



Leisure time of working children in Addis Ababa

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Sissel H Eriksen 

UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

Emebet Mulugeta

Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Abstract

Based on Article 31(1), *the rights of the child to rest and leisure*, and applying sociology of childhood as our theoretical approach, we investigated leisure and play among working children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Data from 45 qualitative interviews shows that the reasons behind work vary among children. For some, the primary motivation for work is getting money for recreation, while others are obliged to help families. Accordingly, leisure and play have different meanings for different children.

Keywords

Children's right, leisure, play, working children

Introduction

Leisure and play are considered important in children's everyday life. Article 31(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Ethiopia is a signatory, states:

States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts (United Nations, 1989: 9).

A similar provision is reiterated in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (Organization for African Unity, 1999), while the National Child Policy of

Corresponding author:

Sissel H Eriksen, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, PO Box 6050 Langnes, Tromsø 9037, Norway.
Email: sissel.eriksen@uit.no

Ethiopia provides for the expansion of child-friendly recreation areas, playground and sport fields and stipulates that childcare institutions, schools and other organisations provide child-friendly playing facilities (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2011).

Despite these provisions and commitments, there is a dearth of research about leisure time activities of children. Veal (2015) asserts that research on right issues lacks presence in the area of leisure studies, and play and leisure are less covered than other areas related to children's development (White et al., 2003). Concurring with this, Punch (2000: 55) points out, '... very few studies have considered the importance of children combining play with other activities, such as work and school'. Since then, a number of articles have been published on this theme (Chuta, 2007; Jirata and Kjørholt, 2015; Tamene, 2007). However, there is still a need for research that investigates the meaning and experiences of play and leisure among different categories of children.

In Ethiopia, the number of children who work is significant: in urban areas 12.3% of the children aged 10–14, and 37.7% of those aged 15–19 are engaged in work (Central Statistical Agency, 2015: 57). In this context, the current study intends to explore how working children in Addis Ababa manage to find time for play. Based on 45 qualitative interviews with children aged 8–16, we study what working children do in their leisure time, and how they manage to create time for play and/or combine work and play.

Our theoretical approach is the sociology of childhood, which views children as active social actors, who are influenced by their environment, at the same time shaping the environment in which they live. Thus, we recognise their agency, but at the same time acknowledge their vulnerability and need for care. We note that sociology of leisure adds to the discourses in sociology of childhood (Mukherjee, 2020).

Discourse of agency

Our theoretical framework evolves from the 'new' sociology of childhood. In this perspective, the agency of children has been acknowledged, and thus children's actions and behaviour to influence and shape their lives within the existing structures and systems have been an issue of discussion (Mayall, 2000). This has moved children from simply being an object for action to active participants in shaping their everyday lives. The children could be considered as agents whose agencies are expressed in their capacities (Wyness, 2018). This perspective considers children as 'beings' (being in their everyday life) as opposed to 'becomings' (in the future) (James et al., 1998).

The 'new' sociology of childhood has focused on children as 'beings', but since children's need for care will always be present, Uprichard (2008) claims that children should be considered as both 'beings' and 'becomings' at the same time. This perspective is of particular importance in our research. We argue that the children should be considered as 'beings' as they are working and many of them are supporting themselves, but at the same time they are in need of care, leisure time and a space for play. Similarly, social cognitive theory underlines that people are not simply products of their life circumstances, but active contributors in changing their situation; they create social systems, which in turn organise and influence their lives (Bandura, 2005).

The children in our study live in a context of poverty, most of them live with other children, siblings and/or friends, without supervision of adults. This affects the

availability of leisure time as well as play activities. With this in mind, we study how they play an active role in structuring their activities to create time and space for leisure and play. We combine this perspective on children with sociology of leisure and play in the light of children's rights. Do the children have opportunities to play during their leisure time?

Leisure and play

As stated by Wilson (1980), it has been a challenge to define the concept of leisure. However, a common theme in the literature attempting to define leisure is the availability of free time. Robinson as cited by Wilson (1980) divides the day into hours of obligatory activities and free time, where obligatory activities are tasks that one carries out to maintain a living, while free time activities include recreation and socialisation. Chick and Shen (2011) consider activities like games, sport, socialising, entertainment and activities that are not obligatory as leisure. In our study, we define leisure as the time that children in this study are left with after school and work undertaken for survival.

Play is one of the activities in which children engage during their leisure time. Glenn et al. (2012: 186) define play as 'an activity or behaviour engaged in by children and defined by children as play'. Play can be viewed as a special activity carried out within other leisure activities (Stebbins, 2015: 12).

The importance of play for children's development and well-being is a stated fact in the literature. According to Van Gils (2014), there are two perspectives in explaining its importance: the developmental approach and the cultural approach. In the developmental approach, play is the path through which children explore and learn about material things such as shapes and colours, and a means of acquiring social skills. Children learn about themselves through play. In the cultural perspective, sport and games are included (Van Gils, 2014).

Children, work, leisure and play in Ethiopia

Children's involvement in work either in the household or outside the home for payment is considered as part of life for many children in Ethiopia. As explained by Woldehanna et al. (2008), most parents in their study consider paid and unpaid work by children, '... as a natural, unavoidable responsibility' (p. 191). The study showed that children's work are embedded in the culture and it is viewed as contributing to the family labour and a means to acquire necessary skills. Several studies show the existence of strong work ethics in Ethiopia; children are expected to work and work is considered as way of informal learning (Gebretsadik, 2017; Jirata and Kjørholt, 2015; Kassa, 2016). The notion of being a good child is also associated with fulfilling parents' demands and societal expectations (Gebretsadik, 2017). As underlined by Abebe and Kjørholt (2009) and Boyden (2009), children do not see their needs as priorities, but as an integral part of the family needs. Similarly, in the study by Poluha (2004: 54), the children took for granted that work is a part of life: 'They felt a lot of responsibility for the family and wanted to bring in some money'.

Kassa (2016) indicated that social expectations on childhood vary between rural areas and Addis Ababa, and that expectations depend on socioeconomic status. The wealthier consider school as more important than work, whereas work is given priority by the poor (Kassa, 2016: 406). Most children take up work along with school and contributing their share in household chores. In Poluha's (2004) study, all the children who worked also attended school. In a study by Mulugeta (2005), 62.1% of the working children attended either a half-day or an evening school.

Children's opportunities for leisure and play affects their development and well-being. In contexts where children need to work, and for many attend school at the same time, leisure time is compromised. Bourdillon et al. (2010) show that children's engagement in paid work took time away from their leisure. They argued that loss of leisure time was one of the harmful psychosocial effects. Though engagement in work may affect children's school activities, the part of their lives most affected is their leisure. Woldehanna et al. (2008: 185) found that sufficiently high level of wealth in the family reduces children's engagement in work and ensures them leisure time. Similarly, Van Gils (2014) highlighted that one of the inhibiting factors for children's play is family stress arising from poverty. As underlined by Raffaelli et al. (2014: 2658), 'Poverty limits a family's ability to meet basic needs (e.g. for food, shelter, safety), disrupts parents' ability to care for their children, and may curtail children's access to education and leisure opportunities'.

Age and gender are mitigating factors in children's engagement in work. Based on his study in rural areas, Woldehanna et al. (2008) showed that when both domestic and unpaid work are considered, the work burden of girls was considerable, which reduced the time they spend on leisure activities.

Despite poverty and combining school and work, some children manage to find time for leisure or define leisure in a way that suits their lives. In the study by Poluha (2004), one of the boys worked every day after school. Of the money he earned weekly, he gave 80% to his mother for household expenses and kept the rest for himself (Poluha, 2004:54).

Working children who attend school have an opportunity for play. In his study in North Ethiopia, Tamene (2007) showed that children played different types of games in school during breaks, lunch time and sport periods. Their play was gender-based, boys and girls playing different games. They also sat in small groups to talk with friends. Jirata and Kjørholt (2015) in their study in South Ethiopia also found that children combined work with play. Chuta (2007) has similar findings from Bishoftu, Central Ethiopia.

Our study is about working children, leisure and play in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Working children in Addis Ababa come either from the city or rural areas. Poverty is a major reason for work among both rural and urban children. The expectation that children must work and contribute to the family is also deeply rooted in the culture as well as in the children's mind (Mulugeta and Eriksen, 2016). Some children come to Addis Ababa virtually alone aiming to work, attend school, support themselves and help their family back home (Mulugeta and Eriksen, 2016). Along with children from poor families in the city, they add to increasing number of working children. It is with this background that we set out to study what leisure time

means for these working children, and how they manage to squeeze play into their busy lives.

Methods

In the effort to find working children we went to major business areas in Addis Ababa (Merkato, Kolfe, Kirkos and Shiro Meda). We asked children visibly engaged in work for an interview. Thus, children engaged in begging were not included as our focus was working children. In some cases, we used a snowball sampling to reach them (Mulugeta and Eriksen, 2016).

We interviewed 45 children (38 boys and 7 girls) from autumn 2007 to spring 2012. The interviews took place at a nearest café chosen by the children. Most of those interviewed ended up to be boys, as girls are generally engaged in employment in households as a maid or a nanny (Bourdillon, 2014). We managed to find the 7 girls either working on the street or through contacts we established with the other children.

We used semi-structured interviews with a detailed interview guide developed together with a research assistant, who followed up the project on a continuous basis. Most of the interviews were conducted by the research assistant, while the researchers participated in some of them. While interviewing, we allowed children to continue talking without interruption, if they wished. The interviews were conducted and recorded in Amharic and the research assistant translated and transcribed the interviews into English.

In this project, the children gave consent for participation, since most lived with friends, siblings, distant relatives, who were busy working elsewhere. We informed the children about the purpose of the project and explained that they could withdraw from the interview at any time and/or refrain from answering questions. Some children brought friends to accompany them during the interview. In the presentation, we gave the children fictitious names to protect their identities.

Both researchers read the material several times and discussed each interview, as well as the different topics which emerged from the material. For this specific article, each researcher re-read all the interviews, starting from the interview conducted last. We read interviews with girls and boys separately. This helped to capture new ideas in the material. We made excerpt files for different topics as an aid for the analysis and sorted the material according to the categories that emerged. We went back and forth between the excerpts and the data to ensure consistency and contextual appropriateness.

In addition to the interviews, we made some observations of how the children took part in city life and took field notes, which were used in the article.

Approximately half of the 45 children were aged 11–13. One-third came from Addis Ababa, while the rest were from rural areas. Twenty-six attended school, while 19 did not. Of the 19 who did not attend school, 18 came from the countryside. The living arrangements varied. While 14 of the 15 children from Addis Ababa lived with one or both parents, only four of the 30 rural children did so. Most (23) of the children from rural areas live with distant relatives, a sibling, together with a sibling and friends or friends only. The sibling could be only a little older than the child himself. Among the rural children, one lives on the street, while two sleep at their workplace. Regarding their work, 17 sell different items such as chewing gums and candies, lottery tickets, cleaning

materials, plastic bags, napkins and food or drink. According to the children, it is common to change jobs depending on their assessment of the market.

All the children come from families of poor background. Subsistence farming made the main livelihood of children's families coming from rural areas. Most parents of children from Addis Ababa worked on low-earning jobs such as daily labour, security and petty trades (Mulugeta and Eriksen, 2019). Some mothers also worked in petty trade. As explained earlier, the researchers' point of departure has been the 'new' sociology of childhood which underlines children's agency and the UN rights of the child, and how children manage to secure the stipulated rights to leisure and play in circumstances that don't favour them. We interviewed children engaged in work and quoted them in this article to ensure transparency and quality (Rose and Johnson, 2020; Tracy, 2010).

Findings

The findings are presented in two parts. First we looked to see if the children have free time, and then went on to find out if they have opportunities to play.

Leisure time among the children

In our study, the children's leisure time depends on their work situation, school and the availability of support from family. The common understanding among the children is that leisure time is any free time after school and/or work. Activities in their leisure time could also include necessary household chores.

Our analysis shows that there are different categories of working children in Addis Ababa, and their views of leisure activities vary depending on their family background, school attendance and the purpose of work. We placed the children into three categories based on their activities and how they spent their earnings. The data show that the children's background determined how they spend their free time and money.

The first category, which we called *leisure for work and recreation*, consists of children who live with their parents and work a few hours during their free time to be able to buy things for themselves. The second category, *leisure for work*, consists of children who work during school holidays. Finally, the third category, *leisure for necessities*, consists of children who use their free time for necessary activities such as washing clothes, as well as socialising or going to church or the mosque.

Leisure for work and recreation. Some children worked during their leisure time to earn money for recreational purposes. These children live with one or both working parents who take care of them. They attend school during daytime and carry out their street work in their free time, either after school or during the weekend. Some of them work without their parents' knowledge. They use their earning to watch football matches, go to the cinema, buy soft drinks and food not available at home. They also save money to buy items like t-shirts and shoes for themselves. Compared to the working children who use their *leisure for necessity*, we argue that these children are a little 'better off'. They are neatly dressed and work to earn money for their own pastime, while children in the other categories must support themselves and their families. It does not mean that they come

from rich families, but they do not work because they need money for basic necessities or feel obligated to support their families.

Nisru (16) is one of the children who worked for his leisure activities. He works on Saturdays and he says:

Whatever we earned on Saturday is for Sunday.

While Nisru spends all he earned, Petros (12) saves what is left after the fun:

‘What do you do with the money you get?’

I eat cake, I watch football matches on DSTV and if I have extra I save it.

‘What are your plans for the money you are saving?’

I want to buy an I-pod.

Hailu (13) lives with both parents and works with their permission. Sometimes he collects plastic for sale, after school and on Saturdays. He says: ‘I need money to watch movies and football matches. We hang out with friends and eat and drink on Sundays’. Because of his work, he is also able to go for a pay shower: ‘But now I no longer wash [my body] at home. I go to a pay shower, since I can afford to pay’.

Belete (13) and Petros (12) are both porters, carrying goods for people arriving at the bus station. They explained that their parents did not know what they did and they would be angry if they came to know.

The children earn money to spend on themselves, and they are proud of what they can do. As we found in Mulugeta and Eriksen (2019), it could be seen as the poor child’s dream, the idea of being rich, lived out in practice.

Leisure for work. All the children in this category attend school. Some come from the countryside to work during school holidays, while others, who are from the city, work on Saturdays, sometimes on Sundays and during holidays. They use their free time to work. Their earning is spent on supporting family, buying school supplies and gifts for their parents.

We talked to the children working in Addis Ababa, but the rural children may also be working in their villages, as unpaid work on farms is common as found by Jirata and Kjærholt (2015). For rural children, coming to Addis Ababa to work for money during their school holidays represents a change in their daily life.

Aschalew (10) came to work during his school holiday. He had saved some money from his earning. We asked him what he wanted to do with his savings:

I will buy something for my father and my mother when I go back. If it is not enough for both of them, I will buy for only one of them.

‘You don’t want to buy anything for yourself?’

No. I want to buy gifts for them.

Endris (13) lives in Addis Ababa with his parents and works on Saturdays and Sundays. He explained how he started to work:

There is this boy who is about my age who lived close to our house. He was working and paying his school fees himself. I asked my father if he could let me work like him. At first, my father refused, but I pressed him to allow me to work for just one day. Eventually he permitted me to try it, and when he saw that I was ok, he said I could help him too.

The 'leisure workers' spend their free time working to cover basic necessities and support families. Unlike their counterparts who work to earn for recreation, for these children work during leisure meets the needs of the family.

Leisure for necessity. The children in this category could be migrants living alone in the city, or from Addis Ababa living with family members. Work is their main engagement all year round, while some also attend school. Free time is used for necessary activities like washing clothes and domestic work. They also relax and engage in social activities such as visiting families, spending time with friends or going to church or the mosque. Work makes an important and necessary part of their everyday life.

Some of the children in this category attend either regular or evening school. The children who attend school work before or after school, in some cases, on weekends, and during school holidays. Work is aimed at supporting themselves and their families.

The children barely spend money on themselves except for food and rent, but sometimes they buy water to take a bath or wash their clothes, or they go for a paid shower. Poverty is common among these children; most are poorly dressed.

Kemal (14) lives at home with his parents. When he realised that his father couldn't afford to pay for his school supplies, he wanted to work. He said:

She [my mother] is happy I am able to work and make money. But sometimes I don't like to work. I want to rest and hang out with my friends. I want to play football instead, just like my friends. But when I remember that the money I bring home is very necessary for the family, I stop thinking like this.

Getachew (14) came to the city two years before we interviewed him. He used to live with his grandparents in the countryside. Currently, he lives with his friends. He complains about Addis Ababa as he felt everything was better back home. 'I know everyone there and everyone knows me. I could spend the day playing. It is bad here; I do not want it'. Talking about Sundays, he said: 'We come here [marketplace], even if there is no market. We wash our clothes and take a shower, and we are around the whole day' (Getachew 14).

Described in Eriksen and Mulugeta (2016) as a 'network of peers for socialization', the children in this category talk about getting together with other children for different purposes. Kibru (13) eats lunch with other shoe shiners. Abraham (12) sleeps together with his friend, and: 'I eat with my friend; we always eat together', he said. They even share a towel that they use as a blanket during the night.

Some of the girls meet for coffee or tea and socialising at home with other girls or with family members. Rahel (14), Helen (11) and Wubalem (16) spend time with their respective sisters whenever they manage. They work full-time and some of them also attend school and carry out household chores during their leisure time. In addition, they do some personal care activities like braiding their hair. They do not spend money on leisure, except for buying coffee or tea to brew. Sofia (15) meets with other girls from her village. She says: 'We meet on Sunday afternoon, after we finished what we need to do in our houses'. Spending time together, eating together and carrying out some activities together were the pastimes for their leisure.

Children from the countryside, specifically from the South, are expected to go home for Meskel, a religious holiday in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and bring gifts and money (Mulugeta and Eriksen, 2016). Alemu (8) is happy to celebrate Meskel at home. He said that people in the neighbourhood talk about children who do not go back home for Meskel: '. . .saying 'They don't love their mothers'; I don't want that to be said about me'. Abera (12) had visited his parents for Meskel, and spent all the money he had saved in Addis Ababa on gifts for his family and Meskel celebration.

The children in the category of *leisure for necessity* use their free time for necessary activities. What comes close to recreation is their social activities with friends, relatives and going to either church or mosque.

As elaborated above, we found three categories of working children in relation to leisure time. Common for all the children was going to church or mosque during their leisure time. In addition, spending time relaxing, meeting friends and family, and just being together was appreciated by all. Except these, leisure time was different for the three groups. While the children in *leisure for necessity* hardly had leisure time, the children in the category *leisure for work and recreation* work on Saturdays or Sundays to earn money to spend on themselves. Though they assist families, for the children in the category *leisure for work*, work is not obligatory and doesn't form the central dimension of their lives.

Play and relaxing: Is there any time and space for play?

The children hardly mention that they play, but talk about what they do when they are not working. Play is not a planned activity. It is often integrated in the children's everyday life; they play while carrying out chores, at school and in between other activities. In this part of the article, we will show how the children incorporate play in their everyday life.

We observed how the children, for example, shoe shiners sit together to chat and laugh when they do not have customers. The children mentioned that they stayed together or hung around with other children during the day. We also saw children playing with pebbles, called Kililibush, which they throw up and catch with small sticks. Abraham (12) is a shoe shiner but often needs to wait for customers. We observed him playing with a ball made of old socks and plastic stuffing while waiting for customers. He was still playing when we talked to him. We asked:

'So you play football when there is no work?'

Yes.

‘Who made this ball?’

I made it myself. I play with it when I have nothing to do.

When Paulos (8) spoke about how they washed their clothes and took a bath in the river on Sundays, he sounded happy. The shiny look on his face when he told us about the river made us curious. So, one Sunday, we stopped by the river to look at some boys who were washing their clothes. They were splashing water on each other, laughing and having fun; they were playing.

The distance between their residence and work or school can be long. Some also have obligations such as fetching water and buying fuel, and the children play on their way to these places. Kibru (13), who likes to sing, said: ‘It is a song about Haile and Kenenisa but I changed it. I love to sing it as I go to school’, and he sang for us when we interviewed him.

Messay (11), who has a long way to walk to his work, said that they play by kicking a ball while they walk back to their homes. Sometimes they go by bus, ‘But most days we walk. We play football as we walk to our houses’. Getachew (14) also has a long way to work: ‘We walk; we reach in no time. We talk and play as we walk’.

The children who go to school play at lunchtime as well. Zeberga (12) explained that sometimes, when he doesn’t have money for lunch, he stays in the school compound and plays football instead of leaving for lunch.

Targeted play is when the children plan to meet to do something together during their days off, mostly Sundays. We asked Messay (11) what he does on Sundays, and he answered, ‘We play dice and different games’. Zelalem (13) plays football on Sundays, while Aschalew (10) plays games, ‘I just hang out with the children and play games’. They also walk and look around. However, the findings show that much of the play by the children is carried out in between other activities. It is intertwined with work and other obligations, and is an integral part of their everyday life. The children do not have much time for leisure, but they compensate the need for play by combining play and work. There are certainly differences in our data. Some of the children have better opportunities for leisure and play than others, like the children in the category of ‘Leisure for work and recreation’.

Discussion and conclusion

The objective of this article is to explore what working children do in their leisure time, and how they manage to find time for play in their everyday life.

Our findings shows that the reasons behind the children’s work affect their leisure time. We found three categories of working children in our study, and they spend their leisure time differently. For the children in the category of *leisure for necessity*, leisure represents having time to do what is necessary. They explain the need for work by the circumstances they live under, often underlining their obligations to their families. The children who must work after school and during school holidays, *leisure for work*, also feel responsibility for the upkeep of their families and spend most of their earnings to support their family. For the category, *leisure for work and recreation*, leisure is related

to their own consumption and pleasure. They use their money on nice shoes, cakes and soft drinks and paying for television viewing.

Despite the limited space and time for play even the children in the category *leisure for necessity*, manage to play. Gusso (2010), in his study from Brazil, argues that play is found in all societies and, with cultural variations, all children play. In line with this, we found that the children in our study play, though most of it is integrated play; they play in between their chores.

In Ethiopia, work is seen as informal learning (Gebretsadik, 2017; Jirata and Kjørholt, 2015; Kassa, 2016) and children's work is a necessary contribution to the household (Gebretsadik, 2017; Woldehanna et al., 2008). We struggled with the definition of leisure since the children in our study were working, and many of them had to do household chores in addition to paid work, and often attend school too. They used the time that should normally be for leisure to work and carry out household chores. We claim that some of the working children are forced to use leisure time for activities that otherwise are reserved adults, such as laundry. Our study shows that even children who live and work far away from home saw it as their obligation to contribute to their parents' household, something they were happy to do.

Work is often not a choice the children have, but rather a virtue of necessity. In addition to contributing to their families' well-being, some children sustain themselves and work could make it possible for them to attend school. Work may give the children opportunity (Bourdillon et al., 2010). Gebretsadik (2017: 36) argue that the children in his study 'claimed that 'working on the street' afforded them opportunities for livelihood, play, leisure and education; to demonstrate agency, opportunities to socialise and to get information ahead of others'.

Circumstances force most of the children in our study to demonstrate agency. Many of them are not under the supervision of adults, neither is there any adult to take care of them. Every day they decide what to do (work, school, leisure activities), and when and where to do them taking into account various factors such as market situation and the best working hours. For these children, demonstrating agency doesn't mean that they are invincible; we have to recognise their vulnerability and the risks they face every day and create a structure that is responsive to their needs. Though work is necessary for their survival and enables some of them to attend school, as discussed by Punch (2003) and Bourdillon et al. (2010), unless supportive structures and systems are in place, it could be a disadvantage.

The children in our study are active in structuring their daily life and their limited free time for leisure activities. In their days filled with work, school and housework, they create space for play in between their obligations. We saw how the children played with stones and sticks, sang and made up their own lyrics. They played on their way to and from school, similar to Punch's (2003) findings. They combined work, school and play and were creative to find time and space to integrate play with their other activities. Bourdillon et al. (2010) claims that play is not necessarily the opposite of work; children can turn work into a form of play and some work, like work on the streets, can be combined with play. Van Gils (2014) also argues that children are good at finding 'loose time' to use for play.

Research shows that children play when they are at school (Camfield, 2012; Poluha, 2004; Punch, 2003; Tamene, 2007). It may be argued that children who attend school in addition to work may have more opportunity to play than the children who work all the time.

Play is often considered a natural part of growing up; when children are deprived of opportunities to play, it is important to discuss why play is necessary. Van Gils (2014: 904) claims that play contributes to children's objective and subjective well-being. Camfield (2012) shows that time to play was seen as part of the girls' understanding of well-being in Ethiopia.

In our study, girls and boys spend their leisure time differently. Girls prefer to spend time together at home, while the boys talked about walking in the streets and playing. This is in line with earlier research from Ethiopia (Camfield, 2012).

We started out to explore working children's right to leisure and play according to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and discussed our findings in the light of sociology of childhood. We found that in many children's lives, there is no adult or authority who is responsible for ensuring that the children's right is adhered to. Similar to children who live with their families, the children who work and live together managed to have social life. They spent time together during work and recreation, and they played, ate meals and slept together. The various activities provided space for play, and demonstrating agency, the children actively created time for fun and play. The main finding in our study is that working children are of different categories, and their opportunity for leisure time depends upon the reason why they work.

Discussing the children's leisure and play in the light of the sociology of childhood, we consider the children as both beings and becomings (Uprichard, 2008). They are working children (beings) in their everyday life like adults, but they are still children (becomings), or their childhood could be seen as 'constant becomings', as Abebe and Ofofu-Kusi (2016) put it. Viewing children as both beings and becomings at the same time does not mean discrepancy or ambivalence, especially not when it comes to working children.

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ORCID iD

Sissel H Eriksen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5521-600X>

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