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Article

"I Have to Further My Studies Abroad": Student Migration in Ghana

Justice Richard Kwabena Owusu Kyei

Department of Sociology and Social Work, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana;
E-Mail: rokyei@knust.edu.gh

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Abstract
The literature on migration intentions of university students and their decisions to travel abroad as student migrants is limited. This article outlines how the thought of student migration is created and nurtured. It investigates how facilitators and/or constraints influence the decision to migrate as students. Using a multi-sited approach, fieldwork in Ghana focused on prospective student migrants, while fieldwork in the Netherlands provided a retrospective perspective among student migrants. Life story interviews were adopted in the collection of data. In the minds of the respondents, there is a clear distinction between the idea of 'migration' and the idea of 'student migration.' The article concludes that childhood socialization shapes the idea of 'migration' that culminates in the thought of 'student migration.' Apart from studies, experiencing new cultures and networking are among the notable expectations that inform the thought of student migration. Religiosity categorised as prayers and belonging to religious community is a cultural principle employed to facilitate the fulfilment of student migration intentions. With a shift from the classical economic models of understanding the decision to migrate, this article elucidates the fears, anxiety, joys and perplexities that are embedded in the thought of student migration.

Keywords
Ghana; migration behaviour; migration intention; student migration; university students

Issue
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1. Introduction

Most of the literature on human mobility from the Global South to the Global North has focused on labour migration, human trafficking and irregular forms of migration (Adepoju, 2005; Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000) because of their consideration as having substantial social, economic and security implications. An emerging category of persons who migrate with the prime aim of studying in the host country have received little attention in the migration literature on West Africa. Studies that focus on graduate and professional migration problematize brain drain, brain gain and brain circulation from the Global South to the Global North (Adepoju, 2005; Dako- Gyeke, 2016; Efionayi & Piguet, 2014; Mutume, 2003). In this article, I shift from the human capital discourse (Rosenzweig, Irwin, & Williamson, 2006) in migration decisions to emotional challenges, joys, perplexities and anxieties embedded in the day-to-day activities of persons (Wang & Chen, 2020) who aspire to travel as students. First the research outlines how the thought of student migration is created and nurtured among prospective student migrants from Ghana. Secondly it investigates the socio-cultural facilitators and constraints that influence the decision of Ghanaians to migrate as students.

The OECD (2019) asserts that over the last three decades, the rise in international student migration superseded total international mobility. As of 2013, over 4.3 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their national borders (OECD, 2013). Student migration has become an important contributor to the global higher education landscape over the past few decades. International students in higher education worldwide rose from 2 million in 1998 to 5 million in 2016, according to UNESCO (2018a). In 2017, the OECD (2019) projected

that the total number of internationally mobile students will reach 8 million by 2025. In spite of the rapid rate of growth of student migrants, student migration remains the least regulated and restricted form of international migration (Rosenzweig et al., 2006).

Contemporary research has begun to problematize student migration and looked into why students may be mobile, what influences their choice of mobility and the impact of mobility on their future (Cairns, 2014). Kell and Vogl (2008) argued that the approaches used in studying international students are more instrumental and tend to emphasize 'market analysis,' which overshadows students' social, cultural, emotional and educational experiences. UNESCO (2006), for instance, reported that the United States, United Kingdom and Australia are the three key players when it comes to international student market. Börjesson (2017) identified three different logics in the flow of student migration, which includes market logic, colonial logic and proximity logic. Interestingly, an element of market logic runs through all the other forms of Börjesson's (2017) logic. This article shifts the student migration discourse from classical economic models' homogeneous factor of wage differentials to emotional and cultural motivations that shape student migration decision-making. I focus on how the decision-making processes of prospective student migrants are embedded with frictions, barriers and anxieties that are coupled with micro-politics of subjectivities.

2. Conceptualising the Decision to Migrate and Student Migration

The decision to migrate originates from the home country as an idea which becomes actualised or not (Edelstein, 2000). The decision to migrate is a multi-phase process which precedes the actual movement to a different country. The process is shaped by multiplicity of micro, meso and macro factors that are crucial in the decision-making of prospective student migrants, many of which are subject to uncertainty. This research is inspired by conceptual frameworks that originate from social psychology and have been drawn into the migration decision-making literature: The theory of planned behaviour is drawn from social psychology and central to the theory is that individual's intentions are the primary determinant of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Intention is defined as a person's motivation and perceived likelihood to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The intentions of an individual in carrying out behaviour are enshrined in motivational factors that indicate how much a person is willing to invest in order to achieve that particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory posits that behavioural intentions may lead to behaviour itself that is the carrying out of concrete actions. There are, however, constraints and facilitators that directly affect the accomplishment of the behaviour which the theory refers to as non-motivational factors for example the availability of time, money, skills, cooperation of others (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). De Jong (2000) incorporates the theory of planned behaviour into migration decision-making discourse and differentiates between migration intention and migration behaviour. Empirical studies on De Jong's (2000) two-phase model have provided conflicting results (Creighton & Riosmena, 2013; van Dalen & Henkens, 2013) as migration intentions are mostly not fulfilled as migration behaviour. Fundamentally the argument holds that when the expectation of moving to a different location will fulfil the achievement of a certain goal rather than the momentary place of living, a person is likely to migrate which is summarised as value-expectancy (De Jong, 2000; De Jong & Fawcett, 1981).

Kley (2011) builds on De Jong's (2000) two-phase model drawing from the psychological Rubicon model and divides the migration decision-making process into three-phase models namely the pre-decisional, pre-actional and actional stages. The pre-decisional stage involves the initial conception of the thought of migration without any engagement or preparation and this phase ends when a person decides to migrate (Hoppe & Fujishiro, 2015). The next stage that the model refers to as migration behaviours are the preparatory actions towards migration that are distinctly divided into two (Hoppe & Fujishiro, 2015; Kley, 2011). The pre-actional phase begins with the exploring of migration possibilities through the gathering of information from various networks but with no obligations as they are tentative. The last stage is the actional phase (Kley, 2011) which consists of the concrete execution of migration by making arrangements for the movement to the destination country for schooling.

When prospective student migrants realise that their aspirations are not likely to be fulfilled in the home country, they look for alternative solutions outside (Ferro, 2006). Potential student migrants therefore make rational calculation, but this process is not limited to economic and monetary calculations of the self. The cost-benefit calculations are also articulated by the push and pull elements in personal experiences, family and social networks. In the push and pull discourse, the prospective student migrant evaluates the expectations of life abroad and the deprivation at home that may deny the attainment of the desired aspirations (Ferro, 2006). For Findlay, King, Smith, and Skeldon (2012), student migration has to be perceived in a wider life-course perspective. The classical economic models of wage differentials as the homogenous factor that explains migration flows have, however, been limited in delving into the dynamics and nuances that motivate migration (Fischer, Reiner, & Straubhaar, 1997). Faist (1997) argues that the network framework for explaining migration decision-making is more successful in studying the direction of flow rather than the volume.

From micro sociological perspective, I transcend the human capital and economic models and focus on the emotional dimensions of fear, joys, anxieties and

perplexities embedded in the day-to-day activities of persons who aspire to be student migrants. I argue that the lived experiences of frictions, barriers, happiness coupled with micro-politics of subjectivities have not received attention in the decision-making process of student migrants. I take into account how potential student migrants and student migrants develop their migratory project at the personal level considering factors such as expectations, aspirations, values, beliefs and personal experiences as indicators in migration decision-making (Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Tabor & Milfont, 2011).

In conceptualising student migrants, the OECD (2011) makes a distinction between international students and foreign students whereby it describes international students as persons who move from their country of origin with the aim of pursuing academic activity. Foreign students are rather students who are non-citizens of a country in which they are enrolled but are long term residents or were even born in that country. Foreign students according to the OECD (2011) encompass students who entered the host nation through family reunion, labour migration, asylum, as refugees, and even those who were born in the host nation.

Since 2015, UNESCO, the OECD and the European Union's statistical office use a joint definition that considers international students as persons who enter a host country for the purpose of studying there and are enrolled for tertiary degree or higher (UNESCO, 2015). They also clarified the duration by stating that the length of stay is more than one year and expands up to seven years. These clarifications set international students apart from foreign students and credit-mobile students who spend one or two semesters abroad. I define student migrants as anyone who leaves his or her home country with the prime aim of pursuing academic formation which lasts at least one year. Student migration is conceptualised as the movement from one country to another for the purpose of obtaining a diploma in an academic institution with a formation that lasts at least one year.

3. History of Student Migration in Ghana

When Ghana gained independence in 1957, Ghana had inadequate skilled personnel that partly delayed the government's plan of rapidly transforming the economy from an agrarian to an industrial economy. The government therefore sponsored some Ghanaian students to undertake specific studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the former USSR and in countries like Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (Anarfi et al., 2000). About two-thirds of the student migrants returned after their education—as foreseen—while others continued to stay abroad (Tonah, 2007).

In the early 1980s, Ghana experienced economic hardships, political instability and political persecutions that were coupled with natural disaster. The harsh Ghanaian situation and the unstable economic and political environment of neighbouring countries like Nigeria and Ivory Coast gave birth to new waves of labour emigration with Europe and North America as the main destination places. Studies have investigated international labour migration across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe, the United States and Canada (Adepoju, 2005; Anarfi et al., 2000; Tonah, 2007). The literature also abounds with the integration of Ghanaian migrants in Europe (Agyeman, 2011) as well as their religious, political and economic transnational practices (Kyei & Smoczynski, 2019; Kyei & Setrana, 2017; Kyei, Setrana, & Smoczynski, 2017). Studies have also examined the re-integration of return migrants into the Ghanaian society (Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Student migration of Ghanaians has not received much attention in the migration literature since the new wave of labour migration began in the 1980s.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the International Organization for Migration estimated that 67,000 African university graduates left the continent for industrialized countries between 1960 and 1984, and since 1984 this figure has been increasing by 20,000 per annum (Mutume, 2003). About 41% of African immigrants that migrated to the United States between 2008 and 2012 had at least a university degree (Mutume, 2003). Black, Tiemoko, and Waddington (2003) suggested that 15% of Ghanaians with university education have migrated to the United States and another 10% to OECD countries. Intriguingly, according to UNESCO's (2018b) *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*, people with tertiary education are five times more likely to migrate abroad than people with primary education.

4. Data and Method

This article adopted a multi-sited ethnography (Candea, 2009; Falzon, 2016; Marcus, 1995) so as to have holistic understanding of migration intention and behaviour of prospective student migrants and student migrants. The research sites were Ghana and the Netherlands. The fieldwork in Ghana took place between September 2019 and December 2019. Multiple methods were employed during the fieldwork in recruiting the respondents. Some of the prospective student migrants were recruited at education fairs organised in and out of university campuses in Ghana while other respondents were recruited through personal networks. Sixty-five university students and graduates from five public universities in Ghana participated in the research. Life story interview techniques were employed in conducting the interviews. Life story refers to the "narrated life as related in a conversation or written in an actual present-time" (Rosenthal, 1993, p. 59). Each interview was divided into three main stages. In the first stage, I presented the main themes of the interview (see Supplementary File) and asked the respondents to recount their life story around the themes. That said, respondents were not limited to the themes and could speak uninterruptedly. In the second part of the interview, I asked the respondents

questions based on what they recounted and in the final part I asked questions more specific to the themes of the research questions. Each interview was a product of the mutual relation between me and the respondents, as they did not produce prefabricated stories from their life; rather they created the story in the social process of the interview (Rosenthal, 1993; Svasek & Domecka, 2012).

Five focus group discussions were subsequently conducted with 35 of the university students who participated in the individual interviews. Education fairs for the recruitment of students were attended in Kumasi and Accra. The education fairs brought together universities from the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and the Netherlands to recruit students from Ghana. I interviewed 15 representatives of the schools from abroad as well as eight of the event organisers.

Subsequently, in the months of January and February 2020, 23 African student migrants in the Netherlands were recruited to participate in the research. The respondents were recruited through snowball sampling technique. Data collection, data analysis and writing in qualitative research are not always distinct rather they are interrelated and happen concurrently (Denzin, 2008). The audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. I organised and prepared the data for coding. I read through all the available data carefully in order to have general understanding of what participants were saying and how they were saying and their credibility and how to use the available information (Flick, 2009). Line by line, I categorised the data into analytic units under descriptive words or category names. I organised the information into themes and subthemes (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). As a way of obtaining validity of the work, transcripts were cross-checked to ensure that clear errors were avoided and there were constant comparison of data with the codes generated (Creswell, 2009; Gibbs, 2007). The research findings do not claim generalization by representation rather due to the thick information gathered, there is generalization by categorization.

Among the prospective student migrants, 34 were men and 31 were women. Eighteen of the men were undergraduate students, seven were postgraduate students and nine were graduates undertaking their one year obligatory national service. Sixteen of the women were undergraduate students, five were postgraduate students and 10 were national service personnel. With the exception of one, all the 23 student migrants interviewed in the Netherlands were enrolled in postgraduate programmes or had just completed their postgraduate studies. Eleven of the respondents were women while 12 were men, and they were situated in different parts of the Netherlands but most of them were located in Amsterdam.

5. Findings and Discussions

In this section, I present three empirical sub-themes that depart from the well-established economic models of wage differentials and economic opportunities to emotional motivations of values, beliefs, prestige and anxieties in decision-making processes of student migration. The first theme is presented in chronological manner to unfold the conception of the thought of migration vis-à-vis the thought of student migration which are shaped by childhood socialisation. Subsequently, the findings discuss the multiplicity of migration expectations that motivate the thought of student migration. The last theme presents the constraints and facilitators that dwindle or enhance the thought of student migration.

5.1. Thought of Going Abroad

Identifying the conception of migration intention (De Jong, 2000) in the lived experiences of both prospective student migrants (referred in the quoted transcripts as PSM) and student migrants (referred in the quoted transcripts SM) were challenging. When the question "when did you first have the thought of studying abroad?" was raised, most of the research participants were fascinated by the question and spontaneously distinguished between the thought of going abroad and the thought of student migration. Ike recounted that:

> As regards the thought of going abroad, it started as a child because we aspired to go abroad one day and we played about it. If you say study, then it was during the transition period from final year student to a graduate that I started thinking of how to continue with my education. (PSM 5, Kumasi; 12 September 2019)

Ama reiterated that:

> I grew up with the thought that Europe and the US were places where almost all dreams were fulfilled, so I really desired to go there if I had the chance. The idea of studying abroad, however, is recent as it started when I was about completing my university education. (SM 3, Amsterdam; 12 January 2020)

The dichotomy created by the respondents manifested how migration decision-making is a process that is nurtured and built upon rather than instantaneous. The thought of migration was created and nurtured at an early stage in the life of the respondents awaiting the opportune moment to transform into pre-actional stage. The status as university student or graduate serves as the currency in moving beyond the pre-decisional thought of migration engulfed in uncertainties to student migration intention. The self is not acting in isolation or out of vacuum rather migration decision-making is informed by the social networks, media and narratives that position the global North as the geographic location where the aspiration of attaining postgraduate education are fulfilled. This article argues that through childhood socialisation abroad is translated into the values and beliefs of

university students that inform the decision to migrate. The values may, however, generate false representation of the 'other' geographic location.

5.2. Expectations Abroad

The thought of travelling abroad is enhanced or curtailed depending on the motivational factors or expectations of the potential migrant (Ferro, 2006). The availability of information is critical in shaping potential migrants' expectations in the host country and their subsequent decision to migrate (Dunsch, Tjaden, & Quiviger, 2019; Shrestha, 2020). The attainment of information as resource through social networks of friends, online portals, institutions and personal experience inform prospective student migrants that their aspirations are less likely to be fulfilled in the present location as such the need to find alternative remedy through student migration.

A sizeable number of the research participants had information that the quality of education was relatively better abroad compared to Ghana, and so they aspired to benefit from such opportunities. Andy narrated: "I have researched the schools to know the facilities that they have. I know that their style of teaching is not just theoretical, but they are very practical" (PSM 11, Kumasi; 27 November 2019). Moreover, most of the respondents also commented that the style of teaching in the global North was more practical due to the class size compared to the large class size of students in the country of origin. Tiz noted that: "I will be well prepared out there due to the quality of formation" (PSM 64, Tamale; 12 October 2019). The prospective student migrant operates within the pendulum of expectation of life abroad and the deprivation at home in making informed student migration decisions. The pendulum this research holds is not value-free as they are embedded with anxieties, fears and joys that shape the actions and inactions of prospective student migrants.

Information is however, never fully obtained, as recounted by Ida:

> I was informed of going to a school in the United Kingdom, but the travel agent took me to Ukraine and I stayed there for six months. I got frustrated and it was there that I found this Dutch school and I applied and moved here. (SM 9, Amsterdam; 01 February 2020)

Adequate information is never enough and student migrants have to go through trajectories of sorrow, despair and uncertainties before getting to their final destination which are not always fulfilled. These trajectories contain emotional costs that are seldom accounted for rather they are ignored or taken for granted.

Expectations that inform the process of making migration decision among student migrants are not limited to the quality of education abroad. They also take cognisance of the exploration of new cultures, avenues and environment that are to be explored in the host nation. For most of the respondents, the migration intention is not only to study and return home but also make use of the new space to develop a new self. Eli explained that:

> I did my undergraduate studies and MBA in Ghana, so I wanted to experience a different study environment where I will encounter people from different cultures. The different engagements open up new avenues for me to be part of the networks of the global village. How can I do all my studies in one place in this global era? I need to explore and get connected. (SM 1, The Hague; 31 January 2020)

Joy also narrated that:

> Ghana is a developing country, so most infrastructures are almost absent but if I go to a country in Western Europe or Canada where they are advanced in technology, I am going to experience what I have seen on the television screens or read in books. For me, apart from the studies, I aspire to learn new cultures and have first-hand experience of how Ghana will look like when it becomes developed. (PSM 22, Accra; 19 December 2019)

Intriguingly, Tina mentioned that

> I was compelled to travel abroad for studies because of the social pressure that mounted on me due to being single and not married at age thirty-three. Those around me were all married, so I had to escape the daily questioning. (SM 12, Leiden; 11 December 2020)

There is a thin line between volition and non-volition in the decision-making towards student migration which emanates from social interactions at the micro level. I describe the situation as involuntary mobility because student migration is an escape route to freedom from social environment that oppresses life situation. If the respondents could achieve the same in Ghana, it appears that many would.

At the meso level, families of prospective student migrants also express their expectations abroad. Within the Ghanaian cultural setting, families envision seeing their children travel outside the country not just for the economic returns but for the prestige and favourable perception that are attached to the act of travelling abroad and especially for studies. Pat recounted: "The news of my intention to travel abroad erupted in my parents feelings of joy and smiles on their faces. For the thought of having their child planning to study overseas was gratifying" (PSM 2, Kumasi; 10 October 2019). Nelly reiterated: "My parents and siblings were overwhelmed with the news of my decision to travel abroad. I was a bit

embarrassed because I was only expressing the thought of travelling as student without any concrete preparation" (PSM 55, Accra; 11 November 2019). At the micro and meso level, this article uniquely reveals the emotions of joy, fear and anxiety attached to migration intentions.

5.3. Non-Motivational Factors

Non-motivational factors (Ajzen, 1991) of time, religion, money, institutional challenges, and visa regimes are facilitators and constraints that direct the path of student migration intentions and behaviour. This article is interested in emphasising the moments of anxiety, fear, joy and tension prospective students and their families live through these moments of uncertainties. All the prospective student migrants and the student migrants expressed concern about the financial investment needed to study abroad, but the approach of the two categories of respondents were different but not mutually exclusive. It manifests how the actualisation of migration intentions creates unanticipated nuances. Zak related: "Without scholarship I am not travelling abroad because I will not have money to fund my studies. My parents are not in a position to sponsor me abroad for studies" (PSM 2, Cape Coast; 04 October 2019).

Lin explained:

> Education abroad is expensive and I cannot burden my parents to continue to take care of me while abroad as I have younger siblings. I am navigating for scholarship so that my dream of studying in Europe, Canada or the US will be realised. I have applied to more than five schools so certainly one of them will be positive. (PSM 41, Kumasi; 22 November 2019)

Prospective student migrants emphasised how their ability to embark on student migration depended on the availability of scholarship. The path of migration intentions is directed by facilitators and constraints at the micro, meso and macro levels. The lived experience of the student migrants in this research, however, revealed that they had to rely on parent's property and personal income before they could travel abroad:

> I applied for schools with scholarships abroad but all of them did not go through as I was admitted without any financial help. In the third year, when my parents saw the desperation in not realising my aspiration, they decided to intervene and support me when I got a school in the Netherlands without a scholarship. It was a big sacrifice because they went for a huge loan from the bank. I am indebted to them (Ange, SM 10, The Hague; 31 January 2020).

Tot also recounted that:

> I had partial scholarship that covered part of the tuition and accommodation, so I had to find financial support for the remaining expenditure. After family consultations, my parents made a substantive decision to sell their piece of land to help me travel to Rotterdam for my studies. (SM 8, Rotterdam; 21 January 2020)

Migration intentions do not necessarily yield to migration behaviour due to the non-motivational factors that may hinder or not the achievement of the desired aspirations. Human capital formation through university education may be considered as resourceful tool in anticipation of probable migration (Stark, Helmenstein, & Prskawetz, 1998). From the data, the financial cost of travelling are bottlenecks to all the respondents and majority of the prospective student migrants interviewed were emphatic that without scholarship they may not embark on student migration. It is interesting to note how families sacrifice life savings to satisfy the student migration aspirations of their wards. The process of making the financial sacrifices is informed by multiplicity of aspirations.

The article further reveals the emotional stress and trauma that individuals and their families endure in order to fulfil migration aspiration. Love narrated:

> I got admission to three universities but none of them offered me scholarship. I applied for student visa, but I was refused. I was demoralised and shattered when I was refused the UK visa. It took some time before recovering from that shock. (SM 20, Amsterdam; 25 January 2020)

Stringent visa regimes are also forms of micro-politics that inflict pain, stress and anxiety in the migration decision process of student migrants.

Intriguingly, I discovered how religiosity sets in as non-motivational factor that seek to facilitate the thought of student migration. At the micro level, the research participants seek spiritual assistance from their religious groups and religious leaders. Roy noted: "I do pray over my travelling intentions and I have also requested intercessory prayers from my pastor and religious group" (PSM 18, Tamale, 02 October 2020). At the meso level, families embark on spiritual exercises to boost the transitioning from student migration intention to student migration behaviour of their relations. Kobi recounted: "As a family, we pray together but the prayer line is directed towards the success of my intention to study abroad" (PSM 32, Accra, 17 December 2019). Religiosity permeates the cultural fabric of the Ghanaian society that shapes the approach adopted to address migration intentions and desires.

6. Conclusion

Empirically, this article contributes to the West African literature on student migration by advancing the understanding of a category of migrants who travel with the

prime aim of academic advancement in the host country. I have argued that student migration may not have substantial socioeconomic and political effect in the migration discourse in West Africa compared to irregular migration, family reunification and labour migration but it carries unique features. The process of student migration decision-making is distinct from the other forms of migration that require further investigation and attention especially in recent times when the competition for foreign students is on the rise in the Global North.

Moreover, the empirical literature has elucidated the non-economic motivations that are embedded in the migration decision process. The article found that prestige and experiencing of new cultures are expectations that prospective student migrants and their families aspire for abroad. The imbalance in the global economic growth between the Global North and Global South tends to overshadow the discussion in migration decision-making as such the non-economic aspect of the migratory phenomenon is somehow overlooked. I argue here that the migratory phenomenon is not always quantifiable in monetary value.

This article establishes that migration decision is a process that is value laden with information. The information shape and reshape the expectations of prospective Ghanaian student migrants in the migration decision-making process. The information generates the desire to experience new forms of education and also to be part of the global system. Due to the fluidity of information, prospective student migrants obtain both resourceful information and misinformation that result in the mixed feelings of disappointment, illusions, happiness and perplexities in their quotidian and lived experiences in the transition from migration intention to migration behaviour.

From the findings, I discovered that religiosity which is categorised as belongingness to a religious group and prayers is a cultural principle that serves as non-motivational factor in student migration intentions of Ghanaians at the micro and meso levels. At the micro level, potential student migrants resort to prayers as a means of facilitating their migration intentions. At the meso level, families and religious groups pray and offer assistance to the prospective student migrants. Recourse to the supernatural Being by most of the respondents is a reflection of the more than ninety-five percent of Ghanaians who profess to be religious according to the 2010 Ghana Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

This article contributes theoretically to the emerging migration literature that focuses on the frictions, challenges, joys and emotions of prospective migrants and migrants (Boccagni, 2017; Collins, 2018; Wang & Chen, 2020). I argue that De Jong's (2000) migration intention–migration behaviour nexus is not progressive rather it is a pendulum that prospective student migrants constantly negotiate their position with facilitators and constraints that determine the path of student migration aspiration. In the process of engaging with the social structures, prospective student migrants experience emotional challenges, joys, perplexities and anxieties. In conclusion, the personalities of prospective student migrants may be transformed into a new self that is the embodiment of resistance, compromise and negotiation of student migration aspirations.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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About the Author

Justice Richard Kwabena Owusu Kyei is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Social Work in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana. He has a PhD in Sociology and his research interests focus on migration, religion, urban sociology and political sociology. He won the 2019 Social Science Research Council's African Peacebuilding Network Individual Research Grant. In 2020, he was a Visiting Research Fellow in the African Studies Centre Leiden.