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Introduction
Migration as one of the three components of population change has been a cogent factor in explaining population changes in the world with the other two been birth and death (Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009). All over the world, several reports on migration have documented the number of people involved (Akokpari, 2000). Migration therefore plays a role in the spatial redistribution of some of the world’s population, and has become an integral part of the daily lives of human beings who from the benefit of hindsight move for various reasons (de la Garza, 2010). Coe (2012) posits that, migration is part of human life and where people move to depends on resource distribution and the opportunities some areas in the world present over others. In addition, people also migrate in response to their individual needs (see also Bryant, 2005). Today, migration is considered as one of the Africa’s most important demographic features in explaining spatial distribution of population (Meade and Emch, 2010).

Migration occurs in two forms. Migration can occur within a country (internal migration) while transnational occurs when people move from one country to another (Coe, 2012). The most dominant form of transnational migration is the movement of people from developing countries in the global south to the developed global north (Akokpari, 2000; Koc and Oman, 2004). Many people continuously move to the developed countries for better living conditions. It is estimated that in 2009, about 3% of the world’s population were residing in a country other than where they were born (Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009).

Akokpari (2000) and Martin (2008) contend that, there exists a connection between globalisation and the increasing movement of people from one country to another. They note however that, this connection is through proximate factors such as unemployment
and increased cost of living among others. The forces of globalisation, which determine the spatial reorganisation of goods and services, continue to widen the growing structural inequalities that exist between developed and developing countries (Ansell, 2005; Parreñas, 2010). The liberalisation and free market economies under globalisation continue to make developed countries rich at the expense of the developing countries, many of which are in Africa (Akokpari, 2000). Most developing countries have become producers of raw materials. The implication of this is that, less employment opportunities are created in developing countries (Ansell, 2005; Abebe, 2007). Also, pressure is exerted on the natural environment resulting in environmental degradation. These “push factors” and increasing attractive opportunities “pull factors” at potential destinations force people to migrate (Smeekens et al, 2012).

Furthermore, the Bretton Wood institutions - the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) - set up to manage financial framework of economies after the second World War - impact migration trends in Africa through their programs and policies (Ansell, 2005; Ennew, 2005). These policy directives from the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the withdrawal of government subsidies on social services, have had drastic effects on developing economies in Africa, subsequently impacting on the demographic patterns of their population through migration (Fafchamps and Shilpi, 2013). For instance, from the 1980s, economic policies known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were introduced in Ghana, as a condition for accessing loans from the World Bank and IMF (Ansell, 2005; Smeekens et al, 2012). SAPs are conditions implemented to reduce governments’ public expenditure and to ensure that, countries receiving loans spend it according to the goals for which the loans were granted (Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009). SAPs brought with them consequences such redeployment and the withdrawal of subsidies for social services such as health care, education and retrenchment of public-sector workers (Ansell, 2005; Ennew, 2005; Abebe, 2007).

Many authors (example; Akokpari, 2000; Ansell, 2005; Smeekens et al, 2012) are of the view that, these policies and programs have compounded the existing inequalities that exist between African countries and countries in the developed world. In many instances, some of the economic gains previously made by some countries have been reversed through the implementation of some of these policies and programs (Akokpari, 2000).
At the same time, as people continue to migrate to potentially attractive receiving countries, the receiving countries are tightening their immigration laws and border controls to stem the flow of people into their countries (Beneria et al, 2012). In view of this, many people are now migrating to different parts of the world without their families (Parreñas, 2010). Martin, (2008) and Pajuik and Baji (2012) succinctly argue that, this trend coupled with the higher number of women engaging in migration - feminisation of migration – in recent years have increased the plight of the families left-behind, especially children (see also Sanaratna, 2012). This is likely to be serious in many African societies where women have the gendered role of catering for children in the home (Nukunya, 2003; Parreñas, 2010). The plight of children left-behind becomes an issue, since child-rearing arrangements have to be put in place for them (Coe, 2012).

Although remittances are sent by some migrated parents to secure better lives for their children, global remittances fell by 6.1% in 2009, due to the global economic crisis (de la Garza, 2010). The effects of this decline would probably have serious ramifications for the families who are dependent on the remittances (Ackak and Mededev, 2012). Therefore, the impact of migration on children left-behind should be seen in the broader context of “poverty-conflict”, as well as within the perspectives of vulnerability, resilience and children’s rights (Smeekens et al, 2012).

Even though there is plethora of literature on the effects of migration in Ghana, there is a dearth of research about children left-behind and how they experience and cope with everyday life. Furthermore, less attention has been paid to the numerous psychosocial, economic and cultural ramifications of contemporary population movement on children left-behind in Ghana.

Migration in Ghana
In Ghana, studies on migration show that, there are rural-urban migration, urban-urban migration, rural-rural migration and a huge number of Ghanaians migrating to other countries - which have been noted as very pervasive in the country (GSS, 2005; Manuh, 2005; Ackak and Mededev, 2012). Ghana has a long history of migration. Almost all ethnic groups in Ghana trace their history as having migrated from different places to their present day location (Owusu, 2000; Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009). Previously, migration was usually done by men who left their homes to seek for paid employment for limited period of time. However, women's migration from Ghana has been noted with special reference to
cross border migration in recent times (Anarfi, 2003; Hashim, 2005; Coe, 2012). According to the 2000 Census Report, the Brong-Ahafo region where the study area is located, recorded a loss of people to international migration as against other regions in the country (GSS, 2005; Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009).

In Ghana, the documented reasons given by people for continued emigration to other countries are many. Key among them include high rate of unemployment and economic decline, mainly due to the economic crises from the mid 1960s (Anarfi et al, 2003). As indicated earlier, the contribution of SAPs to the above-mentioned problems is enormous (Ennew, 2005; Abebe, 2007). For instance, the adoption of SAPs means a cut in the number of adults who were employed especially in the public sector. This led to a dramatic fall in household income, with little or no money to support children (Coe, 2012). These factors, coupled with full cost recovery for the health and education sectors, led to the deterioration in the welfare of children. The programmes under SAPs partly influenced the increasing levels of poverty in many homes, and forced many parents to migrate for better opportunities in other countries (Ackah and Medevdev, 2012).

In Ghana, the large scale of transnational migration has raised concerns about its effects on the children left-behind, such as their schooling and health care needs (Coe, 2012). Migration has also been associated with a number of issues affecting children’s personal and social development when they are left-behind (UNICEF, 2009). This is because children who have one or both parents migrating are perceived to bear the burden of the cost of migration (Smeekens et al, 2012). According to Ansell and Young (2003) children have different levels of acceptance in a situation where a parent or both parent(s) migrate. In some situations, younger children view migration as a form of neglect (Ansell and Young, 2003; Smeekens et al, 2012).

**Overall theoretical perspective**
The various ways, in which children and childhood have been viewed in academic research, for instance within psychology and sociology, have been widely criticised over the past decades (Qvortrup, 1994; James et al, 1998). It should be noted that, these disciplines to a large extent have in some ways ignored the ‘agency’ of children, which in this sense include the lived experiences of children in their everyday lives. The theoretical perspective supported by the social studies of childhood offers a theoretical framework that includes children’s agency as an issue when researching children and childhood
(James and Prout, 1997). It has also broadened the interest in children’s lives across wider range of disciplines than in the past (James et al, 1998). Jenks (1982) argues that, children were studied as learners, being initiated into the cultural and social worlds of adults. The voices of children were also missing in learning about children (Abebe, 2007). This necessitated the emergence of the social studies of childhood or the sociology of childhood.

This theoretical perspective of studying children emphasises that, children are active beings whose agency is important in the creation of their own life world (Qvortrup, 1994). Children are considered as competent human agents – social actors who have freedom of choice and actions (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, children should be studied in their own right, as full social actors, rather than being viewed as adults in the making (James and Prout, 1997). This approach seeks to understand children’s agency through their interpretation of and responses to their environment (Qvortrup, 1994). This theoretical perspective looks at how we theorise children in research and views children as active agents whose own perspectives should be studied.

**Methods**

**Study area**

This paper presents a research study carried out in the Berekum municipality in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana. The municipality was chosen because it has people with varied social and economic status. The municipality is experiencing a lot of international migration making the study area relevant (Boampong, 2007).

**Study sample**

In choosing the sample, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the respondents for the study. Sixteen children (aged 13-16) and six caregivers were recruited as matched samples from the selected communities in the municipality. With the help of some gatekeepers a child was purposively selected, based on the inclusion criteria of having migrated parent(s) living in the municipality and was prepared to partake in the study. Using snowball sampling technique the children suggested other children with migrated parents. The first six caregivers of the children selected in the sample who were willing to participate were also included in the study. The inclusion of the caregivers was to enable contextualisation of the children’s experiences.
Data collection
Qualitative data were collected for this study through semi-structured interviews with both children and some caregivers. Participants were asked questions about their experiences of dealing with parental migration. The interview data were collected from various locations in the municipality.

Data analysis
The interviews were transcribed from the local language (Bono-Twi) into English by the researcher. Data analysis techniques consisting of coding frameworks, thematic and content analysis were used to give a deeper understanding of the issues under consideration (Silverman, 2011). The categorisation, coding and content analyses further enabled the interconnection between the children’s and caregivers’ accounts. The data were analysed to identify emerging themes to enable “thick descriptions” and to provide depth to the experiences of children and caregivers (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The themes developed from these interviews were compared and similar patterns identified, in order to link some of the accounts from children and caregivers. All the names used in this study are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the respondents.

Results and discussions
Care within cultural and social systems
In sub-Saharan Africa, children are sometimes sent to the extended family for care and fostering. In such arrangements, children tend to develop multiple attachments (Abebe, 2010). According to Ansell and Van Blerk (2004), the relationships between children and the extended family members including family friends in some ways serve as both a response and adaptation to parental migration. Therefore, in many societies, the absence of one or both parents places responsibility not only on the caregivers, but also, the entire members within the extended family to provide for the well-being of the child (Gonzalez-Ferrer et al, 2012). In the socio-cultural system, families pull resources together in diverse ways to provide the needed care for children (Abebe, 2010). Kinship systems existing in extended families emphasise the social, economic as well as the religious obligation of protecting the family lineage (Nukunya, 2003). It also has an obligation towards the material and social needs of the people in the family especially children (Nukunya, 2003; Abebe, 2010). Therefore, the relationships between children and extended family serves as a response and an important way through which they adapt to parental migration (Ansell and Van Blerk, 2004).
In conducting this study, children mentioned the extended family system as important mechanism that they rely on to cope with parental absence. I termed the support from members of the extended family as ‘external support’ to care. To this a 14-year-old boy during the study stated that:

*In addition to the support from my parents abroad, I live with my auntie who supports and cares for me. She provides for my basic needs, and helps me with my school assignments and chat with me a lot. My father’s junior brother is a shopkeeper. Sometimes I go to him to ask for books and other things for school.* (Kwabi, 14 years).

Kwabi receives care and support from some family members, even though, this might not be on regular basis. Additionally, Kwabi noted that he has some distant cousins who give him some "used" clothing for him to use.

*Like I was saying, I have cousins who also give me some of their clothing; sometimes when I ask them, you know, because I need them. This helps me very much* (Kwabi, 14 years).

Robbie attributed his success in school so far to his uncle, but believes that other members in the extended family will also support him as time goes on. He commented on how the extended family contributes to his survival after the migration of his parents. Robbie noted that:

*I get support from my uncle who is father’s brother. He pays my fees at school, and buys books for me. He helps me a lot in school and that is why am still in school. There are other people in the family who occasionally support me* (Robbie, 16 years).

For these informants, the extended family members serve as a useful source of support for children left-behind. The fact that the extended family plays a major role in supporting children in most Ghanaian cultures has long been established (Nukunya, 2003). Nukunya (2003) notes that, members of the extended family view children as a common ‘property’. Hence, they support the children when they are in need. In the view of Boyden and Mann (2005), these external supports tend to serve as resources, which make life bearable for children. Also, to a larger extent, the joint responsibility of caring for children by the family is explained by the cultural values and practices to childcare in most African cultures (Nukunya, 2003).
In addition, statements made by some caregivers indicate the importance of the extended family in caring for children left-behind. Amama, described why she was catering for her distant cousin’s child. She said that there exists trust between them because they are family members. She stated that:

\[ I \text{ have a responsibility to cater for the child because I see her as my own.} \]
\[ My \text{ cousin asked me to cater for her. She trusts me, and that is why she entrusted her daughter into my care (Amama, 49 years).} \]

Parreñas (2010) argue that, the increased feminisation of migration puts burden on the kinsmen in the extended family by entrusting them with extra responsibilities to cater for the children of the away parents.

Furthermore, Parreñas (2010) contends that, children who have one parent migrating and leaving them behind with the other parent receive much care and attention. This was especially the case with children who have their fathers migrating and leaving them behind with their mother. Atman (2012) attributes this phenomenon to the bond created at birth between mothers and children. To this, Nkebi described how her mother is concerned about her welfare because her father migrated long ago.

\[ \text{When my mother sees that I need something, she provides it for me.} \]
\[ \text{There is always food in the house for me...am happy at home, because Mummy is wonderful to me (Nkebi, 11 years).} \]

The statement above is also consistent with studies conducted elsewhere in the world (Kautzky, 2009; Asis, 1995) emphasising that mothers normally provide care for their children most of the time as their husbands migrate, in the case of individual parental migration. They attributed this to the feminine roles played by women who are seen by many as ‘natural carers’ in different socio-cultural contexts, as people who provide care for children (Parreñas, 2010). Traditionally in Ghanaian society, it is widely believed that women are responsible for providing care to their children and not fathers. Nukunya, (2003) establishes that, gender roles play a major part in the Ghanaian society, a fact that corroborates this finding. Parreñas (2005) succinctly argues that, even though the age of the child left-behind is important, the gender of the migrated parent impacts greatly on the experiences of the children.

However, it was revealed from my study that, when fathers were left-behind with their children, they take on more care-giving roles with their children. These roles include taking on household chores to help their older children. This finding was also evident in
other studies (example; Hugo, 2002; Asfar, 2003; and Save the Children, 2006; Lu, 2012), even though, the fathers indicated that these roles do not continue whenever their wives return temporarily. In addition, Parreñas, (2010) documents that, the migration of mothers pose a challenge to gender division of labour in many households, and it puts extra responsibilities on fathers and daughters left-behind. As revealed from the above analysis, children who are left-behind experience care from different sources in the society ranging from members of the extended family to care given by a parent left-behind.

*Children’s use of remittances and communication*

Bennett et al, (2012) opines that, labour migration has become a major source of support for families in many developing countries. Remittances constitute the earnings made by migrant workers that are sent to their home countries (Akokpari, 2000). The study revealed that, whereas some of the children received remittances from their migrated parent(s), others in the sample are completely dependent on themselves or in some instances random help from some distant family relatives.

The impact of remittances on local livelihoods and poverty is of great significance to people (including children) who receive it (Kautzky, 2009; Atman, 2012). This is because remittances contribute to the household livelihoods strategies of families left-behind (Atman, 2012). It allows left-behind parents and caregivers access to resources and enables them to better care for children. At the family level, remittances are used to supplement the budget of the households in developing countries (Asis, 2006). It also helps to invest in the human capital development of children by reducing their participation in labour and encourage school attendance (UNICEF, 2007). Therefore, remittances have a massive impact on the life styles of families left-behind.

Consequently, in order to understand the various roles remittances play, children were asked whether they receive support from their migrated parents and if they do, what they think the money is used for? The main reason for asking this question was to explore how children left-behind depend on remittances. Most of the informants stated that they were aware of money sent to them by their migrated parent(s). Most of the children were of the view that, the money sent by their migrant parent(s) was used for their upkeep. On the issue of children receiving support from their away-parent, a 13-year-old female respondent replied that:
My father sends me money from abroad through my mother to support me. The money is given to her for safekeeping and it is used for the upkeep of me and my siblings in the house as well as for the payment of fees charged at school (Ami, 13 years).

In effect, what this child is saying is that, the money from her migrated parent enables her to access education together with her siblings. Also by receiving this money, they are able to pay for their school fees and other expenses. Nav also described how he is aware of the money sent by his parents. Even though, he also believed that the money sent to cater for his needs is used for that purpose, he thought the money was not sufficient to cater for all his needs. This is because he fails to get some of the things that he needs. Nave stated that:

My parents send me money... I am aware that my parents send money to support me. When they call on the telephone they speak to me, and tell me about the money that they have sent to me through my uncle. The money is used to cater for my basic needs in the house like food, fees at school and my daily pocket money...[but] sometimes the money is inadequate to sufficiently support me (Nav, 15 years).

In his study on the impact of remittances in rural Ashanti - one of the numerous ethnic groups in Ghana - Coe (2012) documents that, remittances contribute greatly to the household income of families with migrants, and that, such homes more often than not adopt more sophisticated life styles. Owusu (2000) in studying Ghanaian migrants in Benin contends that, remittances sent by migrants are of great importance to the family left-behind. This is because it increases the purchasing power of families and enables them to afford various goods and services, which contribute to their well-being. From the view of Koc and Oman (2004), money contributes to the welfare of not only children left-behind but also other members of the family left-behind. When there are no remittances from parents, family members left-behind go through hardships; making it difficult to provide some basic needs of children like paying school fees, buying food and clothing (Duque-Paramo, 2012).

Some of the caregivers as well as children also spoke about how they stay in constant touch with the away-parent(s). The respondents mainly relied on technology to stay in touch with the away-parent(s). One technology that was cited by both children and
caregivers was mobile phones although in two instances the Internet was mentioned. However, these respondents could not provide any identifiable evidence to support their claim of using Internet. Abini mentioned the mobile phone as the medium through which she communicates with her migrant sister whose daughter she is looking after. She indicated that, the money sent to her is done through one of the international money transfer agencies. Her sister then contacts her through the telephone so that she can go for the money. She stated that:

Yes, my sister and her husband send money from abroad for the upkeep of their daughter. They use the money transfer system to send the money, and then they will call to give me the code before I go and collect it. Most of the time, they call me during weekends to speak to their child (Abini, 40 years).

Similarly, Ellima spoke about how her parents communicate to her through telephone and mail gifts to her most of the time. She recounted that:

My parents always call me to ask how am doing here. They call on Auntie’s [care-giver he is staying with] mobile phone or sometime I communicate with them on the Internet. My mother knows I like gift so she sometime mail things to me through the post (Ellima, 12years).

Madianou and Miller (2011a) contend that, communication channels and opportunities, which are facilitated by technology, have contributed to the intimacy between transnational families and their families left-behind (see also Parreñas, 2010). Many away-parents remain in constant touch with their children left-behind with the help of the increasing technological advancement. Madianou and Miller (2011b) argued that, long distance communication through mobile phone has made away-parents redefined their parental role in the upbringing of their children left-behind.

Parreñas (2001; 2010) contends that, technology has influence to a greater extent the role of parents residing abroad in caring for their children left-behind especially ‘mothering’ from a distance. As Madianou and Miller (2011b) observed, communicating through the use of mobile phones to children left-behind as well as their caregivers is seen by many away-mothers as a means of empowering them to partially reconstruct their role as mothers.

Working as a coping strategy for children
Coping strategies among children left-behind can be studied within a specific socio-cultural and structural context (Boyden and Mann, 2005). This is because these structures can create different conditions for children to act. Coping strategies are methods that children left-behind in the study area adopt to make life bearable for them in their day-to-day lives (Abebe, 2007). Based on the notion that children are active actors, migration of one or both parents may lead to children “taking active part and crafting responses to cope with parental migration” (Asis, 2006: 47). Coping strategies here therefore refers to ways by which children exhibit and utilize their agency. This study therefore, sought to explore some of the strategies children adopt to make life bearable for them.

Some children cited working as a coping strategy. Some children engaged in income generating activities to earn money or work in order to support themselves. These children told me that they do not hear from their parents who have migrated. Therefore, they have to work to support themselves. Moreover, some of the proceeds from their work are sometimes given to their caregivers. In addition, these ‘working children’ were out of school. Some of them gave me different reasons why they go out to work. The main driving force for this situation was their inability to get enough support from their migrated parents. Others told me that they did not get any support at all.

Children are sometimes forced to rely on their own capacities as individuals to cope (Boyden and Mann, 2005) in cases when parents migrate. The empirical data from my study shows that some children are heavily dependent on themselves for survival. The study revealed that, some of them work for tips without specifically charging any amount of money for the work they do whereas others charged for the work that they did. Some of them cited their inability to pay their fees at school, and also to get basic necessities for school as the main cause of their dropout from school. Therefore, they have to work to attain some of their basic needs. In some cases, these children use part of the money that they earn to support the family members who they live with. One of the respondents said that:

*I normally come here to the market to do some work for money. Sometimes too, I work for tips to get what I want and sometimes give some to my grandmother in the house. I stay in the street for some support from friends like food, clothes and others* (Yami, 15 years).
When asked how he survives, since his away-parents do not send him money, Anina stated that, he goes to a woman in the neighbourhood to run errands for her to get money and food; however he does not do this on a regular basis.

*Unless I have to work in this house, I go to [mentions a name] to run errands for food and money. Sometime she even gives me some shirts and other things for my personal use in addition to the few I receive from my grandmother [care-giver] (Anina, 12 years).*

This fact illustrates that children form part of the entire structure of their society and as social actors they also adjust themselves to cope within existing structural conditions. In a similar way, Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue strongly that, the ability of children to change some conditions in which they find themselves to their advantage shows that, children are not only passive subjects in the social structure but may rather be active social subjects of the structure (see also Boyden and Mann, 2005).

Similar findings were recorded where some of the children told me that they do not hear from their migrated parents so they have to work to support themselves. This finding is consistent with what Kautzky (2009) found in a study in which data was collected in South Africa. According to him, children who do not hear from their migrated parents most often depend on their personal abilities to survive. However, this finding is in opposition to what other researchers (example; Batistela and Conaco, 1998; Duque-Paramo, 2012) found in their studies. They argue that children left-behind have access to basic needs and better life conditions. Therefore, these children do not engage in any work.

To further assess the kind of work children do, the children were asked what kind of work they engaged in when they went out. The children mentioned jobs such as cleaning shops, carrying of loads, working as a cobbler and selling. In relation to this, one of the respondents remarked that:

*There is no money home, and am out of school. Normally when I come here to work, may be sometimes in the early morning, I sweep inside some of the shops in the area, but in the afternoon I carry loads for people to give me money. I do carry load until the evening when I go back to the house (Akil, 15 years).*

The United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2008) argues that, inadequate education and child labour are closely associated with parental
migration in most developing countries. Children who are exposed to these risks often become victims of the circumstances in which they find themselves (Smeekens et al, 2012). This indicates that, not all the children left-behind have success stories of having better life conditions. Whilst some cope well, others suffer severe risks (Ackah and Medevdev, 2012). Some of these children find it difficult to pay their fees at school and drop out of school, while others suffer health risks such as malnutrition (Anarfi, 2003; Asis, 2006; Coe, 2012).

Again, these excerpts from the analysis bring out how some children work to cater for some of their basic needs. It also indicates that children are active social subjects with agency. This means that they rely on their individual capacities to cope (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Boyden and Mann, 2005). Therefore, the ability of these children to survive when exposed to adversities indicates their adaptation to such situations and their resilience. These adverse circumstances, if not well managed, threaten the very lives of the children exposed to them. In most cases, apart from some of the interventions developed to save children from adversity, children themselves develop coping mechanisms to survive. Giddens (1984) argues that, all human beings are knowledgeable agents who know much about prevailing conditions in which they find themselves. Children are therefore aware of their conditions hence, adopt these coping strategies.

As stated earlier, it was revealed from this study that some of the children who engaged in work were mostly those who have migrated parents but neither hear from them nor receive financial support from them. These children engage in income-generating activities to support themselves and in some cases their caregivers. It could therefore be argued that, some children left-behind work to cater for themselves because of the growing numbers of people engaged in illegal migration through North African countries. This form of migration takes longer for the migrants to reach their final destination, making it difficult for children of such migrants to be remitted.

The decisions made by children to engage in income earning activities shows children are rational beings and are able to take decisions to help them cope with parental absence due to migration. The global model of childhood has the view that, childhood as a phase of life should be free from work (Ansell, 2005). However, this is not the case for some children left-behind. Mafukidze (2006) has established the relationships between parental migration, household poverty and child labour. She indicated that when parents
migrate and do not remit their children, they become poor. Household poverty most of the time leads to child labour.

The current study also reveals that gender as a social category is manifested in the work some children left-behind engage themselves in to earn a living. Gender is a social construct, which assigns roles to males and females (Robson, 2003). Most of the boys who work are engaged in activities that involve the use of the physical strength such as head porterage and running errands among others. While the girls are involved in light activities, where physical strength is less required, such as selling food and bagged water among others. This is evident to support the assertion found elsewhere by Abebe (2007), that work children engage in to survive are constructed along gender lines (see also Robson, 2003).

My study, however, contradicts the conventional model set by the global model of childhood, seeing childhood as a period when children are not supposed to work. These forms of paid activities that some of these children engage in, in many instances tend to be a major source of coping mechanism to the conditions in which they find themselves (Ansell and Van Blerk, 2004; Abebe, 2007).

Furthermore, the various coping strategies adopted by these children tend to support Giddens (1984) assertion in his structuration theory; that although children’s lives are shaped by society and its prevailing conditions, as rational social actors with agency who can direct their own lives, they engage in these income generating activities to get their basic needs. It is important to state that rationalisation of action happens according to Giddens (1984) when agents get an understanding of their actions. The analysis shows that decisions to go and work are taken by children themselves even though in some instances parents/caregivers might have some influence on it.

**Conclusions**

This study has examined the experiences children left-behind go through daily when their parents migrate. The study concludes, based on the above findings that, parental migration affects the everyday lives of children left-behind. Children therefore go through a lot of experiences. Whereas some have better life conditions through provisions that support their basic needs, others struggle to meet these needs. Such children do not enjoy a high quality of everyday life, care and support. For instance, some children are forced
out of school due to parental migration even though the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) as well as Children’s Act - now passed into law - and the 1992 constitution are used in Ghana to protect the rights of children.

Therefore, migrated parents and policymakers will benefit from an understanding of the impact of migration on both children and caregivers for effective policy formulation and decision-making. It will be appropriate to look specifically at the impact of migration on children left-behind for effective policy formulation. To examine the impact of migration on children, further research could document the experiences of children who move with their Ghanaian parents during migration. In this case, a comparison can be made to identify the similarities and differences in the experiences between these children.

References


**Endnote**

The author takes responsibility for comments, claims and errors.

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