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SOCIAL SUPPORT OF CHILD MIGRANTS IN ACCRA, GHANA

The Experiences of Young Female Head porters (Kayayei)

Declaration

I do hereby declare that apart from references to other people's work what have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is my own work.

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Acknowledgement

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to God, my father Mr Charles Owusu-Ofori, my mother Mrs Christiana Yartey and the entire family.

Abstract

This study aims to explore the experiences of young female head porters on their social support and how that helps them survive in the city of Accra. It aims to discuss how the social networks of the head porters functioned in the lives of these girls. Furthermore, the study sought to find out more about the roles and challenges of stakeholders in their provision of support for the female head porters.

The overarching perspective of this study is grounded in the philosophy of the social studies of children and childhood. The principles of childhood as a social construct and viewing children as active social agents in matters concerning them were paramount in this study. Other concepts like social support, social network and children's work were also included in the study as an unpinning framework.

The study employed the qualitative research approach in the collection of data. It employed multiple participatory methods such as participant observation, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews. Field notes and other reflections from observations were included. The total number of participants in this study were twelve female head porters who were between the ages of 11 and 17 years. The study was conducted in the Nima market where the female head porters lived and worked. I conducted semi structured interviews with one government official and four informants from different NGOs.

The analysis of the study reveals that the common forms of supports received by female head porters from their social networks were instrumental, emotional and informational support. The findings suggest that instrumental support from friends was very prominent in the lives of my participants while they relied mostly on family for emotional support. The study further reveals that children continue to demonstrate their ability to survive in the face of adversities by developing coping strategies through their social networks and employing their agency in various situations. This study therefore suggests that stakeholders providing support for the female head porters must increase children's participation in decision making to gain a better understanding of their needs in order to provide appropriate interventions.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ACRWC | African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child |
| AMA | Accra Metropolitan Assembly |
| CBOs | Community Based Organizations |
| FCUBE | Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FORWARD | Foundation for Women’s Health Research and Development |
| GSS | Ghana Statistical Service |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| JHS | Junior High School |
| LEAP | Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty |
| MCEs | Municipal Chief Executives |
| MDAs | Ministries, Departments and Agencies |
| MMDAs | Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies |
| MOGCSP | Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection |
| MPs | Members of Parliament |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NHIS | National Health Insurance Scheme |
| NOK | Norwegian kroner |
| NYEP | National Youth Employment Program |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Program |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SHS | Senior High School |
| STEP | Skills Training and Employment Program |
| UNCRC | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 An overview

Migration is a growing phenomenon all over the world. Children just like adults migrate both internationally and internally, basically as a strategy to survive due to the imbalances in development existing between the area of origin and destination (Kwankye et al., 2007b). Globally, the majority of child migrants move with their families but a significant number also move on their own (van de Glind, 2010). Independent child migrants have been defined as children below 18 years old, who ‘choose’ (to a greater and lesser extent) to move from home, and live at destinations without a parent or adult guardian (Yaqub, 2009). Studies have shown that despite the considerable focus on unaccompanied minors who enter the European Union or the United States, majority of children who migrate independently are internal migrants in developing countries (van de Glind, 2010). van de Glind (2010) further indicated that a study done in Argentina, Chile and South Africa drew the conclusion that there were 11 times as many inter-province child migrants than international ones. Similarly, a study done in some cities of Mali and Ghana confirms this pattern as it was revealed that, in Bamako, around two-thirds were internal migrants and 16 per cent were international migrants and in Accra, 97 per cent were internal migrants and under 1 per cent were international migrants (Yaqub, 2009)

The high percentage of internal migration recorded in Accra is an undeniable fact. Considering the increasing number of young girls and young women who have no form of formal education and others who have some limited schooling migrating into the big market centres in Southern Ghana, mainly Accra, Kumasi, Tema and Sekondi-Takoradi. Majority of these teenage girls and young women migrate from the Northern parts of Ghana and just a few of them migrate from other Southern parts in search of better opportunities. In the face of poverty, lack of employment and deprivation particularly in the Northern parts, migration either for a short term or long term has become a significant alternative for mostly women and young girls. The situation in the North, where all my respondents originate from, is such that they have very little investment in infrastructure or services. This results from the policy of under developing the North during the British colonial period to promote the role of the North as a labour reserve for the development of

the South (Hashim, 2005). The three regions in the North (Upper East, Upper West and Northern) until now continue to have the highest concentration of the poor in Ghana. Furthermore, they are noted for having the highest illiteracy rates, under nutrition of children and highly undeveloped. Other outmoded socio-cultural factors, such as forced early marriages, practiced in the north also compels these young girls to migrate to the south. These young women and teenage girls are also influenced by their friends and parents to migrate to the cities (Kwankye et al., 2007a; van Den Berg, 2007; Ziblim, 2017). Seeing the improvement in the lives of their friends and relatives who have returned to the village, most of these young girls are motivated or persuaded to migrate to the city to engage in the Kayayei business. Awumbila (2007) however argues that, regardless of the motive, Kayayei migration has been facilitated by forces of globalisation and market liberation which have led to easy access to information through modern communication technology and means of transportation. These among others are the root causes of the increase in the menace of child migration from the north to the south which has become a serious developmental issue facing the country.

On arrival in the cities majority of these young women and girls usually engage in various economic activities particularly carrying heavy loads on their heads for a fee (Kwankye et al., 2007b). The women and girls who engage in this activity are referred to as “Kayayei”. This name is coined from two different languages. The term ‘Kaya’ in the Hausa language means luggage and ‘Yoo’ or ‘Yei’ in Ga (a local dialect of the people of Accra) means woman or women respectively. Hence, a Kayayoo is a woman or a girl who engages in the carrying of people’s loads on their head for a fee (Opare, 2003). They engage in this kaya business because they perceive it as the only self-employment that can enable them to save money to acquire the assets required for a better marriage or venture into more lucrative future investments (Opare, 2003). Hashim (2005) also argued in his research that children were frequently positive about their migratory experiences as this gave them the opportunity to build important relationships and skills as well as earn an income which they had relative autonomy over. This is contrary to the general presentation of children’s migration as a negative phenomenon which is usually linked to the increase in children’s vulnerability to economic exploitation, dangerous working conditions and abuse. The work of these head porters is so tedious and demanding. They are always on the go, moving from one place to the other under the scorching sun, for many hours in search of customers who require their assistance in carrying their loads. They make very meagre amounts from their daily business and

this amount is usually insufficient to cover their living expenses, send remittance to their families as well as save for the future.

Various studies have brought to bear some of the challenges and risks these children face in their day to day activities in the southern cities. The living conditions of these children tend not to be very pleasant and has attracted significant public concern. Some of these children usually end up on the streets. They usually sleep in the markets where they work or at the transport stations, under bridges or under sheds of shops (Kwankye et al., 2007b). These girls are exposed to all sorts of diseases, such as malaria, due to their exposure to bad weather and mosquitos. In addition, they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and rape which could result in contracting HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortions (Shamsu-Deen, 2013). Notwithstanding all these challenges, there are some benefits for both the migrants and the urban economy in which these girls work (Ziblim, 2017). Through their work in the cities as Kayayei, most of these girls are able to mobilise some money to support their families back home by sending remittances, paying their own school fees, raise capital to build their own business or acquire personal belongings required for marriage (Awumbila, 2007; Opare, 2003; van Den Berg, 2007). Agyei et al. (2016) also argue that, though not often recognised, the Kayayei play a major role in local economic development through generation of revenue, addressing transportation gaps and assist in in the market exchange system. Kwankye et al. (2007b) also alludes to the fact that, despite all the challenges these migrant children face, more child migrants continue to migrate from the north to cities in the south. This he attributed to the fact that, upon arrival in the city, they adopt some coping strategies and gain access to certain social resources which make them survive in these otherwise unfriendly environments.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There is no accurate statistics on Kayayei in Ghana. Despite the undeniable fact that the population of Kayayei in Accra is on the rise, the exact figure is unknown. Estimates of the population of ranges from 2,600 to 160,000 (Kearney, 2013 cited in Lattof, 2018). The population of these girls has become an issue of concern for the government, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. This has however been attributed to the fact that they are usually missed during household and institutional surveys since they are mobile, occasionally homeless and have very little form of formal education (Lattof, 2018). The activities of these girls have been viewed

as inhumane due to the poor living and working conditions in the cities. This situation has attracted the sympathy of various governmental and non-governmental organizations that have made attempts to provide an alternative livelihood for the girls. There have particularly been different intervention programs for these girls such as family planning education, feeding projects, provision of accommodation and vocational training. Studies have however shown that, despite the interventions put in place by government and other institutions to address the Kayayei phenomenon, the degree of success has been very minimal (Osei-Boateng, 2012; Ziblim, 2017) (Osei-Boateng, 2012) . Also, many of these programs have stalled due to lack of monitory funds. Moreover, most of those who have been supported in one way or the other have not returned to their hometowns or have returned to do the Kaya business. This has caused many NGO's to stagger due to the overwhelming number of children on the streets (Beauchemin, 1999).

Most studies have focused on the troubles of these group of children “Kayayei” with little done on the ways it help them improve upon or change their conditions (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2016). It is in light of this that my study seeks to identify and explore the social support available to these female head porters and the role it plays in their survival in the city of Accra from their own perspectives. It will be critical to explore the role these support systems in the lives of these girls and how the support offered to these children impact their lives.

1.3 Aims of the project

1. The main aim of this project is to explore the experiences and perceptions of female head porters on their social support and how that helps them cope with life in the city of Accra.
2. To explore the role of social support systems available to Kayayei
3. To explore and understand the social networks of the Kayayei

1.4 Main research questions

1. How does the social networks of the Kayayei function in their lives?
2. How do the Kayayei experience the available social support?
3. What are the roles and challenges faced by government and NGO's in their provision of support and how could these institutions improve the support they provide?

1.5 Significance of the study

Most of the limited research regarding the independent migration of children tends to concentrate on the causes of children's migration, the problems they encounter after migration, the coping strategies they adopt to survive at their place of destination and the nature of the economic activities they engage in. The female head porters for instance are mostly viewed as vulnerable or passive victims of exploitation who are need of protection and assistance from the tough realities in the cities. In view of this, their agency as well as meaningful contributions they make to their lives and the people around them are ignored. Their resilience and their ability to utilize the social resources available to them to adapt the adverse conditions they face is also underestimated. There is very scanty literature on the social support of independent child migrants especially the female head porters and this study seeks fill in the gap in research by bringing the perspectives of female head porters on the social support available to them and the role of the social networks in their life to the forefront. The study will also contribute to various governmental and non-governmental organizations working with these migrant children to think of ways of adjusting their programs and strategies in pursuit of their support so that it may be more beneficial to their targeted group.

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis outlines eight chapters

Chapter one: This section gives a brief overview of the research topic, statement of the problem and outlines the main aims of the study, research questions and the relevance of the study.

Chapter two: This chapter gives a brief description of Ghana, the study area and the Northern region. It also discusses some child policies, intervention programs, north-south migration in Ghana and finally the history of head portage in Ghana

Chapter three: This chapter outlines and discusses concepts and theories used in this study. The chapter also reviews related literature.

Chapter four: The chapter provides the detailed description and discussion of the methodological approach used in the study and related field experiences and challenges. In this chapter ethical principles are also discussed in detail.

Chapter five: This chapter presents data and analysis on the demographic characteristics of my participants, reasons for migration, nature of their work and challenges faced in the city.

Chapter six: this chapter also reveals some of the social networks and the forms of support they obtain from these networks.

Chapter seven: In this chapter the roles and challenges of the government and NGOs in supporting female head porters are presented.

Chapter eight: The final chapter, presents discussions of the findings based on the theories used in this study. It also provides summary of the main findings and gives recommendation for future policies and research.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief description of Ghana, with respect to the demography, socio-economic features, regions, ethnicity and religion. This chapter also presents a description of the study, Accra, as well as a brief profile on the Northern region where my informants migrated from. It further goes on to identify certain child policies in the country and some intervention programs for Kayayei. Finally, the chapter highlights the rural urban migration situation in Ghana as well as provide a brief history of head portorage in Ghana.

2.2 Brief description of Ghana

Ghana is a democratic country which is located on the west coast of Africa. It is located along the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean and shares borders with Cote D'Ivoire to the west, Togo to the east and Burkina Faso to the North. It is the first sub-Saharan African country to attain independence from British colonial rule on 6th of March 1957. According to Ghana Statistical Service, the population of Ghana has more than tripled within 50 years, from 6.726.815 inhabitants in 1960 to 24.658.823 in 2010. The population structure of Ghana is a youthful one with about 40% representing those under 15 years and only 4.7% representing those above 65 years (GSS, 2013). The population of Ghana is estimated to be about 26.6 million in 2013 (Alagidede et al., 2013).

Ghana has 10 administrative regions namely Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Western regions. The major ethnic groups in Ghana include the Akan, Ewe, Ga- Dangme, Gurma and Guan, with Akan being the largest (47.3%) (GSS, 2013a).

Ghana is endowed with several natural resources such as gold, diamond, bauxite, manganese, crude oil among others. The country has seen an increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the service sector contributing about 49%, the industrial sector contributing about 27.6% and the agriculture accounts for about 23% (GSS, 2012). Ghana's growing oil industry which commenced in 2011, has significantly boosted its economic growth in recent times.

Religion in Ghana is very vital to its people. Majority of people in Ghana are Christians accounting for about 70% of the population with about 17.6% being Christians and 5.2 % being Traditionalists (GSS, 2013a).

2.3 The study area; Accra

Accra is the capital of the Ghana, situated in the Greater Accra Region with a total population of 4,010,050 representing about 16% of Ghana's population (GSS, 2013a). This study undertaken in Accra, specifically the Nima market, located in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). The Metropolis which is entirely urban has a population of 1,665,086 representing 42 percent of the region's total population (GSS, 2014). The importance of this metropolis as an administrative, industrial and commercial centre has attracted people both within and outside the country (Agyei et al., 2016). It is estimated that about 47% of residents in Accra are migrants (GSS, 2014), who have been attracted by the diverse economic opportunities and economic cycle of growth. About 70 % of the population are economically active with majority (15 years and above) being self-employed (GSS, 2014). As an urban economy, the majority of the population 38.5 % are involved in sales and services whereas only 1.7 percent are engaged as skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers. The private informal sector is the largest employer in the Metropolis, employing about 74.0 percent of the population followed by the private formal sector with 16.9 percent (ibid).

2.4 Northern Region

The Northern region is the place of origin of my informants, the Kayayei. The Northern region is the largest region in Ghana with an area of about 70, 384 square kilometres located on the south of the Upper West and Upper West region. The climate in the region is relatively dry and has a single rainy season which lasts from May until the end of October. Agriculture, forestry and fishery is the main occupation of people in the Northern region with constitutes about 74% of the economic active population. The average household size for this region is 7.7 with 85.5 % of males being household heads. It has been estimated that one out of every five persons who are married are below the age of 19 years. This could be attributed to the cultural practice of betrothal of young girls existing in the Northern Region. Islamists are the largest religious group in the Region with about 60 % being Muslims. Furthermore, the Northern Region is characterised by high illiteracy

rate. It is estimated that about 62.5% of the population who were 11 years and older were not literate in the year 2010 (GSS, 2013b).

2.5 Child policies in Ghana

Ghana was the first country to ratify the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in February 1990. Similarly, the government of Ghana also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC) in June 2005. The ratification of these conventions signifies the commitment the country has towards ensuring the rights of children in Ghana. Formerly, the rights of children were only recognised under the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which constitutes the fundamental rights and freedom of citizens in the country. Article 28 of the Constitution of Ghana made provision for the rights and freedoms of children. Though this constitution still exists, there were reforms and laws which were to be enacted by parliament for the protection, survival and development of children. This led to the passage of the 1998 Children's Act (Act 560) which is a comprehensive law incorporating the civil, political, economic and social policies for children. According to Twum-Danso (2009, p. 417) the Children's Act "brought together all laws relating to children into a single child-focused legislation that at the same time, domesticated the Convention into the national laws of the country".

In Ghana, the process of strengthening the child protection system is following the right path from evidence to policy to practice (UNICEF, 2015). The report by UNICEF (2015) further indicated that, after analysis and mapping of the existing child protection system in the year 2010, it was found to be inadequate. In addition, much of the legal framework inherited from the colonial era failed to reflect the country's current context. It is for this reason that the government of Ghana adopted two distinct, but linked policies known as the Child and Family Welfare Policy and the Justice for Children Policy. There is no policy in Ghana that specifically addresses the phenomenon of Kayayei and subsequently 'child' Kayayei (Osei-Boateng, 2012). However, children involved in the Kayayei business are all catered for under various policy frameworks dealing with exploitation and child labour such as the National Gender Policy, Justice for children Policy, the Ghana National Social Protection Policy and the Child and Family Welfare Policy.

2.6 Intervention programs for Kayayei

There have several intervention programs by the government and some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to empower Kayayei by engaging them in skills training or lifeline projects as well as undertaking some social welfare programs to ensure their wellbeing. Several interventions had been put in place by government and NGOs, such as the Catholic Action for Street Children, Rescue Foundation, Assemblies of God Relief and Development Service and Apple, to provide shelter, training and medical assistance to Kayayei (BIBIR, n.d.)

In 2003, the government in collaboration with UNICEF introduced the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP) programme and the ‘Stop Kayayei Programme’. The ‘Stop Kayayei Programme’ was setup to rescue, educate and reintegrate the Kayayei’s into their families while the STEP programme is an initiative by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the aim of fighting social exclusion and poverty and promoting social protection worldwide. This program has now been transformed into the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) (ibid).

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in 2008 also launched an intervention program called ‘Operation Send Them Home’, through which more than 2000 Kayayei’s were registered and sent back to where they originated from. This was done with the aim of protecting them from the harsh conditions they face in Accra (Denekamp, 2011 cited in Huijsmans, 2012).

Similarly, the government has made some initiatives with serious efforts being made to increase the girl-child enrolment as well as the retention rate in schools. In this regard, the Canada-Ghana Girl-Child Education Enhancement Project and others by Action Aid Ghana have tried to reverse the Kayayei trend through education and sensitization on gender issues (Ziblim, 2017).

More recently, various stakeholders have been engaged in providing education and vocational training for the Kayayei in the southern cities. Reports indicate that most of these interventions have not been holistic and have not been implemented specifically for ‘at risk’ Kayayei or returnees. Thus, initiatives regarding income generation among young girls and women are clearly not adequate (FORWARD, 2018). Some NGOs such as BIBIR-Ghana have started alternative vocational, education and training programs for Kayayei returnees and potential ones in the various villages in northern Ghana in a way to let them rescind their decision to migrate to the South to

engage in the Kayayei business. Moreover, to encourage their participation the girls were given bicycles to enable them commute easily to their training centres due the long distance between the neighbouring communities and the training centre (BIBIR, n.d.; Ziblim, 2017). Meanwhile, notwithstanding all these interventions, the degree of success in combating the Kayayei trend has been minimal as most of the Kayayei return to the south or the markets to continue the activity (BIBIR, n.d.; Osei-Boateng, 2012).

2.7 North-South migration in Ghana

Research has proven that rural urban migration from the north to the southern part of the country is not a new phenomenon. This practice can be traced back to the colonial era when young men travelled to the south to work on cocoa and coffee plantations in exchange for money. (Cardwell, 1968 cited in Ziblim, 2017). Kwankye et al. (2007a) indicated that the pattern of internal migration in the country is a result of the differences in the level of poverty between the north and the south including their respective capacities to respond to new economic opportunities. Migration from the North to the Southern sectors has therefore become an essential household strategy to improve the livelihood of migrants (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). Though, the exact numbers of people migrating from the North to South is lacking, GSS (2012) stipulated that the incidence has been on the increase. Subsequently, the 2010 population census revealed that the Northern region has the largest number of children between the ages of 10 and 17 who migrate as independent children migrants (GSS 2012). However, the most disturbing turn in this rural urban migration is the recent increase in the number of female migrants including very young children and teenage girls who move to the southern cities like Accra and Kumasi to engage in the Kayayei trade (Awumbila, 2007; Huijsmans, 2012)

Right through colonial times till present, the Northern region has been at a disadvantage in terms of development. Government development priorities are skewed towards further investment in the south rather than the North since the South is endowed with more natural resources like cocoa coffee and timber thereby attracting more investments and development (Kwankye et al., 2007a). Because of this, most people migrated to the southern parts of the country in search for work in order to earn more income.

Awumbila (2007) also alludes to the fact that, liberalization and structural adjustment programs implemented in Ghana in the 1980s, has had adverse effect on the development of the north,

particularly the agricultural sector, as fertilizer subsidies, and subsidies on health care and other social services were removed. Similarly, Krueger, 1989 (cited in Opare, 2003) also argued that the removal of agricultural subsidies made farming more expensive for women who already have limited access to credit. Consequently, the North now serves as a labour reserve for industries and agriculture in the South, reflecting how impoverished the north is and the relative buoyant urban economy in the south (Kwankye et al., 2007a).

2.8 History of head portage in Ghana

All over Ghana, people carry wares on their head. This includes water, farm produce, firewood as part of domestic duties. However, head portage for commercial purposes was mainly dominated by males. Adding monetary value to head portage was first introduced by male migrants from the Sahelian countries in West Africa, mainly from Mali. Those who were involved in this act were called 'kaya' an Hausa word for load (Kwankye et al., 2007a). According to Kwankye et al. (2007a) due to government policies in 1969, the kaya business almost faced out as those who were involved were affected by the expulsion order. Ghanaian men took over the business and gave it a new facelift by carrying loads using hand-pushed trucks. This later contributed to the increase in later vehicular traffic in the big cities and business centres. Head portage then re-assumed since it was easier to manoeuvre through the human congestion and vehicular traffic in the market place. This created an opportunity for young people to migrate from the Northern Ghana to the Southern parts to carry loads on their heads for people who needed assistance in the markets. They carry all forms of loads for shoppers or shop owners in the market who needs help in transporting their goods from the point of purchase to transport stations or sale points. Due to the increase in female migrants in cities, the kaya business became female dominated, hence, there was the need to qualify this service by adding the word 'yoo' (female in Ga-a language spoken in Accra) to "*kaya*" and termed "*Kayayei*" (Ibid). Therefore, as already mentioned, the name "*Kayayei*" describes females who are carry loads on their heads from one place to the other at a fee.

CHAPTER 3

THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTS

3.1 Introduction

Theories are very important in research because they present a systematic way or guide for understanding the phenomenon under study. In doing research, theoretical concepts can be helpful to ‘lift’ the empirical experiences in serving the important task of providing insight and understanding (Nilsen, 2005). This means that even though theories and concepts guide the way we think throughout the research process, there can also be the emergence of new knowledge, which gives you a better understanding of the phenomenon that you study.

This chapter presents theories and concepts that were deemed important and related to the research topic. Based on the aims and objectives as well as the research questions, some theories and concepts which were used in this study included, social studies of children and childhood, perceptions of children and childhood, agency and resilience, children’s work, social support, social network as well as a brief literature review of related studies.

3.2 Social studies of children and childhood

Viewing children as active participants in childhood research is a relatively new perspective. Prior to this, children have been treated as objects rather than active subjects or participants in the research process. Various criticisms of this approach gave rise to the need to do research with children rather than on children. The social studies of children and childhood proposed by Allan Prout and Allison James, is an emergent paradigm which emphasizes the need to recognize children as active social agents and determinants of their own lives (Prout & James, 1997). It also seeks to give children a voice in matters concerning them (Qvortrup, 1997). As Charlotte Hardman, one of the forerunners of this perspective suggests, children must be studied in their own rights and from their own perspectives and not just as receptacles of adult teachings (Prout & James, 1997). The paradigm shift in research with children contradicts the dominant framework which was mainly dominated by developmental and socialization theories in the approach of studying children and childhood. The dominant framework which stems particularly from psychology mainly addresses childhood in terms of biological and cognitive development through what is termed ‘maturation’(Jenks, 1982). It viewed and value children as what they will become

rather than what they are. Prout and James (1997) indicated that, in relation to the key concept of development inherent in the dominant framework, there are three themes that predominate in the study of children and childhood, which include, 'rationality', 'universality and 'naturalness'. In view of this, it was therefore important to study childhood as a biologically determined stage on the path to full human status, thus adulthood.

The emergent paradigm strongly advocates for the essence to view children as competent actors in the shaping of their lives and influencing the world in which they find themselves. It attempts to give children a voice and emphasize that children are active beings who have the capacity to exercise their agency in matters concerning their lives and in the creation of their own life worlds (Qvortrup, 1994, 1997). As discussed by Prout and James (1997, pp. 8-9), the key tenets of this paradigm are listed below:

- Childhood is understood as a social construction;
- Childhood is a variable of social analysis which can never be divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity;
- Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own rights, independent of the perspective and concern of adults;
- Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live;
- Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood as it allows children a more direct voice and participation;
- The emergence of the new paradigm of childhood is a contribution to the process of reconstructing childhood in society.

The social studies of children and childhood which draws inspiration from various academic disciplines like psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography gives mythological advice on how children should be studied. In order to better understand the life experiences of children, the emergent paradigm urges researchers to view children as social actors and give children a voice in matters that concerns them because they have knowledge on those issues. As Woodhead and Faulkner (2000) revealed in their study, significant knowledge is obtained when researchers solicit for children's active participation and when their views, perspectives and feelings are accepted as genuine and valid evidence in the research process.

The essence of this theory to my study can be seen in various dimensions. Firstly, the theory helps with the choice of methodological approaches that is appropriate in studying children and childhood. Also considering the importance of children's agency in researching about their experiences, I particularly used children as my principal participants. This gave me the opportunity to present the views and perspectives of children on issues concerning their own lives and not only relying on adults' perspectives. I, however, concur with the suggestions of Woodhead and Faulkner (2000) that respect for children's status as social actors does not necessarily diminish adult responsibility but rather places new responsibilities on adults to structure children's environment, guide their behaviour and ensure that their participation in issues concerning their lives are consistent with their interests, understanding and ways of communicating.

3.3 Perceptions of children and childhood

According to childhood studies, childhood is not a natural phenomenon and cannot be properly understood as such. As stated by Prout and James (1997, p. 8), "Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of society". Hence, in this perspective, childhood is to be "understood as a social construct, which refers to a social status delineated by boundaries incorporated within the social structure and manifested through a certain typical form of conduct, all of which are essentially related to a particular cultural setting" (Jenks, 1982, p. 12). This implies that, children and childhood are understood differently in different societies and at different times (Ansell, 2005). Therefore, the definitions of children as well as the varied childhoods which children experience are to be seen as social constructs formed by a range of social, historical and cultural factors (Burr & Montgomery, 2003; Crawley, 2011; Franklin, 1995; Montgomery, 2003). Hence, being a child cannot be considered as a universal experience of any fixed duration but is constructed differently based on the divergence in gender, class, ethnic or historical locations of particular individuals (Franklin, 1995; Montgomery, 2003). Experiences of childhood in Ghana for instance varies from region to region and even from one ethnic group to the other.

The French historian Philippe Ariès who pioneered the idea that childhood is a social construction claimed that the notion of childhood did not exist in medieval Europe prior to the fifteenth century. He argued that once infants stopped being physically dependent, children were treated as miniature adults and were fully integrated into the social and economic life without any special protection

(Ansell, 2005). It was not until the seventeenth century that the ideas that childhood is special and different gained ground. This resulted in what Ariès saw as the sentimentalization of childhood and the ‘child-centered family’ in the nineteenth and twentieth century (Montgomery, 2003). This view of Ariès has heavily been criticized, however, it is widely accepted that, concepts of childhood in medieval Europe differs greatly from those prevailing today (Ansell, 2005).

Westernized conceptualization of childhood has represented children in varied and contradictory discourses as inherently evil, blank slates needed to be shaped by their upbringing and as inherently good or innocent (Montgomery, 2003). However, ideas of childhood continue to change because they depend on the social, cultural and historical contexts (Ansell, 2005; Montgomery, 2003). Furthermore, as these notions of childhood vary over time and space, so too do their experiences of being children (Ansell, 2005). How childhood is constructed has real consequences on how children are treated in different contexts and contradictions in these constructions may cause some difficulties. Emphasizing this point, Crawley (2011) stated that recognizing the boundaries of childhood as socially and culturally constructed, has important implications in terms of understanding the concrete, material and existences of children. The westernized construction of childhood as a time of innocence where children must play and be protected from the adult world have been exported to other countries raising the question of whether there is now a such thing as a ‘global child’ (Montgomery, 2003). “Childhood has been mythologized as a ‘golden age’ in which children are untroubled by the “adult” concerns of work and economic life, are free to enjoy themselves” (Franklin, 1995, p. 17). The 2004 *State of World’s Children* report, for instance, defines childhood as:

“Childhood is a time for children to be *in school and at play*, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and . . . *caring adult*. [As such], childhood . . . is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and *protected* from [work] abuse and exploitation” (Abebe & Bessell, 2011, p. 767).

Consequent to this notion, children especially those in the global south have been affected in various aspects of their life. Children have forcefully been ejected from the worlds of work, sexuality, politics, forced into dependency on adults and designated the classroom as the major focus of children’s lives (Franklin, 1995). Children in different places around the world experience diverse childhoods and culture and therefore making this globalized conception of childhood very problematic by treating children as a homogeneous group with uniform needs and rights. Ennew

for instance argues that the conception of childhood which stresses domesticity and dependency, places certain children, especially street children outside childhood (Franklin, 1995). Consequently, children through this westernized notion of childhood, have been rendered powerless, dependent, incompetent and passive in matters concerning them. Poorer children in the global south have actually been penalized as the ‘global child’ and have been represented as the ideal child, that these children cannot and will never be able to fulfil (Boyden, 1990; Montgomery, 2003).

3.3.1 Childhood in Ghana

There is a limited body of literature on Ghanaian childhood. However, an understanding of how childhood is conceptualised in Ghana is very relevant for this thesis. According to (Boakye-Boaten, 2010), generally, children in Africa are perceived as biologically vulnerable beings in need of protection and nurturing. He also prescribes certain social roles and relationships. For instance, fathers are the breadwinners of the family while mothers are responsible for nurturing the child. In the Ghanaian context, once a child is delivered, the child is considered as the property of the entire community. It is therefore the responsibility of the parents, the school, churches and all well-meaning members of society to ensure the protection and proper socialization of the child (Boakye-Boaten (2010)). In Africa and Ghana as an example, the importance of a child is their fundamental role as future insurance to the family and cultural legacies. Hence, they are trained to conform to the cultural tenets set by the custodians of the culture (Boakye-Boaten, 2010). Children in Ghana are therefore expected and encouraged to contribute to the sustenance of the economic and cultural livelihoods of the family and the society. Most children do this by running errands, caring for younger siblings, helping in household chores and even engaging in work that provides income to support the family. Chant and Jones (2005) exemplify this in the context of Ghana where children feel a sense of obligation to their parents and the need to work in order not to present an image of idleness, which is seen as deviance from social norms. Life is basically built on interdependencies and reciprocity. This is evident in African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Child under article 30 (a) “*the child...shall have the duty; to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need*” (ACRWC, 1999). Boakye-Boaten (2010) asserted that children and childhood in Ghana and many parts of Africa have undergone tremendous transformation as a result of certain changes in the political, economic and

social institutions as well as colonialism, education and globalization. Studies have revealed that the implementation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program by countries indebted to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank has led to the increase in prices that has made basic services like healthcare, education, food very difficult for the poor to access and this has very detrimental effects on children and also increases their workload (Abebe, 2016; Boakye-Boaten, 2010). Boakye-Boaten (2010) further explains that childhood in Ghana is shaped by economics, thus, children from rich families may have the luxuries of protected childhood while those from poorer families have been affected in diverse ways and forced into taking up traumatizing adult responsibilities without the needed securities. Despite all these societal imbalances that have affected the experiences of children, one can argue that, children in Ghana continue to be children in other ways and participate in shaping their image in the society.

3.4 Agency and resilience

The actor-oriented perspective in child research is a branch of the social studies of children and childhood which posits that children should be viewed as social actors with agency who need to be studied in their own rights and from their own perspectives. This tenet is a contradiction to the dominant framework of developmental psychologists and socialization theorists who mainly focused on the cognitive and social development of children. Children were seen as ‘human becomings’ while adults were seen as complete ‘human beings’ (Qvortrup, 1994). To offset this perception about children proponents of the emergent paradigm emphasized the need to recognize and appreciate children as social agents. As Mayall (2002) points out, in this perspective, children are seen as people, who through their individual actions can make a difference to a relationship, a decision and a set of social assumptions or constraints. Prout and James (1997) describe children’s agency as being active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live in and that children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes. Robson et al. (2007, p. 135) on the other hand defines agency as “an individual’s own capacities, competencies, and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their life worlds, fulfilling many economic, social, and cultural expectations, while simultaneously making individual or collective choices and possibilities for their future lives”. Children’s agency has been demonstrated in diverse studies, both in their relations with adults and with their peers. Exhibiting their agency is usually dependent on the cultural context in which

children find themselves. This is basically due to how childhood is constructed differently in different culture hence influencing the way in which children demonstrate their agency. This is to say, although children are social agents, their relative ability to exercise their agency is rooted within particular structure that can enable and constrain their abilities of doing so (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009). Hence recognizing the agency of children does not require the rejection of the social structure that shape their actions but rather entails the need to respect their needs and social competencies (Kjørholt, 2004).

James et al. (1998) argue that, to recognize children's agency, 'there is need to conduct studies which foreground their agency in social action: the life worlds of childhood, the daily lived experiences of children, their experiences and understandings, their interactions with each other and with adults of various kinds, their strategies and tactics of action'. With this concept in mind, I recognized that, these female head potters exhibited their agency in their decision to migrate. Some of them took the decision on their own to migrate to the cities without the knowledge of their parents while others also together with their family made that decision to migrate. The responsibilities they take upon themselves to ensure they meet their basic needs as well as cater for their family back home demonstrates the agency of these children. In my study, it was also beneficial for me to identify children's ability to act as social agents considering the various constraints they face daily. As Robson et al. (2007) reveal, some of these constraints contexts in the majority world are mainly poverty, restrictive socio-cultural norms and expectations and lack of employment and income generating activities. Also, these act as important major stimulus for young people's migration. It is also important to recognize the power relation between children and adults in relation to agency. Punch et al. (2007) highlight that, the presence of power can be oppressive and constraining, however, it can also be enabling as children manage to exercise power on their own and with their peers in order to balance adult demands with their own desires.

Children, just as every individual, face some adversities in their lives due some factors such as poverty, armed conflict, forced migration, exploitation and family problems. However due to their youthfulness and lack of social power, children and adolescents are the most severely affected people in these adverse situations (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Some of these children tend to struggle through these difficulties with little or no form of support to help them cope. However, despite the devastating odds, not all children exposed to risks and adversities develop problems later on. These

children are considered 'resilient' (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Resilience has been defined as "the ability to learn to live with ongoing fear and uncertainty, namely, the ability to show positive adaptation in spite of significant life adversities and the ability to adapt to difficult and challenging life experiences"(Meichenbaum, 2005, p. 4). It has been characterised by the ability to 'bounce back' and cope effectively in the face of difficulties, rebound from adversity, handle setbacks, persevere and maintain equilibrium following aversive events. Several processes and mechanisms have been identified in research, which influences resilience in children. The health, gender and other individual attributes such as age, temperament, sense of humour memory, reasoning, perceptual competencies and spirituality have been found to have significant influence of resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Additionally, children's interpersonal relationships with family members and significant others play an essential role in their resilience. Thus, the presence of at least one supportive adult can have an enormous effect on the child's resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Boyden (2003) argues that, street children, regardless of being continuously faced by risks such as poverty, harsh conditions on the street, operate outside structures such as family, community and schools. However, they demonstrate the ability to meet their basic needs through the achievement of positive adjustments. The concept of resilience in this study provides the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of how these female head porters, in the face of adversity employ strategies to survive through their social networks and support available to them.

3.5 Children's work

Globally, there has been increasing debates on children's work. Abebe and Bessell (2011) argue that this phenomenon is contentious not just because children work illegally but also because of the concurrent involvement of independent realities of survival, socialization, participation, abuse and exploitation. Children's work or child labour are difficult terms to define because they are social constructs, as well, not a natural phenomenon (Ennew et al., 2005). Also, in an attempt to define child labour one has to determine who is considered a child and this varies across different cultures and societies (Ugal & Undyaundeye, 2009). International organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) perceive child labour as harmful and detrimental to the physical and mental wellbeing of the child which has adverse effect on the family, society and nation. Consequently, there has been massive involvement of various organizations to eliminate child labour by putting certain legislations in

place to curb what is regarded as a problem. Many countries including Ghana have adopted these legislations to abolish child labour, nonetheless, child labour is still widespread throughout the world (Osment, 2014). According to ILO (2012), the term child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity which is harmful to physical and mental development thereby interfering with their schooling. However, this definition varies among different societies, especially in Africa where people distinguish between child labour and child work. Child work is perceived to be part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is considered exploitative. (Omokhodion & Odusote, 2006 cited in Osment, 2014). In this regard, given the relatively young age of children involved in the Kayayei business, the dehumanising environments in which they live and the unregulated and exploitative nature of their work, activities of these girls are considered as child labour in the Ghanaian context (Ziblim, 2017). Consequently, there has been a reflection in Ghana's legislations concerning children. The Labour act (Act 651) for instance, clearly states in section 58(1) that "a young person shall not be engaged in any type of employment or work that is likely to expose the person to physical or moral hazard" (ibid).

3.6 Social support

Social support is a term which has been broadly defined by many scholars in different fields of study. Gottlieb (2000, p. 28) defines social support as the "process of interaction in relationships which improves coping, esteem, belongingness and competence through actual and perceived exchanges of physical and psychosocial resources". Similarly Cudjoe and Alhassan (2016) define social support as the support resources provided to persons or perceived to be available from a person's social network. From these definitions social support is viewed to be actual or perceived support. Actual support is the support the individual receives through what is given, said and done for the individual. Perceived support on the other hand refers to an individual's belief that social support is available, generally considered positive or negative and provides what is considered needed by that individual (Mattson & Hall, 2011). Social support can be provided in many forms to an individual. Schaefer et al. (1981) for instance identified five types of social support which are; emotional support, esteem support, network support, information support and tangible support. Most research has linked social support to health outcomes and has been found to be very essential in improving physical health, psychological health and the overall wellbeing of individuals. Also,

not only does it help one to feel better but helps individuals to cope with challenges (Mattson & Hall, 2011). Similarly, Cudjoe and Alhassan (2016) indicate that social support resources are noted for producing positive changes and adaptability in difficult situations.

In this study the concept of social support will be used to describe the various forms of support available to the female head porters. For the purpose of this study, I will adopt the types of supportive functions of social relationships described by Cohen and Syme, 1985 (cited in Kennedy et al., 2017). These classifications are, *emotional support*, *instrumental support*, *informational support* and *companionship support*. Cohen and Syme defined emotional support as encouraging the receiver by way of being sympathetic to their burdens, showing them love and support which foster trust and attachment. Instrumental support involves ensuring that the receiver's needs are met by attaining material support which could take the form of goods and services. Informational support involves giving counselling, as well as provision of knowledge which aids the receiver to finding solutions to their problems. Finally, companionship support refers to the spending time with the receiver by engaging in social activities which helps to promote a sense of belonging. (cited in Kennedy et al., 2017, p. 3). Companionship support was, however, excluded in the study due to lack of substantial data on this topic from the participants. Furthermore, the choice of this classification is due to its simplicity which helps in organising the obtained data as well as allow the flexibly to adjust the data based on the themes that arise regarding the kind of support the Kayayei receive. Identifying the social support of the Kayayei is also beneficial in identifying the gaps in the provision of social support especially by government officials and other stakeholders to devise meaningful and efficient interventions to support the girls I want to study.

3.7 Social network

Social networks are increasingly regarded as important sources of social capital for migrants which allows them to access social support (Ryan et al., 2008). According Ryan et al. (2008) social capital and social networks are frequently seen as synonyms. Based on this, this study will be mainly adopting the concept of *social network*.

Much of the support people receive comes from their social networks. Hence in order to understand the role of social support in the lives of the Kayayei, it is necessary to know which people the Kayayei have connections with and how they are in contact with them. Social network describes the social structure and quantity of an individual's set of interconnected social ties (Cudjoe &

Alhassan, 2016). Similarly, Reza (2017) also defines social networks as interpersonal connections or ties among individual and groups. These ties or connections can be either strong or weak. Strong ties “refer to mutually felt intimate relationships within which individual stay close to each other, interact and provided mutual support” (Wellman & Wortley cited in Reza, 2017, p. 287). On the other hand, weak ties can be referred to as relationships that are less intimate and more tentative, lacking mutuality, reciprocity, and the material and emotional supports common with strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). One’s family members or close friends can be classified as their strong ties while acquaintances are classified as weak ties (Granovetter, 1983). Granovetter (1983, p. 209) by focusing on the strengths of weak ties argued that “weak ties provide people with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circle; but strong ties have greater motivation to be of assistance and are typically more easily available”. In agreement with Reza (2017), it can be argued that it is likely for strong ties to develop among street children who live close to each other and have meaningful interactions through work, play and socialization.

Furthermore, these ties may be very relevant for accessing quick support, preserve scarce resources and meet the needs of basic survival (Reza, 2017). Similarly, a person’s social network can constitute both informal and formal relationships. Informal relationships may include interactions with family, friends and neighbours whereas formal relationships involve those with organizations and formal groups. From the disciplinary perspective of sociology, the larger an individual’s social networks, the more social support they possess (Mattson & Hall, 2011). Contrary to this assumption, studies have shown that having a large network size does not necessarily mean you have more social support (Griffiths et al., 2011). The concept of social network has been widely used in the study of migrants. Sagynbekova (2016) indicated that, the networks of individuals can increase the probability of migration. In view of this, Hiwatari (2016) argues that social networks have the have the potential to increase migration by providing information on economic opportunities, hence reducing the risk to migrate. The support prospective migrants are likely to receive from their social networks facilitates the process of migration. This is a reflection of the north-south migration in Ghana where prospective migrants are supported by their networks through money, arranging jobs, accommodation and food (Akinyoade & Gewald, 2015). Similarly, Awumbila et al. (2016) posit that, in Ghana people do not just migrate blindly to the cities but are often assisted and supported in decision making, travelling, settling, finding jobs and optimising livelihoods. It is evident that migrants most often rely on their social networks for survival at their

destination areas. For example, a study consisting of 1500 households in Ghana shows that prior to migration, more than half of the current migrants had a contact person at their destination area (ibid).

According to (Ryan et al., 2008), social networks are often conceptualised rather loosely with little attention given to the varieties of networks and the different forms of support these networks may provide. Regarding this, and considering the relationship between migration and social networks, it will be particularly essential to identify the kinds of social networks or ties the Kayayei employ in their coping strategies and how they develop new social relationships.

3.8 Brief literature review

The life independent child migrants have received much attention globally, from governmental, non-governmental, international organizations as well as the media and various researchers. Most of these migrant children, especially those in Africa, end up on the streets which becomes a cause of concern many countries. Many publications in both academic and welfare literature have emphasized the sheer scale of the worldwide problem. They have sought to explain the root causes of this phenomenon, to identify the characteristics of street children worldwide and also analyse the dire consequences of a street lifestyle for children's health and development (Panter-Brick, 2002). Similarly, several studies on independent migrant children in Ghana for instance tend to focus on their livelihoods in terms of the decision making process involved in migration, the reasons for migration, their coping strategies and linkages between their migration and education as well migration and health (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Hashim, Iman, 2007; Kwankye et al., 2007a; Shamsu-Deen, 2013). However, there is very little literature on the social support and social networks of these children and how that helps them to cope with life. As Cudjoe and Alhassan (2016) indicated, most studies on female head porters have focused on their troubles with little done on the ways to improve upon or change their conditions.

Previous studies which have been conducted globally have considered the social support of vulnerable children especially those on the streets and the role of their social networks in their lives.

In their work with 130 street involved youth in Victoria, Canada, Kennedy et al. (2017) sought to investigate the perceived roles and supportive functions of the youth's most valued social

relationships. They indicated that contrary to the traditional description of these young people in the media and academic literature as a population with unstable and supportive social networks, their findings revealed that this group had meaningful social relationships and many of these relationships were important sources of social support. The difference in results compared to previous studies was mainly attributed to measurement differences. A study by la Haye et al. (2012) for instance showed that over half of street involved youth had no form of support from their social network members. In this study, participants were asked to identify 20 social network members whom they had contact with in the last three months. Support is defined as the proportion of these contacts that the participants could depend on for tangible and emotional support. On the other hand, Kennedy et al. (2017) in their study considered the general perception of social support availability, even if this support was provided by a small number of social relationships. Based on this approach in measurement, their study revealed that minority of the children had what they termed off-street relationships. These relationships are formed with individuals who were not street involved and usually from connections forged prior to becoming street involved. Such network members included parents, siblings, extended family members, social workers and childhood friends. These off-street relationships were viewed as reliable and stable long-term sources of social support which includes, emotional, instrumental and informational support in times of need. In addition, the majority of the children found themselves within street-based relationships as compared to off-street contacts. These street-based relationships provided more consistent, immediate and diverse social support. Just a small minority in this study indicated they had no one to turn to for support.

In another related study, Reza (2017) drawing on the 75 street children ages 10-17 in the capital city of Dhaka explored the street abuses and children's coping mechanisms through the use of their support networks. The study revealed that street children are faced with multiple types of abuses including verbal abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse, exploitation at work among others. Focusing on street children's peer group which dominated their social networks, three types of relationships that plays a supportive role in coping against various abuses emerged; acquaintances, friends and close friends. The study revealed that all the three types of peer relationship helped in their coping with abuse in various dimensions, however, friends and close friends played the most important role. It further provides a robust picture of how street youth were able to navigate through daily abuse by drawing on the informational, companionship, instrumental and emotional

forms of supports from their peer group. Street children also demonstrated their ability to resist exploitation and protest perpetrators by using their friends and close friends to help in these efforts. Reza (2017) also indicated that the most common form of support street among children was the passing of information usually about dangers, risks and safety. It is evident that social support has a major impact on how street children cope with various forms of abuse and maltreatment. Also, even without the any institutional and state support to protect these children, street children rely on the strength of their social networks.

Similarly, a current study in Ghana by Cudjoe and Alhassan (2016) also attempted to explore the perceptions of 25 female head porters receiving services from an NGO in Kumasi on their social support and how that helps them to cope with life on and beyond the streets. The study sought to also identify the social networks of these street children. Participants revealed that the NGO was a crucial network member which has contributed to their survival. They also mentioned their parents and other members of the extended family as well as friends which included their colleague female head porters and others who spend the night on the street. Children in this study though had limited number of friends, viewed their friends as most supportive as compared to their family. Also, in sharing their experiences children reflected on the forms of support they received from their network members which was classified as institutional support, emotional support, financial support and casual support. Financial and emotional support was mainly provided by their counterparts on the streets and this sometimes helped them to avoid engaging in risky behaviors. They also encounter some good and random Samaritans who provide these children with some form of support because they regard the street children as vulnerable and in need of care and protection.

Based on previous literature, studies that have addressed the social support of female head porters and how this helps them cope from the own perspectives is undeveloped and is rarely found in literature. This study will, therefore, contribute to the few studies on female head porters' perceptions and experiences of support available to them. This will also contribute to building a reference point which will bring to light certain potential areas in the lives of vulnerable children like these female head porters that researchers need to focus on in future studies.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approaches that were employed in conducting this research. It begins with a description of the research site and how participants were accessed. It continues by giving an insight into the choice of informants, sampling technique as well the methods used in data collection. Participatory methods such as participant observation, semi structured interviews and focus group discussions were used in data collection. This chapter will also address my role as a researcher and ethical considerations such as reciprocity, protection, informed consent and confidentiality. Finally, this chapter will discuss the transcription and analysis of data, some challenges in carrying out the study and the limitations of the study.

4.2 Gaining access

This section describes the process of gaining access to my informants during the field work. First, I would narrate how I managed to gain access the female head porters, then the adult informants from various institutions. My initial plan to recruit random girls who would be interested in my study from the Madina market in Accra, proved futile. As noted, obtaining access to certain groups of children especially vulnerable children such as trafficked migrants, street children, beggars and sexually exploited children is usually very difficult (Ennew et al., 2009). van Blerk (2006) also reveals that further difficulty in relation to access is children's ability to participate and remain engaged in the research especially when the engaged in work or labour activities. On day one, I went grocery shopping at the Madina market with the goal of finding some Kayayei for the study. While I was doing my shopping, one Kayayei approached me and asked if she could carry my things for me. I was surprised because I had only item, so I politely turned her down. She began pleading and insisted on helping. I then agreed and used that opportunity to engage in a conversation with her while we bought some other things in the market. I asked for her name and I also introduced myself to her. I then went on to tell her about my research and asked if she could tell some of her friends whether they would be interested, so that I could meet them. She told me she was quite new in town, but she had an older sister who was also working as a Kayayei in the market, so she could take me to see her. We walked to a spot where most of the Kayayei converge, relax and wait for customers. There, I met her sister and two other girls. I enquired of their names

and informed them about my research to which they were excited to participate in. I asked them if they could inform some of their friends who would also like to be part of the study. They, however, told me that they are usually very busy, and they would only be available on Sundays. They suggested we set up a meeting at their residence, which was quite far from the market. One of them had a mobile phone so we exchanged numbers and I promised to call her Sunday for direction to their residence.

On the scheduled Sunday, I made several attempts to reach her but proved futile. I then went to the market the next day and I was told by one of the girls that the girl who had the phone had travelled to their village because she was pregnant. All attempts to gather some of these girls in the market for my interviews proved very difficult because they were not willing to leave their work and some of them worked directly with shop owners in the market.

Due to time constraint I decided to look for other options. These children are very mobile and contact with them may be difficult and may require that the researcher goes through certain organizations that work with them to obtain access (Ennew et al., 2009; Van Blerk, 2006). I consulted to a friend who introduced me to a director of an NGO who works with Kayayei. I was then invited to partake in an outreach programs on teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse. The program was to take place at the Nima market where the Kayayei would be educated on these topics and offered free health screening. I took up the invitation and enrolled as a volunteer, thus assisting in the various activities including the health screening. This gave me the opportunity to socialize and familiarize myself with the girls even though they saw me just as a member of the organization. After the program, the director organized the girls and introduced me to them. I told them about my research and would want to have some of them as my research participants. The girls took me their residence which was just a room rented for them by the organization. We scheduled to meet the following weekend. I finally met the girls and selected my participants for my interview and discussions.

My other key informants were from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP), and NGO's who work with the Kayayei. Gaining access to my informant at the Ministry was easier than I expected. The day I visited the ministry, the woman I met at the reception was very nice to me after she asked my reason for being there. She explained to me that such research would have to go through a long procedure because I would have to write a letter

which might take several months to be approved or even not approved. She offered to introduce me to an official who worked with the Kayayei and proceeded to request that the official grants me an interview. The official gladly accepted the request. She gave me her mobile number to call her and schedule the meeting. As mentioned earlier, I gained access to my first informant from the NGO through a friend. This informant in turn introduced me to his friend in another NGO.

4.3 Research site

The research was conducted in the Greater Accra region of Ghana specifically the Nima market in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). Nima, a low-income, densely populated urban district, which has traditionally been and remains a major reception area for migrants from northern Ghana and the West Africa Sahelian countries of Mali, Niger and Burkina (Aggrey-Korsah & Opong, 2013). Nima is one of the most deprived areas in Accra characterised by poor sanitation, poor access to safe water, poor housing and shortage of sleeping spaces due to high population density (Grieco et al., 1994). The Nima market is a major commercial market in Accra which is part of the central business district where most economic activities take place. It therefore serves as a huge motivation for both young and old people who want to work to earn some income. My informants who are migrants from the Northern regions of Ghana work and live in the Nima market. This location was very beneficial to me because it was easy for me to gain access to all my informants at a time at their common place of residence.

4.4 Choice of informants and sampling techniques

The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of independent child migrants on the available social support and their social networks. As Ennew et al. (2009) put it, sampling of participants is a very important process in data collection because a sample that is wrongly chosen or too small can make the research invalid (Ennew et al., 2009). Conducting a qualitative research as this, it was pertinent for me to select a small but carefully selected participant group. Bearing this in mind, my principal participants were specifically children who worked as Kayayei. The number of participants used in this study were twelve female head porters between the ages of 11 and 17. My participants being all girls is due to the nature of their work. The business of carrying of goods on the head is mainly done by girls who migrate to the cities while the boys usually engage in other menial jobs as truck pushers, bus driver's mates, hawkers etc. (Ennew et al., 2009).

Table 1 Number of participants and their age groups

| Number of Participants | Age |
|------------------------|----------|
| 1 | 11 years |
| 3 | 13 years |
| 2 | 14 years |
| 4 | 16 years |
| 2 | 17 years |

Two major techniques were used in selecting the sample during my field work. Firstly, the convenience or opportunistic sampling method was used to recruit the head porters. Etikan et al. (2016, p. 2) define convenience sampling as “a type of nonprobability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study”. As Ennew et al. (2009) explain, convenience sampling is very helpful in getting access to hard to reach groups such as street children, child prostitutes, beggars and trafficked migrants. My participants fall into this category of children hence, the need to resort to this method. Ennew et al. (2009, p. 6.9) describe convenience sampling as a way of “taking advantage of meeting people during research to involve them as research participants”. As explained earlier, my initial attempt to use the snowball method to recruit these female head porters proved very difficult. Therefore, due to limited time and resources I had as student researcher, I had to select my sample based on convenience and ease of access (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Ennew et al. (2009, p. 6.9) also argue that due to their mobile nature and difficulty in gaining access to these children, researchers usually go through organizations that work with the children, which was exactly what I did. I met my participants at the outreach program which I was invited to by the director of the organization. After the program I introduced myself and my research to them and majority of them were willing to participate.

During our next meeting, I continued the sampling process with purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This study was purposefully set out to study independent migrant children who work as

female head porters. However, in my interaction with the girls, I realized that even though they all lived together and tagged as Kayayei, some of them were not working and others had just arrived in the city some few days before I visited them. It was therefore important for me to select only girls who were engaged in the head portage business and who have been in the city for a considerable period, at least a month. With regards to this, 3 of my participants had spent 2 years in the city, 4 of them had spent 3 years, one had spent a year and the rest had spent between 2 and 11 months. I considered the length of stay with the assumption that the children would have had enough time on the street to develop some relationships and had certain valuable experiences which will lend some credibility to my findings.

I used the snowball sampling method to gain access to my adult informants. Snowball sampling method is a process where study participants are obtained through referrals made among people who know of others who possess some characteristics or knowledge that are of research interest (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). After an interview with the first informant from the NGO¹ which was supporting my participants, I asked for introductions to other key informants. My informants included one government official in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) and four informants from different NGO's who work with the Kayayei.

Table 2 Adult participants by their gender and organization

| Participant | Gender | Organization |
|-------------|--------|--------------|
| Informant 1 | Female | MOGCSP |
| Informant 2 | Male | NGO-1 |
| Informant 3 | Female | NGO-2 |
| Informant 4 | Female | NGO-4 |
| Informant 5 | Female | NGO-5 |

4.5 Methods of data collection

To better understand the life experiences of children and effectively explore the views of children, researchers have employed different methods of engaging children in research. In this study I used triangulation. With this, I employed the use of multiple participatory methods such as participant

¹ NGO-1 is the organization which supports my informants

observation, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and field notes. These varied methods used together in my study was a way to offset the weakness of one method by the strength of another (Abebe, 2009). As Punch (2002) argues, using a range of methods in research with children helps to prevent boredom and sustain interest, prevent biases arising from overreliance on one method, evaluate the usefulness of different methods and to crosscheck data.

4.5.1 Participant observation

Ennew et al. (2009) posit that observation is the basis of a good research which can be categorized as both structured and unstructured. They argue that unstructured observations (sometimes called participant observation) are useful because it helps to record peoples, surroundings, sounds and speech, events, overhead comments, behaviour and body language. Employing participant observation method enabled me as a researcher to enter the worlds of children to gain understanding of their lives, their experiences, their relations to people and how they made sense of the world in their natural setting. This strategy together with informal dialogues was very essential to uncover certain aspects of life of these girls that go unnoticed by outsiders (Vakaoti, 2009). It also helped in the realization of information that participants did not disclose during the interviews and focus group discussion (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Patton, 1990). An example of such information that was disclosed was an issue related to sexual abuse and harassment by some men in the community.

With this method, I assumed the role of a participant observer and sometimes as a complete observer. Observation took place at different locations based on where the children worked, ate, played, slept and attended programs. Most of my observations took place during the day. Even though I have lived in the city of Accra all my life and am familiar with the activities of these girls in most markets, this market is one place I had never visited due to its overcrowded nature. It was therefore pertinent for me to observe the daily activities of my participants to gain a better insight into their life and relations in the market and out of the market. During the initial stage of my observation, I usually went to the market very early in the morning and to my amazement these girls came to the market as early as 6am. I noticed that some of the girls just walked around the market spotting customers or buyers who might need their help. A group of them would rush to the buyer pleading to offer their service. In this instance the customer sometimes asked for the prize and the one that offered the lowest amount would be chosen. The rest just walked away,

some displeased and looked for other customers. Some of the girls are also particularly employed by shop owners especially those who sold their goods in bulk to wholesalers or retailers. These girls usually just stayed at the shops and helped customers carry their heavy loads to their destinations. I also observed that business becomes quite slow after 3pm, therefore, majority of these girls gathered at a spot in the market to relax, play and interact with each other. It is at this point that I got the chance to participate in their activities and interact with them. Participant observation can be practically difficult since children may find it hard to allow researchers to be part of their lives or may be unwilling to talk to them. It is therefore very crucial for the researcher to gain acceptance from the children and a relationship of trust. Building a rapport with my participants was not as difficult as I anticipated. The director of the organization played a prominent role of introducing me to the girls and giving me invitations to their programs. My participation in the various outreach programs as a volunteer helped me develop some personal relationship with girls. They saw me as member of the organization's team from the beginning and therefore seemed very comfortable around me on subsequent meetings. Reflecting on this, I noticed that the girls had a very cordial relationship with members of the organization hence found it easy to relate to me similarly. Since their residence was close to the market, I visited them occasionally and sometimes bought them some groceries and joined them in cooking. One instance that required my participation was when I visited the girls on one non-market day and saw about five of them trying to braid the hair of one girl. I offered to and they gladly allowed me but before I realized they had all stopped braiding noticing I was doing a better job. However, in order not to make them feel incompetent, I encouraged them by teaching them how they could do it the right way and they learned very quickly. My continuous participation and reciprocity created opportunities for making friendship and mutuality as well as creating spacing where close relationships were maintained (Abebe, 2009). It also permitted me to turn informal conversations into topics of particular interest to the research (Abebe, 2009; Punch, 2001).

One major setback in using this method was my inability to observe my participants at night or spend time with them. Though I would have preferred to observe some of their activities during the night, it was not possible for me to do so. This is because, Nima is noted to be one of the most marginalized and dangerous communities to live in. Also, the activities of the youth especially during the night is very alarming and dangerous. They are usually involved in the use of hard drugs and other criminal activities which makes it quite unsafe to visit at night (Mahmoud, 2014).

4.5.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus group discussion is one of the methods employed in this study. FGD is said to be a data collection method which is an adaptation of the interview technique (Matthews & Ross, 2010). It is further described as a method that brings a group of people together (usually between 5 and 13), who have something in common, which is connected to the research topic, to take part in a discussion on a specific topic and is facilitated by the researcher (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Ennew et al. (2009) argues that FGD can be very useful for exploring ideas and identifying the knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes of a group. Similarly, Matthews & Ross (2010) also revealed that FGD can also be useful in observing and recording how a group interacts specifically on the way issues are discussed based on who participates, who takes the lead, how dialogues are developed and how concepts are defined during such discussions.

In this study, two focus group discussions were held with 6 girls in each group. The discussion took place at the residence of the Kayayei on a Sunday which was a non-market day, hence, the environment was conducive for discussions and devoid of frequent interruptions and distractions as Ennew et al. (2009) suggest. The main purpose of this discussion was to explore children's perceptions on the kind of support they receive, how they support each other and identify how helpful these supports have been to their survival in the city. As the facilitator of these discussions, I introduced the topic for discussion and ensured that each child got the chance to express their views on the issue. I also had to ensure that the discussion stayed relevant and focused to my research topic (Matthews & Ross, 2010). One observation I made was that it was not difficult for most of the children to contribute in the discussions since the topics were not very sensitive and personal. However, at the beginning of the first group discussion, I noticed that the presence of the director of the NGO influenced the participation of the children. Some of them were reluctant to speak while others felt shy. Observing this, I kindly asked for him to give us some privacy and thereafter I noted that the children became free to express themselves and more open to the discussions. Ennew et al. (2009) also argue that the act of taking notes and detailed recording of what is being said also contributes to a successful FGD. In view of this, I asked for the permission of my participants to record the discussion and I also took some notes.

The essence of using the FGD in this study was to enable the gathering of a lot of information at a time and it also empowers children to participate in the research (Matthews & Ross, 2010). It

provides a relaxed and less intimidating atmosphere for children to express themselves as they feel more comfortable amid their friends as compared to having one on one interaction with the researcher during interviews.

I agree with McQueen and Knussen (2002) that focus group is not an easy way to interview a group of people at once. They argue that what people say and do and even what they think are affected by the presence of other people. Consequently, one disadvantage of this method is that participants seemed to reproduce the ideas of some dominant speakers in the group. To control this situation, I ensured that each person had their turn to speak and probed further on their comments to encourage each child to go into more details and share more experiences.

4.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interview was another method I employed for my data collection. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009a, p. 3) interview is defined as “the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena”. For the purpose of this study, the semi-structured interview was used because it allows flexibility in asking and phrasing questions and also gives the participant greater control of the conversation, telling their story in their own way (Ennew et al., 2009). I used the semi structured interviews with twelve female head porters. The purpose of this interview was mainly to explore the perceptions of these girls on available support systems, their social networks and how these impacts their coping strategies. Prior to my interview with the girls, I developed an interview guide with different themes to cover my research questions and to generate relevant information. However, to ensure the fluidity of our conversation and enjoyment of the interview process, questions were adjusted along the way and other informal conversations were also incorporated. All my participants spoke a native dialect called Dagbani spoken by people from the Northern region of Ghana. However, majority of the interviews were conducted in a local dialect called Twi. Twi is a common dialect spoken by majority of the Ghanaians and these girls learn this dialect on the job when they migrate to the city. Two of my participants were not so fluent with the Twi dialect so I had to use one of the girls as a translator to help in the interviews. Since all the girls lived together, the interviews were conducted at their residence on a Sunday. This day was convenient because it provided a conducive environment for the interviews to be done without any distractions from the noisy market and from passers-by.

I also used this method to seek for information from officers who worked directly and indirectly with these girls. I interviewed one government official from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and four respondents from NGOs. The purpose of these interviews was to find out the general perception of these officers on the plights of the Kayayei. I also sought to find out the different kinds of support or projects put in place for these girls as well as how beneficial and successful they have been. they provide for them. I further enquired on some of the challenges faced in providing support to these children as well as the existence of policies which aim to support or protect this category of children.

4.5.4 Field notes

Taking field notes was a regular routine for me on every encounter with my participants and during observations. I usually took short notes on cues I noticed from their facial expressions, gestures, emotions, attitudes, reactions to certain situations and comments or statements made during observations, group discussions or interviews. In order to avoid losing important details, some of these notes were sometimes written immediately after leaving the field in situations where notes could not be taken instantly or posed as a source of distraction. Taking field notes helped me in my daily reflections, giving me, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being observed which was of great value to my data analyses.

4.5.5 Secondary data

In my study, I also used information from secondary sources such as websites on the internet, research articles, books, and other relevant publications.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical research with children is a subject that has gained considerable attention which has well developed literature (Bessell, 2015). However, there is no agreement among researchers about whether and how to carry out research on vulnerable children. Each team must resolve its ethical dilemmas throughout the research process (Ennew et al., 2009).

Previous research on this group of children have raised certain methodological and ethical issues due to the nature of work these children engage in, illiteracy levels, language barrier, the difficulty in assessing these children and obtaining informed consent as well as some risks that research may pose due to the marginalized position and vulnerability of these girls.

Ensor and Gozdziaak (2010) specifically address issues of research with migrant children by emphasizing that ethical research with children must ensure that outcome of the research are beneficial and cause no harm to migrant children. In addition, it must be sensitive to the needs of children with special circumstances, must be mindful of the time and effort that children would have to commit to the research process so that it does not interfere with their other daily activities; obtain consent from the relevant adults when appropriate and giving proper attention to issues of privacy and confidentiality. Based on some of these concerns, the section of this paper will address some of the ethical considerations in doing participatory research with these independent migrant children.

4.6.1 Informed consent

Obtaining informed consent is very important in research with children. Informed consent means an agreement to voluntarily participate in a research based on the full understanding of the aims, methods, benefits and risks of the study (Ennew et al., 2009). It is therefore important to provide children with all the necessary information in a clear and simple manner so that they can clearly understand the implications of taking part in the research. Edmonds (2003) indicates that children have the right to be informed about all the anticipations and possible outcomes of the project, be it negative or positive. Hence, “giving children information allows them a meaningful choice about participation, preserves their trust in researchers and the research enterprise, and demonstrates respect” (Graham et al., 2013). Obtaining informed consent may be done by using local language in a written or verbal communication to avoid any misunderstanding (van Blerk, 2006). However, in my research with the female head porters, it was very necessary to convey information to children verbally, using their local dialect since most of these children were school drop outs who were not so conversant with the English language. Due to the special position of children in society, it is also necessary to seek permission from parents, guardians or those who have been entrusted to their care regardless of children’s ability to make informed decisions (Ennew et al., 2009; Van Blerk, 2006). However, it is not enough to seek the consent of an adult. Children must also be given the opportunity to decide whether to take part or not (Ennew et al., 2009; Van Blerk, 2006). In my study, I had to first seek consent from the director of the organization providing support to these girls. I introduced myself as a student researcher from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology whose aim was to research into the social support system available for the

Kayayei. After obtaining consent from the organization, I was later introduced to the girls to proceed with my research. It was, however, pertinent for me to obtain individual consent from the children because these girls are not directly under the organization but live and manage their lives independently. They did not necessarily have any parent or guardian available who can give consent for their child to take part in the study. It was, however, my responsibility as a researcher to find out from children people they considered as their significant others such as employers, friends or group leaders from who consent may be obtained (Ennew et al., 2009; Van Blerk, 2006) as this may help diffuse any suspicion over the purpose of the research (van Blerk, 2006). This was very relevant in one instance where one child who worked with a food vendor on weekends informed me that, for her to proceed with the interview, I would have to go with her to seek permission from her employer since she had to be at work at that particular time. Alderson and Morrow (2011) also argue that approaches to informed consent may vary in different cultures. This may have some implications on how children respond to researchers. In Ghana for instance, children may be reluctant to say no to an adult as they may be considered as disrespectful. Alderson and Morrow cited an example of a research done in Ghana where children reported that they rarely challenged adult authority and that they preferred to be told what to do, otherwise they are considered deviant, disrespectful and may be punished or insulted. In view of this, I made a conscious effort to make it very clear to children that they are free to opt out at any point of the research even though they had agreed from the beginning. Before every interview session or group discussion began, I asked for their consent and recorded it on tape. However, throughout the data collection process, I kept probing for potential refusal especially when I changed methods. I ensured that children suffer no negative consequences by participating in the research (Ennew et al., 2009; Van Blerk, 2006).

In the institutions I obtained consent from the project managers and those who had worked directly with the children. I explained the aim of my research to them and asked for their signature on the consent forms I issued to them.

4.6.2 Privacy and confidentiality

The issue of privacy and confidentiality is very crucial and sensitive in research with children. It is imperative for researchers to avoid undue intrusion into the lives of their participants and also ensure that the identity of children and other information obtained are concealed (Alderson &

Morrow, 2011; Ennew et al., 2009). The identity of participants may be protected by changing their names or asking them to choose a research pseudonym or changing their names and if necessary, their community when using them in reports or publications (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Ennew et al., 2009). I gave participants the opportunity to give me names other than their real names to conceal their identity. Some of the children were reluctant to change their names because they did not see the need to do so but rather saw it as privilege to have their names in my study. I therefore had to explain to them that it is for their own protection that their identity had to be concealed. I also assured them that any information that they gave me would be kept secret and confidential. In situations where I had to take pictures or videos, I asked for their permission to do so. However, I do not intend to include any picture that will reveal their real identity in my thesis or any other publication.

The issue of privacy and confidentiality is further complicated in situations where the researcher has to find a conducive environment where children can express themselves freely and openly. In his field work in Ethiopia, Abebe (2009) described the difficulties he had in finding a space for interviews due to the difficulties in finding appropriate places and also because of the local conceptualization of childhood, where children are seen as having inferior social positions within the household. As a result parents, adults and other children would simply interrupt interviews making it difficult to discuss certain issues of interest and to uncover confidential information from children. Alderson and Morrow (2011) indicated that this situation can happen anywhere in the world, for instance teachers in the UK wanting to stay in rooms where children are being interviewed. Ghana is no exception to this problem. Researchers may face the same issue in conducting research with female head porters. These children are usually based in the markets hence it may be preferable to conduct interviews with them in the market where people are preoccupied with their own activities and may not intrude so much. However there may be situations where some passers-by may stop to see what is happening and might overhear matters mentioned in confidence (Abebe, 2009). In agreement with my participants, they suggested to have the interviews and group discussions at their residence where there were less interruptions.

Another dilemma in relation to confidentiality is situations where children reveal very confidential or personal information about themselves. For instance, female head porters are prone to sexual exploitation and abuse. Hence, in situations where a child discloses a case of abuse, researchers

may have to breach confidentiality in order to rescue children (Ennew et al., 2009). During a group discussion, one of the participants informed me that since the accommodation they had was very small for all of them, some of them decided to sleep under shelters on the streets as it was more comfortable. They usually experienced sexual harassment from some men in the middle of the night. However, “it is appropriate to recognize that unique approaches to such situations may be required, especially given that in many places, reporting abuse does not necessarily guarantee a sensitive response” (van Blerk, 2006). In my case, I asked if any of them had experienced that personally but none of them admitted. They, however, reported that knew some friends who had experienced such harassments. Though, I could have probed further on this issue, I chose to respect their privacy since there may be things the girls may decide to either reveal or not reveal to me. However, in order to avoid any future harm to the children, I suggested to them that we discussed with the director of the NGO to see how they could be protected from these men.

4.6.3 Power differentials

The uneven power relations between adults and children is also an issue of concern in research with children. Children may view adults as authority figures as some children may not be familiar with adults seeking their opinions on matters concerning them. Therefore, children may try to please adults for fear of their reaction if they do not (Einarsdóttir, 2007). Hence, Christensen (2004) suggests that it is important for researchers to recognize that the inherent power relation between adults and children may be reinforced by more general cultural notions of childhood and control in generational relations between adults and children. In an attempt to minimize all adult characteristics and unequal power relations, various researchers suggest the adoption of the ‘least adult role’, ‘atypical adult’ or the ‘adult friend’ (Abebe, 2009; Christensen, 2004). Abebe (2009) exemplifies how he minimized power by establishing a trusting relationship based on a bond of friendship and not exerting authority over children. Some have also used child friendly methods which builds on children’s competencies and interests ensuring they get support from others if they wished (Einarsdóttir, 2007).

In Ghana, just as in most African countries, it may not be generally acceptable for children to have discussions on equal terms with adults (Abebe, 2009). Hence, in working with these female head potters in this context, it is important for researchers to encourage children to share their views and experiences on their childhood by assuring them that they have the power to do so and that their

views are of great value to the researcher. During my field work, minimizing power imbalance was not very difficult because before I started my data collection process, the children had gotten very familiar with me as I was continuously present at the various outreach events. We had therefore developed a friendly relationship and they could trust me as a friend. I also tried to respect their opinions and actions and not critical on any decision they made. For instance, not being critical on how they braided for each other but rather joining them and encouraging them to be proud of what they were doing. It is however important to note that trying to minimize power in research with children may be difficult to achieve as power will always be present and researchers cannot pretend not to have control over the research process (Abebe, 2009). This is because children are aware of the difference in power between adults and children as they encounter them in their everyday lives (Christensen, 2004).

4.6.4 Reciprocity

Paying or compensating research participants in cash or in kind raises complex ethical dilemmas which researchers must carefully consider when doing research with children. Paying children or giving them gifts for their participation in research has its own implications depending on the context. Some researchers have argued that it is usually not the best to pay participants because it may create divisions and impact on the already existing power dynamics at play (Ennew & Plateau, 2004; Graham et al., 2013). Others have argued that paying children is like buying information hence generating false data (Aptekar and Heinonen, 2003 cited in Abebe, 2009). In certain cases, this act may be seen as coercive and put children under great pressure to consent and continue in research unwillingly especially in poor areas (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Morrow, 2013).

On the other hand, other researchers argue that, it may be more appropriate to compensate participants from marginalized groups especially working children who may lose some income as a result of spending time with researchers (Ennew et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2013; Van Blerk, 2006). I personally support this view because I believe, like Grenier, 2000 cited in Abebe (2009), that research is a two-way street. A researcher cannot just go into a local community and take, the community will also have to gain from the research by receiving something from the researchers.

During my field work, my participants did not demand for money or any compensation which I presumed was because I was introduced to them through the organization. This was somehow surprising to me because people usually expect something in return for their participation

especially when they know you are from abroad like Europe or the USA. I experienced the act demanding of money during the initial stages of my study. The girls I met in the previous market for a short conversation would actually ask me to pay them because they would have been working during that time. This was understandable to me because, as noted earlier the nature of work of these female head porters is such that they are always busy looking for a customer to help them carry their loads. I was therefore compelled to compensate these children for the time spent in a research as they could have been making money during that time to aid in their survival and that of that of their families back home. Even though my participants did not demand for money, I decided to give each participant 5 Ghana cedis which is equivalent to approximately 10 Norwegian kroner (NOK) at the end of every interview session. I sometimes also paid for their meals and gave them some refreshments when I visited them. The act of giving back to my participants was based on the idea that Abebe (2009) describes; that giving some amount of money to these economically disadvantaged children was adequate reward for their time and labour and hopefully as a means to encourage their participation. During my little interaction with these girls and based on my observation, I identified certain basic items that would be useful for them, especially since they lived together and shared many things. With regards to this, I purchased some items, such as sanitary pads, toilet paper, mosquito repellents, second hand clothes and some provisions, which I presented to them in the final week of our meetings. Some researchers have cautioned that it is imperative to have a better understanding of the context in which they work and to avoid raising unrealistic expectations of change in lifestyle, but rather they must communicate clearly and respectfully to children in order to develop trust and avoid any confusion in receiving gifts or money (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Edmonds, 2003; Morrow, 2013). Throughout the research process, I ensured not to make any promises for the future to my participants but rather made it clear to them that the money and gifts I was giving them was just a token to show my appreciation for their time, participation and willingness to share their private life and experiences with me.

4.7 Field work challenges and limitations

To summarize, this study came with its own challenges which may have affected some aspects of the research process. In the beginning of my study, it took quite a long time for me to get my research participants especially the female head porters. For the girls as explained earlier, I started looking for participants firstly from the Madina market. It was however very difficult to have any

meaningful meeting with them since they told me they were very busy in the market. Hence, they suggested I visit their residence which was quite far from the market on Sundays. All attempts to reach one of them on phone for directions on Sundays proved futile. I managed to overcome this problem when I got the privilege to be introduced to another group of girls who were being supported by a voluntary organization that works directly with them.

Another challenge I encountered in conducting my research with the Kayayei is with regards to the language barrier. Among my participants, it was only one girl who could speak the English language. Majority of them spoke the Twi language which they were not fluent at, thereby I noticed some of them could not express themselves fully during the interviews. There were some who only spoke native language thus Dagbani which I neither speak nor understand. In dealing with this challenge, I employed the assistance of one of the older girls who was fluent in both languages to help me in translations. Even though I was able to information I required, I felt those interviews were not as open and informative like the ones I did myself.

Finally, a limitation to study may be that information obtained from the Kayayei may be biased in a way that the girls represent a specific group. In my opinion, this may be possible because I was introduced to these girls by an organization that provides some form of support for them. Therefore, in sharing their experiences on the support they receive, information might be significantly skewed towards their experiences with organization. Secondly, the sample of study was taken from Accra particularly the Nima market. Hence, based on the context they find themselves in, the experiences of the Kayayei may differ from town to town and even from market to market. So, in this study, my sample is illustrating some of the experiences in this particular context.

4.8 Data transcription and analysis

This subsection describes how data collected from the field was transcribed and analysed to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Transcribing data is very important in the research process, yet very challenging and complex. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) describe transcriptions as translation of field data from oral language to written language. The interviews and focus group discussions conducted with the female head porters was done in the local language, hence the need to transcribe the stories and discussions with my participants into the English language while listening to the recorded audio. Transcribing data collected from officials was less

challenging since interviews were done in English. I purposely transcribed the data myself to be more familiar with data at hand and be able to visualize the context in which data was collected to have a deeper understanding of the data. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) argue, a researcher who takes time to do their own transcriptions might benefit from the research process and also be reminded of the social and emotional aspects surrounding the interview. Data collected from my participants were mostly stories of their daily experiences as head porters, interaction with others as well as their experiences on the support they receive from their network members. With regards to this, the narrative analysis method was used to gain a deeper insight and obtain the full meaning of what participants were experiencing since the narrative analysis method focuses on the meaning and linguistic form of texts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b). Also, to increase my familiarity with the data, I listened to the audio repeatedly and read and re-read the transcribed data. Based on research objectives and questions, the data was further coded and categorized. After categorizing and analysing the content of my data, data was reorganized into themes which were later developed in my writing. Therefore, in analysing my data, I will present and discuss my empirical data in three chapters;

- Migration and work
- Social networks and support
- Challenges in providing support

Data from the girls are the main empirical focus of the chapters, whereas data from the adult informants are represented in order to understand the structural and ideological features that they have described.

CHAPTER 5

MIGRATION AND WORK

5.1 Introduction

To set the context for this study, this chapter will provide contextual information about my sample. The chapter will further present and discuss the findings concerning the female head porter's description of their rationale behind their migration and their experiences on the challenges they are faced with in the city.

5.2 Demographic information of female head porters

This section highlights the demographic characteristics of my respondents in relation to their age, level of education, ethnic background, religious background the kind of work they do and how long they have been in the city. The ages of my respondents ranged 11-17 years old. It was evident that even though there are female head porters who are as young as 8 years old, my study shows that much older children were represented with majority between the ages of 14 and 17. This is in accordance with the study of (Kwankye et al., 2007a) on independent child migrants which suggested that not very many of younger children are involved in the north-south migration in Ghana.

In relation to their level of education, out of the 12 girls, 3 had no formal education, 6 of them had dropped out of primary school or the junior high school, 2 of them had completed Junior High school and only one of my respondents had completed the Senior High School. The outcome of this data which shows a high number of school drop outs poses a cause for concern for the country. This is because despite the introduction of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) as well as the recent Free Senior High School policy implemented by the current government in the attempt to reduce illiteracy among children has somehow fallen below expectations. One major reason given by the informants for dropping out of school or their inability to access formal education was due to poverty which is as result of unemployment and failure in crop production. To reiterate this fact, Akyeampong (2009) indicated that the FCUBE for instance was least beneficial to the poorest households and this is as result of its failure to offset the

opportunity cost of schooling for the poor by abolishing all forms of fees and significantly reducing every indirect cost which comes with attending school.

All my informants were from Gambaga, a small town of the East District Mamprusi in the Northern region of Ghana. It was not surprising to find all my respondents belonging to one ethnic group because girls from a particular ethnic group usually dominate different markets in Ghana. Hence children are mostly drawn to markets where they can find a lot of people from their ethnic group. Also, considering the fact that they all lived together in one room, their ethnic background might be of great importance to them because it might be easier to relate to people from the same background. In relation to this, one respondent indicated that she particularly came to the Nima market because a lot of the girls who worked there were from Gambaga.

All my respondents were Muslims except one who was a Christian. The dominance of Muslims among my respondents is prevalent because the Islam religion originated from the Northern Ghana and as a result the Muslim population are concentrated in the three Northern regions of Ghana as well as in the Zongo communities which Nima is a part of.

Since these female head porters also indulge in other economic activities, this study was interested in finding out what other work they engaged in to earn some income. I discovered that aside being head porters most of my respondents engaged in other activities such as helping food sellers by helping in preparation washing bowls, carrying food to the selling point and cleaning shops for shop owners.

The data also reveals that the length of stay in the city by the girls varies between 2 months and three years. It is, however, important to note that some of the respondents had been in the city of Accra before. Therefore, even though the time of stay in the city may be considerably short in some cases, it was not the first-time respondents had lived in the city. This was the case of one girl who indicated that although she arrived in Accra barely 2 months ago, it was not her first time because she had visited Accra four years ago when she completed Junior High School to come and work as a Kayayei to save money to continue to the Senior High School. She was therefore back to the Accra to work again with the hope to get money and continue to the university.

5.3 Family background

To obtain an overview of the family background of my respondents, I considered the marital status of their parents, the family size as well as the occupation of their parents. It was interesting to find out that majority of my informants were from a polygamous family, thus they had one or more step mothers and step siblings. The polygamous nature of marriages in the Northern region of Ghana can be attributed to the traditional culture as well as the Islamic religion which encourages men to marry more than one wife. With regards to the family size, I found out that my participants were from relatively large families. The number of siblings of the participants ranged from five to and as many as thirteen siblings. Furthermore, information gathered revealed that, seven out of ten of the respondent's parents were farmers and the rest had either their mum or their dad engaging in economic activities like petty trading and producing charcoal.

5.4 Reasons for migration

Before looking at some of the challenges these child migrants face on arrival to the city and how they cope in these situations, it is important to look at some of the reasons that motivated children to migrate to the southern cities. I believe in doing so, it might help to bring to bear some discordances in provision of interventions and consequently help find solutions to curb this menace.

5.4.1 Escaping Poverty

Various studies have cited several reasons that influences children's migration from the rural to urban areas usually in search of work. Studies have also shown that poverty is the main cause of children's migration (Hashim, Iman & Thorsen, 2011). (Ridge & Millar, 2000) also assert that poverty in the family may have an impact on children's need for social space, on their capacity for constructive autonomy, on their ability to develop wider social networks and wider social relationships. In this study, to ascertain the motivations for children's migration to the city, I asked my respondents why they decided to migrate and work in the Nima market and what they knew about the Kayayei business before moving to the city. This was an open question which gave respondents the chance to give reasons why they had to migrate. My respondents mentioned a few economic and socio-cultural reasons which influenced their migration.

The major reason stated by several of my respondents as the reason to move to Accra is poverty in their family and their desire to make money.

Zalia, a 13-year-old girl, during the individual interview recounted why she came to the city:

“It was poverty that brought me here. My dad has passed away and my mum sells charcoal. She doesn’t make enough money to take care of me and my siblings, so she asked me to come and work here since my aunty was also working here”.

This is a good example of how poverty pushes children to migrate to the city in search of jobs to better their lives. In the case of Zalia, I learnt that poverty was not the only reason for migration but the death of her father whom she said was the sole provider of their needs was a contributing factor. Her mum was struggling to take care of her and her siblings with meagre income she was making from the sale of charcoal. She therefore had to come and work to help her mum since she was the eldest among her siblings.

Rukia, a 14-year-old girl, also gives another good example of how poverty pushes children to migrate to the city. In an interview she stated;

“My parents do not have money to take care of me because I have nine other siblings. I had to drop out of school because they couldn’t afford my fees, so I had to come here and make some money so that I can help my parents and siblings”.

5.4.2 Peer influence

Another factor that contributes immensely to children’s migration is peer influence. The girls are usually motivated by what their peers who return to the village tell them about the kaya business and how profitable it is to them. It was evident that, sometimes these returnees omit the challenges involved in doing the Kayayei business, therefore most of the girls do not know what to expect upon their arrival in the city. Most often, these returnees live the city life in their villages which differentiates them from their peers. Hence, children are convinced that the city life is better when they notice the changes as well as the attractive things their peers possess by virtue of the way they dress, their hairstyles and the phones they use. They view the ability to travel to the south as prestigious and see the returnees as more civilized therefore, yearn to be like them.

My conversation with Fati, a 16 years old girl, demonstrates how peer influence played a role in her decision to migrate to the city.

Nadia: What made you move to the city?

Fati: My parents don't have money to take care of me, so I decided to come and make money to help them.

Nadia: But who told you to come here?

Fati: It was my friend. When she came to the village, she told me I can come with her to this market that she will help me find a job. So, I told my parents and they gave me a little money for transport and my friend also added some.

5.4.3 Funding education

This study also found out that the desire to further their education or to acquire items to learn a vocation was another motivating factor for the participants to move to the city.

"I was learning dress making in my village, but my parents could not support me financially. I need money to survive and I can't do anything in the village, so I decided to move to Accra to work and make some money to buy my own sewing machine so that I can return and start my own work".

(Saida, 16 years)

Saida had the desire to work as a dressmaker but her parent's inability to provide for her needs in terms of buying the materials needed forced her to move to the city. She did so to make money and buy her own items to start a business. This is prevalent because in Ghana, to be an apprentice in any vocation, you are required to purchase your own items for the training as well as pay a fee. Hence, Saida's decision to move to work and save some money to buy her own sewing machine.

Farida, a 17-year-old, while recounting her reason for leaving home said:

"I have completed the Senior High School and currently waiting for my results. My parents are not having money to help me further my education, so I decided to come here. But I have been here before when I completed Junior High School. I came to do this same work to save money and went back to continue to SHS".

I find Farida's situation an interesting one due to the back and forth nature of her migration just to accumulate money to further her education. In our conversation, she told me she would like to be a journalist in future. In order to do this, a university degree is required hence her burning desire to enrol into the university. She seemed very ambitious and hopeful judging from the fact that she had been able to successfully complete her Secondary education through this same work. Therefore, she was sure she certain she could make enough to continue to the university with a little help from her dad.

5.4.4 Preparing for marriage

Another reason for migration, which was revealed in my study, was to acquire personal belongings and assets for marriage. Fuseina, a 16-year-old, told me during an interview said:

“Very soon I will be going back to get married and I need to buy some things like utensils, clothes and other things to take to my husband's house. I have already even started buying bought some saucepans that I will take along”.

As tradition requires in the Northern parts of Ghana, parents particularly mothers, are supposed to provide their children with marital assets for marriage. These things may include utensils, clothes, and jewelleries among other things which is considered very essential for marriage. Some parents who are not able to provide these things for their children encourage their children to migrate to the city to work and save towards their marriage.

5.5 Nature of work and socio- economic difficulties

This section describes the nature of work the female head porters engage in as well as some of the challenges they face upon arrival in city as well as some work-related challenges through observation and interviews with the Kayayei. As previously mentioned, female head porters popularly known as Kayayei are girls who carry loads on their head for shoppers and traders in the markets for a petty fee. Usually, shop owners and traders in the market seek their service in the mornings to carry goods from storage points to where they may be displayed or sold. They also carry the goods back to the storage places at the end of the day. I observed that, there were Kayayei who solely worked for wholesale shop owners by carrying goods for customers who purchase goods at that shop. Some just sit under trees or sheds waiting to be engaged by shoppers or travellers who need help with their luggage. There are some who also roam the markets pleading

with shoppers to help them carry their goods. They usually assist the shoppers by carrying their goods and following them around the market as they shop and then to the bus station or car parks after they have finished shopping. The fee they charge for their service is usually based on the weight of the load and the distance they covered. The price is usually negotiated, and they come to an agreement with the customer who pays them the money at the end of the service. There are instances where the Kayayei feel they have been cheated based on the distance they had covered, or the time spent walking with shoppers to do their shopping. Most often these shoppers take longer than the girls anticipated but because of how desperate they need customers, they initially agree to a particular amount and when they realize how long they have been walking or the heavy luggage they end up carrying, they demand for more money. This is how Hawa, a 13-year-old, narrated her experience in such a situation;

“Sometimes the customers think they can be smart, they know they are going to do a lot of shopping, but they will offer to pay you a very small amount after you decide to carry their goods. One time, someone did that to me, I followed her for over an hour while she shopped and after that she wanted to pay me just 1 Ghana cedis (2 NOK), I decided to carry her things. On our way to the lorry station, I pleaded with her to increase the amount, but she refused, so I got angry and dropped her things in the middle of the road. Eventually she added 1Ghana cedis more before we continued to the lorry station”.

Hawa’s experience is a common situation which occurs in the market and this usually result in conflict between the Kayayei and the customer. Some customers pay them to avoid embarrassment while others just ignore them and refuse to pay. Other times, some customers intentionally refuse to pay them the mutually agreed upon amount at the end of their service, offering to pay less than what was agreed. I personally observed a scenario where a Kayayei was demanding extra money from a woman she was carrying luggage for. The woman got angry collected her luggage from the Kayayei, threw some few coins into the Kayayei’s head pan and proceeded to sit in the bus. It is mostly women who patronize the services of these girls and it is because of some of these abuses that the kaya business is perceived in certain quarters as an ‘exploitation of women by women’ (Amuzu, 1999 cited in Opare, 2003). In terms of how much income they earn for carrying goods, my informants indicated that on a bad they could make as little as 5 Ghana cedis (10 NOK) but on a good day, especially market days, they could earn as high as 30 Ghana cedis (60 NOK). Those

who worked at food joints indicated that they were paid a fixed amount of 10 Ghana cedis (20 NOK) at the end of each day. The older children however make more money than the younger ones because to be a Kayayei you must be very strong and fast. As mentioned earlier, some of these girls also engage in other economic activities. Per my study, this was mostly helping various food sellers at local food joints in the markets. These food joints usually start preparing their food very early in the morning hence the Kayayei reported they sometimes have to get to work as early as 5 am and close as late as 10 pm depending on where they work. During lunch, these local food joints get very busy therefore the girls engaged in clearing the tables and washing dishes to enable more customers to be served. Most often girls who work with these food joints are lucky to get free lunch.

5.6 Challenges of female head porters in the city

Female head porters upon arrival in the cities are faced with certain socio-economic problems related to their work and living conditions. Some of the challenges mentioned by my respondents were; accommodation problems, health problems, sexual harassment, robbery attack, accidents and injuries at work, disrespectful treatment and verbal abuse from customers, as well as low income due to competition. Based on their experiences, the following will be discussed.

5.6.1 Accommodation Problems

Accommodation was one of the major concerns of the female head porters. Acquiring a decent accommodation seemed impossible for these girls. This is because renting a room in the city is quite expensive. There are people who even rent small wooden structures and kiosks for these girls at a fee of about 7 Ghana cedis a week. The girls do not like to patronize these kiosks and wooded structures because according to them, they do not make enough income to cover the cost of rent. However, in the case of my respondents, the organization supporting them had rented a single room of 10-meter square housing about 20 of the girls. The girls however complained about the poor condition of the room and mentioned that they sometimes prefer to go and sleep under sheds on the streets, at transport stations and in front of shops. Zalia, a 13 year old girl, in a focus group discussion lamented;

“As you can see for yourself the room is very small and hot, and we are overcrowded. I am not even able to sleep at night because of the mosquitoes and bed bugs. But currently I have stopped

sleeping here. I rather go to the street to sleep under a shed at least there I can get some fresh air. The only problem is when we go and sleep there some of the Nima boys cut our pockets and steal our money”.

Almost all my respondents expressed this concern and indicated that although they know it is not too safe sleeping outside due to robbery attacks and sexual harassment, it sometimes gets too uncomfortable and unbearable hence they go out to the streets to sleep. They just basically just use the room to keep their belongings. Only a few ends up sleeping in the room at night.

5.6.2 Health problems

The health-related risk of this business is also a major concern. In addition to being exposed to the harsh weather conditions and living conditions which could result in various diseases, these girls are also faced with some work-related risks that affects their health. The kaya business is a very tedious one. Most of these girls, regardless of their physical strength, are subjected to carrying very heavy loads. Customers do not consider this when employing the services of the girls. They mostly select the girl with the lowest offer without considering her ability to carry the load. Thus, the girls push themselves to the limit to carry the load without complaints, just to ensure to make some money. They hardly get time to have enough rest because they have to work for longer hours under the scorching sun in the hope of getting more customers before the day ends. They end up getting body pains and headaches. However, as a result of their financial situation, they cannot afford to seek proper health care. They rather resorted to abusing painkillers which they obtain over the counter in pharmacy shops. They, however, indicated sometimes when one of them gets seriously sick, their last resort is to send the person back to the village to seek for herbal treatment.

Hawa, a 13-year-old girl, said in a focus group discussion,

“The job is just difficult you have to wake up early and sleep very late. There is not enough time to rest. And when you come back from work you feel so much pain in your body for me its usually my back and my waist”.

Although the country has implemented the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) which insures against medical care to all Ghanaians, one can only benefit through subscription by paying some amount of money. Participants in my study indicated that they cannot afford to register for that, so they would rather resort to self-medication when they are sick.

Reproductive health diseases such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is very prevalent among these girls. Because most of these girls end up sleeping in the streets and in unfinished houses, they are made vulnerable to rapists. Some also resort to exchanging sex for shelter which trigger the spread of communicable and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS (Shamsu-Deen, 2013). It is also not surprising that most of these girls end up with unwanted pregnancies and become teenage mothers. However, in this study most of the girls did not talk much about this issue. This is because in Ghana, matters of sex and reproduction health is usually shrouded in secrecy (Kwankye et al., 2007a).

5.6.3 Accidents and injuries at work

The female head porters also face certain challenges and work-related hazards in carrying out their daily business. Accidents are likely to occur since the Kayayoo is expected to manoeuvre her way through the usually crowded street and markets trying to get customers or following customers with heavy loads on their heads. As some of respondents told me there have been instances where some of their friends have been knocked down by cars and motor bikes. Some also obtain various injuries based on the kind of work they do.

This what Farida, a 17 year old girl also said as she showed me the scars on her feet and hands.

“One day as I was carrying hot soup to the food joint, I tripped and spilled the soup and that is how I got this scar. My madam was very angry, and she insulted me bitterly. I had to stay at home for a couple of days because it was very painful”.

It is sometimes very unfortunate for these girls when they incur costs in their line of work which usually results from accidentally damaging the property of their employers or customers. This is a conversation with Aisha, a 16-year-old girl who helps at a local restaurant, on some of the challenges she faces at work.

Nadia: what are some of the challenges you face at your work place?

Aisha: My madam is very mean. If you break any of her things, she will tell you to pay it.

Nadia: And what if you are not able to pay.

Aisha: She will deduct from your pay until you finish paying.

Nadia: How do you survive when you go to work, and you are not paid?

Aisha: I usually borrow from my friends and pay later.

Saida, 15 years old, also recounts a similar ordeal as she said;

“I was carrying a very heavy load for a customer and as we reached the bus station, my neck was really hurting so I dropped the load and there was a bottle of oil that broke and spilled on the floor. She asked me to pay for and I pleaded with her. In the end she gave me half of the fee we had agreed on”.

5.6.4 Competition at work

Also, in carrying out their work, these girls usually have to deal with very high competition with their numerous colleagues and even their male counterparts. The boys and men involved in this load carrying business for instance, use trucks and are stronger and faster than the girls therefore it is sometimes impossible to struggle with them over a customer. On the other hand, the girls also have to deal with competition from other women who are also involved in the Kayayei business. There is often direct competition with older women as the younger ones have to fight and struggle for customers with the adults. As a result, some of these girls reported that they can virtually walk the entire day without getting any customer. Therefore, most of them engage in other economic activities to fetch them extra income. This is how Abiba, a 17 years old girl, narrated her experience;

“Usually I go around the markets running after shoppers and pleading with them to carry their loads. And sometimes even though I was the first to approach a shopper, you will see an adult will also come and will struggling with you over the same person. One time the customer got angry and left both of us and went for another girl. But usually the customers prefer the we the younger ones because they know we charge less, and this irritates the adults”.

Another form of competition and tension that exist is between the Kayayei and the traders. Not until recently thus the year 2017, the Kayayei were expected to pay a daily tax to local authorities to enable them work in that particular market. However, the current government brought a policy to exempt these Kayayei from paying those taxes. This caused an outrage among some traders in the markets. The traders claimed the head porters sometimes earn more income than some of them do, hence, they insisted that they would not pay their taxes if the government did not change that

policy (Ibrahim, 2017). This affected the porters in a way because some of these traders take out their anger on the porters and prevent them from loitering around their shops in search for customers.

In the next empirical chapter, I go further to present and discuss social network and social support systems that these girls depend on to survive in the harsh and often brutal everyday lives.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SUPPORT

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings in regard to participants' thoughts on their social networks and the kind of support they get from their network members prior and following migration from the North to the city of Accra. The chapter investigates how female head porters develop coping strategies through support from their social networks.

6.2 Family ties

Relationship with family members is one important aspect in the lives of the Kayayei. Relatives like parents, sisters, brothers, aunties and uncles play an important role in the migration of the Kayayei both prior and following migration to the cities. For instance, prior migration, aside those who took the decision to migrate without the consent of anyone, there were girls who sought the consent of their parents especially their mothers before migrating to the cities. Those who did not inform their parents before leaving explained that they feared their parents would not allow them to migrate. There were others who were convinced or encouraged by their parents to move to the cities in order to work to support the family especially their younger siblings in anticipation for a better life for their children. Some of the Kayayei also explained that initially, their parents were not too happy with their decision to move to Accra to do the kaya business but when they realized that there was no other option, they eventually allowed them and even supported them financially to aid their transportation to the city. This shows that although some parents were not very pleased with their children's decision to migrate, they are compelled to support their decision and directly or indirectly encourage them by contributing something towards the aspirations of their children. Also, before moving to the city, some of my informants contacted their relatives who worked as Kayayei in Accra before arriving in the city. These relatives usually met them at the bus stations and gave them offered them temporary accommodation. There were others who also came along with their older siblings who visited back home. In this case, the older siblings either bore the full cost or part of the cost of transportation. The relatives of the girls usually helped them to secure a job and accommodation and assisted in any difficult situation. Those who did not live with their siblings normally visited them when they had the opportunity or when in need of something. Most often these older relatives are the ones who own mobile phones and it is through them that the girls

get in contact with their family back home. The Kayayei also preferred to keep their monies and some of their personal belongings with their relatives for safe keeping. A study by Opare (2003) however revealed that these trusted relatives of Kayayei sometimes cheat them by taking custody of their belongings and sometimes cannot make proper accounts of things such as kitchenware, clothes, other non-cash possessions which has been lodged with them. This situation was however not the case of any of my respondents since they all seemed to talk highly of their relatives and how they have been helpful to them since they arrived in the city.

“Since I came here it is my aunty who has been helping me sometimes. She took me to see my madam where I currently work, and I sometimes go to her place to eat when I don’t have enough money. I don’t know how I would have survived if she wasn’t here”.

(Aisha, 16 years)

Also, despite living far away from home and having little contact with their family back home, most of my respondents expressed their appreciation towards their family especially their parents and most often contacted them when they are in extremely difficult situations. They usually not for financial support but mostly when they need to talk to someone for words of advice, guidance, encouragement or assurance.

“I think my parents are the ones who have helped me the most especially my father. He is the one who has taken care of my education since I was a child and bought me provisions in when I was in secondary school. I know they will always be there for me when I have a problem and if my father had enough money, I am sure I wouldn’t be here doing this kind of work”.

(Fuseina, 16 years)

6.3 Friendship ties

“My friends have helped me a lot. When I am in serious need of something, for instance food and I ask them, they will help me by giving money to buy food or sometimes we cook and share”.

(Hawa, 13 years)

The statement above shows how vital friendship is in the lives of the female head porters. As indicated earlier, majority of the girls who decide to come to city to engage in the Kayayei business are usually influenced by stories of friends who have been working in the cities and have returned

to the villages. They are usually enticed by the way their friends are dressed, the phones they used and probably the other goods and gifts they brought to the village. These girls then decide to migrate to the cities alone or sometimes in the company of friends or siblings. Upon arrival in the cities most of these girls get stranded and are confronted with various challenges. However, these children are able to cope with life by demonstrating their ability to provide for their basic needs and adjusting positively to their new life. Primarily, they are able to achieve this through forming friendship with other colleagues on the street but mostly with their fellow Kayayei and people from the same region or town. As one of my participants indicated in a group discussion;

“Because we all come from Gambaga, it is easier to live together. I, for instance used to be in the Agboghloshi market but I moved here with my sister to this particular market because there are a lot of people from Gambaga here”.

(Farida, 17 years)

Farida’s reason for moving to the Nima market also demonstrates the sense of belonging the children felt by being with people who come from the same community as she did.

This study identified various ways in which the friendship that exist between female head porters benefits them in their quest to deal with the demands of their new life.

Most often the girls who have worked and lived in the city for long, support those who have just arrived by helping them in acquiring jobs. They sometimes recommended them to their bosses or informed friends of any job availability in the market. For those who want to engage in the carrying of loads, all they usually need is a head pan which costs about 10 Ghana cedis, and these friends lend them money to buy the pans or sometimes contribute to buy one for the newcomer. During one of visits to the residence of my respondents, I met Zinabu, a 10 year old girl who had just arrived in the Nima market for barely a week. The Kayayei told me that Zinabu had not yet started working that they were trying to get her a pan to start work the following week. However, the girls were sharing their food and other things with her for the time being until she starts working.

When asked how they helped each other as friends, the majority of them echoed on making contribution in terms of money to help someone who was sick. This is what one participant said in an interview with her;

“When any of us is sick, we take about 5 Ghana cedis from everyone and we take the person to the hospital or buy her medicine from the drug store. I remember a day when one of our friends was

involved in an accident and got very sick. We collected money from everyone for her to go back to the village and one of us had to go with her to the village”.

(Fuseina, 16 years)

In this sense, friendship amongst these female head porters is thought of as useful strategy which can help them to deal with the adversities they are faced with in their work and living in the city. It also demonstrates the inter-dependency relationship that exist among the girls. Even though the children rely on one another’s friendship for support, they are not completely dependent on their friends (Barnes, 2003). However, they operate their friendship on what Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010) refers to as a “sensitivity of the reciprocal”. Thus, to enter into friendships, one must know that a friend will seek out one’s support, but it is also to understand that with the privilege of being able to ask for help also comes reciprocal obligations (Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2010). Children therefore help each other and expect that in times of need they will also receive help from their friends. During a focus group discussion on how the Kayayei supported themselves, this is what Saida, a 16 years old had to say;

“Me I don’t mind sharing my food and other things with others but when I need something today and you help me, next time when you are also in need, I will help you”.

Similarly, Rafia, a 14 year old said;

“Sometimes when you help someone the person expects that you also help when she is in need otherwise when you get any quarrel with the person, she will remind you of when she helped you and sometimes this hurts so if you are like me, you would have to return that thing to that person”.

6.4 Ethnic group ties

The ethnic group ties of the Kayayei is one important social network which plays a role prior and following children’s migration. Before moving to the city some of my participants tried to get in touch with people from their ethnic group who were working and living at their place of destination. These persons from their ethnic group provided them with information on life in the city as well as what to expect and how to protect themselves from strangers upon arrival. This is how a participant narrated the assistance she got from an ethnic group member she contacted before her arrival.

“Before I moved to the city, my mum called her friend, one woman from our village. She told me where I can meet her when I arrive. And she advised me to very careful of strangers when I arrive because here in Accra sometimes when people realize you are new in town, they can deceive you and take the little money you came with”.

(Fauzia, 13 years)

With this information, Fauzia claimed she knew how to compose herself immediately after she arrived at the crowded and busy bus station. She was careful of whom to ask for directions and was very protective of the few belongings she came with until she met the woman from her village.

Also, in instances where children do not make any contact prior migration, they look out for people from their ethnic group upon arrival in the city. The various ethnic groups in the Northern region where these girls migrate speak different languages. Hence, as a new child migrant identifying with someone from the same ethnic group makes communication easier and children feel a sense of belonging as they associate with their newly established ties. In times of need these children rely on the support of their ethnic group members who most often assist them in getting accommodation or a job.

This was what Aisha, a 16-year-old, also said in relation to her contact with an ethnic group member:

“I did not know anybody before I came to Accra, but I met a woman at the Accra Central market who was also doing the kaya business she introduced me to a girl who was also from Gambaga but worked here in the Nima Market. It was through her that I got a place to sleep here with the other girls and she also helped me get a job with one food vendor”.

6.5 Customer and employer ties

The Kayayei, as indicated earlier, are engaged in other economic activities aside the carrying of loads for people. Hence, their relationships with employers varies from shop owners to various food vendors as found in studies. From my observation I noticed that, the work of those who are mainly involved in the carrying of loads can be categorized into two types. There are those who are employed by shop owners to stay at the shops and help with carrying of goods for customers who buy items from that shop and there are those who just roam the markets looking for customers to help them with their loads. The shops where these girls work are usually very big wholesale or

retail stores which are into the sale of all kinds of goods and wares. The Kayayei who work at these shops are most often not formerly employed. According to the Kayayei they sometimes you end up automatically working for the shop owner based on how frequent you visit the shop to help people carry their loads. They also said that when you have a good relationship with an employer, he or she may end up employing you to perform other duties in the shop like cleaning, packing and unpacking things to and from the shop and sometimes end up as sales agents. Some of the girls also indicated that working for shop owners can be very beneficial in various ways. Most of them agreed that those who work in the big shops make more money because the more people buy from that shop, the more you get customers to carry goods for. They are also saved from the stress of roaming in search of customers considering the existing competition in the market. Occasionally some of these girls get the opportunity to go into the market to do the usual carrying of loads when there are not many customers at the shop. This fetches them extra income aside what they get from working at the shops.

Some of the Kayayei also told that, most often they try to develop a relationship with their customers so that these customers become their regular customers. The Kayayei in a focus group discussion mentioned that it is possible for you to get a regular customer when you are patient with person while the person shops and not arguing with them of over the price of carrying the goods. As mentioned earlier, there are some Kayayei who will challenge their customers at the end of their service in order to make more money. Building a good relationship with a customer can make him or her the regular of customer of a Kayayei. In this regard, anytime the person comes to the market he or she will only look out for their favourite Kayayei and request for their services. The Kayayei also reported, that is easier to get a regular customer when you have a phone so that the person can contact you before coming to the market. According to Huijsmans (2012), regular customers may not pay the highest fees for the services rendered but having a regular customer ensures regularity in their income.

6.6 Ties with protectors

The Kayayei are faced with various challenges in their day to day activities as explained earlier. Most people take advantage of their situation and cheat, harass, humiliate or insult them in the market. Problems with accommodation also seemed to be a factor which exposes these girls to various forms harassments and abuse. During a group discussion, one of my participants

mentioned some of the dangers they face and the protection they receive from people in the area. She explains;

“Because our room is very small, sometimes when we don’t feel like sleeping here due of the heat and the bed bugs, we go to the street to sleep under the sheds. Some men who sit on the streets at night protect us from the bad boys’ drug addicts. Because sometimes you can be raped, or they will cut your pocket and steal your money when you are asleep”.

(Fatima, 17 years)

In an interview with the founder of the NGO, he indicated that some of these men are actually paid by the organization to protect the girls even though there are people who do it anyway without expecting any payment. Some of these young men see it as their responsibility to protect these girls because of their relationship with the girls in the community. Most of my participants referred to a particular man who was also from their hometown. They said that they turn to him in case they get into trouble and he is always there to their rescue, especially when they are being harassed by the boys in the area.

The NGO also has a hot line that people can contact when any Kayayei is in danger or trouble. These numbers are given to people volunteering or community leaders within the market. They serve as mediators in reporting abuse to the police. This is because most often these girls are not confident to report issues of abuse to police because the level of trust in the police is very low. Hence, they are not sure if anything could be done about the situation and are scared that these perpetrators might even come back to do more harm.

Some of the Kayayei also revealed that, on occasions, random people like shop owners and shoppers or customers they meet in the market, come to their rescue in times of trouble; this is how of my participants narrated her experience:

“There was a time I carried some goods for my customer. The goods were very heavy and while manoeuvring my way through the crowd in the market I tripped and fell. The bags of rice she had things all spilled on the ground. The customer was so furious, and she insisted that I had to pay for the damage. I kept pleading, but she wouldn’t listen as she kept saying if I knew I couldn’t

carry the things I should have just said so. It was another woman who was passing who came to my rescue and gave the woman the money she requested”.

(Zuruba, 11 years)

6.7 Ties with governmental and non-governmental institutions

Generally, the condition of female head porters is as a perceived as a social problem. Hence, they have received considerable attention and support from governmental and non-governmental organizations who consider them as under-privileged. These organizations therefore recruit them primarily to provide them an alternative livelihood by enrolling them into skill training and repatriate them to the Northern regions (Osei-Boateng, 2012). From the information gathered from the organizations I visited, there were no available statistics showing the exact number of Kayayei who have been supported or participated in any of the programs offered by these organizations. However, it is an undeniable fact that, considering the huge numbers of Kayayei trooping the Southern cities every year, very few of them are in contact with governmental or non-governmental organizations. As mentioned earlier, my participants were being supported by an NGO which works primarily with Kayayei. All my research participants referred to the founder of the organization as an important source of support. Majority of the Kayayei believed that the organization had been very supportive by especially providing them with accommodation. The girls were very grateful to have a place to sleep because they felt even though the room, they all shared was very little and uncomfortable, it was better than sleeping on the streets and most importantly they were able to save money which they would have used in renting a place. When asked what other kind of help they receive from the organization, one of the Kayayei had this to say;

“Uncle² has been very nice to us, anytime he visits us here he sometimes gives us money for food or give us groceries and toiletries to share amongst ourselves”.

(Fati, 16 years)

² Uncle refers to the director of the NGO working with the Kayayei

Another Kayayei added;

“I always look forward to days when programs are organized for us because on those days apart from learning a lot of things, we also get a lot of food and drinks. I don’t have to buy anything on those weekends”

(Farida, 17 years)

I confirmed Farida’s assertion when I had the opportunity to attend one of their educational programs. After the program there was a mini party where they shared food and drinks to the girls. It was therefore not surprising that they spoke about this with so much excitement and appreciation. Food and accommodation is a basic necessity for the survival of these girls too, of course, being provided with a room and food on certain occasions seems to give them some form of satisfaction and relief from the stress thinking of where to sleep at night or what to eat. This indicates how these girls value the support they obtain from the organization

In a focus group discussion with the girls, most of them indicated that they had not received any help from the government. They were, however, hopeful that the current government was going to make an impact in their lives. This was clear as one of the participants expressed her opinion during the discussion:

“Our leaders in the association advised us to vote for the current president because he was going to do a lot of things for us. Since he came into power, we have stopped paying the 1Ghana cedis tax we paid to those tax collectors who harassed us in the market. At least we can save that money for something else”

(Rafia, 14 years)

The tax exemption of Kayayei was an initiative that was proposed by the founder of the organization I worked with. The petition was presented to the president and this led to a campaign to abolish the collection of taxes or any market tolls from the Kayayei by this organization (Buimuo, 2017). In 2017, the president fulfilled his promise to exempt the Kayayei from any form of taxes when he came into power. The announcement of this tax exemption came as relief to most Kayayei considering the inhumane treatment they received from agents of the Metropolitan and District Assembly Authority (MMDAs). It was however obvious that the

Kayayei expected the government to do more about their situation than just the tax exemption. When asked what they would like the government and other authorities do to improve their situation, majority of my informants revealed that they would like to be trained to learn a vocational skill like hair dressing or dressmaking so that they could go back to their village. They believed, this training would be very useful to them since it would help them to start their own business and make some money when they return to their village.

6.8 Ties with religious organizations

Religion in Ghana is very much imbibed in the Ghanaian culture and plays a very important role in the lives of every individual and the society. The various religious groups, the Christians, Muslims and the Traditionalists give much regard to their beliefs and practices, hence most people make time for religious events and rites of the groups. Generally, most religious organizations including churches and mosques are involved in providing some sort of support to the Kayayei by providing them with food, shelter, training and medical assistance. Almost all my participants were Muslims, and this was not surprising because Islam is the dominant religion in the Northern part of the country where my participants hail from. The community in which they live, Nima, is also dominated by Muslims. Most of them reported that they visited the mosque daily to pray whenever they had the opportunity. Information gathered from the founder of the NGO working with the Kayayei indicated that, occasionally, the organization received donations from some of these religious organizations in the form of used clothing, toiletries and groceries which was distributed to the girls. However, from the views of all my participants, it seemed like the role of the people who attended the mosque was of less importance to them. They believed that the only person who could help at the mosque was God or Allah. During an interview one Kayayei explains;

Nadia: Do you go the mosque?

Zalia: Yes

Nadia: Do you receive any help from people there?

Zalia: No, I haven't gone to anyone for help before, all you have to do is to pray and Allah will answer your prayers. When I pray to Allah to give me something, he gives it to me. When I was coming here. I prayed to Allah to bring me here safely with any accident and I also prayed to him

help me get a job and he did it for me. I am also praying to get good results so that I can go back to school.

Another participant asserted:

Nadia: Do people in the mosque help you?

Rukia: Yes, sometimes someone will give you some clothes or something. But if you are in need of something, it is only Allah who can help you, not the people there. So, all I do is to pray to Allah when I need something.

From this study, it is evident that religion plays a very crucial role in the lives of the Kayayei. Their belief in God and His ability to provide their needs serves as a source of hope for a better life even in the face of adversities. Although, these girls sometimes get some form of support from people who share in the same belief, they still regard Allah as the ultimate provider of their needs hence they would rather pray to God for help than to ask anyone in the mosque for help. This finding concurs with the findings of Wilson (2012) in their work with Kayayei in Accra. They reported that female head porters who were thriving attributed control to a supernatural being (God) and believed that, their prayer and believe in God would guarantee blessings for the day and also more income during work. Hence, their ability to attribute control to a supreme being served as buffer in the face of stressors and also a resource to help them thrive.

6.9 Forms of support obtained by Kayayei

In this section, children's experiences of the support they received from their social networks will be presented and discussed. Based on the analysis of the data, the study revealed the following themes.

6.9.1 Emotional support

The Kayayei involved in this research gave several descriptions of how they have been supported by their social ties in times of need. Participants often described the kind of emotional support they received from the people whom they had some sort of close or intimate relationship with, such as, family, friends or work colleagues. This kind of support often came in the form of encouragement, reassurance and open communication especially when the girls are faced with problems which leaves them feeling stressed or depressed.

“When I have a problem and I am feeling very sad, I usually borrow my friend’s phone and call my mum. We are very close that is why I prefer to call her anytime I feel down. She will always encourage me and tell me everything will be fine”.

(Fati, 16 years)

Likewise, this is what Zalia, a 13 years old girl had to say about how supportive her family is to even though she is far away from home.

“My family has always been there for me, especially my siblings. I don’t know what I would have done without my family. We are always there for each other when we are dealing with some problems. I can call my elder sister when I need help and when she also has a problem, she calls me. I am comfortable talking to her about my problems because I am very close to her as compared to my other siblings and we understand each other very well”.

It was quite interesting to find out that majority of my participants referred mostly to family especially their mothers as their main source of emotional support. They discussed how they would call parents back home to talk to them about a situation and how they felt better after receiving some form of encouragement or comfort. Calling family back home as they described, is not something that is done regularly because majority of them did not own a mobile phone and buying recharge cards is quite expensive for them. This was not an issue for those who had particularly big sisters who were also working as Kayayei in the Nima market, hence had regular contact with them. Despite the limited face to face contact with family members the Kayayei still considered them as a reliable source of emotional support in times of need.

Emotional support as perceived by some of my participants was not just from family members but also from their friends and colleagues in the market. These are people they spend most of their time with and interact with on regular basis. One research participant posited that her friends especially those she lived with provided her with care and comfort whenever she is having some problems and share with them. This was her assertion;

“My friends are very caring and kind. Sometimes when I go to work and my madam treats me badly, I talk about it with my friends and they will all encourage me not be bothered by the situation but to leave everything to Allah and to just focus and make my money”.

(Rukia, 14 years).

Fati, 16 years, added;

“There are times when my day will just not go well, and I feel and depressed but when I come back to the house and we all sit, and chat and share jokes I feel lot more better”.

These examples demonstrate that, in the face of their everyday challenges, children make every effort to console and sympathize with their friends. The children were also very conscious of the main reason why they came to the city, which is to make money. Hence, every problem they encounter seems to be a temporal situation which would be over once they have enough money to better their lives.

One theme that run through this discussion is what (Kennedy et al., 2017) termed as *familial-like emotional support* which describes participant’s perception of their relationship with friends as filling familial needs.

Children who leave their homes to the streets in search of better life, at the same time leave familial, institutional, or communal provisions and protection. Hence, through their friends, children are able to develop their social resources which serves as a means of substituting familial, institutional or communal support (Fikre, 2016). Consequently, emotional support which children reported to have primarily received from family was as well obtained from friends in the absence of family. Those who emphasized on emotional support from their friends made statements like;

“We live here together like sisters, when one of us is in trouble we are we will be there for the person”.

(Saida, 16 years)

Similarly, this what another participant had to say about her friend;

“She is like a sister to me. I can ask her for anything and when she needs something, she can also ask me”.

(Rafia, 14 years)

Fauzia also added;

“I don’t know how I would have survived if I had not met my friends. They have been of great help to me since I arrived in the city. They are like my sisters and that is why they are so dear to me”.

(Fauzia, 13 years)

Accounts of the children above reveals how the girls cherish the relationship they have with their friends and the role they play in their lives as a substitute to family after they have migrated to the city. Though these girls are all in the city to work and make money, they support look out for each other in times of need. I, therefore, concur with Aptekar and Stoecklin (2014) who argue that children’s peer friendship in the street is more like family and friends than business partners.

In their description of relationship with their friends and family especially siblings, it was evident how some of these descriptions were characterized by encouragement, comfort, reciprocity, and showing love and affection. This implies that despite the struggles these girls go through there is always someone to turn to in times of distress to make them feel better. The results of this findings, however, contradict the finding of Cudjoe and Alhassan (2016) who posited that the majority of their participants indicated that emotional support usually comes from their individual capabilities and that their colleagues are unable to provide them with any form of emotional encouragement. The disparity in these contradicting findings may be due to the fact that participants in this study lived together in the same room and did most activities together. They might have therefore created a bond amongst themselves which has given them the opportunity to be there for each other and help friends and close friends in emotional need.

6.9.2 Instrumental support

Instrumental support from social network members was also a very critical tool for these female head porters to cope with life in the city of Accra. This kind of support often came in the form of necessities like, food and clothing, shelter and money. Aside participants being very appreciative of the room provided by the NGO, majority of my respondents alluded to the fact that their friends and colleagues were their dominant source of instrumental support especially when they are need of financial support. Due to the unpredictable and competitive nature of their job, participants asserted that there are times that they do not make any money at all especially those who are just into carrying of goods. They therefore have to rely on friends for money in order to survive for the

day. Participants demonstrated the confidence they had in their friends to come to their aid in times of need. These are the accounts of some participants in an interview with them.

“Whenever I do not make money in the market, I know my friends will lend me some money if I ask them. Also, when any of them needs to borrow from me and I have, I will I will surely give them”.

(Fati, 16 years)

“There was a time when I got very sick and needed money to buy some drugs. My friends contributed money and they even went to buy the drug for me from the drug store”.

(Zalia 13 years)

Another participant emphasized this fact by pointing out a girl to me and stating;

“See the girl over there, she just arrived in the city a few days ago and she hasn’t started working yet but when we contribute and cook, we share it with her because she is like our little sister. Most often we cook together after work, so it is not possible to stay here and go hungry. You will always have someone to share their food with you”.

(Farida, 17 years).

Additionally, I personally observed an instrumental support the girls rendered to each other in the form of service. During one of my visits to the residence I saw about four of the girls braiding one of their colleague’s hair. They claimed that, even though they were not experienced in what they were doing, that was the only way of saving their little money rather than going to a salon or paying someone else to make their hair for them.

My observations and accounts by participants, demonstrate how the female head porters depend on one another for support in times of need. It also reiterates the reciprocal nature of support that exists between the female head porters. They are expectant that, their friends will come to their aid when they needed help and were also willing to support them when the need arises.

Majority of my respondents said that they do not receive any form of instrumental support from their parents or family back home once they arrive in the city. They presume after receiving every

help they needed prior migration, it is now their responsibility to support their families in the village by sending remittances to them. This is what Farida (17 years) said in an interview;

Interviewer: Do you receive any help from your family back home?

Farida: No. It's funny you even asked that because I am here because there is no money to take care of me and my siblings therefore, I have to work and send money home to my parents. I cannot stay in the village and be doing nothing when I know my family is poor.

The position in which Farida finds herself goes to confirm the assertion of Chant and Jones (2005) who revealed that in the context of Ghana and the Gambia children felt a sense of obligation to their parents and the need to work in order not to present an image of idleness which is seen as deviance from social norms. Moreover, although parents do not compel their children to work in many of these rural communities, a high value is placed on 'hard work' and many of these children take pride in their participation in work and the rewards of their work (Hashim, Iman & Thorsen, 2011). Also, the collective nature of the family system in Ghana requires children to contribute to the sustenance of the family through their work by engaging economic activities.

6.9.3 Informational Support

Aside the emotional and financial support received by the female head porters, a few of them discussed the informational support they received from their social networks. This includes the advice and guidance as well as knowledge and skills on how to cope and deal with their problems. Firstly, a minority of my participants revealed that, their family played an essential role in their survival in the city through the advice they receive from parents and siblings who also work in the city. One participant describes how she could count on her elder sister for any advice when she needed it.

“My sister has been working here for long before I came to join her, so she knows a lot of things that I don't. Sometimes when I have a problem and I talk to her she advises me on what to do or what not to do”.

(Rukia, 14 years).

Another participant also revealed that even though she rarely calls her mother, she always gives her some good advice on how to live her life in the city;

“Anytime I call my mum she tells me to be careful of the kind of friends I associate myself with and to make sure I respect my madam whom I work for”.

(Hawa, 13 years).

Similarly, friends have also been an important source of information in dealing with life in the city and matters related to their work especially new migrants who just arrived in the city.

This is how Aisha described how her close friend has been a great source of informational support;

“I remember when I came here and started doing the kaya business, I was not making enough money, so it was my friend who helped me get the job ‘t where I am working now. Anytime she heard one of the food sellers was in need of extra help she will come and tell me to go and enquire and it was through this that I started working for my madam”.

(Aisha, 16 years).

Another participant revealed how important it was to associate with people who have experience on job and how to survive in the city in order to obtain relevant information.

“If you are new here and you act if you can be on your own and take care of yourself, you might end up in trouble. Some of us have been here for long and we know the bad boys who with ill motives who approach us in order to have sex with us. So if you come and you are not informed about some of these boys, they will just use you and dump you”

(Rafia, 14 years)

In a focus group discussion, the participants revealed how they were able to maximize the number of customers they get in a day through the information they received from their friends. This is how one participant narrated how this may be achieved.

“Usually on market days there are a lot of trucks which comes from the villages to offload various food stuff like tubers of yam, cassava and vegetables. On such days a lot of the market women who buy from these trucks will need help to convey their goods to their selling point. So, when any of us comes across any of these trucks surrounded by a lot of market women, we inform our friends and we go there to help them carry their goods”.

(Farida, 17 years)

As indicated, advice from elder siblings and friends who have prior experiences on the job was a helpful tool for them to survive especially in dealing with issues related to their work. These friends play an important role of giving their peers especially new migrants the vital information and strategies needed to survive in the city. Hence through peer interactions, children learn how best to survive among their equals in a wide range of street environments (Ridge & Millar, 2000). The Kayayei also seemed to understand the nature of their work and how it can get very difficult to make enough money for the day. Those who have the privilege to work for some employers try to help their friends in getting extra jobs by giving them information on which employer in the market needs an employee and even when to get more customers. This demonstrates the interdependent nature of relationship between the girls in ensuring that each of them is comfortable and has something which will fetch them extra money at any point in time. As Conticini (2005, p. 74) argues “children are seen to pay more attention to the development of social relationships than to the maximization of economic opportunities. At the same time, supportive social networks can improve children’s access to better economic opportunities”.

Another form of informational support which I observed was mainly from the NGO working with the girls. As mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to attend one of their outreach programs. During this program the children were educated on their reproductive health, how they can protect themselves from the perpetrators of sexual abuse, how to avoid unwanted pregnancies and how to maintain good hygiene. They were also encouraged to report issues of abuse or molestation to someone they trusted or to the organization in case of such occurrences. I however noticed that, during both interviews and focus group discussions, the children rarely made reference to this kind of support they received from the organization. They mainly focused on the tangible materials they received like the housing and food that was shared after such programs. Information gathered from the founder of the organization revealed that such programs were organized for the girls on regular basis. One may therefore question if these programs organized to educate the girls is of any relevance to them or impacts their lives in any way. From my opinion I think because of the seemingly good relationship the girls have with the founder of the organization, they feel obliged to attend and probably see the program as a normal routine.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING SUPPORT

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the roles of different institutions addressing the issue of Kayayei in the country. The intervention programs that have been implemented by government and NGOs as well as strategic plans in addressing this issue will be discussed here. The chapter will also present some of the problems and limitations these institutions encounter in providing support for the female head porters.

7.2 Role of government

The government has an important role of ensuring and protecting the fundamental human rights of its citizens. By ensuring that this is achieved, the government has the responsibility of developing policies and creating legal frameworks which will guide the affairs of the country. It is in this regard that the government of Ghana adopted the Children's Act 1998 and also ratified other conventions like the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as well the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

During this fieldwork, I interviewed one informant from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) as mentioned in chapter four. This Ministry has a national mandate to protect the rights of all citizens including men and women, boys and girls and ensure that everybody that is vulnerable is protected and provided a social safety net. The ministry works in collaboration with the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) NGOs and INGOs to ensure the rights and enhance the socio-economic status and circumstances of children (MOGCSP, 2018).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goal eight (8) seeks to empower the vulnerable, give them secure employment and ensure they are well established to gain their own micro businesses and a decent work. My informant from the Ministry stated that, it is within this context that the Ministry implemented the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Program which is a social cash transfer program introduced by the government in 2008. It provides

cash grants to extremely poor households across the country to alleviate short term poverty and encourage long-term human capital development (LEAP, 2016).

My informant further stated that in their quest to reduce or stop the Kayayei phenomenon, it is the responsibility of the ministry to primarily empower those who are already involved in this business. In doing so, the ministry designed an innovative intervention program called the “pre-employment skill training” which was aimed to empower the girls economically by taking them through a series of skill training in catering, hairdressing, sewing and computer training. This program was organised in collaboration with already established institutions who were tasked to train these girls to ensure they get immediate employment after the training. According to my informant, intervention programs organised for the Kayayei is an integrated approach. Therefore, there are other educational projects organised to educate the Kayayei on the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls to ensure that the girls are aware of the risks and dangers associated with their work. They are taught ways of identifying signs of sexual abuse or harassment as well as gender-based violence. They are also encouraged to report cases of violence or abuse against them.

Various measures have been put in place by the MOGCSP to address the Kayayei menace. The MOGCSP in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is currently developing a five (5) years strategic plan to eradicate the Kayayei phenomenon across all the cities in Ghana. It is reported that mapping of the Kayayei across the major markets in the country is currently in progress to collect data which will inform any decision (GhanaGuardian, 2018). Similarly, the MOGCSP has also initiated a program dubbed “Operation get off the street now for a better life” which is also aimed to eradicate poverty among the vulnerable and marginalized group on the street and in the markets (Donkor, 2018). My informant also revealed that there has also been plans to link women and girls in the rural communities to the government’s initiative such as the “One district, One factory” project. It is working to ensure that once it starts, it will be made more female centred so that more of these girls at risk of migrating to the cities will be absorbed and gain employment. The Ministry has also established 20 girl leadership clubs in schools and communities which is basically to create awareness of children’s rights and educate girls on the importance of being school to ensure that girls did not drop out of school (Donkor, 2018).

Based on some of the projects and programs organised in address the issue of Kayayei and through my discussion with informant from the Ministry, I realised that the majority of these programs organised by the government seems to primarily focus on older children particularly those above 15 years. Though studies have indicated the existence of Kayayei who are below the age of 10, it seems not much has been done to support the younger children. This could be attributed to the fact that most of these intervention programs aims to empower the girls economically, hence, focus mainly on skills training for employment and starting their own businesses. However, in the 1998 Children's Act article 89 and 98 defines the age limit for children to engage in any form of labour or apprenticeship to be 15 years old.

7.2.1 Challenges faced by government

The government, in its execution of some of these programs to support the Kayayei, face various challenges which were highlighted by my representative from the MOGCSP. My informant talking about the limitations in providing support, stated that lack of funds as a very crucial issue. She argued that the lack of funds affects certain measures and decisions in organising programs such as the vocational skill training. My informant revealed that the ministry profiled about three thousand children both male and female who were supposed to take part of the training across all the markets in Accra. However, due to the lack of funding, just about half of the 3000 were enrolled. Also, the training program was organised in just two (2) market centres and a selection criterion was also adopted to cut down on the number of children who could partake of this program. Consequently, only children who had basic education and have completed at least JHS or SHS were selected. Also, proximity to the training centre was another considering factor because they could not afford to transport participants on daily basis. Similarly, my informant further stated that, the lack of financial resources had also hindered the implementation of similar vocational training in the Northern region due to vase and dispersed nature of communities. To successfully organise such programs, it is necessary to provide participants means of commuting to the training centre or alternatively provide them with accommodation which might me costly.

Another common challenges which seem to be encountered by both government and other organizations in their provision of support to the Kayayei is dealing with the demands of gatekeepers. My informant from the Ministry revealed that, from the findings of the Ministry, there is a whole cartel of people who are making economic gains out of these girls. These cartels go to

the North, organize and bring the girls to the cities, then become the kingpins or the overlords over these girls. They manage them and take advantage of them economically. On the ground, when these girls sell and make money at the end of the day they go and give them commission from their sales. Subsequently, since these gatekeepers are making economic gains out of these girls, they do everything to ensure that the business continues. On the other hand, these gatekeepers self-identify themselves as coordinators, advocators and protectors of Kayayei working the various markets (UNFPA, 2006-2011). During a discussion on the topic of gatekeepers, my informant stated that, after a month of orientation with the girls, just when the training program was about to start, the cartel or the leaders of some of these girls came and said they would not allow the girls to participate unless the ministry goes to consult them and pay them some amount of money. But the Ministry felt since the program was free, that these gatekeepers had no rights to demand money from them, their request was refused. As a result, about 60 of the girls had to withdraw from the program. Due to this incidence, the program delayed a bit. However, other Kayayei who heard about the program joined later. This seems to be a complex situation because though the ministry was interested in supporting these girls, they found it inappropriate to yield to the request of the gatekeepers at the detriment of the Kayayei who were supposed to partake in the training. Similarly, UNFPA (2006-2011) in their report also indicated that it was impossible to implement the Kayayei program until the UNFPA and its partners had established a positive financial relationship with the gatekeepers, who had instructed the Kayayei not to participate.

The lack of coordination among different institutional bodies and other stakeholders who have been given the mandate to ensure the rights of these children, is another problem which was identified in this study. There seems to be a lot of burden on the MOGCSP since they are perceived to be the sole unit responsible for dealing with issues related to children in vulnerable situations. Hence, there is very little support from other governmental bodies as noted by my informant. This information concurs with the finding of Aransiola (2013) who revealed that all stakeholders supporting street children in Nigeria are working in parallel with one another thereby suggesting the need for collaboration to attain better results. Subsequently, my informant agreed on the fact that, interventions programs may not be the permanent solution to the Kayayei menace or children's migration to the south. Therefore, there is the need for all stakeholders including parents, district assembly leaders, social welfare departments among others to play their role per the mandate given them.

Another challenging issue in organising intervention programs for Kayayei is their expression of dissatisfaction in participating due to the loss of income and time during their usual work hours. Once the Kayayei start the training program, they will not be earning money like they used for their upkeep. Hence the motivation for attending training sessions becomes very low. As expressed by my informant, in order to solve this problem, the Ministry entered into an agreement with the Youth Employment Agency to be paying the Kayayei some daily allowances which they agreed in principle. However, up until the Kayayei graduated from the training program, none of them had received any allowances from them. My informant³ indicated that, there were instances where the Kayayei would demand to be paid when asked to pack the chairs or tidy the venue for training as they expressed that, it was also a form of work and they could have used that time to go and work to make some money. This occurrence is quite interesting because in a typical Ghanaian culture, children are expected to submit to elders and moreover, in a situation where children have received help, they are expected to show gratitude by complying to demands of the adult in most cases. This act by the Kayayei shows how they express their agency by taking advantage of the prevailing situation.

7.3 Role of NGOs

Over the years NGOs have been very active in developmental issues across different countries and have also been as active and important partners by development partners across the globe (Aransiola, 2013). Hence in addressing the issue of Kayayei, the role of NGOs cannot be over emphasized. There are various NGOs existing in Ghana who are involved in different issues related to children's rights and advocacy such as street children, child labour, child marriage, child trafficking and all other forms of abuse against children. Through my findings, I realised that there are however just a handful of organizations that specifically work with children working as Kayayei. Most of these NGOs are involved in social welfare duties like providing food, accommodation, clothing and medical treatments. They are also involved in educational and vocational skill training, repatriation of the girls to their various communities as well as advocating for their rights and engaging in research.

³ Informant 1 from the MOGCSP

An informant⁴ speaking of programs organised by the organization indicated that their organization is primarily concerned with the welfare of the Kayayei. It is in this direction that the organization has provided a temporary accommodation for the girls in the heart of the market. They also provide them with food and clothing when necessary as well as supporting the children of Kayayei by enrolling them in nursery or primary schools. During my visit, I had the opportunity to see the rented accommodation provided for the Kayayei. Though it was quite small, considering the number of girls sharing this space, my informant revealed that the organization is working on obtaining sponsorships to build a bigger dormitory which can accommodate most of the girls.

Another informant⁵ in describing its activities highlighted some of the sensitization programs which the organization had been involved in to create awareness of the dangers associated with girls migrating to the south to work as Kayayei. These sensitization programs were done in collaboration with leaders in the north like the assembly men, Members of Parliament (MPs) and Municipal Chief Executives (MCEs) who aided in organising and educating girls who are likely to migrate to the South. The organization, however, has a training centre in the market where some Kayayei of school going age are recruited and trained based on their field of interest in areas like hairdressing and dressmaking. My informant further indicated that the ultimate goal of the organization was to set up educational and training centers in the Northern region of Ghana to provide them a purposeful education and training. By so doing, the centers can absorb them in the north and subsequently reduce the number of children likely to migrate to the south.

Subsequently, other infrastructural projects have been put in place to address peculiar issues related to the Kayayei phenomenon. One of my informants⁶ revealed that the construction of a resettlement centre in the Kejetia central market in Kumasi had been completed. The main aim of this centre is to repatriate the girls to the north. This centre comprises of different units which provides support to all Kayayei in issues related to their welfare. The center is a place for the Kayayei to report all forms of abuse. It also gives the Kayayei the platform to know each other to share information and resources. This center also has anti-human traffic department because Kejetia is a transit point for most girls who have been trafficked from the North to the South. This

⁴ Informant 3 from NGO 2

⁵ Informant 2 from NGO 1

⁶ Informant 4 from NGO 3

department helps to track these traffickers and punish them. It also has a marriage redress unit to help in marital problems of both Kayayei and market women.

Based on discussions with informants from the different NGOs, I came to the realization that NGOs have similar interests in addressing the Kayayei phenomenon but their approaches in solving the problem differ. These organizations were primarily focused on reducing the number of children working as Kayayei by giving them vocational training in relevant areas of interest and encouraging them to go back to the north to start their own businesses. However, there has also been different sensitization programs to create awareness to prevent children from migrating to the southern cities as well as improving on the wellbeing of those who are already in the city as Kayayei.

7.3.1 Challenges faced by NGOs

Interventions from NGOs in addressing the issue is often a way of filling in where government is unable to intervene or provide support to reduce the burden on the government. However, one major challenge that NGOs reported was the lack of support from government as well as other stakeholders in the community like the media and social workers. An informant⁷ discussing some of the limitations stated that the government had failed when it came to issues related to Kayayei. He indicated that working with children from different backgrounds and of different ages can be challenging and requires support from various stakeholders. However, from the perspectives of the NGOs, it is rather unfortunate that very little attention has been given to issue of children working as Kayayei in the city, not to even mention the lack of interventions to improve the poverty situation in the norther region. They argued that, if the root cause of the problem, thus poverty in the North, is not dealt with, the issue of children migrating to the South will continue to be a problem to the nation.

Another challenging issue mentioned by informants in their provision of support was the lack of financial resources. Most of the organization listed a lot of projects which they had planned to implement but have not been able to do so because of limited funds. Therefore, these projects have either been put on hold or have been aborted. An informant⁸ indicated that the reason for halting or abandoning projects is that, most often, funds are obtained when there are new projects, so even

⁷ Informant 2 from NGO 1

⁸ Informant 5 from NGO4

if there are previous projects which needs to be continued, the organization will have to move on to the new project to enable them secure funds. There are sometimes some successful projects which NGOs wished they could scale up to benefit more girls but could not be achieved because of the unavailability of funds, as noted by another informant. Most of these local NGOs are often funded by International NGOs (Huijsmans, 2012). It is for this reason that some of these NGOs are unable to prioritize their needs with regards to issues like funding. Regarding this issue, Garilao stated that:

Since most Third World NGOs have limited internal resources and operate from project to project, such outside funding gives them a certain degree of security to maintain and even expand operations. But security packaged as such also breeds dependency. Having fallen into this trap, it becomes difficult for NGOs not to tailor their programs to the priorities of the resource agency rather than the other way around - hence, the notion that NGOs are here today but may be nowhere tomorrow (Garilao, 1987, p. 113).

As stated above, due the lack of financial resources of local NGOs, they tend to be dependent on international organizations and thereby fulfilling the agendas of their sponsors rather than pursuing their own interest or plans.

Difficulty in monitoring or following up on projects was another problem which was identified by NGOs working directly with Kayayei. Most often, after children have been reintegrated in the family, taken through vocational trading or sent to school, there is the need for constant and long-term monitoring to ensure that children are reaping the benefits of these projects. Failure to do this results in children moving back to the streets to continue working as Kayayei. One informant⁹ stated that in situations where children are given some vocational skills and training, there is the need to have a continuous assessment of their progress and in some offer them a startup capital. However, due to the lack of financial resources some of these NGOs are often restricted and therefore, not able to have more follow up and monitoring activities.

One other challenge mentioned by NGOs was the issue of tribalism which comes to play mostly when tangible or material support is provided for the Kayayei. They indicated that, sometimes

⁹ Informant 4 from NGO 3

because of the difficulty in gaining access most of the girls, they go through their leaders to offer donations to the girls. An informant indicated that, sometimes they assume that the leaders are in a better position to share the donated items since they know the Kayayei better as well as their needs. However, there have been cases where leaders from a particular tribe would collect items and share these items among only people from his or tribe.

Having presented empirical data from both female head porters and the adult informants, the next chapter summarizes and discusses the findings and presents some concluding reflections.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect upon my findings according to my research questions and theoretical perspectives. I will discuss the diversity of childhood and how it relates to the experiences of my participants. I will also discuss the implications of the universal notion of childhood on intervention programs for female head porters. The chapter will go ahead to discuss how children exercise their agency in line of work and in interaction with others. I will also discuss how children are able to survive in the face of adversities through the support obtained from their social networks. Finally, I will present the summary and recommendations.

8.2 Diversity of childhood

Childhood remains and continues to be a social structure in society. According to Qvortrup (2009) childhood has permanence, in the sense that even though each individual child leave childhood biographically, childhood remains a structure which exists to receive new members of children as others transit into adulthood. Qvortrup (2002) further argues that childhood constitutes a particular structural form in society which is comparable to other social structures like class, gender or ethnicity. Thus, childhood gains its defining characteristics through what members of childhood are doing and through what position has been assigned to children by and in relation to more dominant groups in the society. Children exist in various social, cultural and historical contexts, therefore generalizing the concept of childhood may be problematic based on the understanding of childhood as a social construct. As Punch (2003) argues, the children's lives vary according to factors such as class, culture, gender, age, ethnicity, religion and birth order. It can be therefore be said that, children's lives are shaped through their interactions and experiences they obtain in the world or society in which they live. Consequently, each society treats children differently based on their notions or perceptions of childhood (James & James, 2004; Mayall, 2002).

The experiences and situation of my participants in this study do not reflect the universal notion of childhood which describes childhood as a time of innocence where children must be allowed to play, go to school and free from burdens of work and other 'adult' responsibilities. The life of my

participants is far from this idealised notion of childhood since my participants do not go to school, do not live with their families and most importantly work in order to survive in the city as child migrants. The work of participants as Kayayei is very important to their survival because these children need to work in order to earn income and cater for their basic needs and also fulfil their responsibilities towards their families by sending remittances home. The difference in childhood experiences of my participants as compared to the global model of childhood is clearly as a result of the influence of social, political, economic and cultural norms in the Ghanaian context. As Punch (2003) asserts, childhood must be recognized as being both a social and cultural construction and that the diversity of childhood exists both within and between cultures. I therefore argue that children all over the world develop different experiences based on varying circumstances in which they find themselves in, as well as the diverse cultures that exist from one society to the other. It is therefore “too simplistic to imagine local childhoods as following either a traditional mode (in which children’s work is a necessary part of their socialization to become respectful members of extended families) or a western mode (in which children do not work but rather play and study)” (Robson, 2004, p. 236).

8.3 Implications of the idealised notion of childhood on intervention programs

Considering the conditions of migrant children in this study and the kind of experiences they go through, it is evident that the childhood that children in Ghana experience is peculiar to them and is influenced by certain social, political, economic and cultural factors prevailing in Ghana. This makes the idealised notion of childhood inapplicable to children in the Ghanaian context and particularly to my participants who are migrant children working in the city. (Kesby et al., 2006) argue that, in an attempt to secure children’s rights worldwide, international organizations often obscure rather than reveal childhoods in the developing world, based on their idealised western norms. However, the influence of this idealised notion of childhood on various legislations and practices concerning children in the developing world including Ghana, is a fact that cannot be denied. Consequently, the government and most NGOs have employed intervention programs that are inappropriate in dealing with vulnerable children in the society. Repatriating and reintegrating migrant children and street children in general, is an example of intervention programs which have been influenced by the global notion of childhood. The approach of repatriating or reintegrating the Kayayei for instance, ignores certain root factors that causes or

influences children's decision to move to the city to engage in the Kayayei business. The poor economic conditions that prevail especially in the northern region of Ghana contributes to the reason why my informants move to the cities to work as Kayayei. Other factors which have been identified as contributing the migration of these young children can be attributed to the general underdevelopment in the Northern region of Ghana, unavailability of jobs and some socio cultural factors such as early marriage, Basically, the uneven distribution of resources between the North and South of Ghana is the main reason why people migrate to the cities in pursuit of wealth, education, adventure and glamour (Ofusu-Kusi and Mizen, 2012 cited in Huijsmans, 2012). In my opinion, considering the factors that influence the migration of these children, adopting an intervention of repatriation and reintegration is not the solution to solving the problems of the Kayayei or curbing the Kayayei menace in Ghana. Children will continue to return to cities in search for better opportunities even after they have been repatriated if the government and other stakeholders do not tackle the root cause of the issue which is poverty. Though none of my participants were victims of any repatriation program, repatriating Kayayei to the sending villages was mentioned by one of informants from the NGOs as their main aim in dealing with the Kayayei phenomenon. The experiences of some of my participants in escaping poverty and pursuing their dreams clearly indicate that, even in situations where children willingly return home, they are likely to move back to the cities if the economic situation of their family does not improve. To illustrate this point in reference to my study, one of my participants revealed her quest to further her education, but the financial situation of the family has been the reason for her to the city to continue working. This was how Farida, 17 years old, stated her reason for moving to the street during an interview.

"I have completed the Senior High School and currently waiting for my results. My parents are not having money to help me further my education, so I decided to come here. But I have been here before, when I completed Junior High School. I came to do this same work to save money and went back to continue to SHS".

This clearly shows that, in a situation where Farida is for instance repatriated to her village, this will not solve her problem or that of the poverty situation in her family. This act might even affect her chances of furthering her education which is the main reason why she migrated to the city. taking away her right to migrate and most importantly right to work, may be doing her more harm

than good, As Abebe and Bessell (2011) argue, any attempt to stop children from working under this idealised notion of childhood is considered eurocentric and insensitivity to their context and needs. Evidently, it is important to deal with the issue of poverty which is prevalent in the North, otherwise these children will continue to migrate to the cities.

Huijsmans (2012) in his study, posited that NGOs and government approaches to viewing issue of the Kayayei phenomenon stems from different ways in viewing the problem. He argued that, for some organizations migration at a young age is the key problem because these children end up in abusive and exploitative situations, On the other hand, other organizations do not focus on the fact that children migrate, but on the abuse and exploitation faced by child migrants. From these perspectives, organizations either resort to ‘rescuing’ child migrants and sending back home or addressing the abuse and exploitation without deciding for children whether they should be in the city or in the rural north.

With regards to my findings, I discovered that, my informants from the government and NGOs, generally view migrant children specifically Kayayei as destitute children who need help. This was echoed in an interview with some of my informants on their perception of child migrants in the country. My informant from the Ministry expressed;

“I think the situation of Kayayei in this country is a unique phenomenon that we need to strategically try and eliminate, stop or protect these girls from further abuses. Most of them come from the three northern regions and other parts of the country to Accra and the problem of Kayayei in this city is becoming a nuisance”.

Another informant¹⁰ from the NGO also expressed;

“Their situation is very sad, and it sometimes tell you that life is tragic enough. Especially in the rainy season when you see them carrying their babies, sleeping under sheds and all that. I think Ghana as country has failed on the issue of Kayayei”.

Based on these views, it is not surprising that the government, over the past years have employed rescuing programs such as the “Operation send them home” and “Operation get off the street now for a better life” which I mentioned previously. In my opinion, though it seems there have been a

¹⁰ Informant 2 from NGO 1

shift of just rounding up children and sending them back home, the government's aim is of reducing the number of Kayayei in the city still points in the direction of rescuing children from the street. They have just been dynamic in their approach by offering vocational training to children and encouraging them to back to the North, where they came from.

Most NGOs on the other hand have been ambiguous in their approach in dealing with the issue of the Kayayei (Huijsmans, 2012). Per my study, it was evident that there were some NGOs who were involved in the 'rescuing' program by repatriating or reintegrating children and at the same time were involved in improving the wellbeing of the Kayayei by providing them with food, shelter and medication.

I also discovered that, due to the focus of stakeholders in rescuing children involved in the Kayayei business, they seem not to consider the role and impact of their social networks as well as the resources available to them in their survival in the city. As this study reveals, the Kayayei have developed social networks which plays an important role in their lives. Through these networks they have access to resources which makes them cope with difficult situations the encounter. Underestimating or ignoring the resources and networks of these children in implementing intervention programs, may not solve their problems and hence the failure of such programs. I concur with Conticini (2005) and argue that, for an intervention to be more effective, sustainable and respectful, it has to abandon the focus on children's deprivation which is influenced by strict interpretation of children's rights. Rather, interventions must be guided by an investigation of how to improve the lives of children on the street, in this case Kayayei, by helping strengthen their assets rather than creating substitutes for them.

8.4 Agency

This section will also discuss another exceptional characteristic of the Kayayei which is their ability to exhibit their agency in their decision making, their line of work, and relationships with others in the city. Children's agency as described by Prout and James (1997) is their ability to be active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live in. Basically, it is important to view children as social actors who have the capacity to exercise their agency in matters concerning their lives and in the creation of their own life worlds (Qvortrup, 1994).

Participants in my study have exhibited their agency in various ways which have been highlighted throughout this study. Most of my participants started exhibiting their agency prior to migration to the city. Robson et al. (2007) argues that children's ability to act is related to the constraints they face on a daily basis. Thus, the lack of income generating activities, employment opportunities, poverty and restrictive social cultural norms and expectations acts as an important stimulus for migration. Hence, children make the decision to migrate once they realise the circumstances in which they are facing in the village is not favourable to them. For instance, in situations like poverty, which was mentioned by majority of my participants, children demonstrate their agency by deciding to migrate autonomously or with the consent of their parents. Children exercise their agency in line with social structures in which they find themselves, which can either enable or constrain their ability to do so (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009). In the Ghanaian context, children are expected to obtain permission from their parents before acting on any decision, to secure their blessings. It is for this reason that majority of my informants informed their parents before leaving to the city. Only one said she came to the city without the permission of her parents because her dad was not in support of her decision but on arrival to the city, she made sure she got in contact with them. All my participants decided to migrate voluntarily based on various reasons identified in this study, without being forced or coerced to migrate. This signifies their ability to act independently and take actions in matters concerning their lives. After children have decided to migrate to the city to work, they demonstrate their agency in even more complex situations. On arrival in the city, children are able to live independently, organise their lives and also provide for their basic needs with or without any adult interventions. They buy and prepare their own food, cater for other expenses as well as decide on what time to start work and when to sleep. These independent decisions and activities of my informants shows their ability to exercise their agency.

Also, the main activity that aids in the survival of my informants is their work. The work my informants engage in is what is most important to them, because, all my informants came to the city to work in order to earn money for various reasons like furthering their education, marriage, starting a business and supporting the family. For this reason, children employ various means to maximize the income they earn from their work. As indicated in this study, the work of the Kayayei can be very tedious and stressful, however, some of the Kayayei are able to demonstrate the agency by engaging in other economic activities like helping food sellers, aside their usual carrying of loads. This fetches them extra income and helps them to survive in times when they do make any

income from carrying loads. In the execution of their work, the agency of children is also demonstrated in their relationship with other competitors especially adults, doing the same kind of job. As illustrated in this study, children are constantly involved in competing and fighting for customers in the presence other males and older women. However, because of ability of determine whether a customer should be charged high or low fees depending on the situation, they often get some income even on a bad day.

It is also important to recognise that children's agency can be exhibited in the presence of power. As (Punch et al., 2007) argue, the presence of power can be oppressive or constraining, however it can also enable children to exercise their agency on their own or with their friends in order to balance adult demands with their own desires. This level of agency was demonstrated by children who were reported to have participated in an intervention program organised by the government. As illustrated earlier, my informant told me that the children demanded for money when they were asked to clean the venue after the program.

Forming social networks is can also be a way to recognise children's agency. Through their social networks, children can obtain resources like food, money and feeling of care and love which enables them to actively determine their own social lives and ensure their survival in the city.

8.5 Social networks and support of Kayayei

In my opinion, most Ghanaians, perceive the Kayayei as people who do not have any supportive social networks. They are generally seen as helpless people who need help but have received very little attention considering their situation. Contrary to this view, this study revealed that participants had developed social relationships with their social networks both prior and following migration. The social networks of the Kayayei included their family, friends, organizations, customers and employers. Evidently, many of these social networks were important sources of social support for these girls who reported that their relationships with their social networks has been paramount to their survival in the city. Considering the circumstances of the Kayayei and the challenges they face daily, they may struggle in meeting their needs in absence of these network members. Through their social networks, the Kayayei are able to gain access to various kinds of support which was explained in this study, such as emotional support, informational support and instrumental support. According to Ryan et al. (2008), these varying types of support maybe be

provided by different people in varied ways, at different times and for migrants these forms of support may cross ethnic or regional boundaries in relation to my study.

Prior migration, some of my informants indicated how their family and friends supported them financially by giving them money for transport to migrate to the city. There were others who also drew on the supports of their contacts in the city. These network members in the city provided them with information on the expectations of life and working as a Kayayei in the city of Accra. As illustrated earlier in this study, one informant described how information from an ethnic group member who was working in the city, gave her an idea of how to compose herself and protect herself and her belongings from thieves before she arrived in the city. This indicates that the role of social networks does not just come to play after children have arrived in the city but also before children migrate.

I discovered in this study that, after children have arrived in the city, the female head porters shift to rely on other social networks at their place of destination in order to get access to resources like accommodation and jobs. Though the family ties of Kayayei is very essential prior migration, I would say that, these Kayayei tend to rely more on their social networks developed on arrival in the city particularly their friends and colleagues. Throughout my study, my participants emphasized the significance the role of their friends and how they helped each other in their survival in the city. The common responses of the Kayayei in relation to how they support each other were to do with sharing of food, money and information. Majority of my respondents indicated how they could rely on their friends for money and food on days that they do not make enough income. Also, considering the environment and conditions of the Kayayei, falling sick is something that is likely to occur regularly. These girls depended on each other for help when they got sick. They indicated that when one of them gets sick, they make contributions to buy medications for their friend. They also shared information with their friends on where they can find jobs and how to protect themselves from men who may try to harass or abuse them.

Apart from sharing, the relationship the Kayayei had with their friends was characterised by reciprocity. The act of reciprocity as explained by Mizzen and Oforu-Kusi (2010) in their study, indicated that, to enter friendships, one must know that a friend will seek out one's support, and also to understand that with the privilege to ask for help comes with reciprocal obligations. This can be illustrated in the assertion of one participant in a focus group discussion as she explained;

“For me I do not mind sharing my food and other things with my friends, but when I need something today and you help me, next time when you are also in need, I will help you”. From the above statement it can be concluded that Kayayei do not share with everyone but just those they consider as friends. The Kayayei also play a very important role in the survival of their friends who are in need through sharing. However, this process is expected to be reciprocated when the person who is sharing now happens to be in need in future.

Considering the role that the various social networks play in the lives of the Kayayei, it is evident that, the social networks of the Kayayei serves as a useful coping strategy which helps them to deal with the adversities they are faced with working and living in the city. Employing various coping strategies to survive in city through their social networks demonstrates the resilient nature of the Kayayei. As Boyden (2003) argues, children in difficult situations such as street children, regardless of being continuously faced by risks such as poverty and harsh conditions on the street, operate outside structures such as the family, community and schools. The ability of the female head porters to ask, to receive, to share, to trust one another and to have affection for others enables them to be resilient and ensure that their basic needs are met as well as provide a feeling of belonging to a group.

8.6 Summary and conclusion

This section presents the summary of the study in accordance with my research questions and in addition offer some recommendations.

8.6.1 Social networks of the Kayayei

In this study, poverty was said to be one of the major reasons why children migrate from the Northern part of Ghana to the city in search of a better life and opportunities. In the case of my participants, migrating to the city to engage in the Kayayei business came with its own challenges. On arrival in the city, children encounter various problems in relation to their accommodation, healthcare, abuse and exploitation as well as accidents and injuries in their line of work. This study revealed that in the face of these challenges, children survive by developing relationships with their social network members. The Kayayei mainly depended on friends, family, ethnic group members, customers and employers, NGOs as well as other members in the community. Findings from this study revealed that though children were being supported by an NGO, support from their

friends seemed to be more prominent in their lives. This was emphasized through their descriptions of experiences in sharing food, money, information on acquiring jobs as well as caring for each other when sick. Furthermore, though most of these children have limited contact with their families, they were very appreciative especially of the role their parents played prior to their migration by supporting them in one way or the other. Therefore, the girls felt a sense of responsibility to reciprocate that support by sending remittances home. The Kayayei in this study also made mention of certain people in the community and in the markets like customers, employers and ‘good Samaritans’ who came to their rescue when they are in difficult situations such as being harassed or abused by someone. Finally, evidence from this study shows that, although the Kayayei said they sometimes get support from people from their religious group, they consider this support as not so relevant. This is because they believe the ultimate provider of their needs is God and they would rather pray and hope for God’s provision than to seek for help from any religious group.

8.6.2 Forms of support obtained by the Kayayei

This study revealed three forms of support in the lives of the Kayayei. These are; emotional support, instrumental support and informational support. In sharing their experiences on the forms of support received from their network members it appeared instrumental support was the most common type of support which dominates in the lives of the Kayayei. Instrumental support as described earlier usually comes in the form of necessities like food, clothing, shelter and money. The study further revealed that the majority of children’s instrumental support came primarily from their friends especially in terms of money. However, in terms of emotional support, findings from this study shows that majority of my participants referred mostly to their family especially their mothers as a source of emotional support. The girls reported that they usually called home to speak to their relatives for words of encouragement or comfort whenever they are faced with certain difficult situations. Despite the limited face to face contact with their family, the Kayayei still considered them as a reliable source of emotional support. Also, the Kayayei most often described receiving emotional support from their friends, who they usually describe and perceive their relationship as filling familial needs. The study revealed that children cherished the relationship they had with their friends who acted as substitutes to their family after they have migrated to the city. Subsequently, some of my participants also discussed informational support

which includes advice and guidance on how to cope with and manage situations which they may encounter. It was evident that information particularly from family, friends and the NGO helped the girls on how to obtain a job, acquire more customers and how to protect themselves abusers and from the harsh conditions related to their work.

8.6.3 Role and challenges of stakeholders in providing support

This study reveals that the government as well as the various NGOs have their own role to play in protecting and ensuring the rights of the female head porters in the city of Accra. The government agency represented by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social protection (MOGCSP) has a mandate to ensure that help is provided to people who are in difficult situations especially children. Data from my informants revealed that the Ministry has implemented some intervention programs which specifically aimed at empowering the Kayayei by offering them vocational and skill training and other educational programs. The study also revealed that, various strategic plans have also been put in place by the ministry to address the Kayayei menace in the country. Similarly, evidence from this study revealed that NGOs were mainly involved in welfare duties like providing food, clothing, accommodation as well as educational, vocational and skill training. The roles that these organizations are playing is very essential and admirable. However, the extent to which the Ministry and NGOs have succeeded in implementing these interventions programs is questionable due to some of the problems and limitations they are confronted with in their provision of support for the Kayayei. Evidence from this study revealed that the major challenge faced by the government and NGOs is the lack of funds. Due to this problem, organizations have been unable to scale up projects, other projects have stalled and some abandoned. It is therefore important for the government and NGOs to consider developing other means of maximizing their economic resources and not being too dependent on foreign aid. Another problem of concern was the lack of cooperation among the different institutions and other stakeholders making it difficult to successfully implement certain intervention programs which would have been beneficial. Stakeholders must therefore collaborate in order to maximize their resources and achieve better results in designing and implementing intervention programs. Furthermore, in providing support on the field, the study revealed that these institutions had to deal to with barriers of gatekeepers, the issue of tribalism as well as the dissatisfaction of children express in participation in certain programs due to the loss of time and money during their working hours. It is for this reason that

the opinions and active participation of children must be taken into consideration in designing and implementing any intervention program.

8.7 Recommendation

Based on fieldwork experience, the revelations of my participants as reasons for migrating to the city and the essential role of their social networks in their survival, I would outline some recommendations which would be relevant in dealing children's migration and work in Ghana.

Firstly, it is important to note that is highly impossible to stop the Kayayei trend through certain policy and intervention programs like repatriation which has been a continuous failure. Hence, I would recommend that, government should formalise and regulate the work of the Kayayei. The Kayayei can be enrolled and registered under an agency or unit of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection or the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare. By doing this, the Kayayei could be given automated identity cards which would permit them to work legally and help to easily track them. This approach would also help to minimize some of the dangers and risks associated with this work by outlining service conditions especially to employers who are likely to abuse and exploit these girls. It could also minimize the number of minors involved in this work since parents would be discouraged to send children who are underaged knowing they may not be registered.

Secondly, the lack of coordination between NGOs and the government in addressing the issues of Kayayei is also another issue of concern. Though the government and various NGOs are doing their best in helping Kayayei, interventions would be more fruitful if these organizations collaborate and pull their resources to together to raise awareness by educating both parents and children on the dangers associated with children's migration. The general public also needs to be educated to change their negative attitude towards the Kayayei. Also, through an effective collaboration, these organizations could increase their provision of formal education and the vocational and skill training to the Kayayei. I also suggest that NGOs and government should ensure that their funds are sustainable by employing alternative means of obtaining or generating funds rather than relying on international agencies.

Most importantly, the root causes of children's migration to the South must be addressed. This study identified poverty as the main reason for children's migration. I therefore recommend that

measures should be put in place to address the issue of poverty in the North. The government should create more income generating activities for especially women in the North. Also, there should more focus on the North in terms of developmental projects. setting up industries to employ most people who need jobs would also help solve this problem. Therefore, the government's initiative of the "one district one factory" is a step in the right direction.

Improving the provision of education in the North is also a way to reduce the rate of children's migration. The government should subsidise school fees or provide scholarships for people who cannot afford. Though the government has implemented the Free Compulsory Universal Education (FCUBE) and the Free Senior High School program, it must ensure that, all associated indirect cost like examination fees, school uniforms, text books are also catered for. Also, more vocational and skills training should be done in the Northern regions to prevent girls from migrating to the Southern cities.

Finally, this study has revealed that, due the long-held perceptions of children and childhood, most organization are not implementing appropriate measures and interventions to solve the Kayayei trend. I would therefore suggest that in designing intervention programs, children should be approached as active agents and their views be considered in decision making. This is because children continue to demonstrate their ability to survive even in the face of adversities by adopting coping strategies through their developed social networks. Increasing children's participation in decision making will give stakeholders a better understanding of their situation and needs, thereby providing appropriate interventions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for female head porters (study participants)

Personal Information

- How old are you?
- Where do you come from?
- What made you move to Accra?
- How did you come to Accra?
- What made you move to Accra?
- How long have you worked as a Kayayoo?
- What did you know about the Kayayoo business before moving to Accra?
- Who did you meet when you first arrived?

Social support systems

- Do you have any family members here in Accra?
- Have you seen any of your family members since you arrived in Accra?
- Are you contact with your family back home? If yes how often and by what means? If no why?
- Do you receive any help from your family?
- Can you give an example of how your family has helped you?
- Do you have friends here in Accra?
- How did you meet your first friend?
- How many friends do you have now? Who are they?
- How long have they been your friends?
- Do your friends help you in any way?
- Can you give me an example how a friend helped you?
- Do the Kayayei help each other?
- Can you tell about a situation where one of you needed help and how you helped?
- Do you go to belong to any religious group here?

- Do you get any help from the people there? In what ways?
- Do you have an association or a group as Kayayei?
- What do you do?
- What are some of the benefits for being a member of the association?
- Have you heard of any organization that helps Kayayei?
- How did you get information about this organization?
- Have you received any help from any of these organizations?
- If yes what kind of help did you receive?
- How long have been with this organization?
- Do you work for someone or you work on your own?
- Does your employee help you in any way? How?

Perceptions and experiences

- What would you say has been your worst experience working as kayayoo and how did you overcome it?
- Can you tell me of any other setbacks you consider challenging and how you overcame them?
- Who do you go to for help first when you are faced with a very tough problem?
- Why that person?
- Can you think of any other people who help you when you are faced with a problem?
- How would describe your friendship with the other kayayei or your friends?
- What do you think the organization can do to improve your situation?
- Do you think your life has improved since you started working as a Kayayoo?
- If yes in what way has your life improved? If no, why?
- What do you think the government can also do to improve your situation?

Appendix 2: Interview guide for NGOs

- What is your position in the organization?
- Can you tell me a little bit about this organization and what it does?
- What role does your organization play in relation to independent child migrants?

- What kind of support do you provide for kayayei?
- What is your main focus when it comes to supporting these girls?
- Can you tell me about some of the projects that have been organized for these girls?
- How successful have these projects been?
- Have there been any follow up projects or systems put in place to monitor the progress of such projects?
- How are these girls recruited to be supported?
- What challenges do you face in providing support for these children?
- Can you give me a typical example of this?
- Does your organization receive any support and incentives from external agencies or the government?
- Do you sometimes have collaborations with other organizations in supporting these girls?
- If yes how has that helped? If no, why not?
- What are your future plans for these girls.
- In your opinion what can be government and its agencies like the Ministry of gender, children and social protection do to curb the incidence of independent child migration?

Appendix 3: Interview for government official

- What is your position in the Ministry?
- What role does the ministry play in relation to the issue of child migration?
- What kind of support do you provide for the Kayayei?
- What is your main focus when it comes to supporting these girls?
- Can you tell me about some of the projects that have been organized for these girls?
- How successful have these projects been?
- Have there been any follow up projects or systems put in place to monitor the progress of such projects?
- How are these girls recruited to be supported?
- What challenges do you face in providing support for these children?
- Can you give me a typical example of this?
- Do you sometimes have collaborations with other organizations in supporting these girls?

- If yes how has that helped? If no, why not?
- Do you make any budgetary allocation to support Kayayei? If no, why
- What does the ministry do and what kind of support do they provide for Kayayei?
- Are there any policies in place to provide support and protect independent migrants especially girls?
- Does the ministry receive any support and incentives from external agencies or government?
- What are your future plans for these girls?
- In your opinion what can be done to improve the situation of independent child migration in Ghana?

Appendix 4: Informed consent (Adult participants)

This research project entitled “Social Support of Independent Child Migrants: The Experiences and Perspectives of Female Head Porters in Accra” is a study by Nadia Owusu-Ofori in fulfillment of the requirement of the Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies programme that I am pursuing at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The aim of the project is to improve knowledge and understanding of the experiences and perceptions of female head porters on the social support they receive and how that helps them to cope on the street. It also seeks to explore the role of government and NGO’s in providing support for Kayayei and the challenges they face in supporting these girls.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Thus, you have the right to choose not to participate, and you are free to discontinue at any time.

This research may include topics of a personal nature. However, all your answers and personal data will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this research. Thus, we encourage you to be as honest as possible – there are no right or wrong answers. I am simply seeking to gain an insight into the kind of support provided for the Kayayei.

You will have the opportunity, if you wish, to obtain a copy of the results of the research in which you are taking part. If you have any question regarding this research, you may contact Tatek Abebe on +4773596247 or via email: tatek.abebe@svt.ntnu.no

Signature of acceptance

I have read and understood all the information above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this research. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time.

Participants Signature _____

Date _____

Researchers Signature _____

Date _____