

## Reflections on migratory and mobility patterns and labour market security of Ghanaian youth amidst the Covid-19 crisis

Anas, Abdul Latif; Salifu, Mashudu; Abdulai, Muhammed

*Published in:*  
Social Sciences and Humanities Open

*DOI (link to publication from Publisher):*  
[10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100420](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100420)

*Creative Commons License*  
CC BY 4.0

*Publication date:*  
2023

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

### *Citation for published version (APA):*

Anas, A. L., Salifu, M., & Abdulai, M. (2023). Reflections on migratory and mobility patterns and labour market security of Ghanaian youth amidst the Covid-19 crisis. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 7(1), Article 100420. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100420>

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at [vbn@aub.aau.dk](mailto:vbn@aub.aau.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.





## Regular Article

## Reflections on migratory and mobility patterns and labour market security of Ghanaian youth amidst the Covid-19 crisis

Abdul Latif Anas<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mashudu Salifu<sup>a</sup>, Muhammed Abdulai<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University, Denmark<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Department of Communication, Innovation and Technology, University for Development Studies, Nyankpala-Tamale, Ghana

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Covid-19 pandemic  
Migration  
Mobility  
Youth  
Ghana

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the changing migratory and mobility patterns of Ghanaian youth during the covid-19 pandemic using mixed methods research design. The study reveals that the patterns of migration, mobility and labor market security of the Ghanaian youth were adversely affected by the covid-19 pandemic. The study highlighted that due to the covid-19 pandemic, some Ghanaian youth were not able to attend job or promotion interviews, secure jobs and other socio-economic events, and the restricted movements had negative impacts on their labor market participation and economic wellbeing. In view of these, the study recommends, but not exclusively that, special fund be established under the Ministry of Education to build the technical competences of the youth through further education and training against labour market insecurity in future pandemic.

## 1. Introduction

Before the pandemic struck, there are approximately 244 million transnational migrants routing the globe (United Nations, 2016). Besides, there are about 763 million internal migrants globally (United Nations, 2013). Indeed, migration and mobility are deployed as vehicles to create livelihood within or across borders of nations states (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). As a windfall of migration, financial, and other forms of remittance by migrants to their families and communities rose from USD 126 billion in 2000, to USD 689 billion in 2018 (IOM, 2020). However, these grand movements and their ensuing remittances have been significantly modified by the pandemic (Coz & Hooper, 2021) (see Table 1, Fig. 4).

The novel coronavirus was detected in Wuhan, China and quickly spread to other parts of the world in a short while (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). By 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Ghana recorded its first covid-19 virus case (Osei-Assibey, 2021). In the immediate aftermath of this, government of Ghana activated measures and restrictions to contain and prevent the spread of the Covid-19 cases in the country. This included—but not limited to—partial lockdown and closure of the national borders as did by many countries across board. The new reality of living with the covid-19 restrictions impacted the youths' migration and mobility drives (Mwainyekule & Frimpong, 2020).

On the specific national scale, migrations in Ghana prior to Covid-19 have North–South inclinations (John & Ababio, 2009). It is often characterized by considerable migration from the Northern regions of Ghana, with about 40.72 per cent substantial movements into Ghana's regional capital, Accra (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013c). Of the 1.6 million migrants living in the Greater Accra Region as of 2010, roughly 10% are natives of the Northern regions of Ghana—where most of the head porters, street hawkers and other laborers hail from (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013c). However, Covid-19 has changed that pattern especially in terms of return migration (Citi newsroom report, 2020).

More so, Ghana is a major destination for many international migrants within the West Africa sub-region. For instance, an estimated 466,780 international migrants lived in Ghana due to the free cross border agreement within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region (United Nations Framework Report, 2020). However, a projected 20,000 international migrants were reportedly trapped at the border towns of the Continent in Western and Central African countries during the pandemic. An additional 1800 Ghanaian migrants in Niger waiting to be transported to Ghana through the borders of Aflao, Elubo and Sampa were also left stranded due to the border closures (United Nations Framework Report, 2020). The Covid-19 inspired lockdown of Accra and Kumasi resulted in new realities including untold effects on youth mobility and employment prospects.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [anasabdullatif@yahoo.com](mailto:anasabdullatif@yahoo.com) (A.L. Anas), [mash45@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mash45@hotmail.co.uk) (M. Salifu), [nakpas@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nakpas@yahoo.co.uk) (M. Abdulai).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100420>

Received 22 October 2022; Received in revised form 13 January 2023; Accepted 27 January 2023

Available online 13 February 2023

2590-2911/© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

For instance, an approximately 200 migrants returned to the Northern parts of Ghana—without jobs to do—following the imposition of the lockdown in the country (Citi newsroom report, 2020). In fact, this would be the first returned migration since the independence of Ghana in 1957 (Citi newsroom report, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic and its broad impacts on migration and mobility has gained traction in several scholarly migration studies (Anas, Salifu, & Abdulai, 2022; Barbieria, Lou, Passavanti, Hui, & Adomako, 2020; Coz & Hooper, 2021; Martino, 2021, p. 9653; Osei-Assibey, 2021; Sogbe, 2021). Firstly, Anas et al. (2022) explored local and international students' mobility decisions during the pandemic in Denmark. Martino (2021, p. 9653) also reveals how the covid-19 pandemic brought about great changes in human mobilities in Spain. Furthermore, Coz and Hooper (2021) found out a decreased migration globally especially in West Africa. In the Ghanaian context, Barbieria et al. (2020) reveals mobility disruptions and the modal shifts due to Covid-19 that have occurred as a consequence of the restrictive measures implemented in ten countries including Ghana. Last but not the least, Sogbe (2021) found out that commuters considered physical distancing, wearing face masks, cleanliness of vehicle and safety from traffic accidents as essential factors influencing public transport mode choice during Covid-19.

Therefore, the changing migration and mobility patterns—amidst the covid-19 crisis—with focus on the Ghanaian youth has not had fair share of academic discourse. In this regard, the study will contribute to literature by exploring how the changing mobility and migration patterns among the youth were impacted by the novel corona crisis. Especially, for the youth from Northern Ghana who had returned home due to the pandemic. We therefore rhetorically asked: Will the changing migratory and mobility patterns caused by the Covid-19 crisis affect mobilities and relations, labour market participation and the economic wellbeing of the youth? It is this gap our study seeks to fill and make policy recommendations afterwards. Admittedly, it is impossible for this research to cover the whole Ghanaian youth due to time and financial constraints. Therefore, Accra and Tamale are the two specific study areas to represent the South-North divide respectively. Accra and Tamale are worthy of consideration because: Accra is the capital city of Ghana with lots of employment and other opportunities as well as social amenities. These opportunities in the capital city of Accra attract many of the youth from the North of Ghana, and the neighboring countries of Burkina, Togo, Benin, Mali. And some of the youth—head porters, street hawkers—from the North (Tamale) searching for livelihoods in Accra have reportedly returned to the North due to the covid-19. The objective of this study is to examine how the changing mobility and migration—as well as social and labour market security—patterns among the youth have been impacted by the corona crisis. Using embedded mixed research method design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2014), the study tests two hypotheses. H1: The covid-19 pandemic has impacted migration and mobility in Ghana H2: The covid-19 pandemic impacted social and labour market mobilities among the youth. The study is structured as such: the introduction, the study context, theoretical foundation, research methodology, results, findings, and discussion as well as conclusion and recommendation sections.

### 1.1. Precarity and mobility of the Ghanaian youth amidst the Covid-19 crisis

OED online dictionary defined precarity as “Precariousness or instability; esp. a state of persistent uncertainty or insecurity with regard to employment, income, and living standards” (OED Online Dictionary, 2018). It is argued that the uncertainties associated with the covid-19 protocols changed people's mobility patterns, as well as their social and labour market participations (Brodeur, Gray, Islam, & Bhuiyan, 2021). Besides, in the publication “*Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*” (Butler, 2004), it is argued that the social nature of human presence implies that we are dependent on and made

vulnerable to others. Following Butler (2004) perspective, it has been argued that our vulnerability is occasioned by two reasons: 1) We could miss the very people with whom we have developed formidable associations with 2) We are exposed to others and situations and that exposure always breeds some risk of violence (Millar, 2017). In the viewpoint of Butler, precariousness symbolizes “a common human vulnerability, one that emerges with life itself” (Butler, 2004, p. 31). And the pandemic has sought to increase these human vulnerabilities due to the uncertainties in the world economies. In this regard, the concept of precarity will be employed to explore how the changing mobility and migration patterns among the youth have been impacted by the novel corona crisis.

### 1.2. Social exclusion associated with mobility patterns during the pandemic

Social exclusion could be seen as a course of actions that fully or partially, leave out individuals or groups of people from participating in social, economic and cultural webs and has been connected to the idea of citizenship (Lee & Murie, 1999). Social exclusion is referred to as the process by which certain individuals and entire communities of people, are systematically prevented from access to some rights, opportunities, and resources—paramount for socioeconomic integration usually available to members of society (Silver, 2007). It is a multifaceted and dynamic process. The excluded people are disconnected from social relations, institutions, and not permitted to participate fully in activities of the society (Silver, 2007). This is more common for the underprivileged people (Duffy, 1995), thus, making their lives precarious through uncertainties, apprehension, vulnerabilities, insecurities it breeds (Kasim, 2018). The covid-19 pandemic safety protocols—social distancing, wearing of facemasks, vaccination campaigns—have had unintended consequences on the mobilities and migratory decisions of the youth. These consequences, in several ways, excluded the youth from participating in social, political, cultural, and economic affairs due to the altered mobility patterns and their multifaceted constraints.

## 2. Methodology and methods

The study is situated within the mixed research methods. It specifically lent itself to the concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods. This approach helps to gather both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously using one data collection phase (Creswell, 2009). In terms of philosophical underpinning, the pragmatism paradigm was utilized. The pragmatic philosophical perspective posits that the most essential determinant of the research philosophy adopted is the research question(s). In this respect, it is possible to work within both positivist and interpretivist considerations by integrating different approaches to help gather and analyze data prudently (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Triangulation, development, complementarity, initiation, and expansion are the five fundamental reasons for conducting mixed research methods (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Complementarity is the purpose of adopting mixed research method in this article. We deployed it to explain, augment and clarify the qualitative (QUAL) results with those from quantitative (Quan). Thus, the Quan results implanted in the QUAL strand elaborated/confirmed the QUAL results, since the QUAL aspect is the driving part (weightier part) of the study with the QUAN only supporting the QUAL. However, the weight differences of both the QUAL and Quan strands helped strengthen the research results in general using their respective strengths to neutralize their inherent weaknesses (Greene et al., 1989).

The concurrent mixed method sampling technique was utilized. We deployed a probability sampling technique to gather Quan data, and purposive sampling technique to collect QUAL data concurrently (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). The concurrent mixed method sampling technique enable us to triangulate the outcomes from the QUAL

and Quan elements of our research (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

The population of Ghana stood at 30,832,019 per the 2021 population and housing census (Ghana Statistical Service 3B G, 2021). There are 60.5% and 39.5% young people aged 15–35 years in the urban and rural areas of Ghana respectively. The disparity is driven largely by rural-urban migration. Cumulatively, the population of the youth stood at 38.2% in 2021 (Ghana Statistical Service 3B G, 2021). The youth are constantly mobile and migrating in search of livelihood, opportunities, and good quality life (Edwin & Glover, 2016). Also, the working population (15–64 years) is 66.5% and 53.0% in Greater Accra and Northern region respectively (Edwin & Glover, 2016).

Youth resident in Accra and Tamale constitutes the sampling frame. Using the cluster sampling technique, we selected 122 respondents—72 in Accra and 50 in Tamale—for the survey part of the study. Also, 14 study participants (8 in Accra, 6 in Tamale) were purposively sampled for an in-depth interview—QUAL—aspect of the study. Cluster sampling involves dividing the population into separate groups based on any natural occurring groupings (such as geographical area) (Henry, 1990). The study area (Accra and Tamale) was divided into geographical clusters (Accra: Accra North, Accra South, Accra East, Accra West and Accra Central. Tamale: Tamale metro, Sagnerigu Municipal). Thereafter, we used a convenience sample to select youths based on their convenience and availability (Babbie, 1990). And for the youth available by convenience, simple random sampling was used so that each sampling unit has an equal chance of being included for survey. We achieved this by making “Yes” and “No” balloting for them to choose (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In essence, we deployed some sort of probability cluster-convenience-random sampling continuum.

For the QUAL aspect of the study, sampling was done based on our own judgment. With this purposive sampling technique, we purposively elected and interviewed 14 participants (8 in Accra and 6 in Tamale) willing and able to give us relevant information (Bryman, 2012). The differences in sample size in Accra and Tamale is due to the pragmatism epistemology we deployed. Pragmatists posit that researchers have the freedom to decide on the effective data, sample, and processes of conducting research that best satisfy their needs and purposes (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2021). We chose those we believe could contribute significantly to the study. Thus, with regard to inclusion and exclusion criteria, we elected participants passionate, and interested in our project during survey. Again, the youth selected were equally willing and ready to give us relevant information concerning the subject matter. These are youth who claimed their mobility patterns had changed during the pandemic. Youth with low interest levels, not passionate about the topic and not willing to give us relevant information were excluded from the interview process.

### 2.1. Data collection methods and procedures

We administered 14 interviews and complemented it with 122 surveys. The interviews enabled us to discover—in details—the study participants’ opinions, lived experiences, feelings, emotions, and perspectives (Bryman, 2012). Some of the questions asked during the interviews were: How has the pandemic affected the pattern of migration and mobility among the Ghanaian youth in Ghana? How and why has the covid-19 pandemic impacted labor market mobilities as well as social and labor market security of the youth? On the other hand, the survey questions, on the other hand were flexibly constructed and modified to answer a wide variety of questions. It aided us to explore the respondents’ views and experiences in a representative manner using a Likert scale (Creswell, 2009). Some of the questions asked during survey include: the pattern of migration and mobility among the Ghanaian youth has been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic; the pandemic has impacted labor market mobilities as well as social and labor market security of the youth. Our data collection spanned between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the

survey results were automatic transferred to a centralized software reservoir called Kobo toolbox.

To gain access to the participants, we either read and/or handed an introductory letter to each study participant before administering survey questionnaire and/or doing in-depth interviews. The introductory letter detailed the purpose of the study. Thus, all the one hundred and twenty-two (122) study participants granted consent before survey and interviews were obtained. Both the in-depth interviews and surveys were largely conducted in English with few exceptions—such as head porters, street hawkers and other stuck illiterates—who had no formal education at all. In those exceptional cases, Twi (commonly spoken language in Southern Ghana) and Dagbani (commonly spoken language in northern Ghana) were used.

To adhere to the issues of ethics in social science research, we ensured that the consents of the study participants were willingly granted before administering questionnaires (surveys) and doing in-depth and interactive interviews. This, we did, by giving each participant a cover letter detailing the purpose of the study. For anonymity seek, we assigned AR and TR—plus a numeral—as their identity. Again, participation and giving information was without threat, blackmail, or undue influence. This allows the participants to share their views voluntarily and objectively. Finally, raw data (transcribed interviews) were handled meticulously to ensure data validity and credibility.

### 2.2. Data analysis and validity

Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used for the Quan and QUAL data respectively. The descriptive statistics explained and summarized the fundamental characteristics of the data in a study by showing the relationship between variables in a sample (Yellapu, 2018). The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and kobo toolbox were used to produce descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages.

Thematic analysis is a QUAL data analysis method that involves categorizing, analysing, and presenting patterns within datasets (Bryman, 2016). The open coding technique was used to code the interviews and determine common themes within our dataset. Besides, the axial coding was deployed to establish relationship between the themes extracted (Strauss, 1990). Again, the classical content analysis technique—like constant comparison analysis (Abdulai, Ibrahim, & Mohammed, 2017)—was employed to migrate codes to main themes to guide our analysis. In this regard, the number of times each descriptive code occurred was ranked and the most important concepts were identified as the main themes with the help of the voyant tool software.

Furthermore, the Voyant data analytic tools developed by Professor Geoffrey Rockwell also facilitated the qualitative data coding, data chunking and pattern identification. Using the voyant data analytic tool, author 1 extracted recurrent words and their interlinkages from the transcribed interviews. Author 2 also identified common phrases and key topics. Thereafter, author 3 read through the data and noted recurrent words, preliminary categories, seven constructed categories and finally settled on two broad themes—changing patterns of migration and mobilities in Ghana amidst the pandemic, mobilities and labor market securities amidst the corona Crisis—to guide the QUAL-Quan data analysis (Rockwell, 2020).

Using the hermeneutic approach, data are interpreted for the purposes of gaining understanding, through the systematic analysis of actions and texts (Bryman, 2012). In terms of answering the research questions the qualitative interviews were used. Intermittently, the quantitative data from the survey were used to complement the qualitative research findings and testing of our hypotheses. To ensure legitimization/validity of data, Onwuegbuzie, and Johnson’s inside-outside legitimization strategy—where credence is given to both etic and emic viewpoints—was used in this study (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

### 2.3. Major themes for analysis

In arriving at the major themes (see Fig. 2)—for both the QUAL and Quan analysis, the recurrent words (see Fig. 1), frequently used phrases by the study participants were extracted using the Voyant data analytic tools. Thereafter, we then merged the recurrent words, common phrases (preliminary categories) plus the constructed categories together to create these two-pronged themes (major categories): changing patterns of migration and mobilities in Ghana amidst the pandemic; mobilities and Labor market securities amidst the Corona crisis.

It is worth noting that these two major themes, however different are very much intertwined, interconnected, and interrelated. For instance, the changing migratory and mobility patterns occasioned by the corona crisis could affect mobilities and labor market securities of the Ghanaian youth.

The abovementioned repercussions could, as well, lead to stress and depression syndrome and subsequently mental health problems and its wider implications such as gender-based and child abuse, continuous deprivation, and loss of life—in extreme cases—due to the lockdown. Overall, these could affect the economic life of the youth and their general livelihoods which could spark the discourses of national security concerns. The processes of the theme generation are explained below.

The above figure display words that have had several mentioning by the study participants and their interconnections with other variables. The keywords—people, youth, migrate, mobility, pandemic, and covid have the same color. Other interconnecting variables are labeled differently by the software.

Some phrases extracted from interview's data using the Voyant analytic tools.

Using the voyant analytic tools, some commonly used phrases and the number of times mentioned by the study participants are shown in the Table 1 below.

After carefully going through the recurrent words and commonly used phrases extracted from the dataset using the voyant analytic tools, I constructed the following categories myself presented in the Table 1 below.

The above diagram displays how we arrived at the two major themes for the analysis. We carefully read the dataset, then added the recurrent words to the common phrases (obtained from the Voyant tools) plus the constructed categories (we manually generated) to get the two major themes.

### 2.4. Data quality

To achieve data quality, we employed Onwuegbuzie and Johnson's inside-outside legitimization tactic thesis (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Equal attention was given to both etic and emic viewpoints. The

emic perspective connotes the position of the youths in the form of member checking. The etic viewpoint focuses on our "objective" perspective as researchers and using outsider social researchers too to validate our findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

## 3. Results and discussions

Our focus reflects on how the pandemic had affected the migratory and mobilities of the Ghanaian youth. The study revealed that the pattern of migration and mobility of the youth have been greatly affected. The youth could not commute freely as they did prior to the covid-19 crisis. This affected their social and economic mobilities.

### 3.1. Changing patterns of migration and mobility in Ghana amidst the pandemic

The covid-19 pandemic has changed the pattern of migration and mobility among the Ghanaian youth. Of the 122 respondents we surveyed, overwhelming majority (91.81%) of them either agree or strongly agree that their patterns of migration and mobility have been impeded by the pandemic in multifold. For the free movement of citizens enshrined in the ECOWAS charter curtailed by the pandemic, a street hawker—coded AR 5—from Niger searching for livelihood in Ghana claimed that:

*"Now in Africa, there is no free movement because of the covid 19. Movement has become difficult from Niger to Ghana, Accra to Madina [popular market square in the Great Accra Region]. It has become difficult because of the covid."*

This is how bad the pandemic has impeded free movements in Ghana, in the sub-region and globally. Therefore, the above prologue infers that the migratory and mobility patterns of the youth in Ghana have been greatly changed by the covid-19 pandemic. This supposes that the changing migratory and mobility patterns during the pandemic have occasioned precarity. Stated differently, the covid-19 pandemic has impacted migration and mobility, coupled with the social exclusion it brought onto the youth with higher chances of pushing them into a condition of "life without the promise of stability" (Tsing, 2015, p. 2). This could also worsen their pre-pandemic challenges – making their lives precarious through uncertainties, apprehension, vulnerabilities, insecurities associated with their domestic and international movements (Kasim, 2018).

Below are certain accounts from interviewees AR3 and AR6 with respect to the above theme.

*.... when the Covid hits, the drivers' Union had to cut down the number of people per bus, and instructed drivers to work in shifts. At some time, you come out and the buses will not be available because they had picked the*

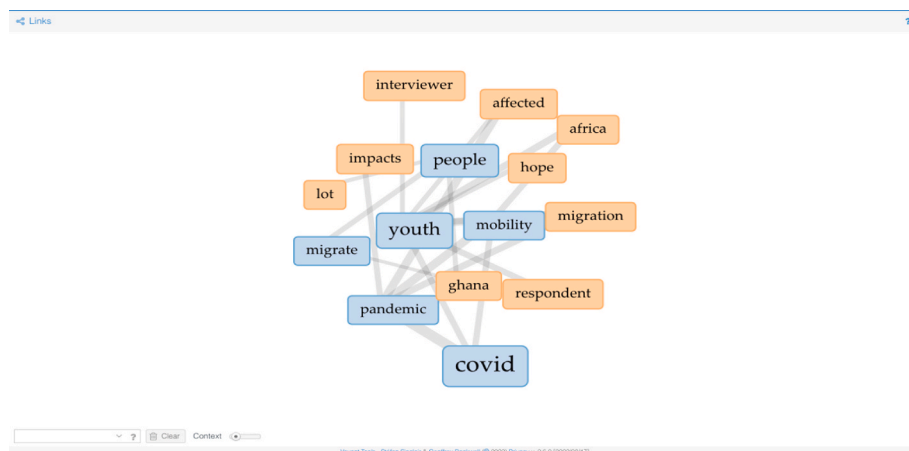


Fig. 1. Some recurrent words and their interlinkages using the voyant tools.

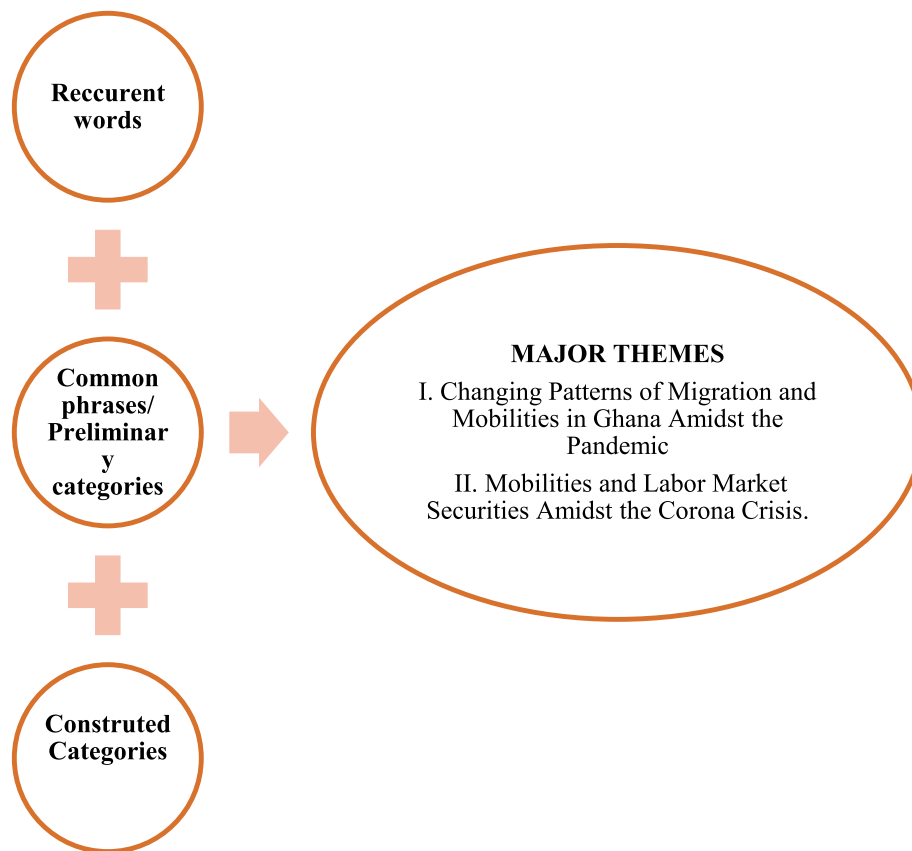


Fig. 2. Major themes.

Table 1

Constructed categories.

1	Patterns of migration in Ghana amidst the covid-19 pandemic
2	Covid-19 and the labour market mobilities among the Ghanaian youth
3	Social and labor migration
4	Patterns of daily mobility in Ghana during the pandemic
5	Online activities necessitated by the covid-19 pandemic
6	Hopelessness of the Ghanaian youth due to the covid-19 restrictions
7	Lack of mobility leading to constrained livelihoods.

Source: Researcher's own deductions

number of people, they are supposed to pick due to the covid-19 restrictions. Some days, you will not be able to get bus to your workplace (Extract 1, AR3).

Similarly, another participant revealed:

*If you are a youth and you did not have a secured job or a source of income, you could not afford nose masks or get vaccinated. How do you move to even search for job? So, I think those restrictions really hampered the opportunity for people to go out and look for jobs* (Extract 2, AR6).

The above renditions by participants AR3 and AR6 markedly shows how the covid-19 pandemic influenced their routine mobilities, labour market participation and securities. With the lockdowns for example, the public transport services could not take onboard the number of passengers hitherto taken due to the social distancing protocols enacted by the President through the executive instrument. In fact, the public transport had allowed boarding for only 22 passengers per one minibus. However, this used to be 26 passengers per one minibus. This was a big disadvantage to transport operators in terms of daily sales and overall profit margins. Moreover, the bus operators were instructed to work in shifts. These restrictions limited the supply of buses on the streets. For some transport service owners, it was economically unwise to ply the

roads only to cart few passengers amidst rising cost of fuel, diesel, impoverishing living conditions and the continuous pressure to cater for household needs—school fees, rent and general housekeeping expenses. Therefore, the covid-19-stimulated shift system generated a mismatch between the supply and demand of public buses on the streets. This is in keeping with social exclusion concept as the bus drivers and passengers were prevented from access to some rights, opportunities, and resources paramount for socioeconomic integration usually available to members of society (Silver, 2007). This clearly shows that the government's transport systems are not accessible enough to the citizens at low or no cost during a pandemic of a sort. This will obviously make mobility cumbersome. Obviously, the variance between the supply and demand for buses—together with global fuel price hikes—led to increasing cost of lorry fares which further depleted the living standards of some of the already impoverished Ghanaians particularly the youth. With few buses on the roads, workers (without personal cars) either go to work late or not at all on certain days. This could result to underemployment, and reduced productivity. From the interviews and surveys, it was revealed that some youth lost their jobs and others have had their salaries or labour hours reduced. The difficulties in commuting to and from work meant that movements and living conditions have been affected.

In relation to the issues of mobility patterns and daily livelihoods of people and their households, the passengers on board were disallowed from taking even snack in the bus whiles at the lorry station or on road going to their various destinations. The priority was survival—keeping everybody healthy and safe—even though people's migratory and mobility patterns have been affected greatly due to the covid-19 safety protocols (Jones, 2020). With snacks proscribed at the lorry stations and in the busses, the implication is that the youth whose source of livelihood involves selling ice creams, candies, doughnuts, and other fries through street hawking are kicked out of business.

To bring quantitative data from the field survey to buttress how the

covid-19 crisis changed the patterns of mobility among the youth, this graph is worthwhile.

The horizontal graph above posits that out of the 122 respondents, overwhelming majority (91.81%) of them either agree or strongly agree that their patterns of migration and mobility have been impeded by the pandemic. On the other hand, 4.1% disagree or strongly disagree. Another 4.1% remained indifferent in that respect. Furthermore, in terms of the pandemic affecting the labor market mobilities of the study participants occasioned by the changing mobility patterns, results from the field survey using a Likert scale of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree are presented in the figure above.

#### Mobilities and Labor Market Securities Amidst the Corona Crisis.

The mobilities, labor market participation and securities of the Ghanaian youth have been altered by the corona crisis as well. For instance, the inability of some youth to acquire nose masks meant that they were excluded from participating in economic, social, and even political activities. Out of the 122 participants who answered our surveys, 88.52% cumulatively agreed or strongly agree that their labor market activities and social mobilities were disrupted by the pandemic.

In terms of underemployment and/or labor work hours loss statistics, the International Labor Organization projected global hours worked in 2021 to have been reduced by 4.3% (approximately 125 million full-time jobs) compared to pre covid-19 era. In the third quarter of 2021, some developed countries witness a total work hour of 3.6% lower than the fourth quarter of 2019. Low and lower-middle income countries were also affected. They former recorded 5.7% while the latter income countries experienced 7.3% reductions ([International Labour Organization, 2021](#)).

Apparently, the corona situation has brought some sort of social exclusion leading to precarious lives for some youths. This is especially so for those in the secondary labor market doing unskilled and temp jobs—graduates doing temp jobs, head porting, street hawking—without any social security, whatsoever. For example, the freedom of boarding buses, eating in the busses or at the lorry station, loitering around the station to sell goods is the right of citizens. With the covid, they have been—passively—excluded from access to certain rights, opportunities, and resources. This reflects social exclusion and its associating precarity tendencies ([Bourdieu, 1998](#)). In this regard, there is the need for the creation of viable employment avenues for the Ghanaian youth. As these temp jobs will continuously make the youth to live precarious and unstable life ([Tsing, 2015](#)).

Relatedly, participant AR 10 argues from the social and economic aspect of covid impacts as such:

“Covid-19 really restricted my mobility especially getting to work and also having access to some recreational facilities ... the impact of the covid-19 is in terms of restricting my mobility, social aspect seeing family ...”

It could be argued that these excluded youths were being disconnected from the social relations of seeing friends, family members, some associates, and willfully frequenting institutions. Also, they are not permitted to participate fully in activities of the society such as free movement to work or search for means of livelihood ([Silver, 2007](#)). This could make their lives precarious through uncertainties, apprehension, vulnerabilities, insecurities ([Kasim, 2018](#)). The disconnection and exclusion of the youth from social and economic relation meant that their future endeavors might be endangered.

In essence, these impacted migration and mobility, coupled with the social exclusion it brought onto the youth could usher them into a condition of “life without the promise of stability” ([Tsing, 2015](#), p. 2). With these impacts, it becomes difficult for them to plan their personal, educational, social, and economic lives with certainty. Other study participants, two head porters shared how their daily movements and labor market mobilities during the peak of the corona crisis in Ghana occurred. TR 7 and TR8 reveal the following in terms of migration and

mobility.

Travelling and funerals were banned. As headporters, we could not back home due to the travelling .... So, when they lifted the lockdown, we all had to ran home [to the northern region of Ghana] for our lives. We ran home because of the covid.

(Extract 3, TR 14).

.... If you are not wearing the nose mask, and they [Police/military] got you, they will collect your head pan, and you will have to pay 10 cedis [\$1.4] before you get it back or you are released. Sometimes they will even lash you. All these things affected me because I am a female (Extract 5, TR 7).

The viewpoints of the above participants are in keeping with Osei-Assibey et al. contention that the covid-19 pandemic had changed the global population patterns of movements including Ghana ([Osei-Assibey, 2021](#)). Since the participants' daily movements and labour market mobilities as head porters is largely on mobility to and from market, the introduction of the executive instrument by the President of Ghana to ban travelling, lockdown the cities of Accra and Kumasi, ensure social distancing ([Osei-Assibey, 2021](#)). The above argument resonates with the precarity concept as it affected their daily mobilities in different ways with its diverse socio-economic effects and unsettlements of their daily temporalities and life plan ([Allison, 2012](#)).

Therefore, these head porters could no longer commute to the market unrestrained like they did pre-covid. This consequently not only caused underemployment but reduced productivity and income levels too. With the high cost of living in Accra and coupled with reduced labor hours and income, the desire of participant TR 7 to return home (northern Ghana) was impractical due to the lockdown/travel ban. Instances where they are allowed to visit the market, they are required to strictly abide by the covid-19 face mask wearing protocols. Failure to do so had resulted to various form of harassments and punishments—losing their head pan, physical abuse, monetary fines—by the Police. This assertion of physical abuse from the Police resonates with Boatenga et al. claim that there were instances violence and illegal sanctions were meted out to ‘undisciplined’ violators—mostly the youth, street hawkers, head porters—by the police ([Boatenga, Kusib, & Ametepye, 2021](#)).

To contextualize how the corona situation has changed the migration patterns in Ghana internationally and internally, it triggered the first returned internal migration in Ghana in a large scale since the independence in 1956. For example, as indicated earlier, an approximately 200 migrants—largely head porters—returned to the northern part of Ghana when the lockdown was mooted, prior to its actual date of imposition in the country ([Citi newsroom report, 2020](#)). Internationally, Ghanaians numbering about 1800 living in the sub-region were also left stranded at Ghana's borders of Aflao, Elubo and Sampa due to the border closures ([United Nations Framework Report, 2020](#)).

As alluded by head porter AR8, the pandemic forced her to return to the northern region from Accra to realize her freedom of movement guaranteed despite limited economic opportunities in northern Ghana. This returned migration hindered her source of livelihood due to the lack of industries in the north. AR8 and most of her returnees are basically home, idle without any paid work.

As seen from the graph above using the Likert scale, 67.21% agree that the pandemic affected their labor market engagements while 21.31% strongly agree. Therefore, 88.52% contended that their labor market activities were disrupted by the pandemic. However, 6.54% either disagree, strongly disagree while only 4.94% neither agree nor disagree to the question.

As seen in two broad themes, our analyses proof that the covid-19 crisis has altered migration and mobility patterns among the Ghanaian youth/women, affected their social and labor market mobilities as well as livelihoods—and could sometimes—lead to mental health problems and their concomitant national security threats. Truly, the noticeable impacts of the pandemic as reported by the study participants included difficulty commuting to work, decline in labor hours, restricted mobility, and access to necessities of life.

For instance, participant AR7 and AR8 who are head porters reported

how the pandemic occasioned returned migration to northern Ghana from Accra. Even though there exist limited economic livelihood openings in the north. Yet, the spreading nature of the virus in Accra pushed the migrants back to the North. Therefore, they lost their jobs and livelihoods at the time of the interview.

There were also reported cases of physical violence meted on the youth when they allegedly breach the restrictions. They were instances head porters were fined 10 cedis (\$1.4) or even lashed by police/military before their head pans released to them.

In terms of descriptive analysis, while 91.81% of the participants agreed that the covid changed their migratory and mobility patterns, 88.52% argued the altered mobility affected their labor market dealings. For the ensuing national security concerns, some head porters beating, having their head pans seized and had to pay money to retrieve them sometimes, and market women allegedly maltreated by the Police for breaking the covid-19 protocols, this could have sparked nationwide agitations, hunger strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of protests.

However, with the changing migratory and mobility patterns coupled with rising unemployment and some youth losing their jobs due to the corona pandemic, there is heightened tension in the country already. Like it happened in most parts of the world, the youth might be lured or even motivated to joining some terrorist or cyber terror groups to earn a livelihood. Often than not, financial inducement is a major motivator for most youth joining terrorist group in Nigeria (Salifu, 2017). And the pandemic might hasten this in Ghana unless securitization and employment creation are taken seriously.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study aimed to find answers to these research questions: How has the covid-19 pandemic affected the pattern of migration and mobility among the Ghanaian youth? To what extent has covid-19 pandemic impacted labor market mobilities among the youth? In line with these research questions, two hypotheses were stated for testing using quantitative data answered by 122 respondents from the field.

Our study concludes that the migratory and mobility patterns of people has been impacted by the pandemic due to executive instrument banning domestic and international travels, social distancing, restricting funerals, requiring people to constantly wear nose mask. It confirmed Coz and Hooper (2021) findings that the pandemic has dramatically decreased migration globally especially in West Africa. In some cases, government moved to even make vaccination or valid negative covid-19 compulsory before people are allowed entry into Ghana. These restrictions obviously affected labor market mobilities in terms of reduced labor hours which impoverished livelihoods of people. For example, Ghana Statistical Service documents that the restrictions in the movement of people to and from the central business districts led to about 10–20% price hikes of agricultural produce leading to depleting living standards (Osei-Assibey, 2021).

We also tested two hypotheses. For hypothesis 1, the research proved that the patterns of migration and mobilities have been impacted by the pandemic. As demonstrated in Fig. 3, majority (91.81%) of the study participants indicated that their migration and mobility patterns have

been affected by the pandemic. Research hypothesis 2 was proven valid too by the 122 surveyed respondents who answered the probe. Of the total 122 participants, 88.52% of them contended that their labor market mobilities have been influenced by the pandemic as seen in Fig. 4.

Conclusively, we deployed the mixed research methods in this study mainly for complementarity purposes. As the analyzed data demonstrated, the QUAN aspect complemented the narrations extracted from the QUAL aspect of the study. Therefore, the purpose of mixing is realized in this thesis.

#### 5. Policy recommendations

In view of the various ways the pandemic had impoverished the livelihoods of the youth, this paper had put forth the following policy recommendations.

- I. The youth should be encouraged to pursue further education. This motivation should include granting them study leave with pay. Also, a special fund should be established under the Ministry of Education to provide financial assistance to youth who want to build their technical competences through further education.
- II. For the unbanked youth especially, the head porters and street hawkers, they should be brought together and given startup capitals (interest free loans at best) to start their businesses. We could as well establish entrepreneurship recovery policy so that if we experience pandemic of this sort, we can hold the people so that once the person loses whatever he has, there should be something to support them. The consolidated fund could be used for this policy recommendation
- III. Public transport system should have social welfare undertones. Thus, the government's transport systems should be easily accessible to the citizens at low or no cost during a pandemic of a sort. This will ease the youths' movements in terms of economic and social relations. Metro Mass or STC could help in this instance.
- IV. Makeshift testing and vaccination centers should be developed. This will facilitate the movements of the youth searching for jobs and other livelihoods.

#### 6. Limitation of the study

Considering the youth population of Accra and Tamale, a sample size of 122 is relatively small. Also, the QUAN data analysis focus on only descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics was not utilized in the study.

#### Funding

Not applicable.

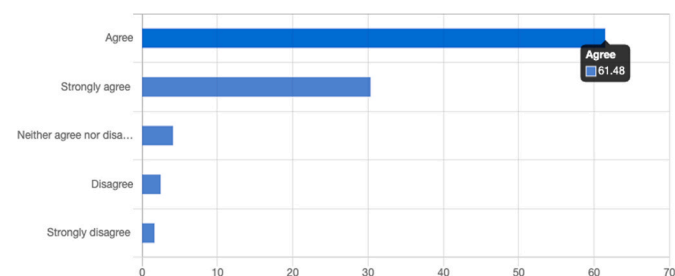


Fig. 3. Patterns of migration and mobilities in Ghana amidst the pandemic.

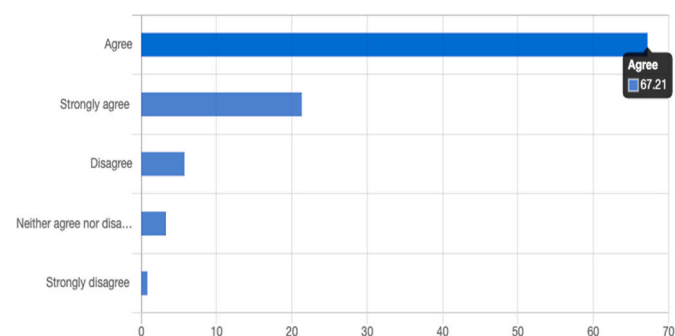


Fig. 4. Covid-19 pandemic impacted labor market mobilities.

## Ethical approval

Informed consent was solicited from all the interviewees. The purpose of the study was explained to them before interview was granted

## Data availability statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

## Author Contributions Statement

The first author conceptualized the idea, developed the methodological chapter, data curation, formal analysis, writing - original draft and in charge of project administration. The second author was in charge of investigation and resources control. The third author identified the data analytic software (voyant), supervised the research project. All authors took part in funding acquisition, research validation, visualization, editing and reviewing the entire article.

## Declaration of competing interest

Not applicable.

## References

- Abdulai, M., Ibrahim, H., & Mohammed, M. A. (2017). Communicating across cultures in multinational ibis West Africa. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 58, 42–53.
- Allison, A. (2012). Ordinary refugees. *Social precarity and soul in 21st century Japan. Anthropological Quarterly*, 85(2), 345–370 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41857246>.
- Anas, A. L., Salifu, M., & Abdulai, M. (2022). Contemporary mobility decisions of international and Danish students in Denmark amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. *Arena of Movements*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-022-00280-z>
- Awumbila, M., & Ardayio-Schendorf, E. (2008). Gendered poverty, migration and livelihood strategies of female porters in Accra, Ghana. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Norway*, 62(3), 171–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291950802335772>
- Babbie, E. (1990). *Survey research methods (vol. 2nd edition)*. Wadsworth, USA: Belmont University.
- Barbieria, D. M., Lou, B., Passavanti, M., Hui, C., & Adomako, S. (2020). A survey dataset to evaluate the changes in mobility and transportation due to COVID-19 travel restrictions in Australia. Brazil: China. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2020.106459>. Ghana, India, Iran, Italy, Norway, South Africa, United States. *Science Direct*.
- Boatenga, F. G., Kusib, S., & Ametepsey, S. (2021). COVID-19 lockdown defiance, public 'indiscipline', and criminalisation of vulnerable populations in Ghana. *African Review of Economics and Finance*, 2042, 1478.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of resistance: Against the tyranny of the market*. Cambridge. United Kingdom: Polity Press, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Brodeur, A. A., Gray, D., Islam, A., & Bhuiyan, S. (2021). A literature review of the economics of COVID-19. *Journal of Economic Surveys*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joes.12423>
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods (4th edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods (vol. 5th edition)*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.
- 1 Citi newsroom report. (2020, March 28). Corona pandemic: Native of North flee Accra over fears of getting infected. Retrieved April, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwuXwKVy9hg&t=26s>.
- Coz, C. L., & Hooper, K. (2021). Deepening labor migration governance at a time of immobility, lessons from Ghana and Senegal. *Migration Policy Institute*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design, qualitative, Quantitative and mixed methods approaches (vol. 3rd edition)*. London: United Kingdom (SAGE).
- Edwin, D. A., & Glover, E. K. (2016). Factors responsible for youth migration to the city: The case of Ghana. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(1), 10–22. <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/232162>.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2013c). *2010 population and housing census*. Accra: Ghana statistical service.
- Ghana Statistical Service 3B, G. (2021). Ghana 2021 Population and housing census. GENERAL REPORT. VOLUME 3B. AGE AND SEX PROFILE. Ghana Statistical Service (ACCRA: GSS).
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. (2020). Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1758708>
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual Framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255–274. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737011003255>
- Henry, G. (1990). *Practical sampling (Vol. 21)*. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- International Labour Organization. (2021). (2021, october 27). *ILO: Employment impact of the pandemic worse than expected*. Retrieved december 1. from [https://www.ilo.org/https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_824098/la-ng-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_824098/la-ng-en/index.htm).
- IOM. (2020). *World migration report. UN migration*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- John, A., & Ababio, O.-M. (2009). Historical overview of internal migration in Ghana. In J. K. Anarfi, & S. O. Kwankye (Eds.), *Independent migration of children in Ghana. Institute of statistical, social and economic research (ISSER); regional institute for population studies, university of Ghana-legon* (pp. 9–44). Accra: Sundel Services.
- Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2014). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches (Vol. 5th Edition)*. Oaks, California: Thousand (SAGE).
- Jones, R., & U, G. P. R. T. (2020). *Resumes work with strict COVID-19 measures*. Retrieved May, 2022 from <https://gh.opera.news/gh/en> <https://gh.opera.news/gh/en/politics/a52d5ffa2a72fe872c5c159cb6b5b53e>.
- Kasim, S. (2018). Precarity. In *The cambridge encyclopedia of anthropology (eds) F. Stein, S. Lazar, M. Candea, H. Diemberger, J. Robbins, A. Sanchez & R. Stasch*. CEA, Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology. <https://doi.org/10.29164/18precarity.14>.
- Lee, P., & Murie, A. (1999). Spatial and social divisions within British cities: Beyond residentialisation. *Housing Studies*, 14(5), 625–640. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039982641>
- Martino, M. L. (2021). *Exploring returnee migrant women, COVID-19 and sustainability in Spain. Multidisciplinary digital publishing institute (MDPI)* (Vol. 13). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13179653>, 17.
- Millar, K. M. (2017). Toward a critical politics of precarity. *Sociology Compass*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12483>
- Mwainyekule, L. H., & Frimpong, F. B. (2020). The pandemic and the economy of Africa: Conflicting strategies between Tanzania and Ghana. *Digital government: Research and practice*, 1(4), 1–8 <https://doi.org/10.1145/3419217>.
- Nations, U.nited (2013). *Cross-national comparisons of internal migration: An update on global patterns and trends. Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. New York: United Nations.
- Nations, U.nited (2016). *International migration report 2015: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/375). Department of economic and social affairs*. New York: United Nations.
- OED Online Dictionary. (2018). "precarity, n.". Retrieved April. 2022 from Oxford University Press, Article 64050894. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/>.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Johnson, R. B. (2006). *The Validity Issues in Mixed Research*, 13(1), 48–63.
- Osei-Assibey, D. T. (2021). Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Ghana's economy: Challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 48(4), 543–556. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-08-2020-0582>
- Rockwell, P. G. (2020). Webinar on text analysis with voyant tools by their developer professor Geoffrey Rockwell. On Thursday, May 7, 2020, the team of Apollonis project at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Apollonis:auth team) organized a webinar on Text Analysis with Voyant Tools, with Prof. Geoffrey Rockwell, co-developer of the tools with Stéfan Sinclair. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToEu8e7pKi4On> ( ). Alberta, Canada. : YouTube).
- Salifu, M. E. (2017). Money talks. A key reason youths join Boko Haram. *Policy Briefs*, 98. [https://media.africaportal.org/documents/policybrief98\\_1.pdf](https://media.africaportal.org/documents/policybrief98_1.pdf).
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. London, UK: Prentice Hall. Vol. Fourth Edition.
- Silver, H. (2007). Social exclusion and social solidarity. *International Labor Review*, 133, 531–578.
- Sogbe, E. (2021). The evolving impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on public transportation in Ghana. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, 9(4), 1607–1614. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2021.08.010>
- Strauss, J. C. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 3–19.
- Teddle, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2021). Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences (2nd edition). *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 15(4), 587–589. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15586898211018086>
- Teddle, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 77–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806292430>
- Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- United Nations Framework Report. (2020). *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19*. United Nations.
- Yellapu, V. (2018). Descriptive statistics. *International Journal of Academic Medicine*, 4(1), 60. [https://doi.org/10.4103/IJAM.IJAM\\_7\\_18](https://doi.org/10.4103/IJAM.IJAM_7_18)