

Marginalization and Empowerment: An Intersectional Analysis of Kayayei Women in Accra, Ghana

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the experiences of females engaged in the head portering business in the Madina Central Market located in the Madina Municipal District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Colloquially known as *Kayayei*, these women are migrants from Northern Ghana who engage in the head portering business (Kaya business) in urban centers.

The study examines these women in their pursuit of their migration goals in the midst of rigid social structures which surrounds them. It employs a multidimensional analytical framework which encompasses three concepts namely; Social Identity Theory, Feminist Intersectionality Theory and Agency, to provide a robust understanding of the motivations, decision and challenges which surround the migration journeys of Kayayei women.

Utilizing qualitative research methods, specifically, observations, one-on-one-interviews, and focus group discussion, this study pursues three major objectives. Firstly, it explores the extent to which women from Northern Ghana possess the power to actuate their migration goals given the stigma and stereotypes they face in society as women. Secondly, it investigates how the portrayal of the Kaya job which is socially perceived as an inferior job affects workers in the industry, and lastly, it investigates the general disposition of the Kayayei towards their occupation in this context.

The findings from this study contribute to the existing knowledge of labor migration among Kayayei women in Ghana. It amplifies the voices and experiences of the Kayayei women by highlighting their agency and resilience in a challenging socio-cultural environment in pursuit of a better life.

Keywords: Migration, Kayayei, Feminist Intersectionality, Agency, Social Identity, Ingroup and Out-group.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

In the vibrant market centers of Accra, Ghana, there is a distinct group of workers referred to as the '*Kayaye*'. Often times, they can be seen maneuvering through the crowds carrying heavy loads on their heads. There is a growing influx of this group of individuals, comprising of females across various age groups whose main occupation is to engage in the head portering of goods in Ghanaian market centers. The word "*Kayaye*" is a combination of two words from two different local dialects in Ghana; Hausa and Ga. In the Hausa language, "*Kaya*" means luggage, goods or loads, and "*Yoo*" or "*Ye*" means woman or women respectively in the Ga language, which is the language of the indigenes of Greater Accra-the capital of Ghana (Opare, 2003). The *Kayaye* are predominantly low-paid, less educated female rural-urban migrants who convey load on their heads for a fee and are not accounted for their efforts as they are invisible within the Ghanaian labor market (Opare 2003, p.34). This master's thesis aims to explore the complexities of migration, gender and labor within the context of a segment of workers in this business and presents a compelling case for a detailed investigation on the dynamics of labor migration, gender and societal attitudes.

The head portering business also referred to as the '*Kaya*' job, is a profession dominated by migrant women in Ghana. These women are predominantly from Ghana's five Northern regions; Upper-West, Upper-East, North East, Savanna, and Northern Regions (Ansong, 2015, p.236). Studies by Lambert et al. (2012), have indicated that, these regions are often characterized by high illiteracy rates, low economic development and opportunities. These factors have therefore created a shift in Ghana's internal labour

migration trends, with women dominating the movement- a phenomenon referred to as the “feminization of migration” (Awumbila, 2015; p. 133; Buske 2014, p. 299).

The context of this study is anchored in the socio-economic disparities between the Northern and Southern Regions of Ghana. Recent reports have estimated that, the population in the Northern regions of the country remain the poorest (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020; p: 7). Hence, the perception of higher incomes earned in both the formal and informal sectors of employment in the South, prompts migrants to venture into business with the attempt to gain opportunities to enhance their lives. This study therefore provides an explanatory account on how north to south migration drives and shapes the experiences of the Kayayei women who have migrated to Accra.

Research has primarily focused on the factors which influence North to South migration among women in Ghana. It has also explored how often these migrant women are deemed as societal threats or nuisances (Huijsmans 2012: p.12). Some studies have also discussed the impact of the Kaya work and experiences Kayayei women face. Yet, the individual experiences and narratives of these women, specifically, their self-constructed identities and the challenges they face in the context of stigma and stereotypes has not been adequately addressed. Also, the individual decision-making processes that lead these women take to engage in the kaya job remains under explored.

Therefore, through a feminist intersectional lens, this study will shed light on how factors such as, migration, ethnicity and class, intersect with gender to shape the experiences of the Kayayei, their Agency, as well as their social identities. Additionally, it will examine how condescending societal attitudes towards the Kayayei impacts their lives in urban areas.

1.2. Rationale For Study

This research study attempts to analyze the perceptions of southern urban Ghanaian societies towards North to South migrants, particularly the Kayayei. These women are stereotyped as societal threats in urban Ghana, a label that studies such as Huijsmans (2012: p.12), have confirmed migrant workers including the Kayayei have been tagged with. The challenges the Kayayei face is a representative of larger societal issues that most people from developing areas such as the Northern regions deal with. These are broader issues caused from societal shifts such as development, urbanization and economic restructuring.

This study seeks to understand how the Kayayei resist these deviant labels, to affirm and re-construct an empowering identity in these circumstances. It will also reveal the individual perceptions about themselves and their careers in an effort to deepen an understanding of their lives. Although studies have added onto to the broad spectrum on the migration trends of the Kayayei (Awumbila, M., & Ardayfio-Schandorf, E. 2008; Shamsu-Deen, Z. 2013; Boateng, C. A. 2018; Nyarko, S. H., & Tahiru, A. M. 2018), they however fail to address how socio-cultural relations and dynamics in the North inform the reasoning and initiatives to migrate. Therefore, this research will explore the persistence of and resistance to traditional gender roles and power dynamics within the context of Kayayei's rural-urban migration.

1.3. Objectives of The Study

The following questions guide this study;

- I. What factors drive North to South migration decision in Ghana, and what extent of power do women from Northern Ghana possess to actuate their migration

- goals given the stigma and stereotypes they face as women in society? This question is important as it addresses the challenges migrant women face when they take the decision to migrate.
- II. How does the characterization of the Kaya job as perceived as an inferior profession, affect the women in this line of work? This question is also important because it seeks to investigate and highlight the effects of society's view on the Kaya job, with focus on uncovering the negative social and economic effects that result from these perceptions.
 - III. What is the general disposition of the Kayayei towards the Kaya job? This question will contribute to the understanding of the Kaya job and will provide insights into the attitudes and feelings of Kayayei towards their occupation.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature surrounding the Kayayei phenomenon has examined the characteristics of migrants and their livelihood strategies (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, E., 2008).

Others have examined the health challenges encountered by migrants, and discussed and recommended possible solutions to mitigate challenges facing the Kayayei (Agyei et.al, 2016; Komesuor 2012). The focus of this thesis is to explore the societal stigma and stereotypes faced by Kayayei women from an intersectional perspective. Again, it delves into the identities of these women as migrants in urban areas and examines their ability to exercise their agency in the midst of the challenges they face. This review of literature shows the existing knowledge on the emergence of the Kayayei phenomenon, the impact of migration on this phenomenon, and the living conditions of migrants engaged in the Kaya business.

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding, this literature review is organized to align with the objectives of this study. It commences with a broad overview of the Kayayei phenomenon exploring the migration patterns and the economic status of people engaged in the business. Secondly, it investigates research about the causes of north to south migration in Ghana, and its implications on female migrants. This review also assesses the extent to which studies have examined women's power and agency in migration with central focus on women from Northern Ghana, and their pursuit of their migration goals. The chapter further examines the literature that has informed on gender specific occupations such as the Kaya job, and discusses how the Kaya job is perceived in the urban Ghanaian setting. Guided by conceptual frameworks, including the Social

Identity Theory, Intersectionality Theory and Agency Theory, the study aims to gain insights into the experiences, attitudes and behaviors of the Kayayei within the social, cultural and political landscapes in Ghana. These theories provide a relevant framework to for an in-depth understanding about the Kayayei women in Accra-Ghana.

2.2. The Kayayei Phenomenon

In recent studies focusing on internal migration in Ghana, researchers have intrinsically linked migration to one's attainment of socio-economic opportunities. (Boateng, 2018; Nyarko & Tahiru, 2018). These include the search for better economic opportunities, family reunification and the advancement of education. As Buske (2014, p.299), highlights, the last two decades have witnessed a substantial change in migration trends with a notable increase in women's involvement. This surge in gendered migration pattern has been explained as being largely driven by unequal gender opportunities (Caritas International, n.d; p.2). Also, data on migration in Ghana indicate that, there is a high proportion of women migrating due to sexual exploitation, forced labor education and limited access to (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020; p.24). However, what is pivotal in understanding this surge is to delve into the challenges Northern migrant women face in certain societal structures rather than just recognizing the reasons for migration.

Researchers have shed light on the various reasons for migration and challenges faced by women in this context. Studies by Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008), have discussed the causes of migration by exploring it through the lens of gender, poverty, and vulnerability. The authors argue that, factors which often force women to migrate from their places of origin include poverty and lack of employment opportunities. Also echoing on this point from a Nigerian perspective is a recent study by Ikwuyatum (2016:

p.121), which maintains that, migration to urban centers in Nigeria have become a major survival strategy to escape poverty. Yet, his study fails to fully explore more on the lived experiences of these women and the intersection factors that influence their migratory decisions. Also, Huijsmans (2012: p.12), recognizes in addition to lack of employment that, the lack of education also plays a dominant role in making migration an alleviation strategy for these women. In the Ghanaian context, the search for greater employment opportunities in urban areas have also been identified as a survival strategy for migrants. According to the author, this makes the Kaya business be reckoned as the only self-employment opportunity to enable gains (Kwankye et al., 2007: 7).

Kansanga et al., (2019), offer a new perspective regarding migration by moving their discourse from the traditional push (factors that cause people to move from their places of origin) and pull (factors that attract people to new places to settle) framework¹. In their study, the authors examined the uneven labor burdens on women in smaller households in Northern Ghana. The results of their study showed a disproportionate work burden on women, thereby unveiling the unequal power dynamics in northern Ghana. Yet, the authors hardly fully justify how these dynamics contribute to women's decisions to partake in the head pottering business in urban areas. Taking into account the cost of living in urban cities such as Kumasi and Accra where most Kaya workers often migrate, their income can be deemed inadequate to support their daily lives. Adjei et al. (2016, p. 298), through their study, revealed that, the average wage of the Kayayei is GH¢ 20-40 (\$3.27- \$6.54)², suggesting that the earnings of Kaya workers depend on the fortunes of the market. These wages of the Kayayei therefore fall short in providing

¹ Lee, Everett S. "A theory of migration." *Demography* 3 (1966): 47-57.

² The Dollar equivalence is in the Canadian Currency. It is worth noting that these rates are subject to change due to daily fluctuations in the Foreign Exchange markets. Therefore, the exchange rates provided in this thesis are based on currency exchange rates at the time of reference.

for their basic needs and the Kayayei women view the Kaya job as a temporary occupation due to its insufficient wages.

Also, “The Bandwagon Effect”, as described by Buske (2014), describes the Kayayei phenomenon in more detail. These points play a role in the migration patterns because of the impact of social networks and peer influences which inform the decision to migrate (Opare 2003; Ahlvin, 2012). This study suggests that, women may more be inclined to engage in the Kaya job when they observe family members or close peers migrating for the job. This therefore reflects the bandwagon effect where these women are influenced by the decisions of their peers which then leads to a domino effect of migratory decisions for the Kaya job in urban areas.

It is therefore evident from this thread of literature that, understanding the migration patterns within the context of the Kayayei demands an intersectional approach. This is because, the migratory behaviors of these women are multifaceted and complex.

Once in the job, the Kayayei also faces significant challenges related to their standard of living, security and sanitation. Most stay in shared shelters which often lack basic amenities such as electricity and sanitation facilities with restricted access to kitchens (Agyei et al., 2016). This unhealthy nature often impacts their health making them prone to diseases like malaria, typhoid fever, cholera and others (Sulemana & Boateng, 2018). The dangerous health conditions of the Kayayei are due to the frequent lack of access to professional medical care. Despite the introduction of the National Health Insurance System Scheme (NHIS)³ in 2003, these women often find themselves excluded from

³ The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), is a social intervention program introduced by the Ghanaian government in 2003, to provide equitable quality health care to all citizens (Agyei et al, 2016; p.310).

Ghana's health system, leading them to self-medicate⁴ without guidance (Lattof et al., 2018; Sulemana & Boateng, 2018). A study by Amoako et al., (2019), revealed that, a mere 9% of the Kayayei sought hospital care, demonstrating a concerning trend in the health seeking behaviors of these women. Beyond physical health, findings by Komesuor (2021), have indicated that the mental health of the Kayayei has also been considerably compromised due to the challenges they face. The high rates of anxiety, depression and stress among the Kayayei can be attributed to the minimal attention dedicated to their mental wellbeing due to their limited access to health care. It is therefore important to consider the context of this issue and not solely attributing this to the health seeking behaviors of Kayayei women. Poverty may limit their capacity to afford health insurance and access health care facilities. The low wages they earn from their jobs and the overall socio-economic conditions they face contributes to their poor health seeking behaviors

Previous studies such as Huijismans (2012: p.13), have highlighted minimal effort from the Ghanaian government to effectively address and mitigate the hardships faced by these migrant women, which in turn intensify the physical and mental health challenges of these women.

2.3. Women's power and Agency to migrate

The intersection of poverty, gender, and vulnerability creates a unique set of problems, especially for women. Firstly, poverty in this context is more than just a lack of

⁴ 'Self-medication' in this context refers to the practice of these women seeking to address their health conditions without proper medical assistance. They prescribe medication for themselves based on symptoms they share with others who have had similar health issues.

money; it is also about not having chances for education or good jobs. Gender in this context refers to socially constructed expectations placed on individuals due to their gender identity which most at times, women are at a disadvantage. Also, vulnerability here relates to the high-risk women are exposed to due to the negative circumstances and their limited access to resources. Due to certain societal expectations, women find themselves at a disadvantage in culturally defined roles such as household management and chores. For instance, in traditional communities in the North, educating the female is deemed a waste of resources. This is because, women are expected to primarily assume household chores and responsibilities which limits or disrupts their access to better economic prospects (Ansong, 2022).

The heightened vulnerability of these women in society is due to their susceptibility to certain seen and unforeseen risks. These risks include economic challenges such as limited access to income, wage gaps, societal prejudices such as stereotypes and gender-based discrimination as well as health challenges including limited access to healthcare which represents a distinct dimension of their vulnerability in society. This can be affiliated to their position in the social hierarchy which is often marginalized to due to their economic status and gender. Although the many external factors influence women's migration, it is essential to understand how all these factors collectively shape women's decision to migrate to the South for better prospects. The intersection of these factors; poverty, gender, and vulnerability within the context of the Kayayei is a complex web of socio-economic challenges. The decision to migrate can therefore be viewed as one influenced by a mix of socio-economic challenges, societal expectations, and individual agency.

Conversely, some researchers argue that, social and cultural factors greatly play a role in the migration patterns of the Kayayei. In investigating the experiences of Northern

men and women in farming households in Ghana, Kansanga et al., (2019), highlighted on how the deployment of mechanized technologies favored men than women. This created an unequal distribution of labour with women having additional manual labor responsibilities on farms while men enjoyed the benefits of technology in their work. This increase in workload for women reflects the uneven power balances in an environment where men have a higher advantage (p. 223). Their analysis on these types of traditional plights adds to the reasons which force women to migrate. Again, the inadequate support and neglect these women get from their families have been reported as key contributors to migration (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2015; p.10).

While these studies give valuable insights, they fail to address the intricate interplay of sociocultural factors which shape the migratory decisions of the Kayayei. A common thread across these studies is the external factors influencing migration. Although the decision to migrate has been explained as the exercise of one's agency, there are several factors such as socio-cultural and economic structures which also influence such decisions. By delving deeply into these complexities, this study, will explore how these women exercise their agency in the midst of multifaceted influences. How do they make choices they perceive as best for them, amid the social, cultural and economic structures surrounding them?

2.4. Societal perceptions and attitudes towards Kayayei Women

In this section, the societal perceptions and attitudes towards the Kayayei is discussed. It explores how sociocultural dynamics and perceptions play a role in the negative stereotypes associated with women in the Kaya job. Studies have suggested that, women move down to the south to engage in the Kaya business due to little or no opportunities. For instance, Awumbila and Ardayfi-Schandorf (2008), mention that,

women migrate to engage in the kaya business because they see it as the only self-employment that could be a survival strategy to overcome their economic difficulties. In Ghana, sociocultural dynamics are deeply entrenched in the perceptions of occupation and economic activity. Research has shown that, the Kaya job for instance, due to its labor-intensive nature and low income, is often negatively perceived by the larger society. People who work in the field fit the stereotypical image as nuisances and societal threats in urban Ghana (Kujismans 2012: p.12).

Buske (2014), highlights more on this point by explaining that, due to their unkempt appearance and the nature of their occupation, the Kayayei are sometimes tagged as “street children” by the Ghanaian public. This shows how the public interacts with them and perceives them in society. From this, it can be agreed that, the formation of these attitudes towards the Kaya job and people in the business is shaped by multiple intersecting factors of their identities. This may include their age, their class or ranking in society, their regional disparities as well as their cultural norms.

Also, in a study by Yeboah et al., (2016), which investigated the experiences and livelihoods of the Kayayei in the Makola and Agbogbloshie markets in Accra, it was found out that, the identity of the Kayayei as rural migrants and living conditions significantly shaped their experiences and perception in urban cities. They faced discrimination due to their identity. One notable finding on this discriminatory practice was a participant’s narration of regular harassment they faced by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (A.M.A) when they could not pay their market tolls of GH¢0.50 (\$ 0.0058). This included physical abuse and seizing of their head pans which prevented them from working (p.306). Findings also showed that, the Kayayei were denied medical access because they were perceived as dirty (p.310). An individual’s membership within social

groups not only contributes to their self-definition, it also contributes positively or negatively to the image they have of themselves.

Although there are governmental policies which aim to bridge the developmental gap nationwide, the Northern regions still suffer from economic development. These socio-economic and regional disparities contribute to the negative societal attitudes towards the Kaya job. This is because of the complex interplay influenced by various factors such as social class, regional disparities, and entrenched cultural norms. All these sources acknowledge that, the Kaya business is a main avenue for income amongst under-privileged northern migrant women. Yet, they fail to present a more comprehensive look into the experiences of these women and how they negotiate the challenges they face.

Chapter 3. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed earlier, it is important to understand the multifaceted experiences of the Kayaye and in order to shed light on the various facets of the Kayayei's experiences and migration decisions. To address the research questions outlined above, three frameworks have been selected: the Social Identity Theory (S.I.T), The Feminist Intersectionality Framework and the concept of Agency.

The S.I.T has been proven to highlight group dynamics and societal categorizations. In this study, this theory is employed to explore how the characterization of the Kaya job, perceived as inferior, affect workers. The focus is to understand the dynamics between the Kayayei and society revealing the social challenges and experiences the Kayayei face. The Feminist Intersectionality Framework proves valuable in unraveling how complex identity markers interconnect to shape the lived individual experiences of marginalised people. This framework becomes pertinent to understand the identity markers of the Kayayei, uncovering how they intersect and influence their lived experiences. By leveraging on the insights of this theory, we also gain a profound understanding of the Kayayei's general disposition towards their occupation.

Lastly, the concept of Agency will be aligned to the research question: 'To what extent do women (who migrate in the Kaya context) from Northern Ghana possess the power to actuate their migration goals given the stigma and stereotypes they face in society as women?' This alignment is crucial in understanding the power of autonomy in structural constraints.

Together, these concepts form a framework that when integrated, will ensure a comprehensive understanding about the Kayayei phenomenon.

3.1. The Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (S.I.T) is a framework for understanding the behavior and attitudes of people, to evaluate themselves as a collective group based on their shared attributes within socio-cultural and political settings. (Stets & Burke 2000, p.225). The theory does not only define the position of individual in society but it also shows their categorizations in society. This categorization depends on the level of value significance and emotional attachment people have towards a group (Hogg, p.186).

The social meanings and value of groups in relation to others may arise from various societal categorization. For instance, a person may belong to several different groups; they might be young, poor, migrant, literate/illiterate, or specifically a Kayayei woman. Therefore, one's identity is defined by the social category to which they belong, influenced by the characteristics of their group. (Hogg et al, 1995; p.259). The theory basically asserts that, self-perception is a concept determined by societal categories which can be either positive or negative and also dependent on the value ascribed to them by society. Such values not only build an idea of one's self, but also contributes largely to their self-esteem and confidence (Trept and Loy, 2017; p.4). Therefore, in the context of this study, the S.I.T is important as it provides a basis which will help in unraveling the perception the Kayayei have of themselves based on the societal groups they belong to. Through this, the deeper insight into their lived experience can be revealed.

Building on this foundation, Hogg et al. (1995), identifies that, in group dynamics, group members tend to adopt strategic behaviors driven by self-perception and how they are perceived by others to either maintain their societal standing or achieve some form of societal value or position. This demonstrates a distinction or cohesion between people

and therefore indicates to members of a specific group, the number of benefits gained by an out-group (Crossett and Spitaletta, 2010; p.26). The central focus on the Social Identity Theory's inter-group and outer-group hypothesis gives insight on the value placed on certain social groups and shows how people outside these groups aim to be positively perceived.

Though social demographics shape the identities of the Kayayei as females within a collective group, it is also important to understand how societal perceptions (out-group dynamics) influence the Kayayei's own sense of identity. It has been established that, society does have negative ideas and opinions about the Kayayei which reinforce certain stereotypes. Therefore, this dynamic not only emphasizes how they navigate through such environments but also shows how external factors deeply shape their individual and collective experiences. It is also necessary to consider how the influence of the S.I.T has been used to understand marginalized groups and their experiences to societal stigma. For example, a study by Sweigart (2022), explored the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community in conservative societies. This study examined how right winged political groups perceive LGBTQ+ rights. Findings showed that, people viewed members of the LGBTQ+ community as both outsiders and also as individuals who challenged their own group values. This blurred the lines between who is considered a part of their ingroup and who is considered an outsider. This categorization showed a crucial concept in S.I.T- how people categorize and perceive others relationally based on their group membership.

S.I.T has also been used to understand marginalized groups and their experiences to societal stigma. In the context of the Kayayei, S.I.T serves as an important framework in examining the dynamics between the in-group (Kayayei) and various out-groups such as the urban locals in Accra or the established Kayayei in urban centers. The application of

this framework therefore aims to reveal the social experiences, challenges, and resilience strategies of the Kayayei as a marginalized collective in the face of social stigmatization. Thus, it will help in understanding the interplay of certain actions and behaviors that shape the experiences of the Kayayei.

3.2. Feminist Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality is a framework developed by Kimberlee Crenshaw, which states that each individual's experience of oppression and/or discrimination is unique. Her approach takes into account the different ways by which a person could be excluded in a given society. (Crenshaw, 1991: p. 1244). She emphasizes that, the experiences Black women face cannot be categorized under the umbrella of race and gender only, but by other intersecting components such as class, age and sexual orientation.

Also posited by Walby et al., (2019), intersectionality is an extensive and multi-disciplinary framework that provides diverse approaches to understanding how complex identities and social structures intersect to make an impact in livelihoods. Again, McCall (2005), also reviews intersectionality as one which is multidimensional; intra-categorical; anti-categorical, and inter-categorical, highlighting a multidimensional perspective on this framework. This signifies that, unlike some other approaches, Intersectionality is more comprehensive. It does not only consider dimensions within a specific category, but also takes into account multiple dimensions within that category. Again, it challenges the traditional method of strictly placing people into different groups by acknowledging the interconnections among various factors that shape their identities. Both authors have enriched the discourse on Crenshaw's foundational work by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the nuances and complexities of the theory. McCall (2005), does this by not only considering how different social categories intersect, but by

also showing that, the experiences within each single category also varies whereas Walby et al. (2019), also provides different approaches to understand how different social structures and complex identities intersect in the livelihoods of people.

Despite its use in the social sciences in two decades, The Feminist Intersectionality Framework is not widely used in the context of African studies and only a few publications have centralized their studies on Africa⁵ (Atewologun, 2018; p.7). Abidogun (2021; p.4), for instance provides an outline on how the theory has been underutilized. He details the distinct differences in identities in the African and American contexts. In the African context, he identifies that, there are certain factors which are peculiar and of high importance in African settings such as ethnicity, national and religious identities, and gender roles, which play a dominant function as markers of oppression as opposed to race, class or sexual orientation which is specific to African American Communities (p.4). This same concept of Intersectionality has also been applied in the studies of other scholars. In the analysis of their studies some have shown that, the focus on a single element such as “gender”, lacks depth into the understanding the ways in which multiple identities intersect and playout against various settings and power structures (Colfer et al., 2018; p.4). Implying that, The Feminist Intersectionality Framework provides insights particularly into how the distinct identity of a person, influences their livelihood in a societal setting. However, the author’s study does not specifically apply the concept of intersectionality in African studies. This gap therefore highlights the need to explore the Feminist Intersectionality Framework within this cultural setting. As Abidogun (2021), points out, the theory makes it possible to identify how gender, age, tribal affiliation; all of

⁵ While it is challenging to determine the precise extent of the use of this framework, this statement is made with the acknowledgement of the assertion that the Feminist Intersectionality framework may not be as popularly employed in the African context.

which are unique social factors in an African setting, reinforces societal inequality among certain individuals like women.

Additionally, a study by Shamsu-Deen (2013), shows the impact of the living and working conditions of the Kayayei on their health. His assertions provide insightful details about the health-related challenges faced by the Kayayei. The author significantly highlights how the multiple forms of the Kayayei's identity as migrants, women and lower-class individuals, interact to negatively impact their overall well-being. While his study does not necessarily employ an Intersectionality Framework, it does provide valuable confirmation that informs an intersectional analysis of the experiences of Kayayei women. It emphasizes the importance of considering how the interconnected identities of marginalized groups affects their lives, thereby, significantly contributing to the discourse surrounding the intersectionality.

Hence, The Feminist Intersectionality Framework stands out as a strong analytical tool by unravelling the complex interplay of identities that influence shape the lived realities of Kayayei women in Ghana. Going beyond single identifiers, like gender, age and social class, can provide a more and varied perspective in understanding the challenges these women encounter through an intersectional approach. As this discourse progresses, applying Intersectionality to the study of African societies with particular focus on the Kayayei has a potential in paving way for a more comprehensive understanding of their individual experiences.

The Feminist Intersectionality Framework will be beneficial in this thesis because, it will aid in explaining how the unique identities of the Kayayei shape their individual experiences. As the theory focuses on the interconnectedness of different identities (Abidogun 2021), it will provide the opportunity to examine how the identities of the

Kayayei affect their livelihood. Also, by focusing on factors like the gender, class, and societal status of the Kayayei, this framework will help in proving how members in the same social category can be different based on their individual experiences (Beradi, 2018; p.7). This therefore, will provide knowledge on the perception the Kayayei have about themselves and their work, deepening the understanding on the ways several factors intersect to shape societal attitudes towards them and their occupation.

3.3. Agency

Agency as a theory in its normative sense implies that, people have the free will to take individual decisions to fully fulfil their potential (Kipo, 2014: p.13). Giddens (1984), has defined Agency as the capacity of an individual to make decisions to impact their lives positively. Another argument by Sewell (1992), also claimed that the concept of Agency has a dynamic interaction with societal structures because structures play a role in facilitating and constraining social activities (p.19). However, the level of agency among individuals differs due to their position in society. This is shaped by a variety of factors such as gender, occupation, wealth, class, or education. As such, some individuals may have more influence and access than others. Despite the evidence from literature which focuses on socio-economic factors such as poverty and employment opportunities, (Awumbila and Ardayfi-Schandorf, 2008; Huijismans,2012: p.12, Ikwuyatum ,2016: p.121), there is an obvious absence on discussions surrounding migration as an act of agency. As suggested by Kristiansen (2014; p.14), a person's sense of agency can be influenced by their perceptions of past experiences, which are in turn, influenced by the societal structures represented by the social groups or categories they belong. Therefore, an individual's ability to recognize their autonomy to take independent decisions to achieve their goals is a major aspect of the concept of Agency. Thus, the

expression of free will is shaped by their own volitions, desires, feelings, and choices (Ankosh, n.d, p.7).

Black et al. (2011), in their study also examines the decision-making process in migration by pointing out that, it is either voluntary or forced. The authors deeply clarify this by stating that, the attempt to move for reasons such as employment or educational opportunities, is voluntary whereas forced migration is where people are being compelled to move due to things beyond their control such as environmental changes reasons such as wars, or natural disasters (p.54). This is evident in a variety of migration theories, including Everett Lee's (1966) Push and Pull Migration Theory, Ravenstein's Laws of Migration, and Stouffer's Theory of Mobility, which have been used to analyze the trends, dynamics, and motivations of those who decide to migrate (Duru, 2021; p.184).

However, the authors note that, this dualism can be problematic because, migration decisions cover a range of different reasons and will not necessarily fall in between these two spectrums. Therefore, while the extremes of voluntary and forced migration depict ideal situations, most migration incidents occur somewhere along these two categories.

Also, in his study, Randell (2016), explores the concept of Agency as one which arises from structure, one's awareness of rules and resource accessibility. The author expounds that, the actions which result from the exercise of one's agency is due to their awareness of existing structures. And the occurrence of such agency impacts already existing structures. The interplay between structure and agency is pertinent to the study of migration because, an individual's ability to act and make decisions to migrate are

informed by an interaction between their personal preferences and socio-economic and political structures (p.3).

From the literature explored, the concept of Agency, has been described as the ability of individuals to make autonomous decisions, and thus plays a critical role in the discourse on migration. Within the specific context of Kayayeei in Ghana, the interplay between structure and agency offers a nuanced understanding of the underlying motivations and trends in migration.

It is essential to understand that, the study of agency within the context of this research is not about decisions made devoid of external pressure or influence, but much more about the ability to make decisions which are believed to be the best for the individual within the given circumstances they find themselves. This relates to the concept of Constrained Agency where individuals have the ability to make choices on their own, yet are limited due to external forces or societal inequalities. Coe et.al (2010), explains, the merger of factors such as political suppression and lack of structural power can leave the agency of workers constrained. Such that, they are unable to advocate for better working conditions or wages due to their disadvantaged socioeconomic positions and political environs they find themselves in which limits and restricts their ability to seek a positive change (p.9).

Therefore, in the context of this study, this thesis will also explore how women from Northern Ghana enact agency through migration. Through this lens, clarity will be gained on how they navigate through society to achieve goals which they believe is best for them given the challenges and constraints they face. The goal here is to understand whether they view their jobs as a stepping stone to their personal aspirations and

whether they find value and dignity in their work. Delving into this will add unto the literature surrounding labour migration amongst marginalized women in Ghana.

In all, the Social Identity Theory (S.I.T), The Feminist Intersectionality Framework, and the concept of Agency brought together will provide a compelling and comprehensive analysis into the experiences of the Kayayei. The S.I.T will contribute to understanding the ways by which the Kayayei perceive their group identity within society and how their identity as group influences the behavioral patterns.

The Feminist Intersectionality Framework will play an important role in highlighting the multiple unique identities of the Kayayei, and expound on how these multiple factors of identity; such as their gender, occupation, age and economic status intertwine to shape their experiences. It will not only spotlight these facets of identity, but will also thematically assess how these different dimensions of social categorization intersect and expose the Kayayei to different forms of discrimination or oppression. Lastly, the concept of Agency will not only be beneficial in understanding how these women exercise their independence in rigid societies, but it will also demonstrate how they navigate through them by taking decisions to best improve upon their lives, their work and future. Through these concepts, robust insights will be established to understand the complex realities of Kayayei women.

In comparison to other research conducted on Kayayei women, less comprehensive methodologies and conceptual frameworks have been used. This study will combine three different research theories to provide a more nuanced understanding. Although a range of studies rely more on economic perspectives, the approach used in this study recognizes the interconnectedness of the social identity, intersectionality and Agency theories.

Chapter 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design that has been used to conduct this study. It aims to explore the cultural and gender dynamics that determine women's decisions to migrate to engage in the head portering business in Accra. The study also examines their lived experiences within the context of their labor migration. The specific objectives are to investigate:

- I. What factors drive North to South migration decision in Ghana, and what extent of power do women from Northern Ghana possess to actuate their migration goals given the stigma and stereotypes they face as women in society?
- II. How does the characterization of the Kaya job as perceived as an inferior profession, affect the women in this line of work?
- III. What is the general disposition of the Kayayei towards the Kaya job?

4.2. Research Design

Silverman (2016), explains that, the qualitative research method plays a significant contribution to gathering data in open-ended settings. Also, Rahman (2017; p.104), mentions that, the qualitative research provides a comprehensive approach in telling and interpreting the innate experiences and actions of research participant. Therefore, in achieving the objectives set for this study, the qualitative research design was employed for gathering data using following research methods; observations, focus groups and interviews.

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach which relied on both primary and secondary data sources. This study design was used with the aim of exploring the cultural and gender dynamics that determine the Kayayei's decisions to migrate to Southern Ghana with the explicit aim on engaging in the head pottering business. The sampling technique was used for this study which ensured that participants were representative of the targeted study population. All methods indicated above were used to gather detailed qualitative data to help answer the study's objectives. A visit to Ghana was undertaken to personally meet participants in person and conduct the field study for the purpose of this research. Complementing insights were gained from observations, focus groups and interviews.

The observation method was used to supplement the information gathered from the interviews and focus group. This method allowed more insight into the daily activities of the Kayayei and their work environments, interactions with their clients and challenges they experience on the work. It was also a valuable research tool which provided a better understanding of the environment in which the Kayayei lived and worked. It also entailed direct non-participatory observation of the Kayayei in their work and living settings.

The focus group provided a deeper insight into the shared experiences and perspectives of the participants. As posited by Lune and Berg (2007; p.98), focus groups play an ideal role in investigating situations where people share a common challenge. Although the focus group discussion was the primary method of this research, incorporating a review and analysis of literature as a complementary method aided in providing a range of different perspectives enabling the triangulation of data to enrich the study and also ensure its validity.

Interviews served as a tool which provided nuanced information about the Kayayei women and their experiences. They enhance the understanding of a phenomenon under study Monday (2019; p.16). For this study, interviews were semi-structured, permitting the ability to ask open ended questions, while maintaining a degree of consistency across all participants. One-on-one interview sessions, were also held which lasted approximately 120 minutes. Questions were designed using a flexible and guided approach to elicit detailed information from the participants. This allowed participants share their stories and perspectives about the Kaya business. Probing questions were also asked to explore more on their answers and to clarify any ambiguities. With the verbal consent and written consent from each participant, all sessions were recorded and transcribed.

4.3. Sample Method and Participant Selection

According to Baker & Edwards (2012), the amount of data gathered by qualitative researchers is influenced by several factors and not solely by the number of interviews/participants. Thus, in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of a study, it was reasonable to use a small sample size. The purposive sampling technique was particularly a useful method given the nature of this study's target population. This was because, it allowed the selection of participants who had specific knowledge and experiences relevant to the research objective. Researchers Awumbila & Ardayfio (2008), have utilized the purposive sampling technique in examining the characteristics and livelihood strategies of female migrants working as Kayayei in urban Ghanaian markets. Their findings efficiently have highlighted the experiences of female migrants in the Kaya business and resulted in vivid and reliable information of the survival strategies of head porters specific to their demographics. Also, Opare (2003), utilized the purposive

sampling technique as a method to contribute to the literature surrounding migration causes among Kaya women. A common factor contributing to the utilization of this sampling technique by the author was the unavailability of the participants due to their busy schedules; hence their inability to cooperate during working times (Opare, 2003; p.38).

In recruiting participants for this study, a specific criterion was selected. This criterion was chosen to guide the selection processes of my participants. Since the central focus of this study was to narrow down the geographical scope and regional focus, the study targeted migrant females, aged 20-37 from the five Northern Regions of Ghana residing in Madina-Accra. This range was selected because it captured the demographics of females who shared common experiences relevant to this research. It was ensured that, the above criteria selected was met by designing a recruitment guide which helped ensure that, participants who met the requirements to partake in the study were a sample representative of the larger target population. This approach in line with Guetterman (2015), allowed the opportunity for detailed discussion and observation.

Comprehensive information about this study was provided to a known contact in Ghana who assisted in the recruitment. The information included the objectives of the research, the methodologies to be employed, potential risks and the relevance and potential benefits of the study. This transparency was conveyed via email to the contact in Ghana who ensured that, all parties involved had a clear understanding of the intentions of this study.

Rapport with initially built remotely with participants by engaging in phone calls and messages through social media applications such as WhatsApp. It was ensured that all participants had all the information they needed and this was made available to them

through the known contact in Ghana. Detailed information about the purpose of this research, its methods, its potential risks as well as its relevance were explained thoroughly to participants. The importance of the study and how their participation in this research could help in illuminating their lived experiences and challenges was reiterated to them. To ensure that the information was fully understood, this known contact played another important role. With guidance, study documents and academic jargons were translated into much simpler terms making it easy for the Kayayei women to understand.

The findings obtained through purposive sampling method may not be necessarily generalizable to an entire population. Instead, the aim is to explore the experiences of a specific sub-group within that population. This study sought to gain insights into a specific sub- group rather than aiming for generalizable findings. Participants were selected based on their characteristics, their demographics and their ability to provide relevant information to each research question within the defined population subgroup.

While the focus on specific sub-groups provided valuable insights, building trust with the Kayayei was a challenge. Given their understandable distrust of people outside their community building rapport became crucial. In a study by Thummapol et al. (2019), the authors highlight the vulnerability of marginalised groups such as the Kayayei who experience social exclusion and discrimination. They posit that women from such disadvantaged groups become highly susceptible to coercion or unwarranted influence (p.2). Therefore, it becomes imperative to implement protective measures when engaging vulnerable groups in research. The assertions of Thummapol et al. (2019), were evident during the field study. Most participants showed skepticism, and asked probing questions about the intentions and the nature of the research. Their reluctance

and fear to participate was stemmed from the negative experiences they encountered with people outside their community.

The table below shows the characteristics of my research participants.

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>
1	20	Unmarried	Junior High school	Bole
2	22	Unmarried		Kukuo
3	23	Married	Junior High school	Savelegu
4	25	Unmarried	Senior High School	Bawku
5	22	Unmarried	Junior High school	Sawla
6	37	Unmarried	-	Sentie
7	21	Unmarried	Junior high school	Bimbila
8	21	Unmarried	Senior high School	Sawla
9	28	Unmarried	Junior high School	Savelegu
10	32	Unmarried	Junior High School	Sala

Table 1. Characteristics of research participants

4.3.1. Study Area

The fieldwork of this study was conducted at the Madina Market located at the La Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality in Accra, Ghana. The location served as a pivotal study area for this qualitative research thesis because of its bustle and its composition of a highly dense female Kayayei populace. The Madina market has attracted women from various parts of Ghana to engage in the head portering business. This is because it serves as a melting pot of cultures, economic activities, and social interactions. This therefore made the location an excellent study area to promote enlightenment on the Kayayei phenomenon from diverse perspectives.



Figure 1. The Madina Market. Photo taken by Samuella Appiah, February, 2023.



Figure 2. The Madina Market. Photo taken by Samuella Appiah, February, 2023.

4.4. Data Collection

In the literature which discusses the process of conducting research using the interview method, various researchers have provided distinct perspectives. Alamri, (2019: p.65), defines interviews as a data collection technique which provides an interviewer with a precise understanding of an interviewee's perspective of a specific topic. Also, Lune and Berg, (2017), emphasizes that, interviews are more than just gathering information but rather facilitating the ability of participants to build a managed relationship where different perspectives and ideas are exchanged for the purpose of research (p.67). These perspectives were key to this study as they showed the multifaceted nature of interviews as a research method. Data was collected from 10

Kayayei women using the semi-structured interview method. This method provided a flexible approach through that provided participants a platform to tell their own stories without necessarily following a rigid structure (Ryan et.al 2009; p.310).

Reinforcing insights from Kilinc & Firat (2017), study on voluntary participation in social sciences, the authors highlighted on the impact of individual vulnerability. They emphasized that, coercion can lead to individuals making choices based on the desires of other people, rather than their own. This therefore tends to violate people's sense of freedom and willingness to participate (p.1466). This study made known to participants the voluntary nature of their participation. It was ensured that they understood their right to participate out of their own free will and not due to coercion, vulnerability or exploitation. They were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. This was a way to reinforce their sense of control and agency and reduce any fears.

To facilitate focus group discussions and interviews, an alternative venue was sought, Approval was obtained from the Head of the Legon Botanical Gardens in Accra to hold these sessions. The serenity of the venue made it a perfect place for the discussion and once the approval was secured, all necessary arrangements were made to transport selected participants to the venue. To ensure the convenience and safety of participants, transportation was prepared for them. They were picked up from their homes to the venue similar arrangement was made for their return journey. Although this process was carried out successfully, it did present some difficulties. Participants did not reside in a centralised location, therefore, coordinating their transportation and ensuring that they were all guaranteed easy venue access was a logistical issue. However, this challenge was overcome by reaching an agreement with the participants to gather at the center of

the Madina market to be picked up. The success of this procedure was hinged significantly on effective communication and detailed planning.



Figure 3. Meeting with participants in person for the first time. Photo taken by Nathaniel Badah, February, 2023.



Figure 4. The Kayayei in their working environment. Photo taken by Samuella Appiah, February, 2023



Figure 5. The Kayayei work setting. Photo taken by Samuella Appiah, February, 2023



Figure 6. Focus group discussion at the Legon botanical gardens. Photo Taken by Nathaniel Badah, March 2023.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the ethical review board of the university, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Delving in to the lives of other humans requires an ethical obligation to a great extent and a fundamental principle of ethics in the social sciences is to “do no harm” physically, mentally or emotionally (Lune and Berg, 2007; p.45). Throughout this research, all data collection methods were designed to include an approved informed consent statement. Reinforcing insights from Kilinc &

Firat (2017), study on voluntary participation in social sciences, the authors highlighted on the impact of individual vulnerability. They emphasized that, coercion can lead to individuals making choices based on the desires of other people, rather than their own. This therefore tends to violate people's sense of freedom and willingness to participate (p.1466). This study made known to participants the voluntary nature of their participation. It was ensured that they understood their right to participate out of their own free will and not due to coercion, vulnerability or exploitation. In situations where participants felt uncomfortable to share their experiences, they were informed of their rights to freely withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions, and that their responses would be kept confidential. This was a way to reinforce their sense of control and agency and reduce any fears. Again, in protecting the privacy and confidentiality of in this study, pseudonyms were carefully selected to conceal the real names and identities of participants.

This chapter has outlined the methodology used to conduct the filed research for this study. It relied on a qualitative research design and used both primary and secondary data sources to gather information. The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns and relationships. In the following chapter, outcomes of the data analysis will be showing prominent themes that provide insights into the living conditions of the Kayayei in Ghana.

Chapter 5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the primary data collected from observations, focus group discussions and individual interviews conducted for this study. The importance of this analysis is to provide a framework to understand the lived experiences and narratives of the Kayayei, while also acknowledging the broader implications of labor migration, societal perceptions, and gender roles for those involved in this line of work.

In conducting the analysis of data, this chapter follows an organized structure based on the dominant themes identified from the data collected. The dominant themes, namely; Motivational Factors Influencing Migration, Escape from Societal Norms and Constraints, Challenges Kayayei Women Face, Survival Strategies Adopted by the Kayayei and the Negative attitudes towards the Kayayei women. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the individual narratives and shared experiences of the Kayayei and also facilitates a systematic response to the guiding research questions. By exploring these themes in more depth, details that characterize the experiences of the Kayayei women will be illuminated.

5.2. Analytical Methods

As part of this analysis, a thematic coding approach was employed. In order for researchers to formulate their findings and draw their conclusions, coding plays a very important role as it serves as a tool for interpreting and analyzing data (Church et al.,2019: p.3). Data was transcribed from by converting interviews, and observations into written text to help identify emerging themes. This process helped to translate the

observed social actions and interactions into an identifiable format which could easily be analyzed. This iterative process of coding allowed analyze data in more detail and identify the patterns and relationships among the data. As defined by Dawadi (2020), the coding approach is a tool which facilitates the systematic organization and analyses of intricate data collections. It also aims to recognize themes that accurately represent the narratives inherently within a data set. The process of thematic analysis necessitates careful review of transcribed data to successfully identify relevant themes (p.6). The themes that emerged from this analysis will further be addressed in depth in subsequent sections of this chapter.

5.3. Motivational Factors Influencing Migration

In the context of these women's lives, power refers to their ability to exert control over their personal circumstances and make key life decisions, like migrating for better opportunities. This power is directly tied to their agency, which is the capacity to act independently and make their own free choices. In the case of these women, their agency is hindered by economic constrains, societal constraints as well as other challenges they face as Kaya workers.

Upon thorough examination and analysis of the interview transcripts and observation notes, a prevalent recurring theme was found. This theme revolved around the diverse motivational factors that influenced the migration of Kayayei women. Their narratives revealed a wide array of push and pull factors such as the desire for better economic opportunities which compelled them to migrate to urban areas to engage in the Kaya business. Following this exploration of motivational factors, subsequent sections will delve more into the other emergent themes derived from the narratives of participants.

These themes will subsequently be related to my three research questions will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.3.1. Economic Factors

Economic hardship was the most cited motivation for migration among the participants. All ten participants pointed out that, the lack of income generating opportunities in the North was their major reason for migrating to Accra. Sharon Day, said;

“Money issues! There is no work to do back home. I have to earn something to support my family.”

This narrative was echoed by Asantewaa Asante, who added;

“...Money is the main reason we all came.”

Again, financial difficulties, the lack of job prospects in their hometowns, and other factors, such as the yearn for a better life in urban areas and the hope of financial independence also played an instrumental role in their decision to migrate.

Akosua M., a 20-year-old unmarried woman, shared,

“I came here because there was no work back home. My family is poor, and I hope that I could earn money in the city to send home.”

Scholars such as Buske, (2014); Punch, (2007); Awumbila & Ardayfi-Schandorf (2008), have previously examined the economic aspects of Kayayei migration. Their research reinforces the idea that, disparities in the economic lives of people in the rural North in contrast to the urban South contribute to migration especially among women to go in search of better economic prospects. The authors point out that poverty and lack of

employment opportunities urge women to migrate from their places of origin and consequently engaging in the Kaya business as a plan of action or as a survival strategy to overcome their economic difficulties.

Existing literature has also demonstrated that women in Northern Ghana face more economic and social disruptions which causes them to migrate. (Caritas Internationals, n.d: p.2). This was the case for Jemima Frimp, who shared a distressing account of her experiences;

“I am from Bawku and there is an ongoing civil conflict⁶ which has stopped us from working. Its why I came to Accra to pursue the Kaya job. When I get some money from the Kaya job I can go back to my town when the war is over.”

Jemima Frimp’s decision to migrate was driven by the need to escape a civil conflict and violence in their home region. This insight highlights the influence of a wider socio-political element which determines the migration patterns of Kayayei women. The presence of conflict and violence as a motivating factor signifies the existence of their migration. Her story also reflects and can be effectively applied to Everett Less (1966), Push and Pull Push and Pull Migration Theory. His theory showed that, certain different factors can compel people to move away from their places of origin to destination areas for better prospects. In light of this, analyzing Jemima Frimp’s story primarily highlights push and pull factors. The urgency of her move from her hometown due to an ongoing civil conflict depicts an environment lacking security and stability forcing her to seek

⁶ The Bawku conflict in the Northern region began from a chieftaincy dispute which arose from the enstoolment of a new Mamprugu overlord known as Bawku Naba, challenging the known ruler, Naba Asigri Abugrago Azoka II. This has then led to a series of unfortunate community casualties (BBC News Pidgin, 2023)

refuge and better economic prospects in Accra. This aligns with the principles of forced and voluntary migrations as pointed by Black et al. (2011). In her situation, there is a dual motivation where the imperative of security and the pursuit of economic prospects coexist. Her experience therefore exemplifies the complexity of real-life migration decisions as explained by (Black et al 2011). Her migration to Accra involved both motivations disrupting the simplistic binary categorization of migration. This also aligns with the notion of the 'capacity to aspire' described by Appadurai (2004, p. 69). His theory within the concept of migration suggests that, migration not only embodies an escape from a challenging life but also a pursuit of new opportunities.

The desire to have a better life and the prospect for a better future was another reason that motivated participants relocate to the south. Nancy Doe, a high school graduate, articulated this sentiment, saying;

“... I am hoping to buy a sewing machine with the money I earn from the Kaya business so I can learn a trade.”

Another participant, a 25-year-old unmarried woman with some high school education, expressed;

“I want more from life for myself and children. My mum is old, my dad passed. I have three kids and I want them to be educated. It is why I came to Accra to pursue the Kaya business so I can get some money to take my children to school.”

These responses align with studies by Huijismans (2012: p.12), Ardayfi-Schandorf, (2008; p.20), which have explained that poverty may not be the only reason that drives migrants away from their places of origin. Instead, these studies do suggest a complex

interrelation of factors where poverty is a compounding element. In this context, factors such as education, employment opportunities and the yearn for a better life likewise play a role which makes migration an alleviation strategy for these women. This is because where poverty blends with other personal goals or aspirations creates a broader picture of their motivations

These findings therefore highlight the impact of economic factors in the decision to migrate among Kayayei women. This alignment between findings from this research and existing literature (Opare, J. A., 2003; Anarfi, J. K., et. al,2003; Awumbila, M. & Ardayfio-Schandorf, E., 2008, Awumbila, M. 2015), show how significant economic factors play in shaping the migration patterns of Kayayei women. This reinforces the argument that economic hardship is a major motivator to their migration, highlighting the urgent need for financial stability.

In the following theme, a deeper and analyses are accomplished into the intricate societal structures and norms prevalent in Northern Ghana. This theme informs how these societal elements intersects with the aspirations of Kayayei women and ultimately shaping their migration decisions

5.3.2. Escape from Societal Norms and Constraints

According to Ngulube, (2018; p.29), areas in Northern Ghana have societal structures that are clearly delineated based on gender and age. Men are obliged to and responsible for the clearance of lands while women are expected to carry out tasks such as farming as well as engaging in domestic duties such as maintaining the household (Abdul-Korah, 2011). An interesting discovery observed was participants inability to undertake their migration journey without the consent of their parents. Findings showed

that, societal norms dictated that women needed permission from their family members to travel or migrate.

“Before we migrate, we ask for permission from our fathers, some of us from our husbands. If we are given the go ahead, then we migrate to Accra. If we are not, then it means we cannot travel to Accra.” (Sharon Day).

Scholars such as Opare (2003), have made pertinent observations regarding young women in Northern Ghana assuming their gender roles through certain acts such as generating income for marriage preparations. His study emphasizes how women’s motivations for migration may be because women are made to prioritize marriage over education. As mentioned by Rubio (2018; p.310), there is a traditional belief in Northern Ghana that, educating women is considered a waste of resources as females are believed to be responsible for household management and chores, and will be taken care of by their husbands once sent off into marriage. This demonstrated the importance and dominance of familial authority and societal norms in the North and the accounts of Sharon Day substantiate them.

However, based on further findings, it is evident that women continue to challenge traditional norms and structures. Per the personal account of another participant, Nora D., who is a married woman, she shared;

“Back home, I wanted to get money to purchase a sewing machine so I can learn a trade. My husband never gave me permission so I run away and came to Accra to make money from the Kaya business so I can pursue my goal.”

Among participants, it was observed that the decision to migrate without explicit permission from a family member or husband was an uncommon occurrence. However,

the majority of participants adhered to their cultural norms which necessitated getting approval from family members before migrating, Nora D's personal account on her migration decision shows the importance of agency in migration decisions. While her case was a rare finding, her decision to migrate to pursue her goal of gaining income to learn a trade in sewing exemplified agency and resilience women display in the face of societal restriction. From this study, it is observed that women challenge traditional norms driven by the economic and personal goals. This shows the importance of recognizing the evolving agency of women from Northern Ghana as they navigate through complex interplay of rigid structures and opportunities in pursuit of a better life.

5.4. Challenges Kayayei Women Face

In the previous subsection of this analysis, the motivations behind women migrating from the North were discussed. It is evident that, the need for economic stability and the allure of the urban centers played a huge role on their decisions to migrate. This subsection however continues to delve into the realities of the Kayayei once they arrive in Accra. It sheds light on the challenges they encounter, specifically the toll of their occupation on their physical and mental health as well as other challenges they face in urban societies as migrant women. By exploring this, a holistic understanding of their complex lives and experiences will be gained,

Participants described how physically challenging their work conditions are and explained that, due to their long hours of work, they encounter health problems such as body pains, fatigue among others. They made clear the physical strain of their work in their narratives. For instance, Nancy Doe shared,

“Due to money issues we tend to carry load our strengths cannot contain but we have to force ourselves to carry the goods, it is very difficult. We suffer a lot.”

Alongside physical health issues, participants also expressed struggles with their mental health. As Adelina Owusu described, “when I go to the market and earn no money for the day, it makes me think a lot. I deeply think, how will eat, where will I sleep, how will I bath? We pay for all these amenities, and without money you can’t do anything...”

Another participant shared her daily struggles, with frustration saying;

“We don’t always get customers when we go to the market. And when we do, clients try to cheat us... I have a daughter; I take my daughter to school. Every blessed day I spend 15 cedis (\$1.77) to take her to school. I need to get her food for the day and cleaning supplies. When she falls ill, I need to buy her medication. I alone take care for myself and my child and so when I am cheated, I will not be happy... for instance if the service fee is 5 cedis (\$0. 59), clients would want to pay 3cedis (\$0.35). And so, assuming you get 3 clients in a day, that is a total of 9cedis (\$1.06). What can I do with 9 cedis for myself and child? How much from that will we purchase food with and take care of other needs. Now in Accra, you cannot even purchase food for 5 cedis..., our clients disturb and worry us a lot.”

Another also lamented saying;

“... Some of us build relationships with our clients and some can inform us they will be by the market and will need our service. So due to this, we decide to dedicate our day to our client and not to work for anybody else. Only to realize our clients don’t come as they promised. Its worrying because I have my kids and

family back home and I always send them a part of my daily income to support them. In a situation like this, you will think a lot because you have no money to support yourself or family...” (Rebecca S., interview).

From these revelations, it is safe to say that the constant pressure to provide for their families and the distress from their circumstances potentially contribute to mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Again, the focus group discussions and interviews also highlighted another issue-adequate sleeping conditions. Participants expressed their concerns about having no access to proper sanitation and living in overcrowded spaces. One participant who resides in a makeshift shelter, described her living condition as follows:

“My challenge is where I sleep. Bed bugs have infested the place and they bite me till morning. They do not fix the roofing properly so when it rains, I can’t sleep... I have to stay up till morning scooping water out of the room... it worries me because we usually fall sick from that...”



Figure 7. Accommodation for the Kayayei. Photo Taken by Nathaniel Badah, March

2023



Figure 8. Rooms where the Kayayei sleep. Once participant informed that over 20 people sleep in this room. Photo Taken by Nathaniel Badah, March 2023

Another participant also shared,

“...Madina-Nkwantanang, when you go there, you will see most Kayayei women and girls sleeping outside. This is because some of them don’t have money to pay for room so they sleep outside. And when it rains, they go into open classrooms to sleep.” (Joyce O.)

Through the narrative of participants, it was found out that access to healthcare was highly inadequate. They expressed their inability medical care due to their financial constraints; Akosua M. voiced this barrier when she said,

“We only go to the hospital when our condition is very serious. We buy medication on our own to treat ourselves. Hospital bills are expensive for us we don’t even have NHIS⁷, it doesn’t even work... when you go to the hospital the doctor will tell you to pay 20cedis for medication. I don’t even have that amount....the herbal medicine providers sell medicine around so we go to them. We tell them our symptoms and they give us medication to treat our illnesses”.

⁷ The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), a social intervention program introduced by the Ghanaian government in 2003, to provide equitable quality health care to all citizens (Agyei et al, 2016; p.310).

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), a social intervention program introduced by the Ghanaian government in 2003, to provide equitable quality health care to all citizens but it was revealed that, it was not available to 69.9 % of Kayayei women (Agyei et al, 2016; p.310). The authors also continued to point out that, migrants from the North who had their NHIS cards issued to them in their local communities were denied access to health care in other areas of the country and had to pay for treatment (p.310).

Also, Amoako et al. (2019), revealed that only 9% of the Kayayei visited hospitals for care, depicting that the poor health-seeking behaviors and the dire measures they resort to for health care. The lack of access to healthcare due to stigmatization and lack of financial resources, forces these women to opt for self-medication practices. These systematic barriers that have been exemplified in the both participants stories. Showing that, this lack of access to healthcare adds on to the Kayayei women's vulnerability and worsens their health issues.

5.5. Survival Strategies Adopted by the Kayayei

A coping strategy that was adopted by the Kayayei was their attachment to group memberships. Participants informed that by building bonds with other Kayayei women, they received support and companionship which helped them navigate the urban environment, find accommodation, and receive mutual support in times of crisis. Their agency, demonstrated through this proactive action, provided them with a sense of community and camaraderie. For instance, one participant stated;

“We look out for each other. For instance, if something happens to someone, we will offer help because you never know what the future holds. If someone is worried, or if someone is in dept or needs help with medical bills, some of us offer to assist...” (Mansa A, interview).

Alhassan (2019, p.87), pointed out the importance of social networks amongst the Kayayei, and how such networks provide offers them mutual support. Within their social networks, agency emerged as an important aspect in the lived experiences of these women. Despite operating within very limiting environments, they still utilized their networks to exercise agency to control their situations. As exemplified by Adelina Owusu;

"One time I broke glass and was taken to the police station... my fellow Kayayei sisters helped by going to the Dogomba elders and gathered some money to get me out."

It is clear that group membership, appears to foster a sense of solidarity among the Kayayei, enhancing their capacity to navigate through their challenging environment.

5.6. Negative attitudes towards the Kayayei women

The intersection of identity factors such as gender, ethnicity and economic statuses were found to be causes of discrimination Kayayei women faced. Their social identity as "Kayayei women" was linked to their experiences of discrimination which impacted their access to economic resources, opportunities and fair treatment. The public perceptions and attitudes towards the Kayayei women appeared to be deeply rooted in societal norms values and beliefs. Literature suggests that the Kayayei are frequently subjected to negative labelling and stereotypes (Huijsmans 2012:12), therefore reinforcing the marginalized status of these women in society.

One of the key findings was the prevalent maltreatment. All Kayayei women were being treated with disrespect and were devalued in society. This was evident in the way some participants felt about their social status:

“When a client calls you to carry their load, they will not give you the exact location and use you for long hours. When you reach the final destination and tell them your service charge, they pay whatever they want and when you counter, they start yelling and insulting you because they know they are above you...”
(Ama Tee).

Another participant shared,

“...They don’t respect us when we are working in market. They see us carrying our head pans and they treat us differently.”

This statement sheds light on the systematic discrimination that the Kayayei women encounter due to their profession and status. Interestingly, while all participants reported experiencing discrimination, the nature of discrimination varied. This reflects the intersections of their social identities with other factors such as age, marital status and education. For example, Ama Tee, who is unmarried and has no formal education, experienced discrimination differently from Jemima Frimp, who is married with a junior high school education. Ama Tee (aged 37), who is unmarried and has no formal education, expressed her encounters with discrimination in the context of her maturity. She reported that she is at times treated with a level of respect in the marketplace because of her age, which is generally seen as a symbol of maturity and responsibility in the society. However, her age did not spare her from the overarching societal view of Kayayei women as inferior. She noted,

“...Even though some people because they see me and know I am much older, they still denigrate me because I am a Kayayei.”

In contrast, a young married woman (age 23) with a junior high school education, experienced a more overt and consistent form of discrimination. As an unmarried woman, she did not benefit from the societal respect accorded to marriage, and her being seen as a youngster compounded the negative stereotype associated with being a Kayayei. She shared;

“Because I am young, ... I am 23 years old and most of my customers are much older than I am so they feel like they don't have to give me respect because, they see me as a very young girl working as a Kaya...” (Jemima Frimp, participant).

It is important to recognize the social identities and categorizations that shape the daily lives of these women. These encompass a range of various factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnic background. Due to the nature of their occupation. Kayayei women tend to experience intersecting forms of categorization which leads to their unique and multifaceted experiences. It is evident that gender plays a pivotal role as the primary social identity of the Kayayei as majority of Kaya workers are females (Opare, 2003; Osei-Boateng 2012). Unfortunately, this makes women victims of specific forms of discrimination such as sexual abuse or rape (Boateng, 2018).

The experiences of these women are clearly influence by diverse forms of their social identities which create a diverse landscape of challenges and in some instances opportunities within their field of work. This finding aligns with the Intersectionality Theory, which highlights how the nature of various social identities intersect and lead to unique experiences of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989).

Again, an additional insight was gathered into the multifaceted discrimination facing the Kayayei. Within the Kayayei community, a form of in-group versus out-group discrimination was apparent. This was not defined just by their shared profession, but

also by their shared ethnic and regional backgrounds. Though they shared a common identity that typically characterizes their community, participants also revealed that, discrimination based on ethnic backgrounds existed within the Kayayei community. This therefore adds another layer of complexity to their experiences. A participant Mas Tetteh. explained;

“Hmmm...Some people will not offer you help if they know you are not from the same town or speak the same language. There’s the mentality that acquaintances in our community are built only because we are in the same business and so when we go back to the North, we are no more friends. So, people from our own community can speak down on you because you’re not from the same ethnic background or hometown” (Mas Tetteh,participant)

Another participant, expressed a similar sentiment:

“Help is often given to those who share a similar background. If you're an outsider of the group, it is tougher because you don't get any guidance or help. It is not easy even within our own circles. If you don't come from the same town or belong to the same ethnic group, they will not want to share with you.”
(Asantewaa Asante, Interview).

These statements indicate that, although the Kayayei community acts as a source of support, they can also exhibit patterns of exclusion and discrimination. Meaning that, their shared experiences and group identity which is often seen to be the only often fosterer of solidarity, could also lead to intra-group divisions, particularly when resources are limited. Within their own communities where they should ideally gain support is where participants have expressed, they face challenges based on their regional and ethnic identities.

Chapter 6. DISCUSSION

In the preceding chapter, the extent of societal stigmas, stereotypes and negative attitudes towards the Kayayei was examined. This section further analyzes the themes discussed above, shedding light on the experiences of these women and their determination to overcome challenges to better their lives. This exploration is crucial in addressing the research questions as it will help to understand how the intersecting identities of the Kayayei influences societal perceptions and impact their lives. Again, it will allow an exploration into their resilience in the face of adversities.

6.1.1. To what extent do women (who migrate in the Kaya context) from Northern Ghana possess the power to actuate their migration goals given the stigma and stereotypes they face in society as women?

Women in Northern Ghana are believed to be responsible for the household. They are also solely in the care of their husbands once sent off into marriage (Rubio, 2018; p.31). Because they have been positioned within restrictive gender roles, it limits their ability to attain their individual goals (Hashim, 2005; Anyidoho, 2009). Despite these limitations, these women still do demonstrate their initiative by stepping outside the boundaries set up by their societies. The examination of the findings from this study have revealed an illustration of empowerment in action performed by these women. In the face of societal and economic constraints, they demonstrate their agency through their pursuit of economic activities like engaging in the Kaya business. Though they face physical and emotional difficulties, their determination to generate income and secure financial independence reveals their resilience and underscores their proactive role in transforming their lives.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.971), present an intricate view of agency by arguing that, the concept can be used in three different ways and the experiences of the Kayayei can rightly be understood through this lens. Firstly, agency can be employed to restore or maintain previous societal structures. In this context, the interpretation of Agency is evident as these women make the effort of maintaining their traditional and family ties by engaging in the Kaya job with the aim of reducing economic hardships for their families. Secondly, Agency can be used towards creating a different social reality. This is reflected in the experiences of these women as they aim to break free from challenges and the constraints, they face by seeking better socioeconomic opportunities to shape a better future for themselves. Lastly, Agency can serve to adapt and respond to current circumstances. Considering this, these women demonstrate their self-determination by building strong social networks through associating with other Kayayei women for mutual support and addressing immediate economic needs and challenges. The experiences of the Kayayei women can rightly be understood through these lenses of Agency as described by Emirbayer & Mische (1998).

The data showed what the intricate nature of women taking the decision to migrate is. It also highlighted how migration is rarely an individual choice but one shaped by broader familial and societal contexts. Patriarchal societal structures and familial obligations are obviously deeply ingrained in Northern Ghana. This is evident because, findings show that there a need to seek permission from their husbands before undertaking migration goals. It is worth noting that, this is a practice which is not unique to Northern Ghana. In various contexts, people in marital relationships would typically have discussions with their partners about their plans before taking important decisions, including migration.

The harsh realities that are faced after migration, as highlighted through the personal accounts of participants, reveals an array of physical hardships and socio-economic

stress. Their descriptions also touch on the potential mental health challenges- a significant area of concern. Through their testimonies, the precarious living conditions marked by overcrowding, improper shelter and lack of sanitation are exposed. This shows a connection between their living and health conditions (physically and mentally), proving the urgency of their situation and the high demand for interventions to improve their standards of living. Again, these findings have also confirmed what several academic studies have addressed. Accommodation, security and sanitation have been revealed as common problems that directly affect the standard of living of Kayayei women (Boateng, 2018; p. 20). Agyei et al, (2016: p..298), discovered that, most Kayayei women live in shared slum housing without electricity, sanitation, and water, and with limited access to kitchens and washrooms. Echoing these observations, Wemakor (2018), also identified that, a significant block to the safety and well-being of the Kayayei was the lack of secure accommodation. The unhealthy nature of the living conditions of these women have put them at a very high risk of diseases and other health-related problems. These also are compounded by the patronage of drugs on their own without prescriptions and/or specific medical guidance (Sulemana & Boateng, 2018: p.93). However, it is evident in the findings that, the unfolding narratives do not only dwell on their challenges, but also in their resilience and resourcefulness; which is their ability to navigate through their difficult conditions.

Their strategic use of social networks for job opportunities and mutual support is a finding that portrays the agency of the Kayayei. This proactive engagement within these networks underscores their ability at strategizing. It is an indication of their active involvement in creating opportunities for themselves. Despite its associated hardships, their ability to commit to the Kaya business demonstrates their agency, reinforcing the concept of Agency's emphasis on self-determination. The concept suggests that,

individuals freely control events in their lives, as opposed to being forcedly pushed to action due to surrounding circumstances or external influences (Shogren et al., 2015; p.5).

It is therefore evident that, the Kayayei though constrained by structural factors, strategically chooses to engage in a line of work that offers them an opportunity to earn a living. Their decisions represent their self-reliant efforts to improve upon their lives. Their utilization of social networks to actively leverage their relationships for a collective benefit, exhibits their supremacy in maneuvering within challenging social structures. Actualizing their migration goals despite the prevailing stigma and stereotypes they face as women in the North and migrant women in urban societies, highlights a powerful demonstration of their agency. It symbolizes a firm pursuit to seek better economic opportunities despite the challenging societal structures around them.

6.1.2. How does the characterization of the Kaya job as an inferior profession affect workers in the industry?

The intersection of the multifaceted identities of the Kayayei play a role in their marginalization and discrimination. Findings from this study have shown that, the combination of several factors like age, ethnicity, marital status educational background and their identity as Kaya workers have contributed to the distinct and complex challenges they face. The concept of intersectionality is evident here because, the intersection of their various social identities creates distinct and complex experiences of drawbacks in their lives. The social categorization of people can lead to positions of oppression or privilege among individuals (Taha, 2019: p.4). Therefore, the result of the intersecting systems of their gender, occupation, and class, hinders their access to economic resources and opportunities leading to unfair treatment.

The diverse experiences of discrimination underscore the reason why intersectionality is as an ideal analytical framework. It reveals how oppression varies within marginalized groups; it is not uniform but varies based on various factors such as gender, age, class and others. Findings reveal a profound level of intersectionality with the Kayayei community. Within this marginalized group of women, internal divisions based on factors like age, region or villages of origin, languages spoken, results in their varied experiences of oppression. Therefore, acknowledging the application of The Feminist Intersectionality Framework beyond Western contexts is crucial for understanding discrimination and oppression in an African context, considering a wide range of identity factors.

As earlier established, most of the Kayayei hail from places with abject poverty and economic difficulties. Therefore, their move to the south to work in an occupation that is deemed inferior, results in a low bargaining power to change their circumstances. This makes them susceptible to exploitation and harsh working conditions. Proving that, the disrespect and devaluation they face in society is not solely because of their job, but also due to societal perceptions on their unique characteristics.

Secondly, in the context of their societal structure, the Kayayei are considered to be a part of a low paying labor-intensive job which classifies them as an 'out-group' in urban societies. According to Verkuyten (2021, p.312), social identity highlights certain behaviors and feelings that are shaped from an interplay of social, cultural, and political structures. Studies from existing literature have proven this. For instance, Lambert et al. (2012); and Opare (2003, p.34), have informed that, regions of origin for Kayayei women are often characterized by high levels of illiteracy rates, low economic development and opportunities. In society, they are predominantly low-paid, less educated and are not accounted for their efforts, rendering them as 'invisible' within the Ghanaian labor

market. This societal placement on contributes to lower- ranked status, worsening the stereotypes associated with their occupation. On the other hand, the wider urban society is often perceived as an “in-group” distinct from the Kayayei- the “out-group”. A common element of the Social Identity Theory is that, the conscious or unconscious categorization of people into social groups influences people’s perceptions of them, leading to certain behaviors towards other groups (Verkuyten 2021; p.315). Participants experiences highlighted the mistreatment by their clients in the market place, reinforcing the in-group and out-group dynamic. In this context, this creates a social and psychological gap, leading to the Kayayei significant societal repercussions such as societal stigmatization and limited access to resources for the Kayayei.

The social identity approach argues that, individuals tend to favor those within their own social group (in-group) and view it positively in comparison to other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Verkuyten 2021; p.317). Findings from this study revealed that, the concept of in-group vs out-group dynamic is not only applicable on a societal level but is also vividly manifested within the Kayayei community. Despite the commonality of their occupation as head porters at the Madina market, internal group dynamics reveal in-group bias based on ethnic identities. The issue of discrimination that Kayayei women face in the larger society also is manifested within their own societal ranks, contributing to an extension of intensified social discrimination. This feeds into a cycle of stigmatization and negatively affect their self-esteem and sense of belonging, making their professional and personal experiences more challenging. As revealed in the analysis, there is concerning evidence that, the negative behaviors from both society and their own community not only adds on to their inferior status, but also crucially impacts their livelihood. Yet, despite societal perceptions of their jobs, findings show that that these women manifest a positive disposition towards the Kaya job, and views it as a

pathway to their financial independence—a symbol of positive self-perception and empowerment.

6.2. What Is the General Disposition of the Kayayei Towards Their Work?

Throughout this study, it has been shown that the experiences of the Kayayei are analyzed through the frameworks of Feminist Intersectionality Theory and the concept of the Social Identity Theory. This is because, as migrant women in urban centers, they tend to find themselves at the nexus of marginalization and discrimination. Yet, aside these challenges, the Kayayei exhibit remarkable resilience and agency. In exploring their motivations for entering into economic activities like the Kaya business, findings have shown that, their active participation on the job shows their determination to improve upon their socio-economic difficulties. This therefore underscores that Kayayei women, who are often from impoverished and rigid backgrounds perceive their occupation as a means to escape poverty and gain some level of economic independence.

However, findings also unveil contrasting perspectives about the Kayayei on the job. Participants expressed dissatisfaction of their work conditions by revealing its grueling nature and its physically demanding tasks as well as their lack of access to basic amenities. Again, the absence of job security and legal social protection make Kaya workers vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment which not only affects their work experiences but also their overall security and safety in urban societies.

Despite these challenges, the underlining factor here is that, it is the aspiration of Kayayei women to gain a more dignified way of life despite the hardships they face. While they recognize that the Kaya job provides them with some economic benefits, they also grapple with the fact that it presents certain hardships.

Overall, it is evident that their perspective on the Kaya job is ambivalent. Although they view it as an opportunity to make their lives better, they also do not downplay the fact that it comes with challenges. Their view is a balanced one that considers both the benefits and challenges the job comes with.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1.1. Summary of Findings

This thesis explored the complexities of the migration phenomenon among Kayayei women in Ghanaian urban centers. The study on the migration experiences of Kayayei women at the Madina market in Accra, has provided a comprehensive look into the motivations, challenges and ambitions of these women. Also, it has shown how they navigate within the broad socio-cultural and economic structures/contexts.

Furthermore, through a comprehensive analysis of qualitative data, this thesis has explored the migration experiences of Kayayei women through three theoretical lenses: Social Identity Theory, The Feminist Intersectionality Framework and Agency.

The Social Identity Theory offers valuable insights into ways by which the Kayayei form their identities within collective groups. This concept aided in highlighting the influences of how societal categorizations and intergroup dynamics shape and mold their self-perceptions. Their social identity as Kayayei women, despite the challenges associated with their occupation, served as a source of strength and cohesion within their communities.

Secondly, the Feminist Intersectionality Framework, played a contributory role in grasping the multidimensional nature of challenges encountered by Kayayei women. By recognizing the intersections of gender, socio-economic status, age and other social identity factors, an understanding of how their unique struggles affected them as individual women in their societies was gained. Also, the study expanded on the prevalence of societal stigma and stereotypes facing Kayayei women. It disclosed the barriers which made it very challenging for the women to gain access to resources.

However, the study has proved that, despite the challenges Kayayei women face in society due to their intersecting identity factors, they still show their resilience and develop diverse coping mechanisms to navigate through their challenging circumstances. This proves the depth of agency possessed by these women.

The findings have shown how agency emerges as a powerful force enabling them to make autonomous decisions in constrained and challenging circumstances and sheds light on their feelings regarding their work as Kayayei women. Most of these women tend to have mixed feelings about their job due to its physically demanding nature and challenging work conditions. Yet, despite these challenges they face in society, they keep a balanced view and continue to work towards attaining their goals of achieving a much better life.

7.1.2. Implications and Contributions

By centering on the Social Identity Theory, The Feminist Intersectionality Framework and the concept of Agency, which formed the conceptual grounding for this study, this research goes beyond the traditional narratives of the Kayayei phenomenon. Throughout this study, the voices and experiences of women from Northern Ghana have been the center stage in informing about the multilayered nature of their migration experiences.

This study advocates that, the stigmatization and stereotypes from society which largely shape the migration experiences of these women must be seriously tackled. The study further invokes a compelling call to promote equality, create inclusive spaces for marginalized migrant women, as well as to create, promote and accelerate initiatives to deculturate society from its negative perceptions, attitudes and structures against the Kaya group as exposed by this study.

Additionally, the study advances the discourse on labor migration among marginalized women as it offers a deepened insight into the motivations, aspirations, and plights of the Kayayei, necessitating a to reform the Ghanaian informal labour system into offering improved work conditions, rights, and opportunities for its labour community. Moreover, the research approach in this study sets a precedence for the application of intersectionality in subsequent scholarly investigations on labour migration and societal inequalities of marginalized women in Ghana and Africa.

7.1.3. Recommendations for Future Research

The context and valuable insights of this work, which is premised on the experiences of migrant women from Northern Ghana, through intersectionality analysis opens greater possibilities for future studies on the migration phenomenon. A recommendation would be to explore women's agency and migration decisions as influenced by the intersectionality of gender, class, and education. Additionally, further investigations can be made into the long-term impact of migration on the socio-economic status and integration of Kayayei. Further studies could investigate whether women tend to permanently stay in Accra, return back home to the North or experiences improvements in their employment opportunities over time. Such studies will offer a comprehensive understanding of how the Kaya job influences the trajectory of their lives.

Again, policymakers in Ghana are encouraged to gear their policy strategies towards effectively addressing the needs of marginalized female migrants such as the Kayayei by identifying the importance and use of intersectional profiling and adopting corresponding intersectional approaches to formulate policies and implement programs. By factoring the complex interplay of social variables such as gender, class, education,

and occupation when planning interventions, the unique challenges and needs of diverse groups of women can be adequately addressed.

In addition, within literature, a comparative analysis across different geographical contexts using the conceptual frameworks which ground this study could boost the understanding of the variations in women's migration experiences. Such comparative studies will pave the way for a more comprehensive look into structural factors, policy environments, and social dynamics that influence labour migration among Kayayei women in different regions of Ghana and also provide insights into their experiences in different African settings.

By implementing the above, a more inclusive and equitable society will be fostered such that, an environment that enables all individuals, regardless of gender or socioeconomic background, will be created for people to realize their migration aspirations, contribute to their own empowerment, and the development of themselves and communities.

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