

work socialization and training (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018b; Afenyadu, 2010; Salah, 2001). The foregoing also reflects what academic scholars have identified as the causes of child labour, especially, in Ghana, including cultural attitudes (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018a; Zelizer, 2005), the poverty levels and economic status of some families such that they need the support of children to be able to generate enough income to feed themselves (cf. Adonteng-Kissi, 2018a; Ahmed, 1999; Frimpong et al., 2021). As another MP articulates:

Example 5: Hansard: 2 April 2019/Col.4556-4557

... the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has some statistics on Ghana, but much of it, like the team from House of Commons, Westminster, UK – we do not have modern slavery in Ghana. We find those words abusive and insulting to our culture and the training of young children. What we do know exists in Ghana are packets of abuses of children who are working but ought not to be working. The solution lies in Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), and Free Senior High School (FSHS) for us to encourage children to take full advantage of.

The issues and questions posed by MPs about what constitutes child labour raise fundamental questions about the fight against child labour in Ghana: it makes the problem of child labour complex. While it is good that the MPs admit that there is, at least “packets of abuses of children who are working but ought not be working” (Example 5) and they “admit that, in some few cases, some of these children are abused” and “we must all condemn the abuse” (Example 4), this way of framing child labour can negatively affect the fight against it. The expressions “packets of” and “in some few cases” appear to underestimate the incidence of child labour and child abuse in Ghana, which can negatively affect the scale of measures needed to fight child labour. When problems are seen as enormous, stronger measures and commitment are needed to solve them, but when perceived otherwise, measures will be milder (cf. Sarfo-Kantankah, 2018). This is important because, how MPs frame child labour affects the attention they will pay to it, for “framing affects what we pay attention to and how we interpret it” (World Bank Group, 2015) and “the way a problem is defined has a major effect on the kinds of ‘solutions’ that are proposed to cope with it” (Mayer, 1996). Thus, underestimating the incidence of child labour has the potential to undermine the existence, the fight against it and reduce the commitment of stakeholders in the fight, because:

*The language of parliamentarians does not only reflect social structures and practices, but also creates them, for social structures do not only determine discourse, but they are also a product of discourse, i.e., they are socially constitutive (Fairclough, 1989). Thus, understanding the language of MPs is crucial for appreciating the social problems it reflects, upholds and which it can change.*

Sarfo-Kantankah (2022: 4)

The question is: where do we draw the line between child “apprenticeship” (Example 4) and child labour/child abuse? Who monitors the “apprenticeship” engagements of these children? Since the majority of child labour activities in Ghana occur in the agricultural sector (cf. Taylor Crabbe, Forest Trends and Fern, 2020), the major part of which is found in rural areas, with parents who know little about hazards of exposing children to hazardous activities, how are they going to determine the amount of work that is not dangerous to the child’s health? If

Parliament intends to help fight child labour, then there must be monitoring mechanisms and education of parents on the issues of child labour and its detriments.

#### **4.4 One in five girls suffers child marriage in Ghana; it destroys the future of girls**

Child marriage is one of the core issues that MPs raise about children. Child marriage is considered a global problem (see Figure 7, lines 1, 18). It is rampant in Ghana (line 1), as one out of five girls in Ghana marries before the age of 18 years (line 6). As stated by one MP:

Example 6: Hansard: 3 July 2019/Col.2619-2620

Indeed, Mr Speaker, child marriage is truly a global problem that cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. Statistics show that worldwide, each year, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18. That is 23 girls per minute, and nearly one girl per two seconds. The prevalence rate of child marriage is, however, very high in Africa than in most areas... The picture in Ghana is not very much different. Even though child marriage ... is illegal in the country ... child marriage is a practice estimated to affect one in five girls. According to UNICEF, 21 per cent of girls in Ghana are married before their 18th birthday.

Considered as a menace (line 12), a serious matter (line 11), child marriage seen as deep-rooted in Ghanaian socio-cultural norms and traditions (lines 4, 12, 21) and partly caused by economic factors and poverty (line 18): “Mr Speaker, child marriage is very often fuelled by gender inequality, poverty, traditions, and insecurity; but these causes are not insurmountable problems” (Hansard: 3 July 2019/Col.2620). The above-stated issues have largely been noted in scholarly literature on child marriage. As Yaya et al.’s (2019) study of 34 sub-Saharan African countries reveals, 54% of women in the sub-region experience child marriage, with cross-country variations. In Ghana, it has been found that 20.68% of women experience child marriage, which was occasioned by factors such as poverty, teenage pregnancy and betrothal marriage (Ahonsi et al., 2019).

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Figure 7. A screenshot of the first 26 concordance lines of *child marriage*

Unlike the issue of child labour, MPs have no argument against what constitutes child marriage; they condemn it outright. The MPs implore each other to rise together to fight against child marriage (line 7): “We must tackle them seriously, given their devastating impact on the girl-child, society and the economy of our country” (Hansard: 3 July 2019/Col.2620). The MPs often bemoan the consequences and impact of child marriage, as exemplified in example 7.

Example 7: Hansard: 3 July 2019/Col2619-2621

Mr Speaker, the impact on the girl child should be seen as a human rights violation that could produce devastating repercussions on a girl’s life, effectively ending her childhood. These also include the huge challenges that child brides face because they are married as children. They often feel isolated and with limited freedom, feel disempowered. They are deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety. Child brides are neither physically nor emotionally ready to become wives and mothers. They are therefore likely to experience dangerous complications in pregnancy and at childbirth, contract HIV/AIDS and suffer domestic violence. With little access to education and economic opportunities, they and their families are more likely to live in poverty and to be trapped in the trans-generational cycle of poverty. Moreover, child marriage usually destroys the future marital life of the girl-child, as available evidence suggests that child-marriage almost always ends in failure.

There are several ways in which MPs think the problem of child marriage can be addressed, including: campaign, education and sensitisation against child marriage (lines 14, 22, 23, 24, 25); increased reportage (line 17); passage and implementation of legislation (line 9) and action against perpetrators (line 19). Article 34 of the UNCRC abhors sexual exploitation of children and charges state parties “to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”. According to Afranie et al. (2019), the fight against child marriage in Ghana has been spearheaded by several state institutions, which include the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP); the Ministry of Health; the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU); the Girl Child Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), UNICEF Ghana, Ark Foundation, Gender and Human Rights Documentation Centre, ActionAid Ghana, and the Muslim Family Counselling Service. These institutions undertake programmes such as community sensitisation and empowerment training for girls, reproductive health services, support for girls’ education as well as rescue and management of victims of child marriage. However, these institutions appear to have been ineffective in the fight against child marriage due to the absence of national policies to coordinate their activities as well as certain socio-cultural practices that are highly difficult to fight against (cf. Sarfo et al., 2020).

#### **4.5 Child trafficking, child slavery or child labour?**

Child trafficking is another fundamental issue about which MPs talk. Child trafficking is an international problem affecting millions of people (Johansen, n.d.) and one of the fastest growing and most lucrative criminal activities in the world (Rafferty, 2013). Child labour refers to an illegal procurement and recruitment of children and relocating them for the purpose of either sexual or labour exploitation (cf. Smolin, 2004). The definition implies that the mere sale of children does not constitute child trafficking (Smolin, 2004). Thus, the definition of child trafficking encompasses child labour and sexual exploitation: “child labour is a major issue and it relates to human and child trafficking” (Hansard: 6 June 2017/Col.218). This reflects how Ghanaian MPs frame child trafficking: it mostly occurs in the context of child labour (see Figure 8, lines 8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 27) and child slavery (lines 3, 16, 18, 24).

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Figure 8. A screenshot of the first 26 concordance lines of child trafficking

Ghanaian MPs recognise that there is child trafficking Ghana: “Mr Speaker, in a situation of hopelessness, child trafficking has become a phenomenon which has been somehow ‘regularised’. This cannot continue” (Hansard: 31 May 2013/Col.115). Recognising the issue of child trafficking in Ghana (lines 2, 5, 6, 11, 12, 18, 20), Ghanaian MPs commemorate the World Day against Human/Child Trafficking every year (line 1). Child trafficking is seen by the MPs as a danger (lines 5, 12) and a menace (lines 8, 13), as, for example, “while reported cases of human trafficking increased by 60.9 per cent from 36 to 92 in 2015, the number of reported cases of child trafficking rose from four in 2014 to 11 in 2015” (Hansard: 21 March/Col.3262) and “human or child trafficking is all over in this country” (Hansard: 15 June 2017/Col.762-764). The MPs express the need to fight against child trafficking or combat it (line 14). They have, therefore, identified a number of ways in which it can be fought against or combatted (lines 5, 8, 13, 25). Consider the metaphorical use of the words “fight” and “combat”, which suggest a warfare, implying that stronger measures are needed to address child trafficking (cf. Sarfo-Kantankah, 2018). The various means of combatting child trafficking include: sensitization (line 6), empowerment (line 14) and education (12, 20, 22, 23). The support of international development partners and NGOs is also sought (lines 17, 25), as envisaged by Article 35 of the UNCRC, which enjoins state parties to “take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form”. While the afore-mentioned recognition is expressed by the MPs, they seem to sometimes question the description and reportage of the magnitude of child trafficking in Ghana, as an MP explains in example 8.

Example 8: Hansard: 3 April 2019/Col.4543

Mr Speaker, I challenge CNN’s ‘Freeing the child slaves of Lake Volta’ and any other actor alleging “pervasive” child trafficking and child slavery in communities along the Volta Lake to provide independent evidence to corroborate these claims. These cases should be described or defined at best as “child labour” and are deliberately being distorted to tell stories of “child slavery” and “child trafficking”, feeding into stereotypes of supposed primitiveness and backwardness of African communities.

As noted previously, such framing of child trafficking may hinder the fight against it. This is because, by framing child trafficking as shown above, MPs are selecting, emphasising and excluding aspects of child trafficking to satisfy specific interests, thereby legitimising and illegitimising issues of concern (cf. Gitlin, 1980; Sarfo-Kantankah, 2018).

## **5. Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to examine the discursive framing of children in the discourse of Ghanaian Members of Parliament (MPs), using Hansards as data. The analysis shows that Ghanaian MPs frame children as vulnerable people who suffer mainly from child labour, child marriage and child trafficking. As a result of children’s vulnerability to these socio-cultural problems, the MPs think that certain measures should be put in place to protect children. These measures include: campaigns, education and sensitisation against child marriage, increased reportage, passage and implementation of legislation, and action against perpetrators, empowerment of children and the support of national, bilateral and multilateral bodies and development partners.

Whereas the MPs condemn child labour, they question the international communities’ definition of what constitutes child labour as a result of certain socio-cultural differences between what can be considered as child “apprenticeship” and child labour. The MPs believe that if children help their parents on the farm and it does not prevent them from acquiring education or pose danger to the child’s health, it cannot constitute child labour. The MPs share similar sentiments on the issue of what constitutes child trafficking and child slavery. They think that the definition of child labour and child trafficking or child slavery must be considered according to culturally-specific circumstances. Some MPs feel that international bodies and organisations sometimes deliberately distort the definitions of child labour and child trafficking to stereotypically paint Africans as primitive and backward. However, the MPs raise no argument(s) about what constitutes child marriage.

The arguments about what constitutes and the framing of child labour and child trafficking can blare their actual existence in Ghana, such that it can negatively affect the implementation of legislation and other measures geared towards the fight against these problems affecting children. This is because the way a problem is framed affects what kinds of measures are needed to fight the problem (Reese, 2001; Entman, 2010). As Sarfo-Kantankah (2018) notes, if problems are seen as huge, it suggests that stronger measures and more formidable commitment are needed to fight such problems.

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## **Creativity and Authenticity in an Emerging Naija's Youth Hip Hop Culture**

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### **Abstract**

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, hip hop has become a cultural means of self-expression, entertainment, and empowerment for youths throughout the world. The creative manipulation of verbal and non-verbal codes has been the main vehicle through which the enormous hip hop cultural industry has been sustained and revitalized. This study investigates the creative ingenuity of a group of Naija (Nigerian) youths in Calabar, south-eastern Nigeria, in the creation of a peculiar hip hop brand in the Nigerian Hip Hop Nation (NHHN). Particularly, the study works through Appadurai's (1996, 2002) theory on migration and the electronic media as agents of modernity to apprehend the emergence and development of hip hop in Nigeria through the example of Calabar hip hop exponents. This article also derives discursive insight from Alim's (2009) idea of style as a major non-verbal linguistic vector of hip hop to identify and interrogate the creative ingenuity of the Nigerian youths here examined. Our study concludes that through the formation of a creative bond and the manipulation verbal and performance codes from their cultural space these Nigerian youths have established a peculiar brand of hip hop and are contributing to the transnational, multi-vocal Global Hip Hop Nation.

### **Keywords**

Naija Hip Hop, Calabar; Electronic Media, Migration, Identity, Style, Youth; Creativity, Authenticity, Postcolonialism, Poststructuralism.

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