenges are equally pronounced in Ghana. Language barriers are a persistent obstacle, especially for Francophone immigrants from countries like Togo, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire. Inability to speak English restricts access to healthcare, legal services, and education (Mensah, 2021). It also limits social interaction and increases dependence on ethnic networks, which can deepen isolation.

Social stigma and xenophobia further complicate immigrant integration. Immigrants are sometimes perceived as competitors for jobs and public goods, especially in low-income urban communities. This perception fuels resentment and marginalization, especially during economic

downturns. Immigrants may also face discriminatory treatment from landlords, employers, and law enforcement officers (Owusu, 2022).

Legal and bureaucratic systems in Ghana also pose barriers. Although ECOWAS nationals have legal rights to reside and work in Ghana, lack of awareness, complex documentation requirements, and inconsistent enforcement create vulnerability. Undocumented immigrants live in fear of arrest, detention, and deportation, which limits their willingness to engage with public institutions (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019).

In summary, immigrants in Ghana experience a range of socio-economic and cultural challenges, including limited access to decent work, services, and legal protections. Cultural differences, language barriers, and societal attitudes further exacerbate their marginalization. Addressing these challenges requires policy reforms, public education, and institutional support aimed at creating a more inclusive and rights-based environment for immigrants.

2.2.7 The Experiences of Immigrants in Ghana

Globally, the study of immigrant experiences encompasses multiple dimensions, including their motivations for migration, patterns of settlement, adaptation processes, access to services, discrimination, and overall well-being. Scholars such as Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2020) argue that migration experiences are shaped by the intersection of legal status, socio-economic opportunities, and societal reception. Immigrants often navigate complex landscapes of both opportunity and exclusion in host countries.

Research in the Global North shows that while many immigrants succeed in creating better lives, they also face challenges such as cultural dislocation, racism, underemployment, and social exclusion. The ability to integrate is often influenced by the immigrant's legal status, access to language education, and the host country's immigration and integration policies (Portes &

Rumbaut, 2014). Immigrants with supportive communities and networks tend to report more positive experiences.

Moreover, immigrants' lived experiences are not monolithic. For instance, gender, age, religion, and ethnicity significantly shape how immigrants experience life in a new country (Anthias, 2012). Female immigrants, especially those working in domestic or caregiving roles, often report greater vulnerability to exploitation and abuse compared to their male counterparts. This demonstrates the importance of intersectionality in understanding migration realities.

In developing regions, particularly the Global South, immigrant experiences are often marked by informality and legal precarity. Due to weaker regulatory systems and limited social protections, immigrants in countries like India, Brazil, or South Africa frequently report experiences of economic exploitation, xenophobia, and administrative barriers (Mohammed, 2022). However, these same contexts also offer strong migrant networks and informal support systems that mitigate institutional neglect.

Across Africa, intra-continental migration is widespread, and the experiences of immigrants differ depending on the political and economic context of the host country. Some African states, like South Africa, have witnessed violent xenophobic attacks against immigrants, while others, such as Ghana and Botswana, are relatively peaceful but still exhibit social and institutional exclusion (Adepoju, 2010). As a result, many immigrants in Africa live in a state of semi-inclusion—recognized but not fully integrated.

In West Africa, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement provides a legal basis for mobility and residence across member countries. However, immigrants' actual experiences often diverge from the protocol's promises. Studies show that despite legal entitlements, immigrants face harassment, limited access to public services, and social discrimination in host countries (Ukaegbu, 2020).

These inconsistencies between legal rights and lived realities are central to immigrant dissatisfaction.

In Ghana, research reveals a dual narrative in immigrant experiences. On one hand, Ghana is seen as a peaceful and economically promising destination, especially compared to conflict-prone neighbouring states. On the other hand, immigrants particularly those working in informal sectors face economic uncertainty, housing insecurity, and limited access to public services (Awumbila, 2017). These challenges are often heightened by a lack of documentation or legal awareness.

Yaro, Codjoe, and Sward (2019) highlight that many immigrants in Ghana live in informal settlements with inadequate infrastructure and sanitation. These living conditions affect their health and safety, yet most remain due to better economic prospects compared to their home countries. The experiences of immigrants are thus shaped by a tension between opportunity and hardship.

Language and cultural barriers further complicate immigrant experiences in Ghana. Francophone immigrants often face difficulty accessing services, navigating public institutions, or interacting socially due to limited English proficiency (Mensah, 2021). This restricts their ability to integrate and increases their reliance on co-ethnic networks, which can provide support but also reinforce isolation from the broader society.

Discrimination and negative stereotyping are additional aspects of the immigrant experience in Ghana. Immigrants are sometimes portrayed as competitors for jobs or public services, leading to stigmatization, particularly during periods of economic strain. Owusu (2022) notes that such attitudes can manifest in subtle forms of exclusion in workplaces, schools, and communities.

Despite these challenges, many immigrants report feelings of safety and relative freedom in Ghana. Compared to their home countries, they appreciate Ghana's political stability, absence of violent conflict, and opportunities for small-scale economic activities. These positive aspects contribute to their decision to remain, even under difficult conditions (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019).

In conclusion, the experiences of immigrants in Ghana are shaped by a complex mix of opportunity, hardship, resilience, and exclusion. While the country provides relative stability and economic possibilities, immigrants continue to face legal, economic, and social challenges. Capturing their lived experiences through qualitative research is essential for designing policies and interventions that reflect the realities on the ground.

2.2.8 How Government and Community Actors Can Support the Integration and Well-being of Immigrants in Ghana

Globally, the role of government and community actors in immigrant integration has been extensively studied. Effective integration involves access to legal documentation, employment, healthcare, education, and social inclusion mechanisms (Ager & Strang, 2008). Governments that adopt inclusive policies and provide institutional support tend to foster more cohesive and productive societies. In contrast, restrictive immigration regimes often create vulnerable immigrant populations and societal divisions (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

International organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR advocate for a whole-of-society approach to migration governance. This includes involving local authorities, civil society, faith-based organizations, and migrant associations in planning and implementing programs that promote immigrant rights and well-being (Mohammed, 2022). Governments are encouraged to decentralize immigration support and build the capacity of local institutions to respond to immigrant needs.

In countries like Canada, Sweden, and Germany, integration policies include language training, employment services, anti-discrimination laws, and support for community organizations that assist immigrants. These initiatives have been linked to higher immigrant satisfaction, lower unemployment, and better social cohesion (OECD, 2020). Such models offer transferable lessons for developing countries striving to manage increasing migration flows.

In the Global South, however, integration policies are often less developed. Many countries lack comprehensive migration frameworks, and local governments are under-resourced to respond to immigrant needs. Community actors often fill this gap by offering informal support, such as housing, job referrals, or translation services (Crush & Ramachandran, 2014). Yet, without state support, such efforts are limited in reach and sustainability.

In the African context, particularly within ECOWAS, the responsibility for immigrant support largely falls on host communities and NGOs. While the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol provides a legal foundation for mobility, it lacks a binding framework for integration. As a result, immigrants' well-being is shaped more by informal networks and the goodwill of local actors than by systematic governmental support (Adepoju, 2010).

The African Union has called for the creation of migration observatories and coordination platforms to enhance cooperation between national and local governments, civil society, and regional bodies. These initiatives are still in nascent stages, and implementation remains a challenge due to weak institutional frameworks and limited political will (AU, 2018). Nonetheless, they reflect growing recognition of the need for coordinated immigrant support systems.

In West Africa, NGOs and faith-based institutions often provide critical services to immigrants, including shelter, food, and legal assistance. In some countries, community leaders also mediate between immigrants and local authorities to resolve disputes or negotiate access to services

(Ukaegbu, 2020). However, their efforts are hindered by lack of funding, limited data, and minimal involvement in policy development.

In Ghana, government policies on immigration largely focus on regulation rather than integration. While Ghana upholds the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, little has been done to institutionalize immigrant support structures at the municipal level. Agencies such as the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) focus primarily on enforcement rather than on assisting immigrants in accessing services (Awumbila, 2017).

Nevertheless, some government ministries such as the Gender, Children and Social Protection, and Local Government and Rural Development have collaborated with international agencies to support vulnerable populations, including immigrants. However, these efforts are often fragmented and under-publicized, resulting in limited awareness among target beneficiaries (Mensah & Bosiakoh, 2022).

Community actors in Ghana, including religious organizations, local chiefs, and migrant associations, play an important role in supporting immigrant well-being. They help new arrivals find housing, navigate cultural norms, and access informal job markets. Some organizations also provide legal support and referrals to healthcare and social services. However, their work is largely informal and not integrated into national policy frameworks (Owusu, 2022).

Civil society organizations have also advocated for greater inclusion of immigrants in urban planning and social protection schemes. Their policy recommendations emphasize the need for legal literacy campaigns, multilingual service delivery, anti-xenophobia education, and decentralized immigration support centers, particularly in urban hubs like Accra (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2019). These measures can bridge the gap between immigrant needs and government services.

In conclusion, the integration and well-being of immigrants in Ghana depend on stronger collaboration between state and non-state actors. While informal community support plays a critical role, it must be complemented by institutional reforms and inclusive policy frameworks. Strengthening local government capacity, ensuring multilingual service delivery, and engaging migrant communities in policy design are essential steps toward building a more inclusive and supportive society for immigrants in Ghana.

2.3 Empirical Review

Globally, migration research has emphasized the dual nature of migrant experiences, those shaped by structural exclusion and those defined by resilience and adaptation. A significant body of empirical literature has focused on how immigrants confront legal, social, and economic marginalization, while also building strategies to survive and thrive. For instance, Bloemraad et al. (2019) in their comparative study of immigrant integration in Canada and the United States found that while legal status and host society policies greatly shape outcomes, migrant agency and local institutions play a crucial role in mitigating marginalization. Their findings emphasized the value of subnational and community-level institutions in supporting immigrant livelihoods, suggesting that bottom-up mechanisms often fill policy vacuums left by national governments.

Similarly, a study by Dempster and Hargrave (2017) on global south-to-south migration showed that while migrants frequently lack access to formal rights and protections, they often draw on informal economies and social capital to integrate into new environments. These dynamics were found to be most prevalent in regions where immigration systems were weak or exclusionary. Informality thus emerges as both a survival mechanism and a structural outcome of state inaction. In countries such as Malaysia, Lebanon, and India, migrants who lacked documentation or official

refugee status still participated in labor markets, particularly in sectors like domestic work, construction, and retail albeit under exploitative conditions.

Within Europe, recent empirical works have shifted attention toward the post-integration phase, particularly for migrants who have resided in host countries for over five years. Ager and Strang (2021), for example, found that long-term immigrants often continue to experience ‘bounded integration,’ where they are structurally included in some areas (e.g., housing or labor) but excluded in others (e.g., civic participation or education). This finding is echoed in urban contexts in the Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden, where even documented migrants experience institutional exclusion rooted in xenophobia and policy ambiguity.

Empirical literature across African contexts presents a somewhat different landscape, characterized more by informality and regional mobility than by state-regulated integration processes. The African Union and IOM (2020) report on migration in Africa highlights that 80% of migration on the continent occurs within its borders, largely facilitated by porous frontiers and cultural affinities. However, empirical studies suggest that host countries rarely have systematic policies to integrate migrants. In South Africa, for instance, Crush and Ramachandran (2018) found that African migrants even those legally residing in the country frequently experience xenophobic violence, especially in urban informal settlements. Despite legal rights to residence and work, institutional hostility and social exclusion remain persistent.

West Africa, as a regional bloc, presents unique empirical evidence of a mixed migration regime. While ECOWAS protocols legally guarantee mobility, actual experiences differ across member states. Recent field research by Adepoju and Mbugua (2019) found that migrants within ECOWAS enjoy limited practical access to legal protections or formal employment. In many cases, border

guards and law enforcement officials were unaware of ECOWAS protocols or deliberately ignored them. Consequently, migrants faced extortion, detention, and frequent harassment particularly if they lacked documentation, even though the ECOWAS framework permits residence for up to 90 days without a visa.

Empirical studies also reveal that most ECOWAS migrants rely heavily on informal economies for survival. In Nigeria, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire, for example, migrants are heavily represented in trade, transportation, and unregulated labor markets. A study by Jegen and Zanker (2020) on West African migration economies found that while migrants contribute significantly to host economies, their labor is often invisible, unprotected, and undervalued. This lack of protection stems not only from national policy gaps but also from weak enforcement of regional agreements, as well as ambiguous public attitudes toward foreigners.

In Ghana, the empirical literature paints a nuanced picture. The country's reputation for democratic governance and regional leadership has made it a preferred destination for many migrants from Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Togo. However, empirical research has consistently found that migrants in Ghana face institutional and social barriers that undermine the rights ostensibly provided under ECOWAS. Yeboah et al. (2021) conducted interviews with migrants in Accra and found that while many had entered legally, few had successfully transitioned to documented status due to unclear procedures, long delays, and corruption. Their study also found that undocumented migrants were particularly vulnerable to police harassment and arbitrary arrest, despite having the right to reside under regional law.

Ghanaian-based empirical work also underscores the role of informal networks in mitigating these barriers. According to Bosiakoh and Tetteh (2019), migrant women in particular rely on religious

associations, ethnic networks, and informal savings groups to secure livelihoods and social support. These community structures serve as alternative governance systems that mediate access to housing, childcare, and even conflict resolution. While these systems are empowering, they also highlight the failure of state institutions to provide accessible support to immigrants.

Recent empirical studies have also drawn attention to the gendered dimensions of migration in Ghana. In a study of domestic workers in Accra, Mensah and Bosiakoh (2022) found that female migrants from Togo and Nigeria experienced significant exploitation in private households. Many worked without contracts, suffered verbal and physical abuse, and lacked any form of legal protection. Fear of deportation, language barriers, and distrust in the police system discouraged them from reporting these abuses. The authors called for stronger enforcement of labor laws and migrant protections, especially in informal employment sectors where women are overrepresented.

Another emerging area of empirical interest is the spatial distribution and urban settlement patterns of migrants in Ghana. Owusu (2022) examined how immigrant communities negotiate space in low-income urban areas, often transforming informal settlements into transnational neighborhoods with distinct cultural and economic life. While these settlements offer affordable housing and a sense of community, they also face eviction threats, poor sanitation, and exclusion from urban development plans. The study found that immigrants are not passive actors but actively shape their urban environments despite structural constraints.

Finally, empirical data from Yendaw (2022) on itinerant retailers in Ghana shows that migration is often cyclical and driven by both push and pull factors. Migrants from Burkina Faso, for instance, frequently move seasonally, returning home after peak market periods. These patterns complicate simplistic narratives of permanent migration and call for more nuanced policy

frameworks that can address circular mobility and migrant transience, particularly in the informal economy.

Overall, empirical research highlights the complex interplay between legal frameworks, social networks, and migrant agency. From the global to the local, migrants consistently encounter legal ambiguity, social exclusion, and labor informality. Yet, they also demonstrate remarkable adaptability, creativity, and resilience. In Ghana, as in other parts of Africa, the success or failure of migrant integration depends less on formal policies and more on the interplay between state action, civil society, and migrant initiative.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a robust intellectual foundation for understanding the lived experiences of immigrants in Ghana through the critical review of theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature. The chapter began with an overview of relevant theoretical frameworks, which are the Structuration Theory and Social Capital Theory which together offer a balanced perspective on the agency of migrants and the structural limitations imposed by formal institutions. These frameworks revealed how immigrants simultaneously navigate legal constraints while leveraging informal networks to construct sustainable livelihoods. The inclusion of both theories was instrumental in explaining the paradoxical coexistence of exclusion and adaptation in the Ghanaian urban context.

The review of key concepts deepened the analytical grounds by tracing the evolution of migration patterns from a global perspective down to the Ghanaian context. The concept of intra-African migration was shown to be deeply embedded in cultural, economic, and historical ties, particularly within the ECOWAS region. Yet, despite regional policies that promote free movement, migrants continue to face structural barriers and institutional inefficiencies. The discussions on socio-

economic inclusion, legal documentation, and cultural integration further illuminated the challenges of migrant life, especially for women and informal laborers. Across these themes, the role of informality emerging as a source of resilience and vulnerability was consistently underscored.

The empirical review provided evidence-based insights into how these conceptual and theoretical issues play out in real-world contexts. It highlighted that although legal frameworks such as the ECOWAS Protocol exist, their practical implementation remains limited. Migrants in Ghana, like those in other African and global contexts, often find themselves in legal limbo, forced to rely on informal strategies for economic survival, protection, and social integration. The review also emphasized that women, undocumented individuals, and those in low-wage informal jobs face disproportionate risks, including exploitation, marginalization, and social invisibility. At the same time, the studies demonstrated that migrants are not passive victims; rather, they are strategic actors who build social capital and reshape urban economies in complex ways.

A key lesson drawn from this chapter is the inadequacy of legal frameworks in ensuring actual protections and opportunities for migrants. While policies may appear progressive on paper, their operationalization is marred by bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, and a lack of political will. This disconnect between policy and practice necessitates a more grounded, empirical understanding of migrant realities one that is sensitive to both the systemic constraints and the agency that migrants deploy in their everyday lives.

Another important lesson is the central role of social networks and community institutions in migrant adaptation. In the absence of strong state support systems, migrants often rely on informal associations, ethnic ties, and religious organizations to access employment, housing, and basic services. While these networks can provide essential support, they can also reinforce exclusionary

practices, particularly when bonding social capital limits cross-cultural engagement or access to broader social and economic opportunities.

The chapter also highlighted the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive lens in migration studies. Women experience migration differently than men, often occupying more precarious forms of labor and facing heightened risks of abuse. Yet, they also demonstrate remarkable resilience, managing households, forming solidarity groups, and sustaining their communities through informal economies. This underscores the need for policies and research methodologies that are attuned to the intersection of gender, migration status, and labor.

Moreover, the spatial dimension of migrant life particularly in urban informal settlements calls attention to the role of cities not just as sites of opportunity, but also as arenas of contestation and exclusion. Urban planning in Ghana and elsewhere often marginalizes immigrant communities, ignoring their contributions while criminalizing their presence. Lessons from this chapter suggest that inclusive urban governance must consider the specific needs of immigrant populations and integrate them meaningfully into national development frameworks.

Perhaps one of the most critical lessons from this chapter is the need for more holistic and context-specific migration policies. Borrowing models from the Global North or adopting one-size-fits-all strategies may not adequately address the nuanced experiences of migrants in West Africa. Instead, policies must be informed by grounded empirical research, participatory consultation with migrant communities, and a recognition of the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the host society.

In conclusion, this chapter has established a clear analytical and empirical framework for understanding migration in Ghana. It has shown that migration is not merely a policy issue but a lived experience shaped by history, law, economics, and human relationships. The insights gained

here will inform the subsequent chapter on research methodology, which will detail how this study intends to capture and interpret the voices of immigrants in Accra, thereby contributing to more inclusive and evidence-based migration governance.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in investigating the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra, Ghana. It explains the research approach, design, study area, population, sampling methods, data collection techniques, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The study seeks to generate context-specific insights into the motivations, challenges, satisfaction levels, and support mechanisms associated with immigration into Accra from ECOWAS countries.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, which emphasized the exploration of human experiences and social phenomena through detailed narrative accounts. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research did not rely on numerical data but instead sought to understand how individuals constructed meaning around their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This

approach was particularly appropriate for investigating the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra, as it allowed for an in-depth understanding of their motivations, daily challenges, levels of satisfaction, and coping strategies.

By using qualitative methods, the study drew out the voices and perspectives of immigrants who might otherwise have been marginalized in statistical analyses. The approach allowed for flexibility in probing emergent themes and enabled the researcher to remain close to the data, allowing the complexity of participants' realities to emerge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This helped to ensure that policy recommendations arising from the study were grounded in the authentic experiences of those most affected.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design to examine how immigrants in Accra interpreted and gave meaning to their migration experiences. Phenomenology, as described by Moustakas (1994), was well suited to exploring subjective human experiences by emphasizing individuals' perceptions and lived realities. The goal was to uncover the essence of immigrants' experiences as they related to motivation, satisfaction, challenges, and interactions with community and state institutions.

This design encouraged the use of open-ended interviews, allowing participants to narrate their journeys and challenges in their own words. It also promoted reflexivity on the part of the researcher, ensuring that personal biases were acknowledged and minimized in the interpretation process. The phenomenological design therefore ensured a deeper and more empathetic understanding of immigrant life in urban Ghana.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Accra, the capital and largest urban center in Ghana. Accra served as a hub of economic activity and offered relatively better infrastructure, access to services, and employment opportunities compared to other regions, making it a prime destination for immigrants within the ECOWAS sub-region (Awumbila, 2017). Its cosmopolitan nature and dense immigrant population made it a relevant setting for studying migrant experiences.

Despite its appeal, Accra also presented challenges such as overcrowding, housing shortages, informal employment, and limited access to essential services that disproportionately affected immigrant populations. By focusing the study in Accra, the researcher aimed to capture the specific dynamics of urban migration, including how economic and socio-cultural factors shaped immigrant integration and well-being in a rapidly evolving urban landscape.

3.5 Study Population

The study targeted adult immigrants from ECOWAS countries who resided in Accra and had lived in the city for at least one year. These included individuals from countries such as Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire. Most of these immigrants were engaged in informal sector jobs, including trading, construction, domestic services, and transport, which exposed them to unique urban migration challenges (Yaro, Codjoe, & Sward, 2019).

By focusing on immigrants with a minimum of one-year residency, the study ensured that participants had had adequate exposure to the Accra environment to meaningfully reflect on their experiences. This criterion also helped to capture a range of perspectives regarding settlement, integration, and institutional support mechanisms within the Ghanaian context.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants based on defined inclusion criteria: being an adult ECOWAS immigrant residing in Accra for a minimum of one year. This technique was appropriate for identifying individuals who could provide rich, relevant data about migration experiences (Patton, 2015). These criteria helped to ensure the credibility of participant accounts and the relevance of the data to the research objectives.

Additionally, snowball sampling was used to identify participants through referrals from initial interviewees. This method proved particularly useful in reaching undocumented or socially marginalized immigrants who might otherwise have been inaccessible. A sample size of 20 to 25 participants was anticipated, based on data saturation principles, which indicated that new themes rarely emerged beyond this range (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study used semi-structured interview guides as the primary data collection instrument. This format allowed the researcher to ask predefined questions while also exploring emergent themes based on participant responses. The questions were designed to explore migration motivations, levels of satisfaction, everyday challenges, and perceptions of support from government and community actors (Bryman, 2016).

Interviews were conducted in English, but interpreters assisted Francophone participants where needed. Field notes were also taken during interviews to capture non-verbal cues, contextual details, and environmental observations. This dual strategy enhanced data richness and supported the phenomenological framework by emphasizing participants' unique lived experiences.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

To enhance reliability, a pilot test of the interview guide was conducted with two participants to ensure clarity, coherence, and appropriateness of the questions. Adjustments were made where necessary to improve the tool. The use of a consistent interview protocol and reflective journaling throughout the data collection process further ensured reliability (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Validity was ensured through member checking, during which participants reviewed their transcripts to confirm accuracy and provide clarifications where necessary. Triangulation across different demographic groups (e.g., nationality, gender, occupation) was also employed to verify consistency in emerging themes. These steps helped to enhance the trustworthiness of the research.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection took place over a four-week period in designated areas of Accra with significant immigrant populations, such as Nima, Madina, and Circle. Participants were approached through local associations, market unions, and informal networks. Once contact was made, appointments for interviews were scheduled at times and locations convenient and comfortable for participants to ensure openness and trust.

Before each interview, participants were thoroughly briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Interviews were audio-recorded (with permission) and supplemented by field notes. This process ensured a detailed and accurate capture of each participant's account while safeguarding their comfort and confidentiality.

3.10 Data Handling, Processing and Analysis

All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and cross-checked with field notes for accuracy. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, and all identifiable information was removed from the transcripts. These were stored on password-protected digital devices and backed up on secure storage platforms.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. Importantly, all coding and theme generation were conducted manually to allow for deeper interpretive engagement with the participants' narratives. Manual analysis ensured that the researcher remained intimately connected to the data and honored the phenomenological approach's emphasis on experiential detail.

3.11 Ethical Issues

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Media, Arts and Communication – Institute of Journalism (UniMAC-IJ). All participants received detailed information about the purpose and scope of the study. Consent forms were provided in both English and French to accommodate linguistic diversity, and participants were assured of anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. Interview recordings were deleted after transcription and validation. Care was taken to avoid harm, especially for undocumented immigrants, by ensuring that interviews were conducted in safe spaces and that

sensitive information was handled with discretion. The research adhered to the principles of respect, justice, and beneficence outlined in the Belmont Report (1979).

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology used to explore the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was adopted and justified to allow for deep, narrative-driven insights into migrants' motivations, challenges, and coping mechanisms. The chapter elaborated on the study area, population, and sampling strategies, with emphasis on purposive and snowball sampling techniques that enabled access to diverse and often hard-to-reach immigrant groups.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, and reliability and validity were ensured through piloting, member checking, and triangulation. Manual thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data in alignment with the phenomenological focus on lived experience. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity, guided all stages of the research process. This methodology provided a solid foundation for capturing the complex social and economic realities of immigrants living in Ghana's capital city.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings from the study on the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra, Ghana. It draws on empirical data collected through qualitative interviews and situates the analysis within the broader context of migration theories and relevant scholarly literature. Using Structuration Theory and Social Capital Theory as interpretive frameworks, the chapter examines how immigrants exercise agency within the constraints of Ghana's social, legal, and economic structures. It also compares the study's findings with existing empirical research to determine areas of convergence and divergence, providing deeper insight into the dynamics of South–South migration. Through this analytical lens, the chapter sheds light on the complexities of immigrant life, illustrating how migrants both adapt to and influence their host environment.

4.1 Presentation of Findings

4.1.1 Reasons for Migrating to Ghana

A dominant theme among participants was economic hardship in their home country, particularly Nigeria. Many participants cited unemployment, low income, currency devaluation, and inadequate infrastructure as the main factors compelling their migration. The phrase *"no jobs,"* *"bad economy,"* and *"hard labour"* appeared frequently across the responses. P1 mentioned, *"The economy was bad, no jobs... so many responsibilities."* R9 echoed this, stating, *"You can work hard... the amount you make will still be nothing."* For others, the lack of reliable electricity and basic services was critical. P6 described this vividly: *"There is power outage every day... sometimes days before the light will come back."*

Another key theme was security concerns and social instability in Nigeria. Several participants highlighted feelings of insecurity and fear, especially in public spaces. R5 said, *"I did not love it again in my country; security-wise and a whole lot of conditions."* Similarly, P6 compared life in Nigeria and Ghana, saying, *"Walking around in daylight is even scary."* Others, like P18, mentioned political and social uncertainty, particularly regarding raising children: *"There was a sense of political and social uncertainty that was concerning for my family's future."* A few respondents, like R7 and R3, stated they were not directly pushed but were influenced by social connections or personal preferences such as a love for travel or music careers.

4.1.2 Motivations for Migrating to Ghana

The most recurring theme in this section was Ghana's perceived peace and political stability, contrasting sharply with Nigeria's turmoil. Participants frequently used phrases like *"peace,"* *"freedom,"* and *"no fighting"* to describe their attraction to Ghana. P6 emphasized this, saying, *"I consider peace over everything... I have not experienced anything like war or conflict."* The freedom of movement and expression was also seen as a positive contrast. R9 added, *"There's*

freedom here in Ghana. Way better than Nigeria.” This sense of safety and personal liberty contributed significantly to immigrants’ motivation.

Another strong pull factor was better economic opportunity and infrastructure, particularly electricity stability and the currency strength. P10 noted, *“The currency stability on the international market is very good.”* Several respondents reported being motivated by success stories from friends already in Ghana. R4 stated, *“Many Igbo guys are doing well... Ghana gives shelter to anybody.”* R8 echoed similar sentiments: *“I get the opportunity to use the light to do a lot of things.”* For families, education also emerged as a reason. P18 mentioned, *“We were specifically attracted to Accra because of its educational opportunities.”* Ghana’s welcoming atmosphere and entrepreneurial potential were major motivators for migration.

4.1.3 Levels of Influence from other Immigrants

The responses revealed that peer influence and social networks played a major role in shaping migration decisions. Many immigrants were encouraged by friends, family members, or community contacts who were already living in Ghana. These individuals provided testimonials of success and shared practical advice about job availability, cost of living, and business opportunities. P1 shared, *“I spoke to a few of them and they told me there are one or two jobs here that you can earn something out of.”* R8 noted, *“My friends motivated me to come to Ghana so that we do business here and stuff.”* The visual transformation of returning migrants also served as a motivator. P10 remarked, *“When they travel back... how they look and the good things they say about Ghana motivates you.”*

However, the influence was not always entirely positive or straightforward. Some participants mentioned conflicting perspectives within the Nigerian community in Ghana. R4 explained, *“Some junkies told me Ghana will frustrate you... but successful ones told me Ghana is good.”*

Others had to rely on themselves due to lack of connections. R3 shared a disheartening experience: *“The person that directed me couldn't reach him again. That's why I started a new life.”* A few immigrants like R7 and R20 claimed they were more influenced by Ghanaians back home or made independent decisions without relying on Nigerian networks. Despite varied experiences, it is evident that diaspora influence was a significant migration factor for many.

4.1.4 Living Experience in Accra

Immigrants' experiences in Accra were described as mixed but mostly positive, with many appreciating the stability, peace, and opportunities, despite the challenges of high living costs. Several participants praised the peaceful environment and stable electricity. R3 stated, *“Light is steady. Not like Nigeria. Everything is going well.”* Similarly, P1 emphasized, *“There's peace once you land in Ghana.”* Respondents also expressed appreciation for the relative freedom and personal security compared to Nigeria. P12 highlighted, *“Security is number one here. Security is very tight.”*

Nevertheless, many described the cost of living in Accra as very expensive, especially in terms of housing, food, and daily expenses. R4 expressed, *“Everything in Accra is all about spending... you must be ready to spend.”* P13 remarked, *“You have to pay for everything, even peace.”* Some described initial struggles with adaptation, especially with language barriers and lack of social networks. P10 mentioned, *“It's not easy to make it here when you are a foreigner.”* The dual experience of economic challenge and personal freedom highlights the complex reality of migrant life in Accra.

4.1.5 Key Features of Living in Accra

The most appreciated aspects of living in Accra included peace, security, freedom, and steady electricity supply. Several participants emphasized how consistent power had improved their

quality of life and business. R4 praised, *“There is always light and my phone has not gone off since I came to Ghana.”* Others valued the lack of violence and harassment. P1 said, *“You have peaceful people all around and your day goes on smoothly.”* R9 added, *“Freedom here is way better than in Nigeria.”* These conditions were often compared favorably to their home country’s instability and power issues.

Some participants also valued social aspects, including friendly interactions, food, and the physical environment. R5 simply appreciated *“The beach, very nice but back in Nigeria, we don’t have beach.”* P18 noted, *“There is a strong sense of community and it’s a coastal city.”* Others like R7 acknowledged the welcoming nature of Ghanaians, even while adapting to climate or cultural norms. While economic hardship was present, most found dignity in the daily experience, with P10 sharing, *“Even if I sell one accessory, I can feed myself the whole day.”* The recurring themes reveal that basic stability, dignity, and community are highly valued by immigrants.

4.1.6 Levels of satisfaction of life in Accra

Participants’ satisfaction ratings varied from 6 to 10, reflecting a mixed emotional and practical experience of life in Accra. Some participants rated their experience highly due to access to jobs, peace, and the ability to support their families. P1 gave a full score, saying, *“I would say my experience is a 10... You land here, do one or two rounds, get your job and start sending money home.”* P6 rated it 9 out of 10, only deducting a point because, *“I’m not a citizen... getting access to even the Ghana card is difficult.”* P12 praised the *“freedom”* and *“no disturbance,”* giving a high rating due to the ability to move and work freely.

However, a substantial number of participants rated their satisfaction 6 to 7, citing economic pressure, expensive living, and difficulty accessing certain services. R4 noted, *“Sometimes you spend above your income because I pay rent, water, light, food everything.”* For P10, although

adapting was possible, the first months were difficult: *“Though you struggle in the beginning, it gets better.”* Respondents who had supportive networks or businesses tended to rate higher, while those facing isolation, discrimination, or job barriers reported lower satisfaction. This reflects the layered and transitional nature of immigrant experience often hopeful but marked by economic and structural constraints.

4.1.7 Challenges of work in Ghana

A strong and consistent theme across responses was discrimination in the job market based on nationality. Many participants said that being Nigerian made it difficult to find formal or white-collar employment, regardless of qualifications. P1 shared, *“They say they don’t want to work with a Nigerian... that mindset is tough.”* P11 similarly explained, *“They see me as a yahoo boy from my accent. So they doubt my qualifications.”* P6 also noted how the reputation of previous Nigerian migrants affected others: *“They limit you in certain information that you have to share.”*

Apart from discrimination, other common challenges included language barriers, difficulty obtaining work permits, and limited job opportunities in general. P10 emphasized, *“Language is a barrier... most suppliers do not speak English.”* For those in informal work, market saturation and low customer trust were key issues. R5, who shifted from online fraud to selling phone accessories, said, *“Sometimes there is no market.”* P15 highlighted bureaucratic barriers: *“Getting a work permit is a long one.”* These responses reveal that while self-employment offers a pathway, systemic barriers significantly hinder access to stable livelihoods for immigrants.

4.1.8 Challenges of Accommodation in Ghana

Housing challenges were primarily marked by high rental costs, upfront payment systems, and discrimination by landlords. Many immigrants found it difficult to rent accommodation due to xenophobic stereotypes. P1 explained, *“You go here and the landlord says, ‘I don’t want a*

Nigerian... they are loud, troublesome.” R8 echoed this, stating, “Sometimes you tell them you are a Nigerian, they be like, I don’t want a Nigerian in my house.” Even when housing was secured, several respondents mentioned being overcharged or denied basic facilities. P13 said, “Even with that, their house lacks certain things like bathhouse, toilet.”

Another theme was uncomfortable and unsanitary living conditions, especially during initial settlement. R4 gave a harrowing account: *“I stayed in a hostel with no less than 200 people... the bath will even lead you to the hospital.”* Many noted that rent was paid two years in advance, which was financially stressful. P12 mentioned, *“They are paying 2 years, 3 years... very hard.”* Despite the challenges, some immigrants managed to gradually improve their situation through perseverance. R4 said, *“Now I’m in a one-room... I appreciate Him (God) for that.”* These responses highlight the intersection of economic, structural, and identity-based challenges in the housing market for immigrants.

4.1.9: Other Challenges Faced in Ghana.

A key theme was social discrimination and stigmatization of Nigerians, especially in public and social settings. Many respondents mentioned being labeled as criminals, fraudsters, or unruly. P1 shared, *“They think I am a prostitute or something...some even tag us as thieves.”* P16 added, *“They see all Nigerians as scammers, thieves... they tag all of us as one.”* This type of cultural stereotyping affects not just social interactions but also self-esteem and identity. P17 reflected, *“Even if you are not a human being... you are here to find your daily manner, so you have to adapt.”*

Other recurring challenges included transportation difficulties, unfamiliar public systems, and high cost of healthcare. P13, who commuted from Adenta to Accra, said, *“Transportation from Adenta to Accra is very expensive.”* P19 noted, *“The maids will hike and give you a price.”* Some

expressed concern about access to quality healthcare and long queues, especially for non-citizens. P18 explained, *“Healthcare is good, but the system can be confusing... long queues at public facilities.”* Emotional challenges such as missing family and cultural isolation also appeared, showing that immigrants deal with multifaceted struggles beyond economics.

4.1.10 Challenges faced in Accessing Public Services in Ghana

Experiences with public services were mixed as many respondents reported no major issues, while others highlighted exclusion, confusion, or biases in access. Several participants stated they had not faced significant challenges. P10 noted, *“No one will know I’m Nigerian if I don’t tell you.”* P6 and P12 also said they hadn’t encountered problems. However, others mentioned that being foreigners without official documentation like the Ghana Card limited their access to services. R3 was denied a job due to lacking the card, and P15 linked service delays to bureaucratic inefficiencies, especially for immigrants: *“Navigating government guarantees... can be slow and frustrating.”*

Some also cited infrastructural limitations and inconsistent practices, particularly in transportation and healthcare. R4 described an experience where his phone was stolen while trying to enter a bus due to the chaotic boarding system. P19 raised concerns about health insurance, stating, *“They don’t care for me so I pay double the price.”* For some, language and lack of guidance in navigating systems made things worse. P17 mentioned, *“I don’t know where the conductor is going to... I might end up in the wrong direction.”* These examples suggest that while some public services are accessible, immigrants often face informal exclusion, policy ambiguity, and cost barriers.

4.1.11 Levels of Discrimination in Ghana

Discrimination based on nationality and ethnicity was one of the most consistent themes in the interviews. Many respondents said they had been denied housing or jobs, or treated with suspicion

solely because they were Nigerian. P1 explained, *“Just because I am a Nigerian, other people were behaving somehow.”* P13 shared, *“I told them I’m Nigerian. They said they won’t collect Nigerians.”* Several noted being excluded from public events or conversations, such as R4’s experience: *“I saw a crowd... they said the meeting is for Ghanaians.”* These experiences reflect a systemic undercurrent of exclusion that shapes immigrants’ daily interactions.

Others spoke about derogatory assumptions, such as being associated with crime or fraud. P6 stated, *“Once the name Nigerian is on you, the house has thought about you already.”* For R8, even academic settings were not immune: *“From the way the lecturer is talking... you could realize he is stigmatizing Nigerians.”* However, a minority reported no such experiences, praising Ghanaians as *“accommodating”* (P11) or simply noting they kept to themselves (P12). P15 provided a nuanced view, saying discrimination was subtle: *“Prices are sadly higher for me and I might be called Obronni or Nyongo in a way that doesn’t feel friendly.”* The findings show that while not universal, discrimination is a widespread and impactful experience for many immigrants.

4.1.12 Cultural Differences and Integration in Ghana

Most participants reported minimal to no hindrance from cultural differences, often describing Ghanaian culture as tolerant, adaptable, or similar to their own. Many stated they didn’t engage deeply with culture, focusing instead on business and survival. R2 said, *“I’ve never seen many of their culture because I don’t have time to go around.”* P10 remarked, *“I think Ghanaian culture is very easy to adapt to.”* Others like P11 went further, actively participating in events: *“I got myself involved in Homowo and I loved the experience.”* These narratives suggest that pragmatism, respect, and open-mindedness help ease cultural integration.

However, specific festivals and social norms posed challenges for a few. For example, R4, who loves music, found cultural restrictions difficult: *“I abandon playing my music... I take my MP3*

home.” P16 echoed this, saying “*They just ban you from listening to music and it affects my work.*” P15 discussed communication challenges, noting that Ghanaians tend to be “*more indirect,*” which initially made social bonding harder. P18 also pointed to different perceptions of time and respect expressions as areas requiring adjustment. Nonetheless, even those who experienced difficulties emphasized adaptability and respect as key strategies for overcoming them. Cultural differences, while present, are not insurmountable barriers for integration.

4.1.13 Strategies Government and Other Stakeholders can adopt to Improve the Immigrants’ Experience in Accra

Most participants reported a shared understanding that improving the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra requires a multi-stakeholder and inclusive policy approach. The participants emphasized that effective management and integration depend on stronger inter-agency collaboration, public education, and policy reforms. As P1 stated, “*Key recommendations include strengthening inter-agency coordination on migration management and data sharing... and developing community-level integration programmes that support social inclusion.*” This reflects an institutional recognition that migration cannot be managed by the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) alone but requires partnerships with ministries, NGOs, and international organizations. Similarly, R8 reinforced this by noting, “*The GIS collaborates with government agencies like the police, customs and National Security to check migrant-related crimes... and institutions such as the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the Ghana Refugee Board, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to influence policy makers.*” These collaborations are seen as essential for ensuring both the security and welfare of immigrants. Together, the statements underscore a shift from a solely regulatory orientation toward an integrated governance model that balances enforcement with humanitarian considerations.

Another critical sub-theme emerging from the responses is the need for enhanced capacity building and public education to promote tolerance, awareness, and institutional efficiency. The respondents stressed that the government should invest more in strengthening the operational and logistical capacity of the GIS while simultaneously addressing public misconceptions about immigrants. R4 specifically recommended “*enhancing capacity and logistics of GIS for effective monitoring and service delivery*” and “*expanding public education to promote tolerance and understanding between immigrants and host communities.*” This dual strategy highlights that improving immigrant experiences involves both strengthening institutional performance and transforming public attitudes. R7 also emphasized the importance of public awareness campaigns, suggesting that “*public education on the activities and services of the Ghana Immigration Service using institutions like NCCE*” would help Ghanaians and immigrants alike understand rights, responsibilities, and the value of lawful migration. Such educational outreach can mitigate xenophobia and promote social cohesion in multicultural neighborhoods within Accra.

Lastly, the participants pointed to policy reforms and regional cooperation as essential for creating a more inclusive and enabling environment for immigrants. R2 proposed “*implementing inclusive policies that promote equal access to education, healthcare, and employment,*” further suggesting the establishment of “*integration programs that offer language training, cultural orientation, and social support services.*” Similarly, R5 called for “*ratification of the African Union free movement protocol,*” underscoring the importance of aligning Ghana’s migration policies with broader regional frameworks. These perspectives collectively highlight a progressive outlook within institutions, one that moves beyond border control to a developmental and rights-based migration agenda. The integration of international frameworks, national capacity enhancement, and community-level inclusion emerges as a holistic strategy for improving the immigrant experience

in Accra. In essence, the responses suggest that Ghana's migration governance can best serve immigrants when it is grounded in cooperation, equity, and the recognition of migrants as active contributors to the socio-economic fabric of the host society.

4.2 Discussion of Results

The study found that economic hardship and insecurity in Nigeria were the most significant push factors driving migration to Ghana. Participants repeatedly emphasized joblessness, inflation, and infrastructural collapse as decisive motivations. P1 said, *"The economy was bad, no jobs, so many responsibilities."* R9 added, *"You can work hard but the amount you make will still be nothing."* These narratives confirm Adepoju and Mbugua's (2019) findings that persistent unemployment and structural poverty underpin most intra-West African migrations. Structuration Theory helps explain this dynamic: migrants acted within oppressive structures such as economic decline and political instability but exercised agency by relocating to a more enabling context. Thus, migration becomes both a response to constraint and an act of self-determination.

Similarly, insecurity and fear emerged as critical drivers of emigration. Respondents contrasted Ghana's safety with Nigeria's instability. P6 recounted, *"Walking around in daylight is even scary... you are not secured."* R5 shared, *"I did not love it again in my country; security-wise and a whole lot of conditions."* These lived experiences align with the African Union and IOM (2020) report, which identifies personal security as one of the top motivations for migration within the continent. Giddens' Structuration Theory conceptualizes this as a struggle within dual systems: while migrants are constrained by violent structures, they simultaneously transform their life trajectories through mobility. Their movement to Ghana demonstrates how human agency can subvert structural insecurity.

Ghana's peaceful environment, political stability, and infrastructural reliability stood out as key pull factors. Participants consistently referenced Ghana's peace and electricity stability as reasons for choosing Accra. P6 said, *"I consider peace over everything and I have not experienced anything like war or conflict."* R4 added, *"My phone has not gone off since I came to Ghana."* These accounts echo Yeboah et al. (2021), who describe Ghana as a "regional sanctuary" for migrants escaping political and infrastructural collapse. Structuration Theory again provides a useful lens: migrants' decisions reflect an informed engagement with structural conditions, choosing environments where institutional rules are more stable and resources more accessible.

The influence of social networks particularly Nigerians already living in Ghana was another defining factor shaping migration. P1 stated, *"I spoke to a few of them, and they told me there are one or two jobs here that you can earn something out of."* Similarly, P10 said, *"When they travel back home, how they look and the good things they say about Ghana motivate you."* This aligns directly with Bosiakoh and Tetteh's (2019) argument that migrant networks act as informal governance systems that facilitate settlement. Social Capital Theory interprets this as the mobilization of bonding capital and close-knit relationships that provide emotional, financial, and informational support. Migrants' reliance on peer influence confirms that social ties operate as both a bridge and a shield in the migration process.

However, these peer networks also had mixed effects. While some provided guidance, others created false expectations or failed to assist once migrants arrived. R3 recalled, *"The person that directed me here, I couldn't reach him again therefore I had to start a new life."* R4 described conflicting advice: *"Some junkies told me Ghana will frustrate you, but successful ones told me Ghana is good."* This duality mirrors Putnam's (2000) distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. While bonding capital sustains migrants within their ethnic groups, it can also

confine them socially and economically. In such cases, migrants must extend their networks to local Ghanaians to develop bridging capital that promotes broader integration.

The findings revealed that immigrants' overall experience in Accra was mixed characterized by peace and freedom but hindered by high living costs. P15 highlighted, "*Light is steady. Not like Nigeria. Everything is going well,*" while P17 lamented, "*Everything in Accra is all about spending.*" This dual experience aligns with Owusu's (2022) study on urban migrants in Accra, which found that immigrants experience both structural inclusion (in peace and infrastructure) and exclusion (in affordability). Structuration Theory interprets this as a negotiation of systems because migrants function within Ghana's structural order while simultaneously reshaping it through informal economies and adaptive strategies.

Respondents expressed deep appreciation for Ghana's peace, freedom, and hospitality. P13 emphasized, "*You have peaceful people all around, and your day goes on smoothly.*" P4 said, "*There is always light so my phone has not gone off since I came.*" These findings correspond with Teye's (2022) assertion that Ghana's urban centers are perceived as safe zones for immigrants within ECOWAS. Yet, appreciation often coexisted with economic constraints, showing the interplay between gratitude and endurance. This mirrors Social Capital Theory's emphasis on trust and reciprocity: even amid hardship, migrants build psychological and relational capital that fosters resilience and a sense of belonging.

When evaluating satisfaction levels, responses ranged between 6 and 10, revealing optimism despite hardship. P1 expressed high contentment, "*I would say my experience is a 10 because once you land here, get your job, and start sending money home.*" P4, however, scored 6, saying, "*Sometimes you spend above your income.*" These mixed assessments are consistent with Yendaw's (2022) observation that immigrants in Ghana measure success not by wealth

accumulation but by safety and stability. Structuration Theory's focus on human agency explains this outlook despite structural inequalities, immigrants redefine satisfaction through adaptive success measures rooted in peace and security rather than prosperity alone.

Discrimination in the labor market was a pervasive theme, with participants describing nationality-based exclusion and stigma. P1 explained, "*They say they don't want to work with a Nigerian... that mindset is tough.*" P11 added, "*They see me as a yahoo boy from my accent.*" This parallels Jegen and Zanker's (2020) study on West African migrants, where stereotypes and institutional bias were shown to restrict job access. Structuration Theory clarifies that institutional structures in Ghana though outwardly neutral reproduce subtle hierarchies that limit immigrant agency. Nevertheless, migrants often circumvented these barriers through self-employment, demonstrating their capacity to innovate within restrictive systems.

The language barrier and lack of legal documentation further constrained employment opportunities. P10 explained, "*Language is a barrier because most suppliers do not speak English.*" Similarly, P15 stated, "*Getting a work permit is a long one.*" This corroborates Yeboah et al. (2021), who identified bureaucracy and documentation hurdles as persistent issues despite ECOWAS free movement protocols. These barriers highlight the structural contradictions between regional policy and local enforcement. Migrants respond to this through informal adaptation, illustrating Giddens' idea that human action both reproduces and transforms structures; a process visible in how immigrants shape Ghana's informal labor economy.

Housing discrimination and high rent costs were among the most intense grievances. P1 stated, "*The landlord says, 'I don't want a Nigerian.'*" P4 described, "*I stayed in a hostel with over 200 people and the bath will even lead you to the hospital.*" These statements parallel Owusu's (2022) and Bosiakoh and Tetteh's (2019) findings that migrants face both structural and interpersonal

discrimination in Ghana's housing sector. Yet, through pooling resources and cohabitation, immigrants demonstrate the power of social capital. Networks of shared housing represent bonding capital that compensates for exclusion from formal rental systems. Thus, migrants resist marginalization through collective resilience.

The findings on social discrimination and stigmatization show that xenophobia though subtle remains pervasive. P1 said, *"They think I'm a prostitute or something."* P16 lamented, *"They tag all Nigerians as scammers or thieves."* These experiences mirror Crush and Ramachandran's (2018) findings in South Africa, where African migrants faced routine stereotyping. However, the Ghanaian context differs in that discrimination is less violent and more symbolic. Structuration Theory views this as soft exclusion, where power is exercised through social norms rather than direct coercion. Such experiences reinforce the need for inclusive public education and policy reform to address social prejudice.

Respondents' experiences with public services were mixed. While P6 and P12 reported no challenges, others faced barriers linked to documentation and cost. P19 shared, *"They don't care for me, so I pay double the price."* R3 also noted, *"I was denied a job because I lacked the Ghana Card."* These accounts align with Yeboah et al. (2021), who found that policy ambiguities often exclude ECOWAS migrants from essential services. Structuration Theory interprets these discrepancies as evidence of structural inertia, where institutions maintain hierarchies of belonging. Yet migrants' continued engagement with these systems reveals their agency in navigating institutional rigidity.

Cultural integration appeared surprisingly smooth for most participants, reflecting Ghana's cultural flexibility. P10 said, *"Ghanaian culture is very easy to adapt to."* P11 added, *"I got myself involved in Homowo and loved the experience."* However, cultural prohibitions occasionally

caused tension, as R4 described: *“During festivals, I abandon playing my music.”* These narratives support Teye’s (2022) argument that Ghana’s pluralism promotes tolerance, while minor frictions reflect the natural learning curve of integration. Social Capital Theory’s notion of bridging capital explains how participation in cultural events fosters intergroup trust, aiding long-term assimilation.

The field data also revealed that immigrants cope with isolation and economic hardship through social and religious networks. P15 noted, *“Church has been my family here.”* This mirrors Garba and Yeboah’s (2022) findings that religious institutions in Accra serve as informal welfare systems offering psychological, social, and even financial support. Through these networks, migrants accumulate bonding capital, which acts as emotional resilience in the absence of institutional care. Structuration Theory complements this by showing that such collective practices gradually reshape social structures, creating spaces of belonging for migrants in the host society.

Participants proposed multi-stakeholder strategies to improve immigrant welfare, stressing inter-agency collaboration and public education. P1 suggested, *“Strengthen inter-agency coordination on migration management and data sharing.”* P4 added, *“Enhance the capacity and logistics of GIS for effective monitoring.”* These recommendations align with Adam et al. (2020), who advocate for participatory migration governance combining state, civil, and international actors. This perspective underscores the dual theoretical insight: structural reforms are necessary, but they must be supported by the social capital that fosters public tolerance and institutional trust.

Finally, the study concludes that immigrants in Accra are not passive victims of circumstance but active agents of transformation. P17 captured this spirit, saying, *“Even if you are not a human being, you have to adapt.”* Their resilience reflects the essence of Giddens’ Structuration Theory, the capacity to act meaningfully within constraints and resonates with Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of social capital as power embedded in relationships. In alignment with empirical studies across

Africa and the Global South, this research affirms that while immigrants face systemic exclusion, they simultaneously reshape their host environments through entrepreneurship, cultural participation, and solidarity.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra by synthesizing insights from field interviews with theoretical and empirical literature. Drawing on Structuration Theory and Social Capital Theory, the findings reveal a complex interplay between structural constraints and migrant agency. Immigrants are primarily pushed by economic hardship and insecurity in their home countries, particularly Nigeria, and pulled by Ghana's perceived peace, stability, and opportunities. While many participants reported improvements in electricity, safety, and freedom, they also encountered significant challenges such as high living costs, discrimination in employment and housing, and exclusion from public services. Social networks played a critical role in facilitating migration and providing support, yet also reinforced dependence on informal systems. The chapter also highlighted how migrants adapt culturally and economically, often transforming their urban environments despite limited institutional support. Overall, the findings align with broader empirical patterns across Africa but also offer unique insights into the Ghanaian context, emphasizing both the resilience and vulnerability of migrant communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding components of the study on the lived experiences of immigrants in Accra, Ghana. It summarizes the key findings emerging from the field data and interprets them in light of the theoretical frameworks such as Structuration Theory and Social Capital Theory and the empirical literature. The chapter provides a reflective conclusion that addresses the central research questions, highlighting how immigrants navigate their realities in a host society marked by both opportunity and constraint. It also outlines practical recommendations aimed at improving the conditions of immigrants in Ghana, identifies limitations encountered during the research process, and proposes directions for future research. The aim is to tie together the major insights of the study and provide a foundation for policy action and scholarly engagement.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to explore and document the lived experiences of immigrants in Ghana, with a specific focus on Accra. Using a qualitative approach, the research drew insights from in-depth interviews conducted with immigrants from various ECOWAS countries who had lived in Accra for at least one year. The purposive and snowball sampling techniques enabled the inclusion of both documented and undocumented migrants, ensuring diverse perspectives. Data were gathered using semi-structured interview guides that allowed participants to narrate their migration journeys, daily experiences, and perceptions of life in Accra.

The study revealed that economic hardship, unemployment, and insecurity in migrants' home countries, particularly Nigeria, were the most significant factors pushing individuals to relocate to Ghana. Many respondents described poor living conditions, rising inflation, and inadequate public services as major motivations for leaving. These push factors were reinforced by personal aspirations for stability, better livelihoods, and safety.

On the other hand, Ghana's peace, political stability, and infrastructural reliability served as strong pull factors attracting migrants. Participants consistently viewed Ghana as a safer, more organized, and opportunity-filled environment compared to their home countries. Accra, in particular, was perceived as a city where hard work and peace of mind were possible, making it a preferred settlement destination for many.

Social networks and existing diaspora communities played a crucial role in influencing migration decisions and supporting settlement. Many respondents were encouraged by relatives and friends already living in Ghana, who provided information, housing, and initial financial or moral support. However, not all migrants had access to such networks; some had to navigate the migration process independently, highlighting variations in access to support systems among migrants.

Despite appreciating Ghana's peaceful atmosphere and stable infrastructure, immigrants faced notable challenges in Accra. These included high living costs, employment discrimination, housing barriers, and bureaucratic difficulties in accessing public services. National identity emerged as a major source of exclusion, with many respondents reporting subtle forms of stigma or xenophobia. Nonetheless, most migrants demonstrated strong resilience, adapting to the local environment through informal business ventures, community participation, and personal

determination. Overall, the study found that migrants are active agents who creatively navigate social and economic barriers while contributing to the city's cultural and economic landscape.

5.2 Conclusions

This study set out to understand the experiences and challenges faced by immigrants living in Accra and how they navigate the opportunities and constraints within their environment. The findings show that migration to Ghana is largely driven by economic difficulties and insecurity in home countries, but sustained by the search for peace, opportunity, and dignity. Migrants view Ghana as a place where they can rebuild their lives despite facing new social and economic barriers.

A major conclusion from the study is that there exists a clear gap between the legal provisions that support free movement under regional agreements and the practical realities faced by migrants in Accra. Many participants struggled to obtain documentation or access public services, highlighting weaknesses in administrative systems and inconsistencies in policy implementation. This gap creates frustration and limits the full benefits of regional mobility.

The study also concludes that informal structures play a central role in supporting migrants. Community networks, religious institutions, and ethnic associations often filled the gaps left by formal systems. These groups provided essential assistance such as accommodation, job opportunities, emotional support, and information sharing. However, the effectiveness of these networks depended on the migrants' level of social connection and trust.

Another conclusion is that social discrimination remains a persistent obstacle to integration. Migrants, especially Nigerians, often encountered suspicion and stereotyping that restricted their

access to jobs and housing. Such perceptions perpetuate social distance between migrants and host communities, hindering social cohesion and inclusion.

Finally, the research concludes that despite these challenges, immigrants exhibit strong adaptability and agency. Many have managed to establish small businesses, build community ties, and maintain their families both in Ghana and abroad. Their resilience illustrates not only individual determination but also the potential contribution of immigrants to urban growth and cultural diversity in Accra.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the challenges faced by immigrants in Accra and to improve their overall living conditions and integration outcomes.

First, there is a need for government institutions to strengthen the enforcement and accessibility of migration-related policies. Simplified and transparent documentation procedures would reduce the bureaucratic barriers many migrants currently face. Establishing clear information channels at immigration offices and community centers would also help migrants understand their rights and responsibilities.

Second, efforts should be made to address discrimination in housing and employment. Legal frameworks should be reviewed to explicitly protect individuals from exclusion based on nationality. Public education campaigns can also be launched to promote tolerance and awareness of the positive contributions that immigrants make to Ghanaian society.

Third, improving access to affordable housing should be a priority. Many migrants struggle with high rents and advance payment requirements. The government and city authorities could explore initiatives such as rent regulation, subsidized housing schemes, or partnerships with private developers to create more inclusive accommodation options.

Fourth, public service delivery should be made more inclusive by establishing migrant support desks in major cities like Accra. These units could provide information, legal aid, translation services, and employment guidance. Collaborating with non-governmental and community-based organizations can ensure that such programs are culturally sensitive and accessible to all migrants, including those without formal documentation.

Fifth, partnerships between government agencies, religious groups, and ethnic associations should be formalized to enhance coordination in service provision. These informal community structures have proven effective in reaching vulnerable migrant groups and should be integrated into official outreach strategies.

Finally, long-term integration strategies should include community engagement programs that foster mutual understanding between migrants and host populations. Activities such as intercultural dialogues, vocational training, and local leadership participation can promote coexistence, reduce prejudice, and strengthen community cohesion. By implementing these measures, Ghana can continue to uphold its reputation as a peaceful and welcoming country while ensuring that migration contributes positively to national and urban development.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was the language barrier, as some potential participants were excluded due to an inability to communicate in English. Although the study sought to include diverse

migrant voices, the reliance on English-speaking respondents may have limited perspectives from non-Anglophone migrants, such as those from Francophone West Africa.

Another limitation was the geographic scope, as the study focused solely on Accra. While the capital is a significant migration hub, it does not represent the experiences of immigrants across other parts of Ghana, such as Kumasi, Tamale, or border towns. The urban focus may have overrepresented certain themes like housing cost and formal employment barriers.

Lastly, due to time and resource constraints, the study had a modest sample size. While the qualitative approach allowed for in-depth narratives, a larger sample across different regions, genders, and occupations could have provided a more representative picture. The findings should therefore be understood as indicative rather than generalizable.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study have significant implications for both migration policy and future scholarly inquiry. From a policy perspective, the results highlight the need for Ghana to strengthen the coordination and implementation of its migration management framework in line with regional commitments under the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement. While Ghana is often regarded as a peaceful and welcoming country, inconsistencies in documentation processes and institutional enforcement continue to undermine migrants' access to basic rights and services. A more coordinated, multi-agency approach linking the Ghana Immigration Service, relevant ministries, and local government structures is essential to ensure that migration management extends beyond border control to include social and economic integration.

Furthermore, the study underscores the need to incorporate migration issues into broader national and urban development strategies. Migrants in Accra face challenges similar to those of low-income citizens, including housing shortages, informal employment, and high living costs. Policymakers should therefore view migration as a developmental issue rather than merely an administrative one. Integrating migrants into social protection programs, employment schemes, and housing initiatives would promote inclusive growth and reduce social tensions. Local assemblies, in collaboration with civil society and religious organizations, can also play a key role in extending community-based services and promoting cultural understanding between host communities and migrants.

Future research should build on this study by conducting comparative analyses of immigrant experiences across different Ghanaian cities and regions. Such studies would help determine whether the challenges and coping strategies observed in Accra are specific to the capital's urban context or reflect broader national migration dynamics. In addition, longitudinal research tracking migrants over time would provide valuable insights into how integration evolves, revealing shifts in aspirations, livelihoods, and social belonging throughout different stages of settlement.

Finally, future studies should give greater attention to gender and intersectionality in migration. Examining how gender interacts with factors such as age, education, religion, and family structure would deepen understanding of the diverse vulnerabilities and resilience strategies among migrant groups. This intersectional approach would not only enrich academic knowledge but also inform more targeted and equitable policy interventions.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the study's findings and their implications. It began with a summary of key results, revealing both the motivations for migration and the

multifaceted experiences of immigrants in Ghana. Drawing on Structuration and Social Capital Theories, the chapter highlighted how migrants navigate structural barriers through agency, community networks, and resilience. The conclusion reinforced the central argument that immigrant experiences are shaped by a dynamic interplay of formal systems and informal strategies. Recommendations were made to improve legal protections, housing, public services, and integration policies. The chapter also acknowledged the study's limitations and offered suggestions for future research to deepen the understanding of migration in the West African context.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Study Title: The Experiences of Challenges Among Immigrants in Ghana: A Case Study of Accra

Introduction and Consent

1. Thank you for participating in this study. I would like to ask you some questions about your experience living in Accra as an immigrant.
2. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential.
3. Do you consent to this interview being audio-recorded? (Yes/No)
4. Do you understand that you can skip any question or stop the interview at any time?

SECTION A: Motivations for Migration

1. Please briefly tell me about the conditions in your home country that pushed you to migrate to Ghana.
2. Please, briefly tell me about the conditions in Ghana which motivated you to migrate to Ghana.
3. How did Nigerians already in Ghana influence your migration to Ghana.

SECTION B: Satisfaction with Life in Accra

4. How would you describe your overall experience living in Accra so far?
5. What are the things you appreciate most about living in Accra?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your life in Accra? Please explain your rating.

SECTION C: Challenges Faced

7. What work challenges have you faced in Ghana?
8. What housing challenges have you faced in Ghana?
9. What other challenges have you faced in Ghana?
10. What challenges have you faced in accessing public services in Ghana?
11. Have you experienced any discrimination in Ghana? Please explain your answer.
12. How have cultural differences hindered your ability to integrate into Ghanaian society.

SECTION D: Institutional and Policy Perspectives

13. How does your institution's mandate address the management and integration of immigrants in Ghana, particularly in Accra?

14. What kinds of support or services does your institution provide to immigrants (e.g., documentation, health, housing, employment assistance), and how effective are these services in practice?
15. What are the main challenges your institution faces in managing immigration and ensuring the well-being of immigrants?
16. How does your institution collaborate with other government agencies, NGOs, or international organizations to address immigrant-related issues?
17. From your observation, how do host communities in Accra generally perceive and interact with immigrants?
18. In your view, what strategies or policy actions can government and other stakeholders adopt to improve the lived experiences of immigrants in Ghana?