Migration and Social Networks: Ghanaian Immigrants' Perspectives

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Abstract

Studies on migration and social networks mostly focus on the role of social networks as an important migration motivation. This paper draws on migration experiences of eight Ghanaians residing in South Africa to argue that much as social networks are key factors underlining motivation of migration, there are perceived social networks that are equally significant and should be considered in the studies on migration and social networks. A questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with open-ended and close-ended questions were used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. The questions covered the participants' desire to emigrate from Ghana and their motives for doing so. They were also required to mention all the destination countries they had migrated to before arriving in South Africa and indicate the year and the motives of migration to South Africa. The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and thematic analysis respectively. The findings demonstrated the effects of social networks on the participants' motives for migration. Of greater significance is the fact that some of the participants successfully arrived in their destination countries without the aid of social networks in either the countries of origin or the destination countries.

Keywords: motives, migration, social networks, Ghanaian immigrants

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2023/sp41a14

Introduction

International migrants are mainly from low-income[1] or lower middle income countries to upper middle income or high income countries (United Nations Organisations 2016). Ghana is classified as a lower middle income country (ChartsBin Statistics 2016). It is therefore not surprising that Ghanaians have been migrating to different countries in the world. Political and economic reasons have been the main motivators of emigration in Ghana. Politically, as at its 63rd independence anniversary on 6th March 2020, Ghana had experienced six years of one-party rule, 36 years of multiparty governance and 21 years of military rule. These turbulent political situations had adverse effects on the socio-economic conditions of the people. Particularly, intimidations and harassments from military rulers and their cohorts caused some Ghanaians to flee the country.

Economic motives tend to be the predominant factor influencing Ghanaian emigration (NIDI/EUROSTAT 2000; Anarfi, Kwakye *et al.* 2003; Tonah, 2007; Peil 1995). 51% of the informants in Conduah (2012) provided economic reasons for migrating to South Africa, 22% on a visit, 13% for education purposes, 6% for political reasons, 4% joined their spouses and 4% were in transit. Out of the 22% who came on a visit 19% were employed, which made their real motive for migration economic. For about 12 years (From 1970 to 1982) Ghana's economy registered a negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth with an average annual fall of 0.5%, a population growth of 2.6%, a decline in government revenue from 15% to 4%, negative terms of trade and high inflation rates (Ray 1986). Employment rates declined with very high cost of living. Emigration of Ghanaians to countries with better economic conditions was a predictable aftermath. According to Yeboah (1987: 9), 'Many Ghanaians left, from all sectors of the economy, in search of better opportunities abroad, in a never ending stream of professionals, skilled and unskilled workers'. Indeed, emigration was perceived as the best option to solve personal financial difficulties.

[1] Low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita of $1,045 or less in 2014; middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,045 but less than $12,736; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of $12,736 or more. Lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income economies are separated at a GNI per capita of $4,125 (http://chartsbin.com/view/2438).

Ghanaians have been migrating to Nigeria since the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Almost 300 Ghanaians migrated to Nigeria on a daily basis during the early part of the 1980s (Peil 1995). Perhaps, the common use of English in Nigeria and Ghana and the proximity between the two countries accounted for Ghanaians migrating to Nigeria. Nigeria is about a day or two journey by road from Ghana. Financially, it is also not expensive to travel from Ghana to Nigeria thus making it more viable for Ghanaians to migrate to Nigeria. Above all, Nigeria experienced its greatest oil boom between 1978 and 1980. The country's oil revenue rose from N5,4 billion in 1978 to N10,3 billion in 1979 and reached the highest recorded revenue of N13,5 billion in 1980 (Afolayan 1988: 17).

There was, however, a change in the trend of migration in the early 1980s. The Nigerian economy registered a downward trend in 1983–1984 and Nigeria was no longer considered as an ideal destination for Ghanaians. Ghanaians therefore continued to seek favourable destination countries with the top five countries of destination being Nigeria, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, Cote d'Ivoire and Italy (UNICEF 2017). Difficulties and red tape involved in visa applications to Europe and the United States have led a number of Ghanaians to consider South Africa as more viable alternative thus going some way in explaining some of the reasons for the presence of a Ghanaian community in Johannesburg. The potential migrant's use of a common language with the destination country is one of the 'pull' factors for migration (Schoorl, Heering, Esveldt, Groenewold, van der Erf, Bosch, de Valk & de Bruijn 2000). This factor tends to influence Ghanaian immigrants' choice of Nigeria, United States, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and South Africa as destination countries. English is an official language in all these destination languages. Moving away from these factors of emigration among Ghanaian immigrants, this paper focuses on the role of social networks in Ghanaians' desire to migrate.

Social Networks and Migration

Any forms of established relationships built on kinship, friendship and community are deemed to be social networks (Massey, Ariango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino & Taylor 1993). Social networks are channels of information and structures for social and economic assistance. There are

'interconnected' networks that attract and are basically used for social support and 'expansive' networks which involve larger circle of friends and offer information that may induce a migrant's choice of destination. Interconnected networks are potentially more beneficial than expansive ones. Migrants also tend to select destinations where they have a number of social networks. 'Individuals with more contacts in a destination community are more likely to migrate to that community' (Blumenstock, Chi & Tan 2019: 27). Drawing information from a longitudinal study across more than 150 countries, Manchin and Orazbaye (2018) also grouped social networks into close social networks abroad and broad social networks. Close social networks include friends and family members whilst broad social networks involve people living in the same country, who intend to migrate. The authors state that the close social networks abroad are the greatest contributory factors to the desire for international migration. Further, the combined effect of close and broad social networks on motives for migration is far greater than one's financial capabilities or assurance of job opportunities in the destination country. Readily available migration information from social networks reduces migration costs (Zhou 2015).

Migrants' social networks can be considered on different levels. Migrants' personal associates or ties who have international migration experiences are categorised as individual-level social capital. Migrant social networks impact largely on attitudes towards migration. Men and women use different types of social networks for migration. The use of male migrant networks is more likely to aid migration than networks involving women. The latter networks become useful in the migration process of independent women (Toma 2012). Colussi (2013) also states that social networks in the destination countries provide valuable information and assistance that lead to positive labour market opportunities and settlement of new migrants. Undry and Conley (2004) researched on the relationship between economic activities and social networks in four villages in Ghana and discovered that networks of information, capital and influence largely affected the economic activities in the communities. However, Yeboah (2017) explored the effects of social networks among 30 young migrants in Accra, Ghana and highlighted financial assistance received by the migrants through social networks as a positive effect but the study observed further that these migrants were vulnerable to financial exploitation through the very same social networks. Badwi, Ablo and Overa (2018) also studied the impact of

social networks and social identities on the integration of Ghanaian immigrants in the labour market in the city of Bergen, Norway and noted that Ghanaian immigrants' sole reliance on social networks could not enable them to get fully integrated into the labour market and most of them were forced to resort to blue collar jobs.

The role of social networks in migration processes needs to be interrogated. Okyere (2018) conducted a study involving 10 in-depth interviews and three focus groups of Ghanaians in South Africa and concluded that the participants' family members with international experiences played pivotal role in their migration to South Africa. The study revealed further that once in the destination country developing new social ties especially with migrants of higher social class and strengthening existing ones are sometimes difficult. Boateng (2016) assessed the role of social networks among young migrants in Jamestown in Accra, Ghana and concluded that strong social networks were used as channels to disseminate information that contributed to the improved lifestyles and good health of the migrants and that weak social networks potentially created debilitating results on the migrants' lifestyles and health. However, Awumbila, Teye and Yaro (2017: 993) argue that 'while social proponents of networks theory tend to focus on cooperation and thereby ignoring power differentials in society, in reality, actors within the networks do not have equal power relations'. Indeed, Blumenstock *et al.* (2019) note that migrants tend to select destinations where they have sizeable number of networks. Van Meeteren and Pereira (2013) also studied the migration experiences of Brazilians living in Portugal and the Netherlands with a focus on different migrants' profiles and migration motives on one hand and their different socio-demographic profiles and migration strategies on the other hand and discovered that some categories of migrants barely depend on social networks. The authors specifically mentioned that migrants 'that move seeking to experience life and culture abroad are also less networked than labour migrants and less dependent on those contacts to arrange their migration'. Out of 100 participants in the study in Conduah (2012), 56 per cent had lived in 38 different countries. 55 per cent migrated to destinations where they did not know a friend or a relative. Against this backdrop, this paper argues that a good number of people migrate to destination countries where they do not have existing social networks prior to migration but they are able to successfully settle in these countries counting on 'perceived social networks'.

Research Method

Using the migration experiences of eight participants, namely an architect, a dentist, a businessman, a technician, a mechanic and a 'burger'[2], an accountant and a salesgirl, this paper explores deeply the impact of social network in the participants' desire to migrate to South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, Belgium, Libya, the United Kingdom and Germany. Three factors influenced the selection of the participants. The ***first factor*** was that all the participants were residing in South Africa at the time of this study but there were differences in their migration status. The Salesgirl was a first time migrants because South Africa was her first country of destination. The Architect and the Dentist had lived and worked in Nigeria. The Businessman had also lived and worked in Nigeria, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. The Burger had lived in Nigeria, Libya and the United Kingdom. The Technician had also lived and worked in Nigeria, Belgium and Mozambique. The Mechanic lived and worked in Nigeria, Libya and Germany. He was in Zimbabwe and Zambia for short periods of time. Similarly, the Accountant lived and attended school in Swaziland and she also travelled to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire for short periods of time.

The ***second factor*** was about the differences in the participants' age, occupations and attitude towards destination languages. The Architect and the Mechanic were between the age range of 56 and 60 years. The Dentist and the Technician were between the age range of 46 and 55 years. The Businessman and the 'Burger' were between the age range of 36 and 45 years. The Accountant was between the age range of 26 and 35 years. The Salesgirl was between the age range of 18 and 25 years. The Architect, the Dentist and the Businessman had learned South African indigenous languages namely Xhosa, Sotho and Zulu. The Technician, the Mechanic and the Burger had not learned any South African indigenous language. However, the Technician did learn Hausa in Nigeria and French in Belgium. Similarly, the Mechanic and the Burger learned German and Arabic in Germany and Libya respectively. The Accountant and the Salesgirl had not learned a destination language despite their youth when language acquisition is deemed to be relatively easier.

[2] A German term that was used for all migrants irrespective of the country to which they migrated. This was probably because of the conspicuous and ostentatious dressing and lifestyle of Ghanaian migrants who had returned home or were just visiting from Germany (Tonah 2007: 4).

The ***third factor*** was the type of research instrument used for the study. Six of the participants who were the Architect, the Technician, the Mechanic, the 'Burger', the Accountant and the Salesgirl were in-depth interviewees but the Dentist and the Businessman answered a questionnaire. The differences were expected to yield variation, richness and depth in the data analysis.

In-depth interviews and the use of a questionnaire were the research instruments. The questionnaire included open-ended and close-ended questions but the interview questions were basically open-ended. Both categories of questions elicited information concerning the participants' personal biography, their migration experiences, use of language prior to migration and during migration, employment history in Ghana and South Africa and lastly the relationship between language and employment. The Architect, the Dentist, the Mechanic and the Accountant were employed in the formal sector whilst the Businessman, the Technician, the 'Burger' and the Salesgirl were working in the informal sector. The Architect, the Technician, the Businessman and the Salesgirl were interviewed at their workplaces. The Dentist filled in a questionnaire at a meeting venue. The Mechanic was interviewed at the premises of a university, the 'Burger' was interviewed at his friend's shop and the Accountant was interviewed at her church premises. About one hour was spent on each in-depth interview and each questionnaire contained 17 pages with 98 questions.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher approached the participants and explained the objectives of the study to them and invited them to be part of the study. Following their consent to be interviewed, the researcher and each participant agreed on a date and time for the interviews. The participants were made to read and sign a letter of consent and agreement attached to the questionnaire. The participants' rights to anonymity, withdrawal from the study and the choice not to answer unpleasant questions were explained to them.

Data Analysis

As stated earlier, the in-depth interviews and the questionnaire incorporated both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Thus, the data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative data so that similarities and differences in the participants' responses would be clearly captured. Qualitative data were generated from the in-depth interviews and the reasons the participants, who responded to the questionnaire, provided for the closed-ended questions. The qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis in order to identify themes and patterns. The following main themes involving social networks and migration were revealed: pre-existing social networks and migration, family social networks and migration and perceived social networks and migration.

Discussion of Participants' Experiences

The following part presents and analyses the migration experiences of the participants under the subheadings of pre-existing social networks and migration; family network and migration; and perceived social network and migration.

Pre-existing Social Networks and Migration

The Architect was employed as a teacher in Imo State in Nigeria and eventually resigned his teaching post following the school management's inability to assist him to obtain a work permit and a residence permit. He then successfully applied for another teaching post at the University of Science and Technology at Port Harcourt. However, social networks contributed to his migrating from Lagos to Port Harcourt: 'A lot of Ghanaians were teaching there and they told me that the university was new and it was looking for lecturers'. This assertion confirms the finding by Atiso, Kammer and Adkins (2018). The authors elicited the views of 50 Ghanaian immigrants living in Maryland, United States of America with regard to their access to sources of information and the associated challenges and noted social networks as major sources of information. In 1996, the Architect migrated from Ghana to Eastern Cape in South Africa using his wife as a social network conduit: 'My wife left for South Africa. I visited 10 months after that, that is from December 1993 to October 1994. I came with some of the children and left them here … I tried to get a job here but I couldn't so I went back in March 1995'. The Architect's failure to find jobs on a short visit could be as a result of lack of social networks in South Africa. This condition is consistent with the notion that ineffective social networks tend to increase search friction and low labour market outcome in the destination country (Zhou 2015).

Social network was a major contributing factor to the migration of the Architect's wife to South Africa: 'Yes, my wife came to South Africa in '93 for a number of reasons especially where she had a problem with her employers and so on so my wife left for South Africa. She is a medical officer. She was doing a programme in paediatric at Korle Bu … And some classmates were already in South Africa, doctors here so they managed and fixed an appointment for her even before she left Ghana'. A cluster of classmates and professional doctors reflect the assertion that 'common consciousness or bundle of experiences' metamorphose into social interconnected networks with significant outcomes (Vertovec 1999: 5). Interconnected networks served as a motivation of migration for the Architect's wife. Blumenstock *et al.* (2019) are of the view that interconnected networks in a destination country largely influence a migrant's decision to relocate to that country. Zhou (2015) also argues that migrants who have social networks in the destination may use referral means to obtain employment, which reduces search frictions in the labour market. Having established herself in South Africa, the wife was in a strong position to cause her husband's migration: 'The following year 96 June I visited again my family in South Africa. And at that time they said I should be here with them. I had seven months of leave from my workplace and so within the seven months I got a job here in South Africa in the Eastern Cape so I decided not to go back to Ghana'. He therefore migrated to South Africa, lived and worked in the Eastern Cape for two years (1996 to 1998) and later relocated to Johannesburg. Thus, the impact of the social networks of the Architect's wife served as a knock-on effect for the relocation of the Architect to Eastern Cape.

The Technician lived and worked in the Kano State for two years (from 1976 to 1978) and returned to Ghana where he stayed also for two years (from 1978 to 1980). He then returned to the Kano State in 1980, worked there for eight months. 'In 1980, yeah, I went back to Nigeria and I went back to Kano again and it was there that I met a new company that has been built, Binato. It's an electronic company so I just went there and then they took me and I started working with them. I worked for eight months and then I moved to Belgium'. Blumenstock *et al.* (2019: 5) argue that 'the probability of migration roughly doubles as the number of contacts in the destination doubles'. It can be inferred that the Technician had created a good number of social networks in Kano before his return to Ghana that facilitated his coming back to Kano.

The Technician migrated to Belgium in November 1980 through social network: 'All the time there are great challenges in life. I was thinking maybe if I could have made it to Europe, maybe things would be better for me so then I have to move to Belgium. So I get some friends who were in Belgium and then I was communicating with them so they asked me why not, why can't you come. I said no then I was making the plans. So after collecting my money, my pay, I was saving then it was there that I bought the ticket and then they collected the visa for me and I just moved to Rome so from Rome then I take a train to Belgium'. He lived and worked in Louvain, 25 kilometres from Brussels, the capital of Belgium as an independent second-hand car salesperson for three years (from 1980 to 1983) and returned to Ghana in 1983. He lived in Ghana for three years (1983 to 1986). Similar to the situation in Kano where established and known social networks might have played a role in his return, the Technician later returned to the job of selling second hand cars in Belgium: 'I went back again to Belgium from 1986 to 1990'. This re-migration to Belgium confirms the assertion in Blumenstock *et al.* (2019: 5) that 'repeat migrants (who have previously migrated from their home to the destination), long-term migrants, and short-distance migrants all of whom are presumably better informed about the structure of the destination network are more likely to migrate to locations where their networks are more expansive'.

The Mechanic migrated to Germany where there were pre-existing social networks. He worked in Nigeria for three years and 'earned good bucks', which made him 'safe to go to do some practicals in Germany' with the support of his brother: 'My brother took me to the language school. You see my brother here. He was in Germany. He went to Germany far back as 1970. He's married there. A German girl and they are … he made a family there and he is working there. So they…they supported me'. At the end of two and a half years of living in Libya, the Burger returned to Ghana in 1992 stayed there for one and a half years and finally migrated to South Africa. This time his brother who had lived in South Africa provided him with information prior to migration: 'Because my senior brother was here. It was here he passed to South Korea so he told me that I should come here there was opportunity here whereby I can get to any part of the world anywhere I want to go, yeah'.

The Accountant graduated from the University of Transkei in 1994 and she travelled to a number of countries through social networks: 'To the States. To Paris. To London. Cote d'Ivoire. Kenya was for a short time because my dad went on sabbatical and we went with him … To the States, just for a

while. No school. Nothing. It was just in the initial stage when he said I must come back'. Her uncle and some of her family members were in London: 'I have been there, yeah. To my uncle. My family is there, when I take leave usually like three weeks, two weeks'. The Accountant's experiences corroborate the observation that some people choose to join their parents, siblings, or children in a destination country as a means of family reunification. This reunion occurs regularly in a good number of destination countries in the world (Poros 2011). Her journey to Paris was influenced by her friends who were living there: 'Some of my colleagues are there working and I went with a friend. I just took a flight to Paris from London just for a while'. This scenario is consistent with the notion of social network expansiveness that one is likely to migrate to a destination with a number of friends (Blumenstock *et al.* 2019).

The Salesgirl arrived in South Africa in April 2000 through the influence of a series of social networks.

> My younger uncle was working at South African embassy in Ghana so the ambassador was his friend and weekends, like the air hostesses, when they come to Ghana, sometimes, they spend time at his house. I was very close to that uncle of mine so every time when I go there, I will meet these South African air hostesses. They would be coming and made friends with two of them. So some few months after us meeting and you know, talking, one of them came to Ghana and, she has a daughter of about 12 years that time - now I think she is about 15 or 16. 12 years that time and she has a house here in South Africa. Her mother left South Africa for UK to work as a nurse so she needed somebody to be staying in the house with the daughter after school so she asked me if I could, you know, come to South Africa and then do my studies in South Africa by being in the house every afternoon for the daughter. 1998, that was the time I met the lady. And then 1999 the lady came to South Africa seriously saying that, 'Okay, Emelia, right now I am ready to … she sent me the ticket, yeah, beginning of 99. So 99 I thought, 'Oh, I would be coming'. She lived with the flight attendant, her daughter and a house help at Diepkloof Phase 3 in Soweto.

The Salesgirl had dual motives for migration. She claimed that 'I came here at the age of 19 to further my education'. Her situation corroborates McDonald,

Mashike and Golden's (1999: 19) finding that 'one of the most enduring stereotypes of African migrants in South Africa is that they are young with little (if any) education'. However, the flight attendant who had invited the Salesgirl to South Africa had different motive for her. This suggestion reflects the view that 'some children may move in order to fill a labour deficit in a household, receiving their school costs or access to better education as 'compensation' (Hashim 2007: 919). Perhaps, the perception that 'basic services like education, water and health care, and economic opportunities, are clearly deemed better in South Africa than in the home country' (McDonald *et al.* 1999: 21) influenced the Salesgirl's and her family's decision to accept the flight attendant's proposal.

Family Social Networks and Migration

The situation of the Architect's wife migrating before him was out of the norm. It is quite unusual for a wife to migrate before she is joined by her husband. Studies conducted with regard to demographic constitution of Ghanaian immigrants indicate that men dominate the number of Ghanaians who emigrate (Anarfi 1982; 1989; Twum–Baah, Nabila & Aryee 1995; Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographics Institute 2000). Thus, Ghanaian men are more likely to migrate first followed with the re-union of their family members. Anarfi, Kwankye, Ofuso-Mensah & Tiemoko (2003: 19) explain that 'Societal norms and traditions of most tribes (if not all) in Ghana are such that there is a bias in favour of men and discrimination against women'. Yendaw, Borbor, Asante-Afari & Nantomah (2019) also state that female Ghanaians mostly migrate internationally accompanied by their husbands. Significantly, 'the reasons for gender selectivity in migration patterns lie in the patriarchal culture manifested in intra-household resource and decision-making structures and other cultural values' (Thieme 2006: 29 - 30).

However, as a qualified medical doctor, the Architect's wife stood a better chance of getting employed in South Africa than her husband. In the early 1990s, there was a greater demand for medical doctors especially in the black communities in South Africa than architects and black lecturers. A 1997 Human Rights Watch sums up the doctor-to-patient ratio in South Africa in 1996: 'There is a national average of 4.2 doctors per 10,000 people, against an international recommended average of 4.9; 10,000. When only doctors in the public sector are taken into account, the national ratio decreases to 1.8 per

10,000' (Human Rights Watch 1998). The then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki attributed this shortfall partly to the emigration of South African doctors and 'the aggressive recruiting campaigns by organisations in relatively wealthy countries, who find it much cheaper to buy individual doctors from South Africa than to train a sufficient number of their own citizens as medical graduates' (Mbeki 1996).

The Technician did not mention any involvement of his family in his decision to emigrate but his family's poor financial conditions could have prompted his migration to Nigeria in 1976 and 1980 and later to Belgium also in 1980. He dropped out of Kumasi Polytechnic in 1975 because of financial difficulties after his father's death. He was not married at the time so there was no influence from a wife. However, there might have been a direct family influence on his decision to migrate to Belgium again in 1986, to South Africa in 1998 and Mozambique in 2003 because he had then married. Tiemoko (2004: 158) states that '... factors relating to household and family structures, play a critical role in determining patterns of migration and development, … migrants might be seen as generating capital for investment through remittances'. The responsibility of catering for his family and being a source for financial transformation would be important consideration for the Technician to emigrate. The Mechanic's mother encouraged him to migrate to Nigeria: 'In fact, I discussed with her and she told me, 'Ah, if you feel that that's going to give you a good future, go ahead'. A decision to migrate may not necessarily be personal. The economic benefits to be derived by extended and nuclear family members resulting from an individual's migration tend to make family members take direct or indirect interest in their relative's desire to migrate (Fleischer 2007).

The poor financial conditions of the Burger's family influenced his intentions to emigrate. He stated that 'some of us there is no money in the family. My family doesn't have the money. I am the one struggling to survive. All my family, the people's eyes on me. Yeah, am the one to help them so everything is God and I hope things will be better'. Adepoju (2002: 7) argues again that 'the dramatic changes in the region's (West Africa) economic fortunes adversely undermined the ability of families to supply the basic needs of their members'. Thus, financial benefits in terms of remittances from an immigrant to family members in the country of origin has become an important feature of African migration (Petkou 2005). Petkou (2005) suggests further that family pride is an important motivation factor for migration in West

Africa. He states that a family's socio-economic importance in the community is determined by the number of emigrants from that family. 'In the popular imagination in Ghanaian society, 'abroad' is the source of innovation, opportunity and material success' (Burrell & Anderson 2008: 205). Some immigrants, as in the case of the Burger, do all types of jobs to satisfy the basic needs of their family members.

The Accountant's migration experiences are largely determined by her parents. She joined her parents in Swaziland, where her father was employed in 1982 as a lecturer at the Swaziland Institute of Management and Public Administration (SIMPA). She accompanied them to Umtata in the Eastern Cape of South Africa when her father got another job at the University of Transkei. Tiemoko (2004) argues that family members in the upper middle and middle classes tend to influence the migration of other members. This influence is because they prioritise their education. The desire to let the Accountant have quality education would have been the main motive of making her join them.

The financial conditions of the Salesgirl's mother, on one hand, might have motivated the Salesgirl to migrate. Hashim (2007) conducted research with 70 children on child rural–urban migration in Ghana and noted that poverty was the prime reason for migration followed by education. On the other hand, the Salesgirl's own quest for a better standard of living could have been an underlying factor. The idea of being independent and living in a better economic environment might have lured the Salesgirl to South Africa.

Perceived Social Networks and Migration

The Architect left Ghana for Nigeria in 1980 apparently for economic reasons, having already been formally employed before his arrival in the country. He states: 'The main reason was that maybe it was also more lucrative in Nigeria in those days than Ghana'. He was employed as a teacher at a technical school in the Imo State in Eastern Nigeria. Even though his nephew was already residing in Nigeria, the nephew did not play a role in his migration process*:* 'Yeah, I had a nephew who was living in Lagos but I didn't go there because of him. I applied to a number of schools and companies in Nigeria and fortunately this school wrote and gave me an appointment letter so I actually got the job in Ghana before travelling to Nigeria. When I arrived in Lagos, I stayed for only a night and left for the east'. Blumenstock *et al.* (2019: 2) note that 'it

is through social networks that migrants learn about opportunities and conditions in potential destinations; at home, the structure of migrants' social networks shapes their ability and desire to leave'. Even though the Architect did not depend on his nephew to migrate to Nigeria, it is likely that he learned of opportunities and prospects in Nigeria through indirect information concerning the nephew.

The Dentist also migrated to Nigeria in 1980 and returned to Ghana in 1984 after a 4–year sojourn and got employed at the Korle–Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra. He worked at the hospital as a dentist for 10 years which he described as 'pleasant but financially not rewarding' and migrated to South Africa in 1993 'to seek fortune'. He stayed in South Africa for one year without a job and eventually entered into a private dental practice in Vereeniging in the East Rand of Johannesburg. The Dentist's situation of staying for one year without a job is contrast to the view that better educated migrants with requisite skills are likely to find employment in the destination labour market (Thieme 2006). Perhaps, the Dentist did not have access to labour market information through pre-existing social networks to facilitate significant labour market outcomes (Zhou 2015).

The Businessman migrated to Nigeria from 1991 to 1992, to Togo from 1992 to 1994 and then to Cote d'Ivoire from 1995 to 1996. He did not assign any reasons of migrating to these countries. All these countries are located in the West African sub-region. Adepoju (2000: 384) states that 'migration is historically a way of life in West Africa. Over the generations, people have migrated in response to demographic, economic, political and related factors'. As a result, Article 27 of the Economic Community of West African States makes provision for free movement of nationals from these countries within the sub–region. Nationals cross borders without visas and can stay for 90 days (Adepoju 2000). They may also apply for residence and seek employment in member states (Anarfi, Kwankye *et al*. 2003). Adepoju (2000: 384) states further that highly skilled workers from Ghana and Nigeria had been migrating to almost all African countries in search of 'relatively higher salaries and better conditions' in the destination countries.

Against this backdrop, one may infer that these political and economic factors might have stimulated the Businessman to emigrate from Ghana to Nigeria, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. One cannot also ignore the geographical proximity of these countries to Ghana as an important motivation of migration for the Businessman. Mitchell (1989: 36 in Petkou 2005: 105) also

observes that 'Africans rarely travel long distances if they can make money under satisfactory conditions at home'. This observation emphasises proximity as a significant consideration for African immigrants. The Businessman's proficiency in English and French, which he had already acquired before his travels, might well have been a significant reason enabling his free movement in these countries. French was his main language of communication in both Togo and Cote d'Ivoire and English in Nigeria. He believed that French and English are common international languages. Togo and Cote d'Ivoire are Francophone countries with French as the official language whilst Nigeria is Anglophone with English as the official language. The Businessman migrated to South Africa in 2002 with the purpose of doing international business: 'I came to South Africa purposely for business; just to expand international trade'. Business in the form of trading, hawking and vending appeared to be the most attractive occupation for African immigrants. 30% of 501 respondents in McDonald *et al.*'s (1999) study were involved in this kind of business. This was the highest number followed by 23% in the armed forces or the security sector. Similarly, a number of African immigrants in the United States were engaged in businesses in many cities in the country (Okome 2005). Rogerson (1997) also reports that 65% of his participants were engaged in business in Johannesburg.

The above discussion suggests that African immigrants find it more viable to create jobs for themselves in the informal sector instead of competing for jobs in the formal sector. This trait makes them more enterprising than most people in the communities they settle in. This is contrary to the general perception that immigrants 'steal' jobs from nationals (Chaskalson 2017). The Businessman imported hair products and distributed them to wholesalers who sold them to retailers. McDonald *et al.* (1999: 10) observes that '… some are creating jobs for South Africans, and bringing goods and skills to the country that might not otherwise be available'. The Businessman was such a person. He is a university graduate, engaged in business in Johannesburg. This is consistent with findings of Rogerson's (1997: 11) study which reported that 'almost half of the non-SADC businesses were operated by individuals with university-equivalent or post-graduate qualifications'. He became a supplier of hair products. Of greater importance is the fact that in all his migration experiences, the Businessman did not refer to existing social networks either in the origin country or the destination countries that facilitated his journey. Perhaps, he was counting on perceived social networks.

The Technician left Ghana for Nigeria in 1976 for the following economic motives: 'Just to better my life, to find some better job to do. I just decided to move to Nigeria and see if I can find some better work there and make my life better'. He did not have existing social networks in the destination country*:* 'I reached Nigeria. I found it a little bit difficult to stay in Lagos … because it was very crowded, very, very crowded. And the way things are going it was not my life so I then moved to Kano. I don't know anybody … In Kano I reached there in the daytime, that's early in the morning because it's a day's journey by train. When I reached there in the morning, I was just going around town when I saw that workshop I was talking about. I just entered it and talked to the guy and he said no if I know how to repair then I should come and he will test me if am okay, he will take me. So I went there and he tested me and he just took me'. The Technician's ability to get employed a day after his arrival in Kano without the assistance of any social networks is in contrast with the view that 'individuals with networks have almost twice job arrival rate than those without networks' (Zhou 2015: 1). His technical knowledge and the fact that he was not competing for a job in the formal sector were instrumental in his immediate employment.

In 1998, the Technician embarked on another route of migration aimed at Australia apparently without existing social networks in the destination country. 'Then I moved from Ghana like I had wanted to go to Australia but my main aim is I took a Korea visa. I was going to Australia so on my way to Korea I would just get down in Australia but I was refused boarding flight from Zimbabwe, yeah. I was refused a boarding flight in Zimbabwe because I'm not having a transit visa through Australia'. His failure to reach Australia from Zimbabwe directed his attention to South Africa, once more, without existing social networks: 'So then I decided to come to South Africa and hustle a little bit and see if I can make it from here. South Africa, I came to Johannesburg. In Johannesburg, I went to the School of Scientology. In fact, they were able to pay my school fees and everything but I couldn't get anywhere to stay in Jo'burg. I didn't get anywhere to stay. I mean somewhere around. Then, I found a workshop just like what happened to me in Nigeria. I just found one workshop, I just went there, I just interact with the guy and he said no I will test you. He tested me and then he took me so I tell him my problems. He took me home'. Clearly, the Technician had not made any prior arrangement to live in Johannesburg, which suggests non-existing social networks.

An economic incentive and his mother's support encouraged the

Mechanic to leave Ghana for Nigeria:

In fact, I discussed with her and she told me, 'Ah, if you feel that's going to give you a good future, go ahead'. As in the case of the Architect and the Technician, the Mechanic migrated to Nigeria without existing social networks. Proximity of Ghana to Nigeria made him consider Nigeria as a 'home from home': 'Oh, Nigeria was just a stone throw away. So, it was not far. Even people go on the weekend and come on … in their cars. So, I didn't feel any big difference'. Perceived social networks also served as a motivation for him: 'Because we were having interaction long ago when we were kids with the Nigerians and the Nigerians with us so we … we were like brothers'. He eventually migrated to Southern Africa and finally arrived in Johannesburg without pre-existing social networks but perceived ones: 'I entered South Africa through the Beitbridge. Then I came to Johannesburg. When I came to Johannesburg, I found some Ghanaians. Then I stayed with them … I didn't know them before. I found someone who … who sympathised me and took me in'. Sympathy appears to be a key factor for established immigrants' desire to assist newly arrived immigrants.

The Burger was about nineteen or twenty years old[3] when he first emigrated. It was a common practice at that time for the youth of his age to stop school and leave for Nigeria. He arrived in Nigeria in 1987 with perceived social networks: 'I was having my friends there but I didn't know where they are living in Nigeria. You know, I cross Ghanaians. So when I cross some Ghanaians, very fortunately my Ghanaians - my tribes - my tribe - Asantes, yeah, so they helped me to look for my guys. And they helped me in accommodation some months before I see my friends'. This behavior confirms the 'assumption that individuals from the same hometown, or with similar observable characteristics, are more likely to be connected than two dissimilar individuals' (Blumenstock *et al.* 2019:2). He lived in Nigeria for one and a half years and left for Benghazi City in Libya in 1989 for the following economic reason: 'I am prepared to survive because I dropped out from secondary school so I don't have good qualification to search for a job in my country so I have to be hard. I have to work hard and, you know, get something'. As in the case of his migration to Nigeria, he arrived in Libya without pre-exiting social

[3] Primary school at the age of five. 10 years of primary and middle school education making it 15 years of age at the end of middle school. He spent four years at secondary school and two years as a petty trader in Kumasi.

networks but perceived ones: 'Anywhere you go you across a Ghanaian. Very fortunately you across a Ghanaian over there so I didn't find things difficult'.

The Burger arrived in South Africa in 1998. However, he considered South Africa as a 'transit' country to a better destination. He ultimately left in 2000 for the Republic of Ireland without pre-existing social networks: 'I don't know somebody there. I don't know anybody there. I didn't even across Ghanaians. I survive because I speak English. It's English country so I wouldn't find … it's a matter of I make my few days' hotel reservation so about five days I was in hotel going out. Yeah, as a guy you will meet a friend so I didn't find anything bad. And they are very, very friendly, yeah. so I didn't find things difficult'. He lived and worked in Ireland for four years and moved to London for the purpose of seeing what Britain was like. He did not mention any existing social networks in London. Perhaps, the proximity between London and Dublin might have enabled a form of social networks prior to migration. He spent two years in London and returned to Ghana, lived there for one year and left for South Africa for the second time through pre-existing social networks. He was then living with friends he might have made when he was in the country for the first time.

Conclusion

This paper sought to highlight and discuss the use of social networks in the migration processes of eight Ghanaian immigrants who were residing in South Africa. The analysis revealed that social networks influenced the participants' decisions to migrate. Poros (2011: online) states that 'Most potential immigrants seek to minimize their risks when they move and consider places where they know other individuals or organizations that can help them to make the trip and settle most easily. Social networks provide the kinds of connections needed to make migration possible'. The participants' family circumstances also impacted on their decisions to migrate. However, of major significance was the fact that the study demonstrated further that the participants were equally determined to migrate to destination communities where they did not have existing social networks prior to migration. They were largely confident of 'perceived' social networks that ultimately assisted them to settle in the new communities. Perhaps, the inner drive to migrate appeared to be far greater than the external conditions that might facilitate or obstruct the migration processes.

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