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**SURVIVING THE STREETS**  
**A Case of the 'Kayayoo' child in Accra (Madina)**

A Research Paper presented by

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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 List of Participants Information **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## **List of Acronyms**

LANMA – La Nkwatanang Municipal Assembly

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## **Abstract**

The kayayoo female child has been the subject for a lot of research in Ghana. The situation facing the girls in various markets all over the country has re-searched, with every research being unique in its findings and some repeating the findings of others. What this Research Paper seeks to do is to shed light on how these girls are able to strategize to survive the streets. This is mainly done through recounting their stories of life on the streets and analysing their stories, through the chosen theoretical concepts. The paper seeks to contribute to already existing literature by shedding light on some of the coping strategies adopted by these girls. The research particularly focused on girls in the Madina market in La Nkwatanang Municipality. Data for this research was gathered through interviews, group discussion and observations. The theoretical concepts used in analysing collected data was Power relations, Agency, Intersectionality and gender.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

Issues concerning children are very central to ensure development. In certain contexts, the female child is more at risk, subject to gender based discrimination, violence and unhealthy cultural practices that are detrimental to their potential development. By raising issues concerning the lives of female child migrants on the streets of Accra. I hope to contribute to already existing literature by hopefully giving a broader understanding of their lives on the streets.



## **Keywords**

Kayayoo, Girl, Child, Kayayei

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This research is focused on the lives of girl child migrants working as head porters in the capital city of Ghana, West Africa. These children are mostly migrating from the three northern regions of Ghana. These girls come into the city of Accra to work in the head pottering business and are locally referred to as Kayayei. Accra is the capital town of Ghana. The research would focus on girls specifically in the Madina market which is one of the biggest markets in Accra and is in the La Nkwatanang district assembly. The Research is concerned with how these girls are able to survive the streets. It asks the question of 'How do kayayei girls living and working in the Madina Market (Accra), survive on the streets and how do they deal with multiple power actors in the streets'. The Research attempted to answer this question by using a qualitative research methodology, which basically involved in-depth interviews, group discussions and observation as the primary sources of data collection. The theoretical tools used were the concepts of gender, power relations, intersectionality, group solidarity and agency. The Paper consists of 5 (five) chapters.

In chapter 1 there is a brief introduction of the research, followed by some background of the research topic, looking at global trends and national trends. There is a small write up on who are kayayei and then there is a look at existing literature on Child Migration in Ghana. Followed by a section on the Research Questions and objectives. There is a section on ethics, justification of

the study and the limitations of the research, this is followed by a section detailing the research method employed.

In Chapter 2 the focus is on theorising the lives of the Kayayoo child, there is a write up explaining each of the theoretical concepts chosen and how the theories would be used in answering the research questions.

Chapter 3, I look at the journey of the girls to the streets. Looking at the influence of Global trends, the state the communities they come from and the Family. It also incorporates a discussion, using the relevant chosen theories on how this affects the lives of the girls and attempting to make a theoretically informed analysis of what it means for the girls to strategize, it looks at solidarity between the girls in their groups, while delving into the diversities that exists within these groups.

Chapter 4 responds to the questions of how the girls deal with different influences of power relations in their lives. In order to do this, certain power relations identified as most powerful in their lives was used.

Chapter 5 is the Concluding chapter I revisit the research questions and look at the extent to which I was able to answer and critically analyse the situation of the girls, using the chosen theories.

## *1.1 Child Migration*

Child Migration is a global phenomenon that has been ongoing for centuries. A lot of research has focused on the issue and there are discourses surrounding why children migrate and sometimes end up on the streets. Children migrating, are being pushed by factors such as poverty, abuse or sometimes they are willingly walking out of the home in the search of a better life.

Conticini and Hulme (2007:201), point out that one discourse surrounding child migration is the economic discourse, which pinpoints to poverty as the main reason for child migration. They point out that, when the needs of children cannot be met by the households they live in sometimes the only other option is to leave.

Duyan 2005, also points out that sometimes children leaving home to join the labour force, is the only means through which a family would survive. The money earned from working is sent back to the family left behind to cater for everyone else (Duyan 2005:446).

Recent Debates surrounding child migration and child work have sought to make a distinction between children who have willingly migrated and are working and children who are being forced into migration to engage in child labour. The realities of child labour and its underlying harm cannot be overlooked. But clear categorization is essential to deal with the issue. In certain instances, child work is the only means of survival for families. Some children choose to willingly work to make a living and improve their lives.

While it is important to acknowledge the agency exercised by children in the decision-making process to migrate and to work. It is also important to note that the agency of these children does not exist in a vacuum. Agency can be constrained by societal structures and the way they relate to them. In instances where agency is not being exercised, existing power structures might indirectly impose decisions that are made to seem as the norm.

### ***1.2 Child Migration in Ghana.***

Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008:171) notes that migration in Ghana is not new, neither is the north south migration pattern a recent phenomenon. Migration from the three northern regions of Ghana can be traced back historically to colonial policies, governmental economic policies and environmental factors that left these regions of Ghana as the most underdeveloped regions of the country. The British who were Ghana's colonial masters from 1867 to 1957 when Ghana became independent, invested more in the south of Ghana in terms of infrastructure than in Northern Ghana. This has contributed to the north south migration pattern evident in Ghana and the subsequent influx of young children into major towns willing to work in order to survive and sometimes to ensure their families survive as well. (Songsore & Denkabe 1995 as quoted in Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008:171)

Studies (Hashim 2005, Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008) have shown that migration has become an important coping mechanism for most people and their families. Over the years, major city centres in Ghana have seen the influx of young migrants from the three Northern Regions of the country. There are a lot of reasons associated with why many young people

are migrating internally. Some young people are likely being drawn by the dreams of a better life into the cities. These dreams as to be expected are soon dashed, after they have arrived and are confronted with the harsh realities of living in the city with no stable means of income, no decent accommodation and without their families.

In Ghana gender is often noted for playing a key role in who migrates. Females are now migrating to fulfil their own economic needs or the needs of their families. The traditional migration pattern was for men to leave home in search for greener pastures and then later asking their wives and children to join them if the move was successful, females hardly ever migrated alone especially into unknown places with no relatives and not female children. But that has gradually changed over the years, more and more females are migrating willingly now without any intervention from their families etc. Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008:171), note that the reason why girls migrate to work as head potters known popularly in Ghana as 'a kayayoo' vary, some see the work as a means of acquiring items needed to build up their dowry. Others are escaping forced marriage, while others are saving up to learn an apprenticeship, start their own business and sometimes even go to school. Some of these girls have been sent to the city centre's by parents who see their children as an asset for making money, these girls work and send the money back home to care for their parents and younger or sometimes older siblings.

On the streets of major cities, they are exposed to bad weather conditions with many of them lacking proper accommodation, facing sexual harassment,

unwanted pregnancy and being exploited by market women, shoppers and city authorities.

### ***1.3 Who are Kayayei?***

A 'kayayoo' is a term derived from two languages 'kaya' which means load in Hausa and 'yoo' which means female in Ga, the term then translates as a female who carries goods. A kayayoo is a singular term whiles kayayei refers to a collective term. In this research I would make use of both words appropriately i.e. kayayoo when referring to a girl and kayayei when referring to a group of girls.

These girls carry goods on their heads or sometimes making use of a pan, they transport these goods around major markets for a fee. Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, (2008:171) notes that sometimes children as young as 8 years old are involved in the kayayoo business.

### ***1.4 Existing Literature on Child Migration in Ghana***

A lot of research has been carried out into child migration. Literature on internal migration of children indicates that sometimes child migration is a way for very poor families to survive. Hashim (2007:911) notes that in migration studies there is a minimal amount of research that has been carried out in issues relating to independent child migration, most often child migration is seen as coerced or treated as part of family migration.

There are quite many discourses surrounding child migration in Ghana. Oerm and Seipel 2007, while examining the situation of street children in Ghana noted that most of these children had migrated from varying parts of the country into regional capitals mostly on their own without adult supervision. They point out that most of the children had little or no contact with family members and that some had their parents' dead or were fleeing from all sort of situations back home, these ranged from child neglect, abusive homes or the death of a parent or both parents, fleeing child marriage and sometimes poverty.

Some cultural norms also contribute to the reasons more girls from Northern Ghana migrate to the south, Hashim 2004 notes that culturally in some parts of northern Ghana there are different expectations for women and men when it comes to time for marriage. Females are expected not to come to their matrimonial home empty handed. This implies that adolescent girls must find a way to earn an income to be able to afford items they need for marriage especially if their parents are poor. Amongst certain groups Adolescent boys on the other hand can depend on family relations for the cattle and dowry they would use in getting married. It is therefore unlikely for boys to migrate in search of money they would use for marriage, boys are more likely to stay behind and help with household labour. (Hashim 2004: 93).

Huijsmans 2012, points out that modernization is another reason why children migrate into urban areas. He argues this when he writes that "although poverty has persisted in the northern regions in Ghana, the integration of the rural areas into the wider Ghanaian and global social imaginary has



deepened due to expansion of mobile phone networks, coverage by a range of television and radio stations, etc. These factors have increased the exposure of rural youth to supposedly modern (and urban) ways of living. In addition, the expansion of the road network has made travelling easier and cheaper” (Hutjimans 2012:5).

Understanding some of the reasons why children migrate gives insight into prevailing conditions in the home environment and why there is a need to move out to make it. The whole idea of young people being forced into migration by pull and push factors is not always the case. Hutjimans (2012:2), points out to the need to consider diversity when thinking about young people and policies that affect them. Amongst the issues he raised which account for differences in young migrants include household conditions, i.e. number of children in the home, birth order and gender. In the analysis of his data he notes that in terms of available statistics girls outnumber boys in the trend of migration because most girls migrate at much younger ages than boys. He attributed this also to the fact that most boys spent more years in school than girls in this context. Hutjimans (2012:2), notes that it is important to appreciate the role young people play in the migration process. By appreciating the role young people play, it will prompt the need for further research since migration cannot then be simply reduced to push and pull factors. The decision of some children to migrate should be seen on some level as they are exercising their agency and refusing to continue to rely on their already poor parents for their upkeep. They would prefer the harshness of the street life to having to wallow in poverty and misery.

On the Streets Children exercise their agency through the decisions they make and their ability to survive the harsh realities they face. Hutjimans (2012:10) points to the fact that children on the streets deal with vulnerability on two levels, on an individual level and at a group level. He notes that at a group level child would stick to larger ethnic groups for example during sleep time at night. This would serve as a form of protection from a possible rape. Oberhauser and Yeboah (2011:32), point out that most girls first come to Accra through the recommendation of a friend or through family members and are able to first adapt with the help of people they might already know.

On the streets and in the markets, the girls work around ethnic divides with groups of girls from one ethnic group forming a street family, this was also observed during my field work. They would usually be sitting around the same place and working together. They look out for each other. During the day, they protect each other from physical and verbal assault from shoppers, city guards and market women alike. At night they sleep together preventing each other from being raped. Huijsmans (2012:10), notes that these groups are not without faults, some girls complain of stealing and often older children abusing younger ones.

Kombarakaran (2004: 867-868) notes that for children to survive the street life they take friendship and alliances on the street very seriously, learning to establish good relationships is vital to their survival on the streets. Younger children were likely to associate with older children because of protection. Orme et al 2007, also note the importance of forming street families for street children. He notes that street families look out for each other, they provide

the emotional and physical support children need to survive the streets and generally take care of each other Orme et al (2007: 23).

### ***1.5 Research Question***

In this research, the main questions I would be seeking an answer to is, How do kayayei girls living and working in the Madina Market (Accra), survive on the streets and how do they deal with multiple power actors in the streets.

In order to answer this main question, I have sub questions in order for clarity and to help in the gathering of data.

Sub questions:

1. How do kayayei girls end up on the streets?
2. What are some of the coping strategies adopted by kayayei girls, especially devising specific solidarity strategies based on various collective identities?
3. How do kayayei girls deal with multiple power actors in the streets?

### ***1.6 Objectives***

To contribute to the existing literature in Ghana on understanding how the kayayoo child survives the street. I hope this research would contribute to a broader understanding of their lives on the streets and how their various identities affect their daily lives on the street. By analysing the power structure of the streets, I hope to shed light on the obstacle they face and their daily struggles to overcome them, collectively or as individuals.

### *1.7 Ethics when working with children*

In doing a research on children issues it is essential to give them a voice. For a long time the voices of children have been muted by the adults who think they do know better and make assumptions about what they assume as the view point of children. James (2007: 269) notes that, like any other research field, researching on children has some representation issues. One way to solve this issue of misrepresenting children is that we attentively listen to children when they talk by adopting conversational analysis. Children's perspective should be the basis for any analysis, this research has tried to inculcate this perspective in its analysis.

Throughout the research extra caution was taken to ensure that the children who participated in this research were protected always. This was an essential priority. In instances where it was required children were assured of confidentiality. Considering the appropriateness of seeking consent from parents or legal guardians of children when conducting research with them. In instances where there was an obvious guardian permission was sought. In most instances however most of these children were on their own. In such cases I took the time of making sure they understood what I was doing by critically explaining what am about and try to the best of my ability to make them understand what my research is about and what I intend to use the information I gather for.

In instances where photographs were taken I explained to the children that these photographs would be published as part of my work and they would be seen by many other people apart from myself. Some children after these

explanations sometimes refused for their pictures to be used and I respected that. All pictures used in this text have faces blurred.

Having worked as a social worker in my research location for some time, I have come across a lot of cases involving some of the child rights abuses these children face. Before going to the field, I had an idea of what life looked like for most of these children. But of course, I have never lived their experiences before. In conducting this research, I acknowledged this positionality, and had this in mind during interviews and observations. In doing this I hoped to limit my bias and try to the best of my ability to avoid making assumptions about things I assume I knew. I must say that most of the information that came up during this research were things I had no fore knowledge of.

### *1.8 Justification of study*

My interest in researching on the issue of migration of girls into the streets to work as kayayei stems out of my general interest in issues concerning the development of the girl child. A lot of study has been done on the migration of young people from the three northern regions of Ghana into major cities to work as head porters carrying loads around market places. Several authors and academic have made a lot of assumptions about why they migrate and have tried to place the reasons for their migration in various cultural and societal norms and dominantly as economically motivated.

This research was aimed at looking at the whole phenomenon with a different perspective. In spite of restricting circumstances these girls find themselves in, I see their willingness to strive for a better life trying to make use of available resources and capacities to make a better life for themselves.

### ***1.9 The scope and limitations of Research***

Considering the time frame there were a lot of things that we had to be done in a rush in order to finish early and to meet deadlines. Starting with my fieldwork, I felt if I had the time and other resources which I could have had more data.

Most of these girls have been subjects of varying forms of social research due to their peculiar position in society. It was therefore not surprising that some of them might have shown apathy. It took a lot of explanations to let them know what they can expect and what not to expect. This was done to prevent disappointments and make what they can expect from this research clear to them.

Ghana being a country colonized by the British, English is the official language of the nation. Unfortunately, the language is limited to those who have been through the formal education system. Sometimes pidgin, a more adaptable street form of the English language to the Ghanaian setting is used by both the educated and uneducated as a means of communication. But this is also limited to city areas and not very common in rural settings. Most of the participants of the research were young girls coming from rural areas and so some of them were not educated, even with the educated ones they had very basic primary education and sometimes their knowledge of the English language was very limited. Most of the interviews were conducted in Twi and transcribed into English.

### ***1.10 Research method***

Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008, note that the independent migration of these girls into major cities both opens up new opportunities and new challenges and notes that this has implications for development. This Research

targeted female child migrants from the three Northern Region of Ghana (The Upper West, Upper East and Northern Regions) working as kayayoo in Accra. In this Research a Qualitative Research Method was used in collecting data and in analysing it. Flick (2008:2) notes that in qualitative research the researcher becomes an observer who uses field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and self-notes to represent what they see in the world they are researching. And this is what I tried to do during data collection and analysing.

In this research I collected data primarily using interviews, Group discussions and conversations. In analysing I do not intend to generalize to the entire population out of this research, since I bear in mind the time constraints and its limits to the data I was able to collect, my analysis was based on the context through which I collected my data.

This study was limited to female migrant children (below the age of 18yrs) who have migrated into the city of Accra which is Ghana's capital town specifically Madina and working as head potters 'kayayei'. The girls constituted my main population of study. In this research I attempted to analyse the power relations existing between the girls and their environment and how this affects their ability to exercise agency in their daily choices. I analyse how they live their lives on a daily basis and how they are able to assert their agency through negotiations with the various power actors in their individual lives. I also had interviews and informal conversations with key focal persons within the markets they work in.

### 1.10.1 Selecting Participants

I interviewed a total number of eight (8) girls. It was quite difficult to get these girls to agree to do an interview. There were a lot of initial trust issues. When I got to the field I tried to engage the girls myself without having to go through a focal person. Whiles doing my shopping I would try having conversations, some were quite open with their responses whiles others were suspicious from the very onset. For those who were open if I made the suggestion of sitting down for an interview and recording them they quickly declined. After almost two weeks of making no headway, I was introduced to a man who happened to be the gate keeper of one of the communities were these girls lived. After discussions he agreed to lead me to the girls.

In trying to understand the initial difficulty, one reason that came up was the essential nature of time for these girls. Time is very crucial to these girls, because they make money depending on how long and how far they carry goods. There were also the issues of trust, from my observations I noticed that amongst their own closed groups they found it quite easier to trust each other than to open to people outside their circles. Meeting with their gate keeper gave me access I would have had to take weeks to establish. Considering the time limit I had, I did not have enough time to work on gaining the trust of the girls gradually, going to them through a known face was essential in helping me gain access. Of course, this did not mean they suddenly opened up and were telling me everything but at least they started giving me their attention.



The interview sought for answers that would answer the main research questions and the sub questions too. The research made use of open ended questions to allow participants the freedom to openly express themselves and tell their stories.

Another set of two (2) interviews was conducted with key stakeholders in the spaces of the girls. That is a market queen who has authority in the market and my focal person because of the role he plays in the girls community. By talking to them the research sought answers on their perceptions and attitudes towards these girls and this helped in providing a better understanding to the existing relationship.

#### **1.10.2 Generating Data**

I conducted my fieldwork over a period of 6 weeks. I did not go to the field every day during this six weeks period. But from the first interview I had to my very last interview lasted over a period of six weeks. I spent the first week getting myself acquainted with the market and trying to strategize on what to do. During my second week I met the gate keeper and started having sit down interviews with the girls. The interviews were conducted at their convenience which was mostly during times they were not busy in the market. During Sunday which was not a market day and sometimes during the evening which was rarely. During interviews we usually found a relatively quiet place to sit and talk and depending on the time of day I provided my participant with lunch or supper. Usually some girls were more willing to talk than others. I had some informal group conversations with them too, especially during the later weeks when I had gotten used to them and they to me. I could interact with them even when they were in the market and were not busily working.

It was usual to find them sitting around in groups trying to rest or find shelter from the scorching sun.

### **1.10.3 My Research Journey**

My field work was a very interesting one. It allowed me to interact with the girls and see them in a whole different light. During my weeks in the field, one thing that struck me was the way in which these girls lived their lives. There was a sense of community amongst them. They stood up for each other, maybe because they realised that they only had each other. In certain instances, I was able to record my participants. In other instances, this was not possible. In those instances, I quickly scribbled in my field note book when I had a chance. In instances where pictures were taken of me and the girls together. They were mostly done after interviews because my phone was multi-tasking as a recorder and a camera.

### **1.10.4 Writing Up**

For the purposes of protecting the identity of my participants, I will refrain from using their real names. For the other participants I selected to participate as key informants, I will also use make up names or their positions in referring to them.

### **1.10.5 Region of Study**

My research was conducted in the La Nkwatanang district which is in the Greater-Accra region of Ghana. It was carved out of the Ga East Municipality. This market is quite a big and busy market. The Madina market is one of the biggest markets in Accra and the main economic centre of this district.

With such a busy market it then not surprising that, there are quite many girls engaging in the kayayoo business and living in this market.

### ***1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER***

The research paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter mainly gives a general synopsis of the research topic. This chapter includes the research objective, questions to be discussed in the research, background about issues of child migration globally and then it narrows it down to the Ghanaian situation. There is also a look at available current literature on the subject. The chapter also includes limitations of the research, ethics and data collection method. In chapter two there is an introduction to theoretical concepts that provides the foundation for the analysing this paper. The chosen concepts are power relations, agency, gender, intersectionality and group solidarity. Chapters 3, uses the theoretical tools to answer the first research question making use of the stories from the girls. In Chapter 4, I look at answering the second research question, while still making use of the chosen theoretical approaches. All analyses would be based on the theoretical frameworks mentioned in Chapter 2. In the final chapter, I revisit the available data collected through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks and draw conclusions to the whole research while making suggestions. In the process of gathering my data I interacted with a lot of people both kayayei and random people. All the stories of the girls were very important in shaping my understanding of the research topic and of course this contributed to the way I analysed my data.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Theorizing the Life of the Kayayoo

### *2.1 Introduction*

This chapter introduces the theories that would be used in analysing the situation of female child migrants and how they survive the streets is introduced. All the concepts chosen are explained. The next part looks at a detailed outline of all theoretical concepts and these are Foucault concept of power, Kabeer's definition of agency, Scott's definition of Gender, the concept of Intersectionality and the concept of group solidarity as defined by Hechter. The chapter also briefly points out how these concepts would be used in explaining the Research findings.

### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.2.1 Power Relations**

Power as a concept has received quite a lot of attention in academia, with Foucault being one of the many scholars giving the concept attention in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sawicki (1991:20-21), in discussing Foucault points out that Foucault analyses Power as a relationship, He points out Power is not only oppressive but reproductive. It is not just enforced but ensured by normalization. Foucault emphasis that power works through the knowledge of what we believe is true. Who determines what is true and what is not and who determines what is termed 'normal'. Foucault points out that what we believe as true is a means of power being exercised. The situation of these girls has been associated with poverty, patriarchy and discriminatory cultural practices. Dominant discourses have viewed these girls as vulnerable and victims.

By using Foucault's concept of power, it is possible to analyse the situation of the girls using fresh lenses. If power is a relationship present in varying societal relationships, then right from the family level existing power relationships are at play. It is undeniable that there are conditions that make leaving home the best option for these girls but then they exercise power too, when they decide to leave. Sawicki (1991:23), point out that Foucault believes power is not exercised from the top down, as in being vested for example in the state but power is also exercised socially through institutions like the family. He points out that Power is exercised and not possessed as the dominant notion is. Foucault believes power is present everywhere and at all levels of social relationships. These notions of power would be used to understand how these girls exercise power daily through their interactions with themselves and others i.e. relationships. From the varying choices they make like where to sleep, which male to seek protection from, which people to associate with and how they can come together to do something for themselves show power being exercised in different ways.

VeneKlasen and Miller 2002, further note that power does not always operate in visible ways and can operate invisibly in many ways and forms. Feminists' scholars point out that power, occurs on three levels in the lives of women and that in most instances they are interacting, it is therefore important to consider these interactions happening publicly, privately, and intimately in order to understand the situation of these girls. Sometimes things that may not be so obvious may be uncovered through further probing. And I do hope that during the interviews some of the not so obvious power relations might come to light.

Kabeer (2001:21) power operates in the absence of obvious agency, rules governing societal norms tend to reproduce certain outcomes where there is an absence of agency. She argues that this is a form of power as non-decision making especially where it affects the life choices of others.

### **2.2.2 Agency**

Kabeer (2001:21), in defining agency notes it as the ability to act on one's defined goals, she argues that agency is more than the actions that are visible and that most often other element of things like why people act in a particular way, what motivates people i.e. power within. She argues that even though in the social science agency is associated more with taking decision it can also refer to other relations like one's ability to negotiate, manipulate, resist etc. and may also include cognitive abilities of being able to reflect and analyse. She further notes that in relation to power, agency has both negative and positive sides. Positively being power to. Where people are able to make choices and see them through and negatively being power over, where others curtail the agency of others sometimes through violence.

Berner (1998:4), notes that although social structure can influence an individual's decisions it does not determine how one should act. We cannot focus on agency without taking into consideration social structure and social structure is a power relation. Agency is sometimes restricted by societal structures. In the market places they cannot always make choices they would have preferred. Sometimes they are faced with two bad choices so they must choose between the lesser evils. These decisions might not have been the one they would have exercised if they had other options

### **2.2.3 Intersectionality:**

Davis (2008:68), defines 'Intersectionality' as referring to the "interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power". And how that affects that power relations positively or negatively. Sawicki (1991:17), point out that in discussing issues facing females the issue of difference is taking the forefront. Acknowledging differences helps in better understanding the unique experiences of individuals. These girls have different identities that uniquely marks them and influences their stories. Instead of lumping all of them up as young female migrants, it is essential that as a researcher I go beyond this point to identify what makes them exactly who they are, apart from being female their order of birth, class in their indigenous society, what they were escaping from poverty or child marriage etc. Using intersectionality as a lens these unique identities will help explain their reality.

Denis (2008:677) define an Intersectional analysis as involving simultaneously being able to analyse varying intersecting sources, relations and practices of subordination and/or oppression There is an emphasis of the impact of an oppression varying in the lives of the individuals going through it. Depending on the persons unique identity, that person may suffer in one sphere and be privileged in another. A person could be at the bottom of the social ladder in one instance and be on top in another instance. Intersectionality would explain why the situation of kayayei children cannot be lumped up into one big category. It is important to consider the influence of age, gender, ethnic groups etc. And how these categories affect their ability to negotiate with

existing societal relationships of power in trying to understand the unique situation of individual girls.

#### **2.2.4 GENDER**

In adopting Scott's definition of gender, I have come to understand the term gender as resting on these two assumptions firstly that gender is made up of societal inter relations based on assumption on what is to be expected differences between the sexes and secondly on the fact that gender is a relationship of power (Scott 1986:1054).

Scott (1996: 167-69) in defining gender notes it has two parts. That is, it is one "relationships of power" and "social relationships that are based on the perceived differences of the sexes" and the second part has four related features. Firstly, Cultural symbols which are used to reinforce notions of gender through history and socialization (Scott 1996: 167).

Secondly, she points out to the normative concepts which understand the imports of the symbols. These is enforced by different teachings in religion, education, law, science, polity, etc. They give binary meanings and identities to what it means to be male or female. (Scott 1996: 167-8).

Thirdly Social institutions, where normative notions of what should constitute social relationships are made, politicized and constructed, then rooted in society. (Scott 1996: 168).

Lastly Subjective identity where characteristics of gender are mainly reinforced through "activities, social organisations, and historically specific cultural representations". People get their identity in terms of gender from a combination of the above-mentioned elements. (Scott 1996: 168-9).



Secondly gender is also a power relation, involving power who gains access to what resource. In this sense a resource is either physical or representative. And how all this affects what we see as gender representation and identities, social institutions. etc. Gender is used as a basis for legitimizing some social relations (Scott 1996: 170-71).

### **2.2.5 Group Solidarity**

There have been a lot of scholarly approaches to defining group solidarity. Hechter (1987:18), In defining group solidarity notes that it is the extent to which member resources are used to fulfil corporate obligations. Solidarity therefore is deepened when member resources contributed for the collective good is more. Hechter (1987:8-9, 10), further argues that for sociologists groups are of more significance than the individual, this is because it is within the group that the behaviour of its members is significantly determined. Groups influence the actions and inactions of an individual. He further asserts that a group's solidarity influences the attitudes of its members. The stronger solidarity is within a group the more influence the group has on its members. He points out that there are varying levels of solidarity within a group, he explains that sociologically this can be explained within two folds.

The normativists he points out that argues that a group such as the family tends to have more solidarity because families are likely to have norms that are internalised. He points out that internalisation is a way of ensuring solidarity but then it has two liabilities, which is it is difficult to measure its effect and secondly it asks the question of why some groups are better socializers than others.

He argues that another reason that accounts for this is the structuralist position which sees individuals joining together in solidary groups like ethnic groups do not necessarily carry norms within themselves but basically form such groups because they might share individual interests. These interests could range from having similar societal relations, like workers in a factory etc.

He further makes a point for a rational choice theory of group solidarity where he argues that members join groups to enjoy certain benefits. In order for the group to survive they must continue to provide these benefits, but for this to continue there must be rules that will determine how access to these groups benefits are attained. Amongst other points key to his arguments which is vital to this research is his argument that solidarity is agreeing to a groups rules even though there are actually no benefits for doing so. Group solidarity is then seen as the tax members pay for joining groups in order to access its benefits. The more dependent individuals are on groups, the more likely that are to have more solidarity.

Heckathorn and Rosenstein (2015:62) argue that solidary groups are formed through collective action that is aimed at making a collective good or goods. They point out the essentiality of these groups in providing friendship, the feeling of having a mutual purpose which usually stems from having a common lifestyle and often a common problem. There is therefore usually a high feeling of togetherness and these groups are usually a supportive community.

### ***2.3 USING THE THEORIES***

All the chosen concepts outlined in the last section will be the basic tools to analyse and try to give meaning to the life stories and every day experiences of the chosen research participants. My intention was to understand how these girls survive the streets daily. How they can exercise agency, and how they handle issues of power relations and what role gender plays. This was done while using an intersectional lens that allowed me as a researcher to view them in different identities. Selecting these concepts was very crucial during this writing process. I believed and still believe they were very useful in trying to understand the peculiar situation of these girls in Ghana.

### ***2.4 Conclusion***

In this chapter a summary of the concepts that will be used as analytical tools in this paper were given and explained. The chapter also gave a brief insight into the concept of Power relations as looked at by Foucault and Sawicki. It also touched on the concept of Agency as argued out by Kabeer. The concept of Intersectionality as argued out by Davis was also looked at, Gender as defined by Joan Scott and lastly Group Solidarity as defined by Hechter. These concepts would be adopted throughout the paper. It would be used in the analysis of all collected data.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Before The Streets and On the Streets**

#### ***3.1 Introduction***

In this Chapter I will focus on answering two of the sub questions. How do kayayei girls end up on the streets and what are some of the coping strategies adopted by kayayei girls, especially devising specific solidarity strategies based on various collective identities? To get answers to these questions I asked my kayayee participants questions to draw out their individual stories.

#### ***3.2 The Journey to the Streets***

Some research (Huijsmans 2012, Oerm and Seipel 2007, Awumbila and Ardayio-Schandorf 2008) have considered what is causing the girls to migrate, most emphasis is being placed on the root causes being poverty, gendered cultural norms, patriarchal dominations, household conditions etc.

It must be noted that these prevailing conditions of especially poverty are influenced by multiple factors. Globally the North South development patterns have seen the North being more and more developed than the global south, with most countries in the global south wallowing in debts. The wealth of the world lies in the hands of the few whiles majority suffer with more and more people living below the poverty line. Structural adjustment programs initiated by the world bank to help indebted countries pay their debts and restructure their economy so it flourishes, end up cutting off a lot of social interventions and causing unemployment leading to more people being poor.

### ***3.2.1 The State***

Countries like Ghana cannot only blame the global north for its problems since within the global south there is a global north that controls the wealth of the masses. In Ghana the Northern sector of the country where most of these girls are migrating from is relatively underdeveloped as compared to the southern part of the country. The North, South migration pattern as noted by Songsore and Denkabe 1995 and quoted by Addai (2011:313), was associated to British colonization policies that sought to keep the north as the labour reserve to serve the interest of southern cocoa farmers and the mining sector. Over the years Governmental Policies of Free compulsory basic education and recently free secondary education, National health insurance scheme, school feeding program for children in basic schools and the setting up of a development fund purposely aimed at bridging the developmental gap has suffered some setbacks and has not yielded the intended developmental results.

### ***3.2.2 The Communities***

At the local level these girls are discriminated against based on their gender. There are different societal expectations for men and women. Females are often considered as not belonging to the family because they would get married and will leave the fathers home, male children are however seen as belonging to the family. The role of the family and the societal ideology on gender brings us to Scott's definition of gender being based on cultural and symbolic representations, these are societal doctrines imbibed into the subconsciousness of the community. They set fixed binary meanings of what it means to be woman and women (Scott 1996: 167-8). This translates to what

is expected of male and female children in the communities. The story of every girl is different but many of the reasons given by girls for migrating, be it being forced into child marriage, the desire to make money to learn a trade, to get married or continue schooling are mostly because of deeply seated cultural representations of what the community expects from them as female children. For some of them migration is a means to escape these cultural expectations and charting new paths for themselves. For others however, migration is a way of responding to what is required of them as girls.

Hashim 2004, alludes to this when he points out that culturally in some parts of northern Ghana there are different expectations for women and men when it comes to time for marriage. He notes that women are expected not to come to their matrimonial home empty handed. Amongst certain groups Adolescent boys on the other hand can depend on family relations for the cattle and dowry they would use in getting married. It is therefore unlikely for boys to migrate in search of money they would use for marriage, boys are more likely to stay behind and help with household labour whiles some girls would migrate purposely so they can get married. (Hashim 2004: 93).

### ***3.2.3 The Family***

The Family is a key institution where the decision to migrate is directly or indirectly taken. For some girls the decision to migrate is taken by the family for others prevailing conditions in the family force them to end up on the streets. Scott points out that social institutions which in this case is the family are the institutions where normative notions of gender opinions are fabricated,

and made rooted in society (Scott 1996: 168). Family expectations for males and for females are very different. Most of these girls on the streets are making money only to send it back home for their families to survive on. Sometimes the Kayayoo child is the only key to the survival of the family back home. Addai (2011:317) notes, the kayayoo earnings are not only for their personal survival and the survival of their immediate dependants but also for the survival of other relatives and the community back home.

*“When one tree braces the storm, it could easily break but the wind does less harm to a forest filled with trees”.*

This was a proverb used by Fatimah to explain to me why she and her sister followed their elder sister to the capital, to work as head potters. I was impressed by her use of the proverb and asked how come she was so familiar with the words and meaning of the proverb. She told me that was what her father told them before they came to Accra. It was evident that for this family the remittances of the first daughter was very key to how they survived it was therefore important to send her sisters to help. In that way ensuring that she is relieved of some burden.

Fatimah and Adjara are sisters, Fatimah is 12yrs and Adjara 15yrs old, and they wouldn't agree to talk to me individually but together. This was one of the issues I experienced especially when I approached the girls on my own for the first time and without a familiar face they knew. They came to the city together with their big sister. I asked them for a clarification of who their big sister was. In my interviews I realised it was common for the girls to refer to

people they were not even related to as their sisters. But for this two this was their real sister even though they all had different mothers. They all grew up in one compound and had the same father. Following their elder sister to Accra was a decision taking by their family. The plan was to bring them to work so they could also send remittances back home and of course save up to learn a trade which seemed to be the main reasons almost all the interviewed girls said. Speaking with them they pointed out similar girls who were sisters to me too. As noted earlier Kabeer (2001:21), argues that power sometimes takes the form of non-decision making, especially where in the absence of agency being exercised certain societal norms that affect an individual's life is reproduced. The parents of these girls exercised the authority to choose how these children should live their lives, this is seen to be normal for parents to send young girls to work. In most cases this is not seen as a form of power until their authority is questioned.

Even though these girls were away from home the family is a very powerful relationship in their lives. From talking to them you realize that they feel responsible for the upkeep of the family back home, especially in instances where girls were sponsored by family finances to come down to work they are under obligations to send remittances back home. They must be careful with their spending and they must work hard to make enough to save for themselves and send some back home for the family. It is interesting to note that for most families the girls belong to, they are relying on their daughters to work and fend for the family. The question then is why more male children are not being sent into the streets to work as head potters. Some girls told me they had brothers who were back home. Most of these brothers were going to



school, helping out with farming or in some cases might have also migrated somewhere else but in all these instances it doesn't reduce the responsibility these girls feel they have towards their families. Scott argues that Gender can be used in legalizing some relations and obligations (Scott 1996: 170-71). In the situation of the girls, the responsibility of caring for their families has become an obligation they must meet. Kayayei girls sending remittances back home have become a sort of accepted societal norm. In the relation they have with their families it is expected and quite important that once they are working as kayayei they have to contribute in some way to the upkeep of the family. Even for girls who came to the streets on their own, they still feel an obligation to send money back home.

Nufer is from the Upper West Region of Ghana, she tells me that her Parents gave her the money to come to Accra. She is the older girl of her family and she has brothers. She would very much like to learn a trade. She narrates that her parents don't have enough money to put her and her brothers through school at the same time. Besides she tells me she is not too interested in schooling but prefers to learn a trade of some sort. Her options for now are between becoming a hair stylist and becoming a seamstress. When she was leaving her home town she did not leave alone. She left for the city in the company of an older girl who had already been to the big city once and had returned with a lot of things. Nufer goes on to tell me about all the nice clothes this girl had come back with, she had also come with cooking utensils and other cookware. I asked Nufer if this was what made her decide to come to the capital, she tells me she had already made up her mind. Apparently, she

knows a lot of girls who had moved to the capital city from her village. Hutjimans (2012:5) notes that the appeal of modernization is sometimes the reasons why the girls migrate. They are drawn to the material things that the city can provide, like mobile phones etc. Since she came to the city, business has not been as brisk as she thought it would be, but she still makes enough money to feed herself, pay her rent and even sends some back home to help in paying the fees of her brother. She tells me nobody forced her to come, she wanted to. She wanted to make enough money to put herself through learning a trade.

The Family as an institution plays a major role in how the girls migrate. For some girls however, it is just not an issue of family pressure, meeting family obligations but a desire to do something for themselves. To make something out of their lives. In these situations, the girls exercise their power within to make life choices they think will benefit them which is exercising their agency. Kabeer (2001:21), in defining agency notes it as the ability to act on one's defined goals.

### ***3.3 The Kayayoo Child and Her Agency***

Agency plays a role in how sometimes the girls end up on the streets. Amid such an environment of hardship faced by these girls, some girls are pushed out of their homes into the streets, others are assertive enough to willingly leave. The decision of some girls to leave, may have come from an urge to do something for themselves, a personal decision to go out there and make something out of their lives. In this act these girls exercise their agency. Abdul-Korah (2006:85-86), notes that unlike the colonial period when women migrated only because they were accompanying male relatives like husbands or

fathers, recent developments have due to a lot of factors have seen more girls leaving home on their own in search of wage labour. This he associated to the fact that girls are being exposed to the world outside their villages and naturally want more for their lives. The only means of making money is to then migrate in search of wage labour.

When I bring up the issue of the kayayei child having agency, it sometimes raises questions. How can children who are forced to leave home due to poverty, unsafe cultural practises etc. and giving up their childhood for life on the street be seen as having agency? I do realize that if these girls are exercising agency, it is constrained in the sense that they have limited options and are forced to choose based on what is available. Berner (1998:4), argues out the point that although social structure can influence an individual's decisions it does not determine how one should act. So if the girls act on a decision they have made, it is an act of agency. In this story of their lives filled with poverty, patriarchal domination etc i also see a story of hope and resilience and of girls willing to make something out of their lives, I think that aspect of their lives is always overshadowed with all the gloom they must deal with daily.

During my field work one thing that caught mine attention was the attitude my participants had towards life. They tell me that yes, they know they are marginalised, they know they are poor but they believe they can make something out of their lives. Leaving behind their families and the various situations of poverty or need they found themselves in, they came to the streets with the hope of making a life for themselves. Surviving mostly on less than a dollar a day, these girls smile, they try to be as neat as possible. They sing and they dance. On Sundays which is a day they usually take off from work,

you find them by their wooden structures busily washing, cooking together, plaiting each other's hair, sometimes playing traditional games and dancing to music. Sitting down with them on a Sunday and watching them and hearing the sounds of laughter, it is quite easy to forget the kinds of multiple levels of oppressions these girls have to face. One look at your surroundings though would remind you of the societal class they occupy. It was essential to understand that for some of these girls their decision to come to the streets was an act of exercising their agency. Nufera is one of the participants mentioned earlier, she tells me "*The girls who come back home tell us this place is not an easy place to be, they tell us stories of some of the bad things that can happen, so if you are coming her you have to be brave, I came because I think I am brave enough to survive and make money to go home with. I didn't come to Accra with the intention to settle here, life is better back home but there is no money*" (translated from Twi by JINO Newman)'.

Nufera clearly shows that even though she was aware of the potential difficulties she could face in the capital she still chose to come, believing that she would be able to make enough to save up for her apprenticeship. Nufera shows agency in her decision and determination to learn a trade. But with no one to take up the responsibility she has decided to do so for herself.

As argued earlier people cannot entirely exercise their agency without being inhibited by societal structures but societal structures do not entirely hinder people from exercising their agency. For most of the girls interviewed their decision to come was based on the knowledge that they could make some money and the fact that they have seen other girls who have returned home with some form of financial independence. In spite of the told hardships and

risks they pose to themselves, they believe that money could be made in the big city is usually the main reason most of them come.

*“ I just completed Senior Secondary School, and I want to go to the nursing training college, asking my mother to pay my fees would be wickedness, I can't expect her to kill herself for me. She has done more than enough for me, when other girls were coming here at younger ages she didn't allow me to come, she struggled and paid my fees. But I saw how she suffered, I can't let her go through that again I have to earn something so I can put myself through school and even help her take care of my younger siblings”.* (Alima,

Alima is the third of five children her mother has, she grew up in a polygamous home, which is a common thing in the Upper west region where she grew up. Her father has 3 wives and so there a lot of children to be taken care of. He is a peasant farmer and obviously cannot make enough to support all of his children, his strategy for coping with his family's responsibilities was to take the decision to educate only his male children. This decision came out of the symbolic representation of gender, where boys are seen as better off than women. If his wives wanted their daughters to be educated they had to bear the cost. With no proper form of income for themselves most of the wives couldn't live up to this expectation. Alima decided to come to Accra against the wishes of her mother because she felt it was time to help herself. She believed that if she saved enough she could save up enough for school and even have a little for more to give to her mother.

Kabeer (2001:19), points out agency as the heart of the process by which choices are made. Kabeer notes that one's ability to exercise agency does not

stand alone, resources available will determine ones agency (which is the process and thus affect the outcome) resources here does not refer to only economic resources but also social resources which in the case of the girls can be found in their relationships with their families and other key relationships.

CCC narrated how she badly wanted to come to Accra. She wanted to learn a trade and she knew if she could make it to Accra she could work and save up enough to learn something, but she had no money. Someone in her village told her of a woman who gave out money to girls to come to Accra. When they get to Accra they pay her back after they had worked and gathered the money. She contemplated on the arrangement for a while and decided it was a good one. She went to see the woman to negotiate how much she could take and how much she would pay back. After negotiation she took the money and came to Accra. Upon arrival she looked for girls from her village who had made it to the capital earlier, with their help she was able to find a wooden structure she could sleep in. They also showed her, her way around the job. Once she had made enough money to pay the lady she sent her money back to her through mobile money. Her story is not the first of its kind, a lot of girls borrow money to come to the capital to work.

In trying to understand how these girls are able to exercise their agency it is important to also note that the concept of agency is not only about the 'power within' but also it 'encompasses a much wider range of purposive actions, including bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion, resistance and protest as well as the more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. Kabeer (2001:21), notes that agency also includes the actions and reflections of one person and also the group. For most of these

girls the very decision to make it to Accra was an act of agency, It is however also important to note that their ability to exercise their agency is not only restricted to their decisions to come to the Capital. The way they negotiate for their fares to come to the capital and the various decisions they take upon arrival are all ways of exercising agency. It can also be seen in the way they go about their daily activities, through their ability to negotiate with customers, outwit city authorities and evade payment of taxes. And at certain points collectively come together to defend each other.

### ***3.4 Coping Strategies for Surviving On the Streets***

For many of these girls surviving the streets is an art that needs to be learned. The girls have to adopt to the streets in order to survive. One thing I clearly observed about my participants was the importance of the group i.e. the street family in their lives on the streets. To them having group solidarity was everything. Surviving as a loner was not an option. On a daily basis the girls have to make decisions that would ensure their survival on the streets. Some of these decisions are taken together as a group or individually. These involve decisions from which group to associate with and this is likely to influence where they sleep and whom they seek protection from. Solidarity with each other is one of the ways that ensures that they are able to cope with living on the streets. Grouping themselves sought of protects everyone in the group to some extent. Most of these groupings are based on ethnic affiliations. It must be however noted that these groups are not devoid of their own issues. This would be discussed later in the paper. The varying identities they possess as individuals also have a way of impacting how they survive on the streets. The

daily experiences faced by a girl child kayayoo of about 10 years is different from the experiences of a 23 year old kayayoo.

*Picture 1*

**Group of girls waiting for customers at the market place in Madina**



*Source: Picture taken by the author*



### 3.4.1 Group Solidarity

For the girls to survive the street, it is quite essential for them to belong to a group, which is a sort of street family and is usually made up of a large group of other girls and women. Hechter (1987:8-9,10), points out that in groups that possess solidarity the individuals that make up the group might share common interests, in the case of these girls it is their ethnicity, social class and work. Hechter (1987:8-9, 10), further argues that members join groups to enjoy certain benefits. He points out that in order for the group to survive they must continue to provide these benefits, for these girls the groups is a life saver. Asana tells me, when she first arrived she knew no one, she felt lost. In the market crowds she identified girls who were working as head porters. She said she knew they were the people she had to talk to. She asked for where the girls from her ethnic group lived. Finding a group of people from her ethnicity was essential to her. She explains why by telling me,

*‘if they are not your people they can do anything bad to you, but your people will hurt you but not as badly as an outsider If there is something you need too, like when you are sick the people from your hometown will look out for you’.* (translated from Twi by JINO Newman)

Asana narrates to me that, if one of them gets sick everybody in the room they share, will contribute to help take care of the sick person till she recovers. If one has a bad working day and did not make any money, it is more likely to get someone to lend you some money for feeding and for paying your rent. From interviews, observation and conversations it became clear

that group solidarity had a lot of benefits for these girls. Heckathorn and Rosenstein (2015:62) as noted earlier argue the essentiality of these groups is mainly in the fact that they provide a sense of belonging, provide friendship etc. For these young girls it is crucial that there is that kind of support from others on the streets.

Showing solidarity towards each other sometimes also means risking getting into trouble in order to cover up for each other. As argued out by Hechter (1987:8-9, 10), group solidarity is seen as the tax members pay for joining groups in order to access its benefits. The more dependent individuals are on groups, the more likely that they are to have more solidarity. In my interaction with one of my participants who is a market woman, she clearly states that even in the market if one is in trouble and the others notice you quickly see them coming around trying to find out what the problem is and help. Sometimes they don't even mind getting into trouble in order to defend or protect each other. She states that,

*'The way they stand up for each other is one of the things I like about them. It can be very annoying though, especially when they start speaking their language and you don't understand. They never give out each other, no matter how bad the situation is. Let's say they are carrying my goods to my shop and something gets missing her and I suspect it is one of them. Even if I threaten them with a police case, they would not say A or B took it. Before you realise they start speaking their language, give them sometime the person who took it would return it without you noticing or the individual owning up to it and then everyone else would start begging you to forgive her. Instead*

*of saying this person took it, they would rather convince the person to own up.* (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman).

Ahoufer my focal person also emphasis this point, in one of our conversations he tells me in a rather funny way, why you shouldn't sperate two kayayei fighting.

*'When you see them fighting ignore them, let them fight. Even if they beat each other up, they would settle their differences themselves. They don't need you to mediate. When you ask them why they are fighting? They might not even bother answering you, if they do, it is likely not the reason why they are fighting. Worse of all if you are not lucky, the would stop fighting each other and come together to fight you'.* (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman).

Their solidarity to each other sometimes means that the intrusion from outsiders is not welcome. Oberhauser and Yeboah (2011:32), as pointed out earlier argue that most girls first come to Accra through the recommendation of a friend or through family members and are able to first adapt with the help of people they might already know and most probably already part of these groups. Group solidarity is therefore quite essential for these girls to survive the streets.

### **3.4.2 Ethnicity**

Membership requirements for most of the groups formed on the streets is mainly based on ethnicity, you associate because you identify as belonging to a particular ethnicity. Earlier research has pointed out that most of these girls

organize along ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. Bhopal (2004:441) notes that the word ethnicity is from the Greek word *ethnos*, which implies a nation. He argues that ethnicity can refer to different implications. It is used in identifying a group which people identify with or perceive to be a part of, they have common traits, which might include geographical and ancestral origins, but most importantly cultural traditions and language. What defines ethnicity is not static but fluid. The three northern regions in Ghana have very strong ethnic identities. Even in recent times there have been ethnic wars and this subject is a very touchy one. It is therefore not surprising that even away from home they organize along ethnic divides and not as collectives. Amongst themselves certain groups are considered superior to others, with some groups referring to others as their slaves etc. this obviously dates to centuries of history. But the feelings of superiority are very evident today. To avoid conflicts most girls stay together and work together with a group of their own ethnic people. However, work sometimes unites these various groups. The essentiality of forming solidarity is crucial for survival on the streets. It creates a feeling of belonging, a home away from home. You have people you can turn to in times of need. Research has shown that it's quite usual to find the girls settling in peculiar ethnic groups around the market places. There are possibilities that they might even be from the same extended family. Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008: 177), point to this fact when they assert that, the *kayayei* are usually an organized group. They are not haphazard in their actions. They

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<sup>1</sup> Mateos (2014:14) notes "The word is first noted to have been used by Weber in 1921, Weber defined ethnic groups as '[t]hose human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration (...) it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists'" (as cited from Weber 1980 [1921])'.

note that the spaces within which they operate are defined largely by their ethnic groups. They suggest that this might be in order to prevent fighting or at least minimize it. Old rivalries and societal structure of which families are more powerful back in their home regions might come to play in the streets. This would determine who is bullied and who is not and who seeks protection from whom. Because no one would want to get into trouble or put their families back home in trouble with each other. With these thoughts at the back of my mind I tried to see through my interviews if I could pick up cues of this happening on the streets. Their stories confirmed these happenings and confirmed how important identifying with one's ethnic group on the street is essential for their survival.

### **3.4.3 Using diverse identities as a survival strategy**

It is essential to understand that although kayayei can be identified as one big group facing varying and multi levels of discrimination they are also very diverse within that group. One's identity is very crucial to how an individual survives on the streets. Kayayei are most often mistakenly lumped together when they are being addressed. They most often portrayed as vulnerable females, who wallow in poverty and have to carry loads for survival. This is to a large extent very true, but it must be noted that kayayei are a large group of people in this case females with many varying identities. On one level they are connected because of the societal class they occupy, their gender as female etc. But there are disconnections too in terms of their age, ethnicity, educational background, religious identifications etc.

### 3.4.3.1 Education

Most of the girls on the streets are not educated or only have a minimum level of education. For this reason girls who are identified as educated have a different experience on the streets, compared to the girls who are not.

*'She is lucky, she doesn't have to carry loads all day like the rest of us she gets to sit in the shop and help the madam because she is educated more than the rest of us.'* (Translated from Twi)

This came up in a discussion I was having with a group of girls gathered around a shop. In the afternoon it gets very hot in Accra and when there is no goods to carry these girls usually gather and just idly talk. On this day it seemed one of the girls very angry at something. Being unable to understand their language I asked one of the girls I had spoken to earlier what the matter was. She narrates to me that the girl who was angry felt one of the girls in the shop who was also a kayayoo but working in the shop, had been rude towards her. In a further discussion I got to know that not all the girls carried goods all day. A few of them were lucky to have shops to work in. Having different identities means that even though these girls may identify collectively as kayayei it is also worthy that as a researcher I recognize the fact that they cannot all experience life on the streets in the same way. Some of these girls are more educated than others.

Having an education has an added advantage on how one can survive on the streets. Girls with an education conduct their kayayei business differently from those who are not educated, most of them save up on mobile money-making use of a mobile phone instead of keeping it in a room where it may be stolen by other girls in the room or by thieves. Education also gives a girl

an added edge in securing a more permanent position with a shop owner, especially since the shop owner would pay less for the services of someone who can read and write.

#### **3.4.3.2 AGE**

The issue of age is very crucial in looking at the experiences of these girls. For most of the research my focus was on children, adopting the definition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, my definition of a child was anyone below the age of eighteen (18) years as stated. Younger children might be more vulnerable on the streets than girls who are teenagers. Most of the girls told me they really didn't feel bullied by older kayayei this could mainly be because of the kind of environment they grew up in. In most Ghanaian societies reverence is giving to older people, you just don't get into trouble with older people. They are always right. This cultural seemed to have been transferred unto the streets. You respect people older than you and as much as possible try not to get into conflict with them. In certain instances, much, younger children who migrated earlier or have been to the capital to work before can take care of themselves much better. Being older doesn't necessarily make you better in navigating the streets.

In terms of work most people prefer to use children, one woman associated this to the fact that most children would grumble less if they are given an unfair wage unlike adult kayayei. This is a clear form of exploitation happening on the streets.

### **3.5 Significance of diverse identities (Intersection of Age and Education)**

Having different identities means the experiences of these girls on the streets are not the same. Even though they can all be collectively identified as kayayei, some girls would have better experiences than others and vice versa. Davis (2008:68), defines “‘Intersectionality’ as referring to the ‘interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power’. And how that affects that power relations positively or negatively”. Being a child on the street is tough but for some of the other girls who are younger, their age does not necessarily always work against them. Sometimes they enjoy the privilege for lack of a better word of having more work because they are paid less. And for those in that category that fraternize with more than one ethnic group they can enjoy the benefits of working both groups and so making more than some other girls. Memuna is a 12-year-old participant, she narrates to me how in the streets both the ethnicity of her father and mother have groups in the street. When she came she chose to live with her father’s ethnic group.

*‘Even though I stay with my father’s people when I come to the market I have friends who are not sisala. I especially talk to the other girls who come from my mother’s hometown because I can speak the language so I am able to relate with them’ (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman)*



Because of her unique identity she enjoys the benefits most girls would not get, that is being privileged to enjoy benefits from two groups. An intersectional lens in considering the individual stories of the girls helps in appreciating their unique situations. As noted earlier, Denis (2008:677) define an Intersectional analysis as involving simultaneously being able to analyse varying intersecting sources, relations and practices of subordination and /or oppression. In the case of Memuna she is young and already on the streets, putting her in a vulnerable position. Even though she is facing multiple levels of oppression her age works for her in the sense that, because her rates are cheaper she tends to get more work than other girls, she also has the added advantage of being able to associate with more than one group because of her ethnic background.

Alima is 18yrs and wants to be a nurse, she has completed her secondary school education. She wishes to continue her education, we had the interview in English. When I asked if she would prefer to speak in Twi, which is a known local dialect she quickly tells me we should speak English. I was quite impressed with her level of fluency. In our conversations she tells me that even though she is working as a kayayoo now, she sees it as a starting point in her life. She needed to get away and she needed to make legitimate money and that is why she is on the streets, but she knows she wants more out of life. For Alima being educated came with benefits others don't have. Her identity as an educated person and her age i.e. older than the other girls gives her opportunities the other girls don't have. She helps in one of the shops in the market and also makes extra income carrying loads on days the shop is closed.

Alima's story was narrated earlier and is continued here, Alima's category of difference works for her advantage.

### ***3.6 Conclusion***

In this chapter the discussions were based on how the girls got onto the streets and how the girls survive the streets. I looked at Global and national influences and also the role of the community and family. For some of the girls the decision to come is an act of exercising agency. I also looked at their lives on the streets and how they are able to survive, mainly through group solidarity. Light was thrown on existing group dynamics and how this influences their lives on the streets. It is evident from the above discussions that being in a group is essential for the survival of kayayei girls in the streets. But like every group there are different dynamins and a group of kayayei is no different. Kayayei should not be lumped up into one big category. Being able to understand that within these groups they form on the streets are individuals with varying identities gives new insights into understanding of their peculiar situations on the street.

*Picture 2*  
Interacting with a kayayoo



Source: Picture taken on request of the author.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## **Power Relations in the Life of Kayayei**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

In this chapter the focus would be on answering the question, 'How do kayayei girls deal with multiple power actors in the streets? How do they strategize or cope in these power relations. The different levels of power relations in the lives of these girls' means they have to strategically place themselves in order to be in a position to effectively deal with them.

### ***4.2 Power Actors within the Streets***

Through this research one of the things I sort to understand was how the girls strategize to deal with power actors. Sawicki (1991:20-21), as noted earlier in discussing Foucault argues out that Foucault analyses Power as a relationship, Power is not only oppressive but reproductive. Placing the girls in the centre of my analysis I selected four main actors and critically delved into the issues of how these relationships of power affected the daily choices the girls make. These actors were chosen because based on my observations and interaction they happen to be the most powerful actors in the lives of the kayayei.

#### **4.2.1 The Land Lord**

Ahoufer my focal person is a native of La Nkwatanang were most of my participants lived. He tells me that they own the land the girls have their wooden structures on and in fact he owns some of the wooden structures the girls rent, so he is part of the landlords. Ahoufer tells me most of the kiosks are in a deplorable condition, they are mostly overcrowded and so it's not a comfort-

able place for most of the girls but they have no choice. He is quick to however point out that his structure and some others are in good shape. He even asserts that there are some kiosk which are quite comfortable and comes at an extra cost. Girls who make enough and are willing to pay have the option of choosing these other ones. This is later confirmed by some of my participants, but they also point out that it is not easy to even find a kiosk to sleep in, so changing to a better kiosk is not a luxury most of them have.

Ahoufer has lived most of his life in La Nkwatanang and he recounts stories of his younger days. He tells me about how he dated one of the kayayei girls and had a child with her. He tells me most of the girls are beautiful and that now he is much older and has changed. He narrates how he, together with other males used to chase after the girls and how they could make the lives of some perceived stubborn girls miserable. If the girl had a boyfriend that was known then she was safe from such harassment. In trying to find out if the girl he claims to have dated, did date him willingly he answers by telling me,

*'I didn't force myself on her, she accepted me'.*

He tells me how the girl was good towards him and how the girl uses to sometimes give him money. Ahoufer then didn't have any stable means of income and still does not. He is a self-acclaimed youth leader of the community and is recognised as such by almost everyone in the community. He happens to have some education, is quite outspoken and so serves as the liaison between the girls and the outside community. When NGO's come into the community they mostly work through him, he speaks for the girls and tells me about how he has gone to various stakeholder meetings discussing issues relating to the situation of the kayayei. Some of my participants gave me initial audience

because he asked them to, even though he is oblivious to it, he does hold a lot of power over these girls and so do other people.

His story makes me begin to wonder what the story of the girl he dated might have been if I had met her. Did she have a choice? The second part of Scott's definition argues that gender is a relationship of power (Scott 1996: 170-71).

In this case the Land lord is a very powerful representation in the society the girls have formed on the streets. Most of the wooden structures the girls sleep in are owned by male landlords. Having a place to sleep no matter how bad it is, is very crucial. And most often the girls are at the mercy of these male Land lords. They control a very essential need they have, which is accommodation. They take their rent every week and sometimes do nothing to improve the structures the girls sleep in. Girls who do not earn their rent from work done during the week have to borrow money from their peers to pay their rent or have to ask boyfriend for money. Most of the girls deal with the Landlord by mostly avoiding any form of confrontation with them. They can't afford to be thrown out.

BB tells me *'my mother is not here.my father is not here, there is no one here to talk on my behalf, so I try to obey everyone and avoid fights at all cost, because if you get into trouble you are alone''*. (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman).

In the words of another participant Meri,

*'It is not the best place, sometimes when it rains we can't sleep, you must stay awake because the roof is leaking and you have to protect your things.*

*When it is not raining the rooms are very hot. But it is better than having no place to sleep'. (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman).*

With very few structures most of the girls would have no alternative if they are kicked out of their rooms. Kabeer (2001:21) argues that power operates in the absence of obvious agency. Listening to the girls narrate how they have no other option even if they hate the accommodation they have and recounting how Ahoufer went on and on about how he dated one of the girls and listening to him tell me of the role he plays in their community, it became obvious that in dealing with someone in that position the girls might not be able to exercise their individual or collective agency.

*Picture 3*

A picture showing part of the community where some of the girls live.



Source: Picture taken by the author.

#### 4.2.2 City Authorities

Delivering on a campaign promise made during the 2016 general elections held in Ghana. The current Government of Ghana abolished taxes that was imposed on kayayei by the various District and Municipal assemblies in the market places. In an article by graphic online a Leading news agency in Ghana the announcement was made during the reading of the 2017 annual budget in parliament (graphic online, 2017).

The Madina market is in the La Nkwatanang Municipality so the city guards stationed there are from LANMA municipality. Before the abolishment there were reports of instances of clashes between kayayei and City guards in many markets. The market places usually do not have police men stationed there. This make the city authorities quite powerful. They collect taxes, they sometimes determine who should sell what and where one can sell. They exercise power even over some vulnerable traders. With these girls being at the bottom of the hierarchy of the market structure, it is not surprising that they were being abused by them.

*“Sometimes if you are lucky and smart you can avoid them all day and not pay but when they see you and you don’t have the ticket that shows you have paid, they would ask another kayayoo who has the ticket to carry the goods instead of you. And so, no matter how far you would have come with the goods you would lose your money. Sometimes if you are lucky the person whose goods you are carrying would plead with them and pay for you. They always listen to the shoppers. But now because of the abolishment nothing like that exists anymore”* (Nufera, Translated from Twi by JINO Newman)



Scott notes that institutions is where normative concepts or gendered perceptions of what should constitute social relationships are politicized, constructed, and made and then embedded in society (Scott 1996: 168). In certain instances, some of the girls told me the city guards had prevented people from abusing them. In certain instances, they are perpetrators and in other instances they are protectors. The city guards are supposed to be the law enforcement agency of the district assembly, it is one thing to make laws advocating for equal rights of all genders and to protect children rights and another to have an institution meant to be protectors become perpetrators. Most of the girls point out that sometimes you can't be sure of what to expect from the city guards, they simply try to stay out of their way as much as possible. But there are certain individual city guards whom have become familiar to them because they are generally known to be kind towards the girls.

#### **4.2.3 Shoppers/Traders (Market Women).**

In this research I examined the relationship between the girls and those they work for. It might not always be that one group is more powerful than the other. As noted earlier Sawicki 1991, points out that Foucault believes power is not exercised from the top down, as in being vested for example in the state but power is a relationship. In most big markets activities would come to a standstill if there are no kayayei to carry goods from one point to another. The kayayei would also have no means of survival without these traders and shoppers. In examining this relationship and in trying to understand the situation of these girls, it was clear that even in their vulnerability, they did possess power no matter how constrained and they did choose to

exercise it how they please especially in their relationship with the traders and shoppers. The notion of power being vested in a central person and trickling down is not always the case. Sometimes some traders have a standard fee they would pay the girls for their services and would not pay more than that. The girls do decide however if they want to work for that amount or not. No one forces them to carry goods. Most of the time before carrying goods the kayayei can negotiate for their fees.

*'There are so many girls in the market now, so you just have to agree to some fees even if it is not enough or you will go hungry!!!'* (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman)

*'Sometimes some of the prices are not worth it. I won't carry very heavy goods for a small fee and end up using all the money to buy pain killers.'* (Translated from Twi by JINO Newman)

Both girls are head porters but their approach to their situation is very different. Sometimes dealing with certain power structures is done on an individual level, and in certain instances the girls decide to exercise their individual agency. Some girls are able to negotiate for better terms than others. There are other instances when kayayei girls collectively exercise their agency collectively negotiating for a fee for a job they would all partake in doing. In such instances they collectively have a voice.

#### **4.2.4 Males in the Streets**

There have been several reports of kayayei suffering from all forms of harassments in the hands of males they share the streets with. Some of these girls are sometimes raped and end up with unwanted pregnancy. Sometimes

they have to deal with physical and verbal abuse. In examining this relationship, I tried to find out if their relationship with the males have some benefits. Some girls told me they didn't think it was necessary to have a boyfriend to protect you. They felt you had to keep saying no to all of them and ignore them totally and you would be fine. Others insisted a boyfriend served as a form of protection from harassment. Some told me they entered relationships because the boys would give them money to support their income. For some of the girls the males in the streets and in their spaces not only prevented harassment from other males but also came with added financial benefits. From the various conversations, it was obvious that sometimes the girls were under pressure to enter unwanted relationships. This can be associated with Scott's argument of gender given being given binary meanings. (Scott 1996: 167-8). This notion give an idea of men as protectors and women needing protection.

As pointed out earlier societal structures can inhibit agency to some extent but cannot entirely subdue agency. Some of the girls can make decisions on which kind of boy they want, especially if they find it necessary to have a boyfriend.

*'He needs to be working, so he can support me'* (Translated by JINO Newman from Twi).

This clearly shows that for this girl such a relationship is a means to an end, although we cannot completely ignore the prevailing conditions in the immediate environment that has led to such a decision.

*Sometimes, having a boyfriend is so they can have a place to comfortably sleep, their rooms are very crowded. (Ahoufer, Translated from Twi by JINO Newman).*

So even though this might not necessarily be a perfect situation. They tend to have a say in some cases of who they choose as a boyfriend.

### **4.3 Power dynamics within Kayayei.**

Within themselves there are relations of power too. From my observations and from talking to them, it became clear that there was a regard for seniority amongst them. Children were required to show some level of respect to older girls. This in my understanding is a societal norm. Children are required to respect the elderly. Girls who portray these attitudes are considered respectful and those who do not are considered arrogant and disrespectful. Even though younger girls are not obliged to serve, they sometimes run errands for older kayayei in the street. As pointed out by one participant,

*'It's like being home and you are not busy and your older sister or mother sends you, it is not polite to refuse to go. No one will beat you if you don't go, but you just do it because it is right.'* (Meri, Translated from Twi by JINO Newman)

Some older kayayei told me that some of the younger ones don't respect, pointing to the fact that some make money more than they do. And in their opinion, that is what makes them disrespectful. Of course, this is an arguable statement.

### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at selected power actors within the life of the kayayoo child on the streets. The chapter also covered how these girls deal

with these actors individually and collectively. The actors that were chosen to be analysed were the landlord, the city guards, the market women/ shoppers and males in the street. The chapter also briefly touched on power dynamics amongst themselves as kayayei. Through narration of the girl's experiences, the chosen theories were used to analyse how the girls deal with multiple power actors in the streets.

## CHAPTER 5.

### CONCLUSION

#### *Reviewing the Theoretical Concepts In Relation To the Stories of the Girls and Other Participants*

Through this research I tried to understand, how kayayei girls living and working in the Madina Market (Accra), cope with surviving on the streets and how they deal with multiple power actors in the streets. In order to answer this main question, I sub divided the questions in order for clarity and to help in the gathering of data. I asked the questions of, how do kayayei girls end up on the streets. What are some of the coping strategies adopted by kayayei girls? And how do kayayei girls deal with multiple power actors in the streets?

Adopting the concepts of Power, Agency, Intersectionality, Group solidarity and Gender. I attempted at analysing the lives of female child migrants specifically kayayei in the Madina market of the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

In chapter three I looked at how the girls ended up on the streets. Taking into consideration global, national and community influences on their current positioning in life. Through narrating their stories I also looked at the family as a societal structure and how it shapes gendered expectations from the girls. In chapter three again I touched on what some of the coping strategies adopted by kayayei girls were. Highlighting on group solidarity, ethnicity and how their different identities helps them with coping on the streets.

In chapter four placing the girls in the centre of my analysis I selected four main actors and critically delved into the issues of how these relationships of

power affected the daily choices the girls make and how the girls interacted in these power relationships.

The research consisted of In-depth interviews which were conducted over a period of six weeks, some of the interviews took place in very informal group meetings and setting. The stories of these girls as narrated by them and analysed within the chosen theoretical framework, are stories of girls who under constrained conditions are trying to make it in life. As noted earlier by James (2007: 269) like any other research field, researching on children has some representation issues. I tried to the best of my ability to narrate their stories as told by them in order to avoid misrepresentation.

Delivering on a campaign promise the present government of Ghana has made secondary school education free for those starting secondary school for the first time this year (Ghana.gov.gh, 2017). This has not been done without some controversy surrounding it. Most people are worried about the sustainability of the programme. For most of these girls ending up on the streets was due to the need to make money to further their education to the secondary level, this would reduce the burdens of their parents and hopefully reduce to some extent the influx of child migrants. This however is not a means to an end because basic education is free and compulsory in Ghana but surprisingly most of these girls dropped out of school citing their parent's inability to supply school requirements like exercise books. The state has to put more efforts into programs that would ensure that girls do not only have access to education but can stay in school. Provision for vocational training or apprenticeship should be made available and accessible to girls who wish to enrol. These

interventions is not an insurance against the migration of female children, especially since sometimes it is due to deep seated cultural expectations. But interventions would ensure the girls have equitable opportunities.

From my research and fieldwork experience my participants see migration as a means of survival for themselves and sometimes for their families back home. In spite of all the prevailing conditions around them, these girls have hope of a better future for themselves. A future they are not waiting to be handed down to them but they are willing to go onto the streets and earn a wage that they hope would hopefully give them some financial independence.



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## Annexes

### Appendix 1 List of Participants' Information

Number	Participant	Age..	Educational Background	Sex
1	Nufera	15yrs	Primary educa- tion	Female
2	Memuna	12yrs	Not educated	Female
3	Fatimah	12yrs	Primary educa- tion	Female
4	Adjara	15yrs	Primary educa- tion	Female
5	Alima	18yrs	Educated ( Sec- ondary education)	Female
6	CCC	15yrs	Primary	Female
7	Meri	13yrs	Not educated	Female
8	BB	15yrs	Not educated	Female
9	Focal Per- son ( Ahoufer)	N/A	Educated	Male
10	Market queen	N/A	N/A	Fe- male







