

KAYAYEI NEEDS ASSESSMENT





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KAYAYEI NEEDS ASSESSMENT



AIM

This needs assessment aims to present a cohesive understanding of the backgrounds, challenges, and goals of women and girls working as Kayayei in Accra's Kantamanto Secondhand Clothing Market so as to inform the expansion and strengthening of support services and interventions, such as job training, educational scholarships and healthcare, that may not only address immediate identified needs but also work holistically to end dangerous headcarrying.

METHODOLOGY

While the study employs a mixed research approach of primary surveys, observations and interviews to contextualise findings and desk research drawing on both previous primary research as well as third-party references, quantitative analysis is the core of the report. Primary research systematically gathered numerical data on the backgrounds, challenges, aspirations, and support needs of women and girls working as Kayayei within Kantamanto Market. Secondary data were gathered from articles and related literature to support the review of existing knowledge and compare findings with prior studies in Ghana with specific focus on Northern Ghana, where the majority of women and girls working as Kayayei in Accra originate.

Quantitative research enables the objective measurement of variables, supports statistical generalization, and reduces researcher bias in data interpretation (Nardi, 2018). The approach made it possible to quantify experiences relating to migration motivations, living conditions, skill levels, access to social services, and future goals. In line with Dehalwar and Sharma (2023), the quantitative approach supports the application of statistical tools such as descriptive statistics and correlations for robust analysis and accurate inference. The surveyed population included both adults and minors. We paid careful attention to ensure that factors such as level of education, marital status, ethnic background, or length of stay in Accra played no role in inviting respondents to participate so as to include a wide spectrum of lived experiences within the community.

The Kantamanto Market census conducted in 2025 as a collaboration between The Or Foundation and Kantamanto Obroniwawu Business Association placed the population of women and girls working as Kayayei within Kantamanto Market at 1,387 people. Out of this population, a sample of 305 respondents was obtained and used for the quantitative analysis. The sample of 305 ensures adequate representation, reliability, and analytical power for assessing the needs of women and girls working as Kayayei. The study

employed simple random sampling, a probability sampling technique that offers equal chance of selection to every eligible individual in the population. This approach minimized sampling bias and enhanced the generalizability of the findings to the broader Kayayei population (Mujeres, 2016). While our sampling approach was based on simple random sampling to ensure representativeness, there were specific instances where purposive sampling was applied. This was done intentionally for categories of respondents who were small in number or critical to our needs assessment, and for whom a purely random selection might have missed. When we combined these approaches, we ensured that our sample remained representative. This approach is commonly used when certain participants are necessary for a comprehensive analysis.

Primary data were obtained through direct responses from Kayayei women using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items.

DATA ANALYSIS

The raw data from Google Forms was exported into Google Sheets, cleaned, and processed for statistical analysis. The cleaned dataset was analyzed using Google Sheets and Partial Least Squares (PLS). The data analysis procedure involved descriptive statistics (frequency tables, means, percentages) used to summarize demographics, migration patterns, living conditions, health behaviors, and support needs. On top of descriptive statistics, a correlation analysis identified relationships among variables. Regression/PLS modeling was used to explore predictors of personal goals and support needs among Kayayei women.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WORKING AS KAYAYEI

Respondents to the survey identified entirely as female, which is consistent with the established finding that contemporary headcarrying in urban markets has become a gendered labour niche dominated by migrant women from northern Ghana (Agarwal et al., 1997; Grieco, Apt & Turner, 1996). This is also consistent with census data collected by The Or Foundation earlier. Such findings do not seek to ignore the observation of males carrying secondhand clothing bales in certain parts of Kantamanto Market, however statistical findings indicate that the population identifying with the term *Kayayei* is female.

6% UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

With respect to age distribution, the majority of the respondents fall within the economically active youth bracket. The highest proportion were aged 26–35 years (42%), followed by respondents aged 18–25 years (35%). Over 6% were between 10–17 years, indicating the presence of child labour among *Kayayei*.

The presence of respondents of such young ages underscores the persistence of child migration and youth involvement in informal labour markets, a pattern observed in earlier migration and labour studies in Ghana (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2009; Hashim & Thorsen, 2011). Women aged 36–45 years constituted 13.11%, while those aged 46–55 years formed 3.93%, and only 0.33% were above 55 years. This suggests that the work of headcarrying is dominated by young women facing survival migration.

Respondents originated from diverse communities across northern Ghana and neighbouring northern regions. The highest representation was from Tamale (15.41%), followed by Yendi (10.82%), Savelugu (10.82%), Kumbungu (4.59%), Wa (5.90%), and Vogu (4.59%). Other communities showed marginal percentages (each less than 2%), reflecting highly scattered migration patterns. To protect respondent anonymity smaller communities are not listed by name.

Regionally, **91.15% of respondents report originating from the Northern Region**, while smaller proportions came from the Savanna (1.97%), Upper West (2.62%), Upper East (1.97%), North East (1.97%) and Bono Region (0.33%).

This distribution indicates that migration into *Kayayei* work is predominantly driven from the Northern Region to southern urban areas, consistent with broader internal migration trends in Ghana, a long-established north–south labour migration tradition driven by uneven development and livelihood insecurity (Songsore, 2003; Awumbila, 2015). In terms of languages spoken, Dagbani accounted for the largest share with 93.75% of respondents reporting fluency in Dagbani. 35% of respondents report fluency in Twi, representing overlapping language fluency for around a quarter of respondents. Other languages including Sisala, Mossi, Mamprusi, Kusaal, Konkomba, Frafra, and Gonja were reported at relatively low percentages. 14% of respondents report speaking English.

93.75% DAGBANI

35% TWI

14% ENGLISH

The dominance of Dagbani corresponds with the high representation of respondents from Dagbon-related communities and suggestive of patterns identified by Owusu, 2005 and Abdul-Karim & Awumbila, 2021 where ethnic-networked migration streams including settlement in areas termed urban zongos are seen as social anchoring points. Limited fluency in English, Twi and Ga, the primary languages spoken in Accra, presents a significant exclusionary barrier for the population of women working as *Kayayei* in Kantamanto Market.

Similarly, educational attainment of respondents was largely low. More than half (54.43%) had no formal education, while 21.64% had completed primary school, and 13.77% had junior high school education. Only 9.51% reported senior secondary or vocational qualifications, and less than 1% had a diploma or certificate. None of the respondents had attained a post-secondary degree.

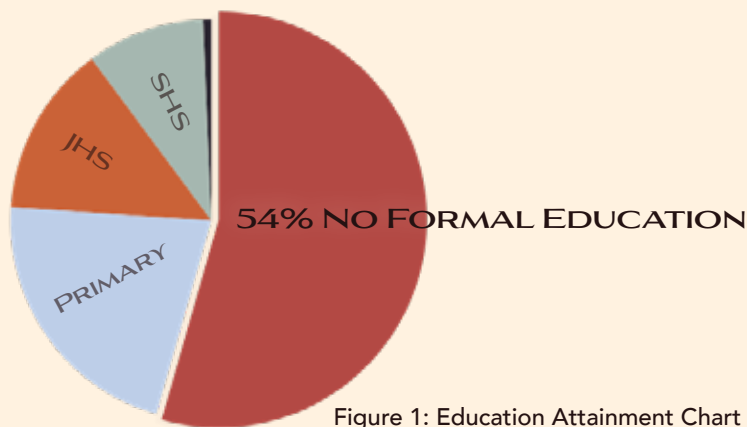


Figure 1: Education Attainment Chart

This suggests that limited access to formal education may contribute to the pursuit of informal and vulnerable livelihood options such as headcarrying. This also foregrounds the long established argument that lower educational access among the northern female population increases vulnerability to early migration and precarious employment in southern cities (Dako-Gyeke & Asampong, 2013; Porter et al., 2011).

44.92% of respondents had been engaged in the work of headcarrying for more than 5 years, with 16.07% between 2–5 years and 15.74% between 1–2 years. A smaller proportion had worked for less than 6 months (13.11%) or between 6 months and a year (7.21%).

The distribution highlights that a considerable number have been in the Kayayei trade long-term, indicating sustained dependence on headcarrying as a livelihood rather than a temporary financial coping mechanism. This mirrors findings that

female migrants in Ghana often become “locked in” to informal urban labour due to limited mobility into formal employment (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). Family responsibilities were also evident.

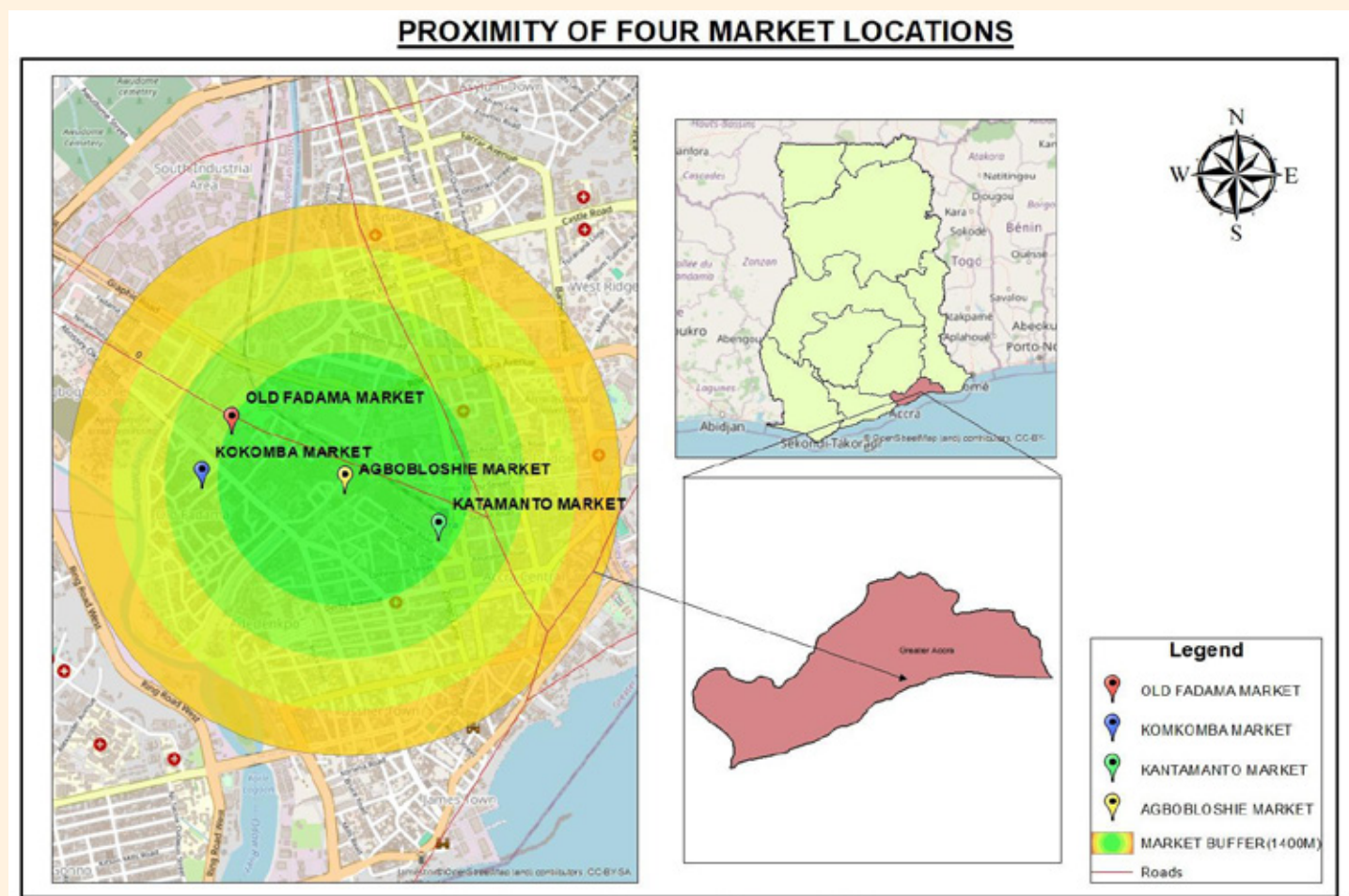
A majority of respondents, 83% reported having children, while only 17% did not have children. The majority of respondents (69% out of the total surveyed population) reported having more than 1 child. While nearly 83% of respondents reported having a child, 72% reported that they were married. Analysis indicates that nearly 95% of the married population reported having children.

83% HAVE CHILDREN

The family-responsibility profile here is striking; this supports existing scholarship demonstrating that women’s migration is often tied to household survival strategies, where remittances and urban earnings support schooling, feeding and social obligations in rural homes (Van der Geest, 2010; Whitehead & Hashim, 2005). Thus, the Kayayei population cannot be conceptualised merely as “urban market labourers,” but rather as key economic providers whose work supports rural household reproduction.



Map 1: Map showing proximity of four residential areas for Kayayei.



Source: Author (2026)

DESCRIPTIVE CONSTRUCT OF LIVING CONDITIONS

Most participants reside in highly informal urban settlements located in or around major markets (See Map 1), with the largest concentrations recorded in Kokomba (55.08%), Agboblshie (23.28%) and Old Fadama (17.70%), which are essentially the same area within immediate walking distance in central Accra adjacent to the Korle Lagoon. The area is characterised by insecure tenure, overcrowding and inadequate access to basic services (Songsore, 2003; UN-Habitat, 2016).

Such spatial clustering confirms previous observations that Kayayei tend to live close to market districts to minimise transportation costs and maximise daily income opportunities (Awumbila & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Van der Geest, 2010). These results correspond

with previous research finding that housing arrangements among women working as Kayayei are determined not only by affordability but also by proximity to markets and informality of employment structures (Larcher-Gerritsen, 2011; Adaku, 2021). In addition, as previously discussed, language and cultural preferences lead to social anchoring points.

More than half of the respondents (51.76%) sleep in shared rooms or houses, followed by 34.82% who sleep in kiosks, containers or shops. Smaller proportions sleep inside the market (6.07%), with family members (7.03%) or on the streets (0.32%). The large share of respondents sleeping in makeshift structures attests to serious housing precarity and absence of urban social protection.

Crowding is also a major issue. Common room sizes in Old Fadama are observed to be less than 10 square meters. **More than 65% sleep with four or more people in the same space**, while only 2.62% sleep alone.

Overcrowding is widely recognised as a risk factor for communicable diseases, fire hazards and interpersonal violence in informal settlements (Ezeh et al., 2017; Mberu et al., 2016). These vulnerabilities are seen in the respondents' perception of safety: only 44.59% feel safe where they sleep, while 22.30% feel safe only sometimes, and 33.11% do not feel safe. Meaning that in aggregate, **over 55% of respondents are unsure of their safety**. Reasons cited include lack of privacy (27.52%), security problems (12.75%), frequent theft (7.38%), overcrowding (35.57%), risk of fire outbreaks (14.09%) and risk of disease (2.68%). Prior studies similarly show that female migrants in informal settlements face heightened threats of theft, harassment and sexual violence (Dako-Gyeke & Asampong, 2013; Chant & McIlwaine, 2016).

Healthcare-seeking behaviour further indicates the economic vulnerability of Kayayei women. When sick, **66.23% self-medicate** using pharmacies or drugstores, compared with only 31.80% who visit hospitals or clinics. A minority rely on herbal remedies (0.66%) or do nothing (1.31%). This pattern aligns with previous literature noting that cost and time constraints lead informal workers to substitute professional healthcare with over-the-counter medication and herbal treatments (Nsawah-Nuamah et al., 2021; Dzator & Asiedu, 2022).

Indeed, among those who do not attend hospitals, the most common reasons are high cost (56.06%), lack of health insurance (13.94%) and preference for pharmacy or traditional medicine (23.64%). These findings affirm the persistence of medical pluralism shaped by affordability rather than cultural preference (Tsey, 1997; Hampshire & Owusu, 2013). The frequency of medicine use also reinforces the economic drivers of self-care: 40.7% reported using or purchasing medication 1–2 times in the past month, and 31.8% used medicines 3 or more times within a month, indicating high reliance on non-clinical healthcare channels.

Finally, daily income ranges reveal pronounced poverty: the largest share (37.38%) earns GHS41–60 per day, while around 21.64% earn 81–100 and 16% earn GHS21–40. Less than 1% earn more than GHS200 per day. This supports earlier findings that earnings from headcarrying are unstable and below the urban living wage, often insufficient to cover rent, food, childcare, healthcare and remittances (Okyere, 2015; Awumbila, 2017). Our survey did not identify how frequently reported daily earnings are achieved, e.g. whether every day in a month or a few times in a week. Observations and previous interviews suggest that income is not consistent. In such contexts, a “cycle of survival” emerges where low earnings lead to precarious housing and reduced healthcare utilisation, which in turn limit productivity and income, a pattern widely described in urban poverty research (Gough & Yankson, 2011; Fox, 2014).

Figure 2: Statistical Breakdown of Earnings

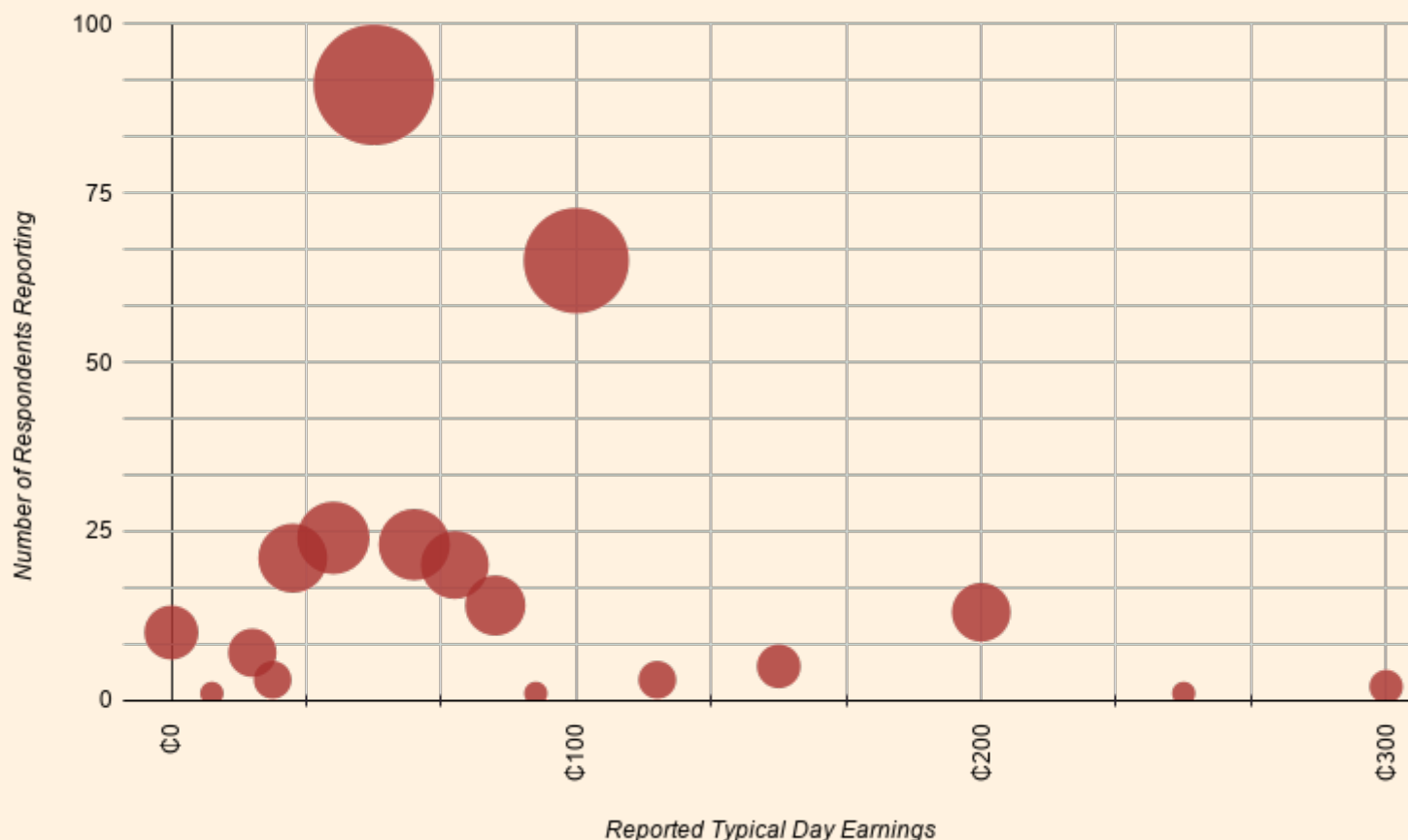
ESTIMATED TYPICAL DAY* EARNINGS	
Minimum	GHS 0.00
Lower Quartile	GHS 50.00
Median	GHS 50.00
Upper Quartile	GHS 100.00
Maximum	GHS 300.00
Mean Average	GHS 70.44
Std. Deviation	GHS 45.52

* The term ‘typical day’ does not equate to daily, rather days when income is earned.

The typical daily earnings reported by respondents indicate a range from 0 to GHS 300 that is heavily weighted toward the lower half. Survey results indicate that the majority (51.64%) of women working as Kayayei earn less than GHS 50 in a typical day. Ten respondents (3.29%) reported that they typically earn no money.

For reference, at the time of survey administration, the average exchange rate between USD and GHS was 1:11.46.

Figure 3: A scatterplot of reported 'typical day' earnings before expenses.



The average monthly cost of living in Accra (basic necessities for a single adult) is estimated to sit within the following range:

- Rent: GHS 400-1000
- Food: GHS 800-1500
- Transport: GHS 100-250
- Utilities: GHS 250-600
- Other items/Miscellaneous: GHS 100-300

This places the basic cost of living in Accra between GHS 1650 and GHS 3650, while the majority of women and girls working as Kayayei earn no more than GHS 1500 per month based on the unlikely scenario of making typical day earnings all 30 days of the month. This means that the majority of women and girls working as Kayayei do not earn enough to afford the basic cost of living in Accra or have the ability to save money to support their ambitions or the reasons they came to Accra.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF MINORS IN KAYAYEI

Figure 4: Social and Migration Characteristics of Minors Engaged in Kayayei Labour

CAN YOU BRIEFLY SHARE HOW YOU CAME TO ACCRA?	COUNT	%
Came alone	46	69.7%
Came with parent/relatives	13	19.7%
Came with friends/peers	4	6.1%
Brought by someone who promised work/help	2	3.0%
Came with the husband	1	1.5%
Total	66	100.0%

WHO DO YOU CURRENTLY LIVE WITH?	COUNT	%
Family member	25	36.8%
Another Kayayei	28	41.2%
I live alone	10	14.7%
Husband	4	5.9%
Guardian	1	1.5%
Total	68	100.0%

ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING CARE OF ANYONE HERE OR AT HOME?	COUNT	%
Yes	49	73.1%
No	18	26.9%
Total	67	100.0%

Figure 4 illustrates the social and migration characteristics of minors engaged in Kayayei labour. Many minors live either with peers who are also working as Kayayei (41.2%) or with family members (36.8%), while a significant proportion live alone (14.7%), indicating the prevalence of peer-based survival networks rather than formal adult guardianship.

Consistent with earlier research on independent child migration in Ghana, this pattern suggests that young female migrants depend primarily on co-ethnic labour peers rather than caregivers for protection and livelihood support (Hashim & Thorsen, 2011; Dako-Gyeke, 2012). Migration pathways further reinforce this trend, with 78.8% of minors reporting that they came to Accra without a guardian, and only 21.2% migrating with relatives (including a husband), underscoring the increasing normalisation of self-directed migration among children as a livelihood strategy (Whitehead & Hashim, 2005; De Lange, 2007).

79% OF MINORS MIGRATE WITHOUT A GUARDIAN

Importantly, 73.1% of minors report responsibility for caring for someone either in Accra or at home, highlighting their dual positioning as both children and economic caregivers, a finding that aligns with academic studies describing the gendered burden of social reproduction placed on migrating girls (Thorsen, 2013; Van der Geest, 2010).

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PULL AND PUSH FACTORS

Figure 5: Pull and Push Factors

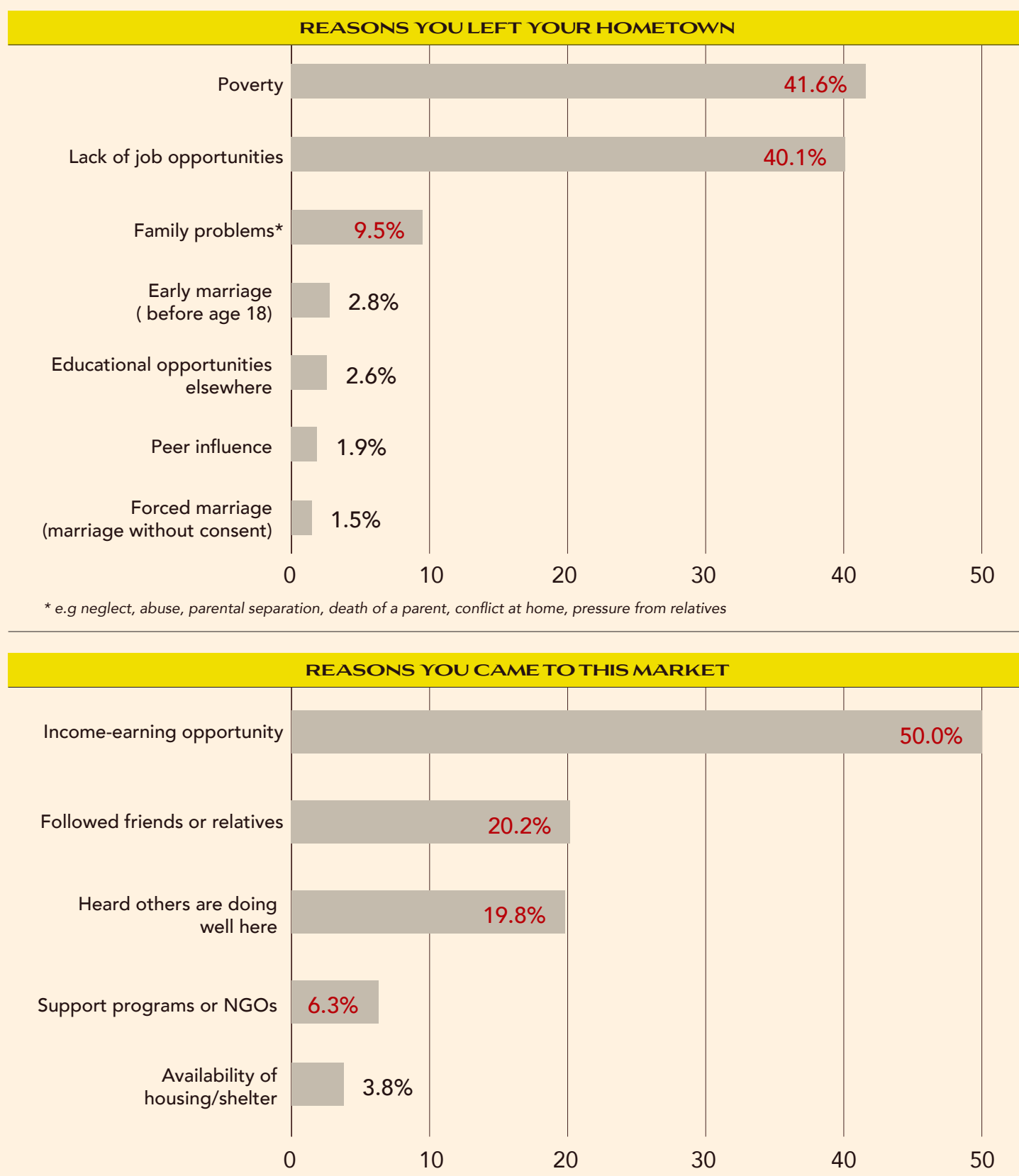


Figure 5 presents the descriptive statistics on the migration motivations of women and girls working as Kayayei in the Kantamanto market. The data indicate that the primary reason for respondents

to migrate from their hometowns to Accra was a lack of job opportunities in their hometowns, as reported by 40.1% of respondents.

Other reasons include family-related challenges such as neglect, abuse, parental separation, or pressure from relatives (9.5%), **early child marriage before age 18 (2.8%), forced marriage without consent (1.5%)**, pursuit of educational opportunities elsewhere (2.6%), and peer influence (1.9%). Regarding the reasons for coming to the Kantamanto Market, 50.0% of respondents reported seeking income-earning opportunities, while **41.6% cited poverty as their main motivation**.

Other factors influencing relocation include following friends or relatives (20.2%), hearing of others' success in the market (19.8%), availability of support programs or NGOs (6.3%), and access to housing or shelter (3.8%).

These findings suggest that migration among women and girls working as Kayayei is primarily driven by economic imperatives, with social networks and prior knowledge of opportunities playing a supplementary role. The data further indicate that structural economic challenges in the communities of origin, combined with the promise of better livelihoods in urban centers and social pressures, remain key determinants of women and girls migrating to Accra who end up working as Kayayei.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

Figure 6: Descriptive Statistics on the Skills and Training of Women and Girls Working as Kayayei

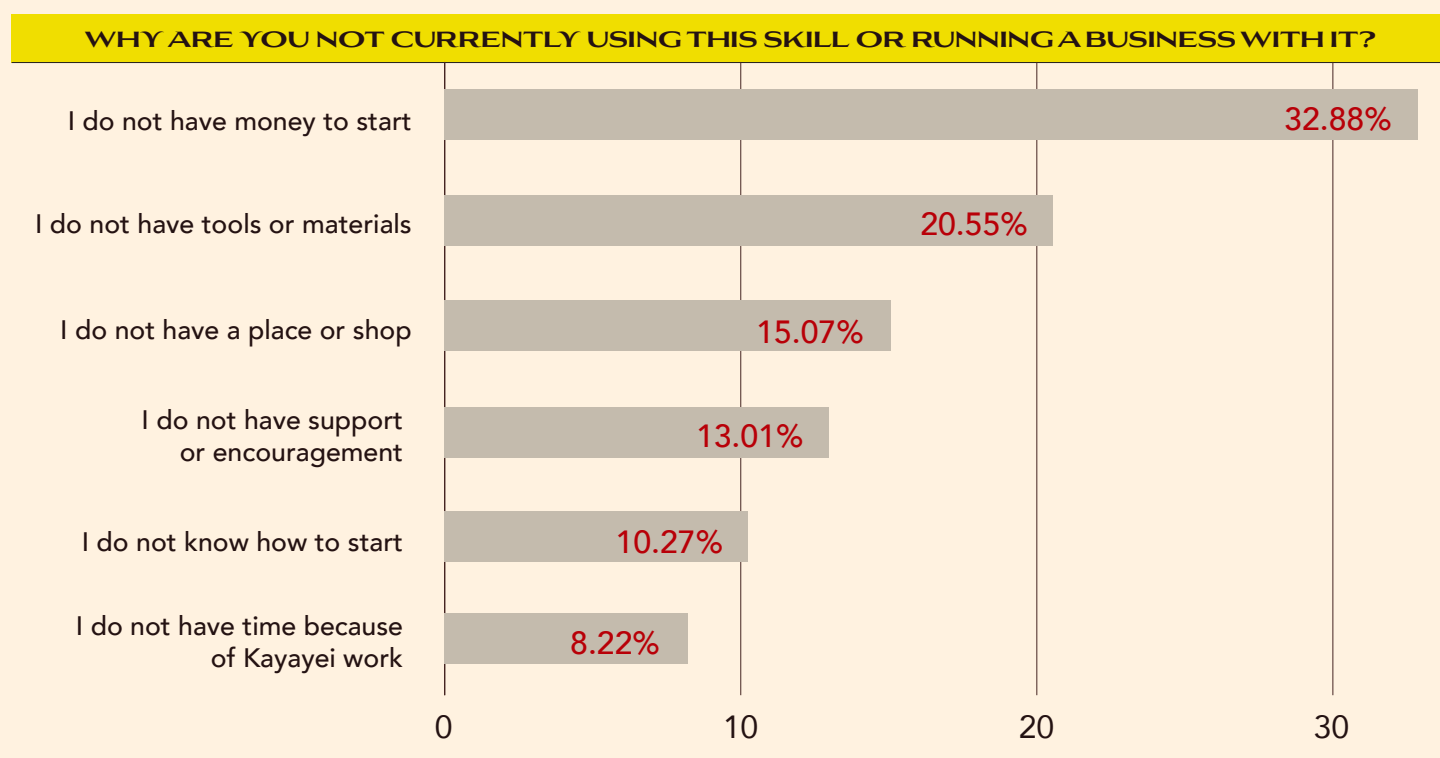
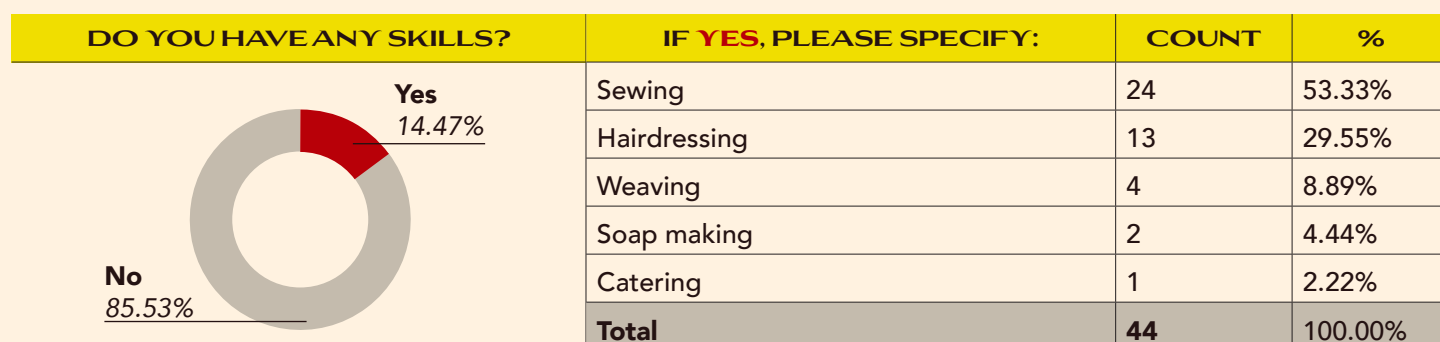


Figure 6 presents the descriptive statistics on the skills and training of women and girls working as Kayayei. The data indicate that a **majority of respondents (85.5%) reported having no formal skills or training**, while only 14.5% had acquired some form of skill. Among those with skills, sewing was the most common (53.3%), followed by hairdressing (31.1%), weaving (8.9%), soap making (4.4%), and catering (2.2%). Despite possessing these skills, many respondents were not currently utilizing them or running a business. The main constraints reported include lack of financial resources to start a business (32.9%), lack of necessary tools or materials (20.6%), absence of a place or shop (15.1%), lack of support or

encouragement (13.0%), insufficient knowledge on how to start (10.3%), and **limited time due to Kayayei work commitments** (8.2%).

These findings suggest that although a minority of women and girls working as Kayayei have vocational skills, structural and resource-related barriers significantly limit their ability to convert these skills into income-generating activities. The data highlight the intersection of economic vulnerability and occupational constraints, demonstrating that the daily demands of Kayayei labour restrict opportunities for skill application and entrepreneurial engagement.

DESCRIPTIVE OF CONSTRUCT ON PLANS AND ASPIRATION

TABLE 1: PLANS AND ASPIRATIONS	
WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL OR CAREER GOALS FOR THE NEXT 1-3 YEARS?	PERCENT (100%)
Business / Entrepreneurship	46.90
Skills Training / Learning	12.10
Seamstress/Tailor	11.50
Hair & Beauty	10.86
Personal / Family Goal	6.20
Food & Grocery Business	5.20
Fashion & Retail	3.30
Fire Service	1.00
Nursing	0.70
Military	0.70
Kente Weaving	0.70
Doctor	0.30
Law	0.30

Table 1 illustrates the personal and career goals over the next 1-3 years among women and girls working as Kayayei. A dominant theme emerging from the data is entrepreneurial aspiration, representing nearly half of the total sample (46.9%). Participants frequently cited goals such as:

“to start a business,” “to own a shop,” “to have my own tailoring shop,” “to open a supermarket back home,” “to set up a grocery shop,” “to become a clothing wholesaler,” and “to do my own business in my hometown.”

These statements show a desire for economic independence, stability, and social mobility, as well as a push to transition from transient and physically demanding labour to capital-driven livelihoods. Another significant pattern is the strong drive toward skills acquisition and vocational identity formation, captured under Skills Training / Learning (12.1%), Seamstress/Tailor (11.5%), and Hair & Beauty (10.9%). Many responses explicitly tied skill-learning to income-earning.



These include:

"I want to learn a skill and be a professional," "To learn hairdressing and start a business," "The goal is to acquire tailoring skills that I can use to work," "I want to learn sewing and also go into trading," and "The goal is to learn hairdressing and hopefully open a salon."

These aspirations reveal that skills training is perceived as a pathway to self-employment. This is supported by responses such as *"I want to become a seasoned seamstress with a fully functional shop," "a professional beautician with a salon," or "a hairdresser with a fully furnished salon"*.

A smaller category (6.2%) emphasized personal or family-related goals, yet these responses strongly illuminate the socio-emotional pressures that affect their decision-making. Statements such as:

"I want to get money and help my children go to school," "I want to take good care of my family," "Want to get more money to take care of my children as a single mother," and "Where I've gotten to, it is only Kayayei I want to do"

These underscore the centrality of caregiving and survival responsibility. For this subgroup, aspirations are driven by maternal duties, grief, widowhood, or household obligations, which sometimes dilute ambition or sustain their dependence on Kayayei labour.

A limited share of respondents mentioned formal professional careers such as Nursing (0.7%), Fire Service (1.0%), Military (0.7%), Law (0.3%), and Medicine (0.3%). The rarity of these ambitions suggest either low access to education, limited exposure to alternative career pathways, or barriers to such credentialed professions.

Notably, comments such as *"I want to go back to school," "The goal is to continue my education," and "The goal is to learn tailoring or further my education"* show that returning to school remains an aspiration, but one that is often conditional on financial security: *"The goal is to gather enough money to continue my education," "The aim is to gather enough funds to start a business or continue my education."*

Across categories, the dataset reveals a recurring conditional structure in the women's ambitions, however, it is clear that capital is the gateway to aspiration.

Expressions like *"I need capital to start," "need more money to start business," "to get enough capital to establish business back home," and "I hope to save enough to return home to start my business,"* highlight that financial insecurity is the central limiting factor. Even vocational ambitions (hairdressing, tailoring, catering) frequently appear linked to the ability to purchase equipment, rent space, or open shops.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF FUTURE PLANS

	MEAN	MEDIAN	SCALE MIN	SCALE MAX	OBSERV. MIN	OBSERV. MAX	STANDARD DEVIATION	EXCESS KURTOSIS	SKEWNESS	VON MISES
I WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL	2.233	1	1	5	1	5	1.537	-0.912	0.846	0
I WANT TO LEARN A TRADE OR SKILL	4.039	5	1	5	1	5	1.305	0.594	-1.354	0
I PLAN TO RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN IN THE FUTURE	4.19	4	1	5	1	5	0.878	3.196	-1.55	0
I FEEL CONFIDENT I CAN ACHIEVE MY PERSONAL GOALS	4.066	4	1	5	1	5	0.963	1.511	-1.262	0
I NEED SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE MY GOAL	4.62	5	1	5	1	5	0.663	10.906	-2.724	0
I AM AWARE OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT PROGRAMS	3.056	3	1	5	1	5	1.386	-1.381	-0.078	0

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of Kayayei women's future plans, aspirations, and perceptions of support. The results indicate a high level of orientation toward skill acquisition and economic self-reliance. Respondents reported strong interest in learning a trade or skill, with a mean score of 4.039 (median = 5), suggesting that most women prioritize acquiring marketable competencies as a pathway to improved livelihoods. Similarly, the intention to return to their hometowns in the future recorded a high mean of 4.19 (median = 4), reflecting forward-looking planning and a goal of reinvesting earnings or establishing businesses in their communities of origin.

Confidence in achieving personal goals was also high (mean = 4.066, median = 4), indicating optimism and self-efficacy among the women despite their current labour-intensive work. The need for support to achieve goals was the highest-rated item, with a mean of 4.62 (median = 5), highlighting the critical role of external assistance in the form of financial or educational support or mentorship to enable Kayayei women to realize their aspirations. In contrast, the desire to return to formal schooling was comparatively lower (mean = 2.233, median = 1), suggesting that while formal education remains a consideration, immediate livelihood and skill-based goals take precedence. Awareness of available support programs was moderate (mean = 3.056, median = 3), indicating

a potential gap between existing resources and knowledge of how to access them. Skewness and kurtosis values across items reflect non-normal distributions, particularly for the need for support, which is highly peaked (excess kurtosis = 10.906) and negatively skewed (skewness = -2.724), suggesting that most respondents strongly endorse this need.

The correlation analysis in Table 3 below provides insight into how the aspirations, confidence levels, and support needs of women and girls working as Kayayei relate to one another. The results reveal several statistically significant relationships that highlight important dynamics within this population. A moderate and highly significant positive correlation exists between feeling confident in achieving personal goals and needing support to achieve those goals ($r = .455$, $p < .01$), suggesting that confidence does not eliminate the need for assistance; rather, those who believe in their potential still recognise the importance of external support.

Confidence is also positively associated with both planning to return to one's hometown ($r = .307$, $p < .01$) and the desire to learn a trade or skill ($r = .243$, $p < .01$), indicating that future-oriented intentions and skills training aspirations align with greater self-belief among women and girls working as Kayayei.

Planning to return home also shows a significant positive correlation with needing support ($r = .339, p < .01$), implying that individuals considering relocation anticipate requiring resources or guidance to successfully transition. Additionally, the desire to learn a trade or skill is positively correlated with both the need for support ($r = .188, p < .01$) and wanting to go back to school ($r = .170, p < .01$), reflecting a general clustering of educational and skills-development motivations.

In contrast, awareness of available support programs shows no significant relationship with any other variable, with correlations close to zero and all p-values above .26.

This suggests that awareness is not currently influencing confidence, aspirations, or support needs, an important finding indicating a potential gap in outreach or program visibility.

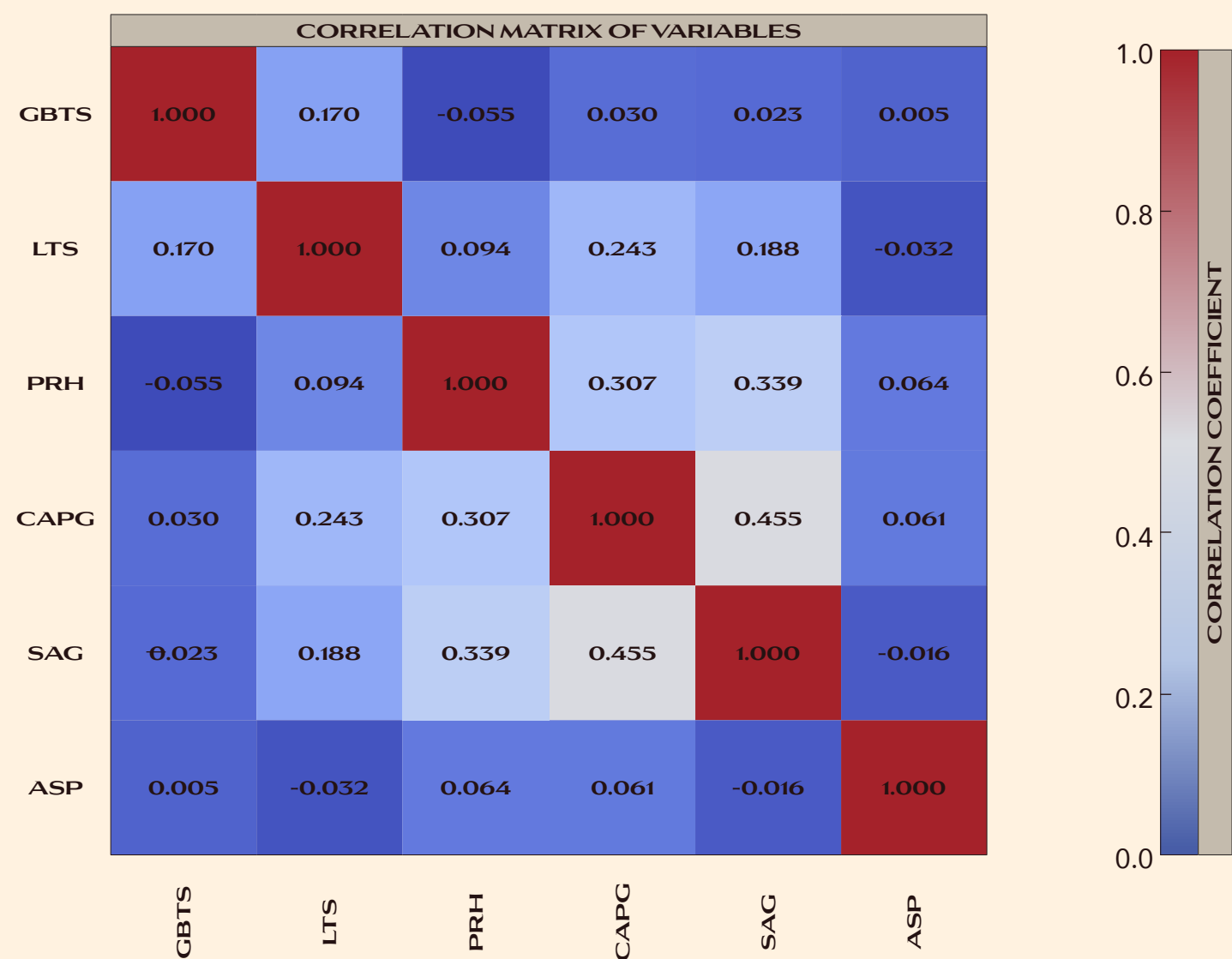
Finally, the desire to return to school shows only weak and mostly non-significant associations with other variables, implying that formal education aspirations may be driven by factors not captured in this model.

TABLE 3: CORRELATIONS OF STATISTICS OF FUTURE PLANS

CORRELATIONS						
	I WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL	I WANT TO LEARN A TRADE OR SKILL	I PLAN TO RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN IN THE FUTURE	I FEEL CONFIDENT I CAN ACHIEVE MY PERSONAL GOALS	I NEED SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE MY GOAL	I AM AWARE OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT PROGRAMS
I WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL	Pearson Correlation	1	0.170**	-0.055	0.03	0.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.003	0.341	0.607	0.695
	N	304	304	304	304	304
I WANT TO LEARN A TRADE OR SKILL	Pearson Correlation	0.170**	1	0.094	0.243**	0.188**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003		0.096	0	0.001
	N	304	304	304	304	304
I PLAN TO RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN IN THE FUTURE	Pearson Correlation	-0.055	0.094	1	0.307**	0.339**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.341	0.096		0	0
	N	304	304	304	304	304
I FEEL CONFIDENT I CAN ACHIEVE MY PERSONAL GOALS	Pearson Correlation	0.03	0.243**	0.307**	1	0.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.607	0	0		0
	N	304	304	304	304	304
I NEED SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE MY GOAL	Pearson Correlation	0.023	0.188**	0.339**	0.455**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.695	0.001	0	0	
	N	304	304	304	304	304
I AM AWARE OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT PROGRAMS	Pearson Correlation	0.005	-0.032	0.064	0.061	-0.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.935	0.577	0.265	0.287	0.778
	N	304	304	304	304	304

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 7: Descriptive Correlation Matrix



GBTS: go back to school
LTS: learn a trade or skill
PRH: plan to return to my hometown

CAPG: confident I can achieve my personal goals
SAG: need support to achieve my goal
ASP: aware of available support programs

A correlation matrix is an essential statistical tool for examining the strength and direction of relationships among multiple variables simultaneously. In social science research it provides a structured overview of how attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral intentions interact, thereby helping researchers identify meaningful patterns that may inform further analysis or intervention design.

By presenting all pairwise correlations in a single table, the matrix supports comparison across variables and highlights which associations are weak, moderate, or strong, offering preliminary insights into underlying constructs or dynamics

within a population. In this study, the correlation matrix enables a nuanced interpretation of how educational aspirations, confidence, support needs, and awareness interact, providing a basis for evidence-based conclusions and programmatic decisions.

The correlation matrix shows that confidence in achieving personal goals is the most influential factor, moderately linked with both the need for support ($r = 0.455$) and planning to return to one's hometown ($r = 0.307$), suggesting that confident individuals still value support and may see going home as part of their pathway to success.

Wanting to learn a trade or skill also has a modest positive relationship with confidence ($r = 0.243$), implying that upskilling is associated with greater optimism. Planning to return home is additionally related to needing support ($r = 0.339$), indicating that those considering relocation also anticipate requiring assistance. In contrast, the desire to go back to school shows almost no meaningful correlation with any other variable as explained in the correlation table in Table 3 and in the corresponding matrix presented in Figure 7, making it largely independent of confidence,

support needs, or plans. Awareness of available support programs also has very weak correlations with all variables, suggesting that simply being aware of support options does not strongly influence confidence, intentions, or support needs.

TABLE 4: WILLINGNESS IN JOINING OUR OPEN HOUSE		
WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN JOINING AN OPEN HOUSE?	FREQUENCY (N=305)	PERCENT (100%)
Yes	239	78.6
Maybe	45	14.75
No	21	6.89
Total	305	100.00

Table 4 presents the respondents' willingness to participate in an open house initiative designed to provide support services for women and girls working as Kayayei in the Kantamanto market. The majority of respondents (78.36%) indicated interest in joining such a program, suggesting a strong openness to structured support platforms, information sharing, and

community engagement. A smaller proportion (14.75%) responded "Maybe," which may reflect uncertainty regarding programme expectations, time constraints, or their ability to commit. Only 6.89% expressed unwillingness to participate, signifying minimal resistance to involvement in organized support.

TABLE 5: ASSOCIATION IN THE MARKET		
DO YOU BELONG TO ANY ASSOCIATION?	FREQUENCY (N=305)	PERCENT (100%)
No	300	98.36
Yes	5	1.64
Total	305	100.00

Table 5 examines the extent to which women and girls working as Kayayei belong to existing associations or organized groups within the market. **The results reveal that an overwhelming 98.36% of respondents do not belong to any association**, with only 1.64% reporting membership in such groups.

This indicates extremely low levels of formal group organization and collective representation within the Kayayei community.

The absence of association structures suggests limited social capital, lack of coordinated advocacy, and restricted access to pooled resources or peer support systems. Some respondents mentioned they have smaller groupings of people from the same hometown but not necessarily an association with any form of structure.



CONCLUSION

This needs assessment aims to provide an evidence-based understanding of the backgrounds, living conditions, challenges, present skills and aspirations of women and girls working as Kayayei in Kantamanto Market, with the objective of informing responsive and contextually appropriate interventions.

Using quantitative data from 305 respondents working as Kayayei within a total census population currently at 1,387, the study provides a representative profile of a population that is structurally constrained while simultaneously being economically active. The findings confirm that Kayayei is a highly gendered and migration driven survival strategy dominated by young women and girls, from northern Ghana with limited or no formal education and few employment opportunities or prospects for advancement.

The patterns described can be likened to the asymmetries in modern development between the so-called Global North and Global South, where metropolitan centers attract populations from the periphery in search of opportunities. Accra operates as an internal metropole, pulling migrants primarily from the north of Ghana who seek personal economic advancement and the means to remain financially responsible to households and dependents left behind.

Migration into Kayayei work is overwhelmingly influenced by economic necessity; the absence of jobs, and pervasive poverty in the community of origin. Engaging in Kayayei labor is not an individual preference in the face of available alternative employment opportunities.

Importantly, the data demonstrates that Kayayei women cannot be understood as merely a transient form of labour, especially in Kantamanto Market. Women and girls working as Kayayei are critical economic providers with the majority bearing responsibility for children and extended family members whether in rural

or urban areas. This study has done well to reinforce existing scholarship in female migration, as integral to household survival and social reproduction.

Living conditions among women and girls working as Kayayei reveal the various urban precarity where they sleep in overcrowded, insecure spaces that exposes them to risk of theft, fire outbreaks and ill health. These vulnerabilities are compounded by low and unstable daily earnings, poor health-seeking behaviour with widespread self medication and pharmacies due to cost and lack of health insurance. All these conditions sustain a cycle of vulnerability that mutually reinforces one another.

Despite the challenges, the study shows **striking levels of aspirations**. Most women and girls working as Kayayei express strong confidence in achieving personal goals and indicate a clear preference to skill acquisition, entrepreneurship and eventual return to their hometowns as a pathway to dignity. **Fulfilling these aspirations, however, remains conditional on access to external support.** The strong correlation between confidence, support needs, skills acquisition and plans to return home suggest that women and girls working as Kayayei are not lacking motivation but operate in constrained opportunity structures. Also, the analysis points out extremely low levels of association membership indicating limited collective representation and weak social capital.

This needs assessment draws our attention to the fact that effective intervention for women and girls working as Kayayei must move toward integrated support models that address skills training and education, small business investment and financial inclusion, access to healthcare and collective organising.

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