

## Work and Play as the Tasks of Childhood: Global South and North Perspectives (Desk Review)

Meberate Belachew

Debre Markos University, Institute of Education and Behavioral Sciences,

Department of Psychology. [meberatebe5@gmail.com/](mailto:meberatebe5@gmail.com)

[meberate\\_belachew@dmu.edu.et](mailto:meberate_belachew@dmu.edu.et)

### Abstract

*Historically, Ethiopian children were subjected to enslavement prior to the Ethiopian Middle Ages, underscoring that labor has long been an integral aspect of childhood. In contemporary Ethiopian society, many parents actively encourage their children to engage in work rather than play—a practice that contrasts sharply with the normative conceptualizations prevalent in the Global North, where childhood is predominantly characterized by play and leisure. This desk review synthesizes existing literature to explore the divergent conceptualizations of play and work as central childhood tasks across the Global North and South. It examines the prevailing beliefs surrounding these activities, their intersections with educational practices, and the developmental consequences associated with play deprivation. The analysis reveals that while Global North societies tend to view work undertaken by children as potentially harmful and developmentally pathological, children in Ethiopia routinely allocate a substantial portion of their daily activities to work and domestic chores, albeit with some integration of playful elements within these routines. Despite the recognized benefits of play, certain communities persist in holding negative perceptions regarding the value of play for optimal child development. This review not only provides contextual background on the roles of play and work in childhood but also elucidates the methodological approach used to compile and analyze the literature. In conclusion, the findings challenge the Western-centric definitions of childhood by underscoring that, for many Ethiopian children, work constitutes a normative and culturally embedded aspect of daily life. The discussion emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for play to support holistic child development while remaining sensitive to local cultural practices and perceptions. Furthermore, the review identifies critical areas for future research, including typological classifications of play and work, developmental trajectories, the role of adult facilitation, and gender differences and socio-cultural perspectives on these practices within diverse Ethiopian contexts.*

**Key words:** child work, dimension of tasks, child play

---

## Introduction

The interplay between work and play significantly shapes the lived experiences of children. Understanding the dual roles of children's work and play activities in Ethiopia appears to be paramount in grasping the essence of childhood. This desk review delves deeply into the nuances of these childhood tasks against the backdrop of historical, cultural, and global paradigms of child development.

This desk review examines how play and work are conceptualized as integral aspects of childhood, particularly for children aged six to 14 years old. It does not aim to minimize the exploitative nature of child labor<sup>1</sup> or the importance of play for holistic development. Rather, it seeks to highlight the differing perspectives between societies in the Global South and Global North<sup>2</sup> regarding children's roles and responsibilities. The review is structured to investigate how children in Ethiopia are situated within the tension between work responsibilities and opportunities for play. The goal is to provide a socio-cultural analysis that not only highlights the challenges Ethiopian children face but also considers the broader implications for their development and well-being. By juxtaposing local realities with international perspectives, this paper seeks to illuminate the essential rights of children to enjoy both play and work in a balanced manner, ultimately calling for recommendations that emphasize child welfare and holistic development.

## Background

Ethiopia has rich history shaped by diverse cultural traditions and social structures that influence childhood experiences. As the second most populous country in Africa, the country is home to over 80 ethnic groups, each with distinct family norms and expectations. These cultural elements play a crucial role in defining children's responsibilities within their families and communities (Yeshanew, 2024).

Historically, Ethiopian children have been seen not merely as dependents but as essential contributors to family economies. In rural areas, where agrarian lifestyles dominate, many households rely on children's labor for their livelihoods. This

---

<sup>1</sup> I prefer the phrase 'child work' to 'child labor' because that the latter sometimes sends out strong and often problematic messages that their participation in household livelihoods is an undesirable activity (Abebe, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> I use the phrases 'global north' and 'global south' in preference to the 'developed world, mainly Western and European countries' and 'developing world, mainly the Ethiopian context', respectively (Penn, 2010).

generational practice has made child work<sup>3</sup> a widespread phenomenon, often overshadowing the importance of play<sup>4</sup> and leisure, which are critical for cognitive and psychological development. While traditional norms view children's work as essential, perspectives from the Global North frequently regard this engagement as detrimental to child development (Poluha, 2004).

Although historical accounts of children's voices and development before the Ethiopian Middle Ages are scarce (Tilahun, 2002), Pankhurst (1992) notes that, in earlier times, many Ethiopian children were captured and treated as slaves. This historical precedent underscores the deep-rooted nature of child work in Ethiopia. Even today, many Ethiopian children are more likely to be encouraged-or even compelled-to participate in adult work rather than engage in play.

In urban settings, access to education and recreational opportunities offers a shift in childhood experiences. However, challenges such as poverty and rapid urbanization continue to threaten these opportunities. Despite governmental efforts, including the National Policy on Ethiopian Children (1996), deep-seated societal norms and economic instability persist as barriers to achieving a balanced childhood that includes both work and play.

The review synthesizes insights from various sources, including academic literature and personal observations, to address the following key questions:

- ψ How are play and work dominantly conceptualized as the tasks of childhood in the global south and north?
- ψ What beliefs or views do children and adults (parents, practitioners and scholars) have about work and play as the tasks of childhood in the global south and north?
- ψ What possible outcome/s can be observed if children are less likely engaged into play activities?
- ψ What educational implications and themes to be investigated through research can be sought from the discussion of play and work in the global south and north contexts?

---

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes this paperwork can be seen as the intentionally goal directed activities of children that are primarily originating from the needs or orders of adults.

<sup>4</sup> Play is often defined as an (1) intrinsically motivated, (2) freely chosen, (3) pleasurable, and (4) actively engaged behavior of children (Smith, 2010).

---

The desk review is organized in three sections. The first section is an introduction about description of the background that mainly indicates basic guiding questions to be addressed in the summary. The second section emphasizes a summary of readings on play and work as the tasks of childhood in the global north and south, the adults' beliefs about play and work, play and work as related to schooling, and the outcomes of play deprivation. The last part of the review is intended to indicate the conclusion, possible educational implications, and major themes identified for research investigations.

## **Methods**

This desk review employs qualitative synthesis methodology to systematically examine existing literature on children's engagement in work and play activities within the Ethiopian context. The review integrates findings from peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental and non-governmental reports, policy documents, and unpublished studies, with a particular focus on child labor, child rights, and play. The selection of sources was guided by their relevance to the socio-cultural, economic, and developmental dimensions of childhood in Ethiopia. The review is structured around the following key thematic areas:

- The various forms of child labor prevalent in rural and urban Ethiopian contexts, including their socio-economic determinants and implications (Abebe, 2008; Poluha, 2004).
- The nature and significance of play in children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as structural and cultural barriers limiting access to play (Pankhurst, et al., 2016; Woodhead, 1999).
- The role of gender in shaping children's participation in work and play, highlighting disparities in labor expectations and recreational opportunities (Bourdillon, 2006; Camfield, 2011).

Systematic thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and gaps within the existing body of knowledge. By synthesizing diverse perspectives, this review aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between work and play in Ethiopian childhoods. Furthermore, the findings contribute to ongoing discourses on child development, rights, and educational policy within Ethiopia and the broader Global South.

---

## Literature Review

### Global Perspectives on Childhood

The understanding of childhood has evolved significantly over the past few decades, particularly with the advent of international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted in 1989. This pivotal document asserts the rights of children to be protected from economic exploitation and to enjoy leisure time, emphasizing the fundamental role of play in developing a well-rounded individual.

Globally, research indicates that play is not merely a frivolous activity but is essential for various aspects of development, including cognitive growth, social skills, emotional well-being, and physical health. Scholars like Smith (2010) argue that play facilitates crucial learning experiences, encouraging problem-solving, creativity, and emotional regulation.

The conceptualization of childhood is profoundly shaped by the socio-cultural context in which it is situated, leading to significant variations across different societies. In more affluent nations, childhood is typically perceived as a distinct and protected phase of life, characterized by access to formal education, opportunities for play, and a strong emphasis on cognitive, social, and emotional development (James & Prout, 2015; Woodhead, 2009). In such contexts, children are generally viewed as individuals in need of nurturance, guidance, and structured support to facilitate their transition into adulthood. This perspective aligns with dominant developmental theories that emphasize the importance of early childhood experiences in shaping long-term well-being and success (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978).

Conversely, in economically disadvantaged countries, this idealized narrative is often tempered by the exigencies of daily survival and economic necessity. In these contexts, children frequently assume active roles in contributing to household income, engaging in labor-intensive activities that may limit their access to formal education and leisure (Boyden, 1997; Nieuwenhuys, 1994). Rather than being perceived solely as dependents requiring care and investment, children in such environments are often regarded as essential contributors to family sustenance. This alternative conceptualization underscores the importance of adopting culturally responsive approaches to understanding childhood, as a singular, universal framework may fail to capture the diverse lived experiences of children across different socio-economic settings (Bluebond-Langner & Korbin, 2007).

---

This disparity highlights the critical need for scholarly inquiry and policy interventions that embrace both cultural specificity and global commitments to children's rights. While acknowledging the diverse realities that shape childhood experiences, efforts should also strive to uphold fundamental principles of child well-being, education, and protection. A balanced approach—one that respects local traditions and socio-economic conditions while advocating for universally recognized rights—can contribute to a more nuanced and equitable understanding of childhood in a global context (Boyden, 2013; United Nations, 1989).

### **Ethiopian Childhood: Historical and Cultural Context**

Ethiopia's cultural landscape offers a multifaceted and historically rich perspective on the conceptualization of childhood, deeply intertwined with the nation's socio-economic realities. Historically, children's roles within Ethiopian society have been closely connected to familial structures, economic imperatives, and cultural expectations. In this context, childhood is not merely a stage of life marked by play, education, and developmental milestones, as is often conceptualized in Western societies. Rather, it is shaped by the needs and demands of the family unit, where children are seen as integral to the survival and functioning of the household (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009).

As Pankhurst (1992) elucidates, agrarian societies in Ethiopia have historically relied on child labor as a vital component of household economic activity. From an early age, children are expected to contribute to both farming and domestic chores, tasks that are seen as part of their integration into adult responsibilities. This system of early participation in labor reinforces the perception of children as economic assets, where their value is measured by their contributions to the sustenance of the family rather than by their individual rights or entitlements to childhood as a protected phase. As a result, the notion of childhood in Ethiopia has traditionally been less focused on formal education, play, or psychological development and more oriented towards preparing children for adult roles and responsibilities (Boyden et al., 1998; Poluha, 2007).

The expectation for children to contribute economically to the family is not simply a matter of choice but a necessity shaped by broader socio-economic conditions. For families in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, the labor provided by children is indispensable for survival. This dynamic not only informs how childhood is conceptualized but also creates a situation where children's rights to education and leisure, as enshrined in international conventions such as the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), are often secondary to immediate family needs. The perception of children as economic contributors, rather than as individuals with distinct needs and rights, remains a persistent challenge in efforts to promote child rights and welfare in Ethiopia (Morrow, 2010).

Additionally, this cultural and economic expectation places limits on children's access to formal education, as many children, particularly in rural areas, are required to balance their school attendance with their labor responsibilities. Ethiopia has made significant progress in expanding access to primary education, but dropout rates remain high due to the competing demands of household labor and economic necessity (Camfield, 2011). This reality underscores the importance of context-specific approaches to child rights advocacy and development programs in Ethiopia, which must take into account the historical and socio-economic dimensions of childhood in the country. Understanding the unique cultural context of Ethiopia is crucial to devising interventions that respect local traditions while striving to ensure children's well-being, education, and development in line with globally recognized standards (Abebe, 2019).

The relationship between childhood, labor, and cultural expectations in Ethiopia is further shaped by deeply ingrained traditions that vary across ethnic groups and livelihood systems. These traditions influence child-rearing practices, socialization patterns, and labor responsibilities, reflecting the intergenerational transmission of cultural norms. Within Ethiopia's diverse socio-cultural landscape, the expectations placed on children are not uniform but rather differ significantly based on the economic and subsistence activities predominant in each community (Abebe, 2007; Poluha, 2007).

Among pastoralist communities, for instance, children's roles are heavily influenced by the need to sustain livestock-based livelihoods. From a young age, boys are typically assigned herding responsibilities, including tending to cattle, goats, or camels, while girls often engage in related domestic and support tasks, such as fetching water and preparing food for herders (Müller-Mahn et al., 2010). These responsibilities are not merely economic necessities but are also seen as crucial learning experiences that prepare children for adult roles within their communities. The expectation that children contribute to herding activities is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs that emphasize communal responsibility, resilience, and self-sufficiency (Gebre, 2001).

Similarly, in agrarian communities, children's labor is predominantly linked to farming and household maintenance. From an early age, they are introduced to agricultural tasks such as plowing, planting, weeding, and harvesting, often assisting their parents and older siblings (Pankhurst et al., 2016). Girls, in particular, are frequently responsible for domestic duties, including cooking, collecting firewood, and caring for younger siblings, reinforcing gendered divisions of labor that persist into adulthood (Kefale & Mohammed, 2017). These responsibilities are not perceived as burdensome but rather as essential aspects of socialization, through which children learn the skills and values necessary for their future roles as productive members of society (Boyden et al., 1998).

The continuity of these practices across generations is reinforced by cultural narratives that emphasize respect for tradition and adherence to established social norms. In many communities, childhood is not viewed as a distinct, protected phase but rather as a preparatory stage for adulthood, where participation in labor is an expected and valued part of a child's upbringing (Abebe & Kj rholt, 2009). This perspective challenges Western notions of childhood centered on education, leisure, and psychological development, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive frameworks when addressing child rights and labor issues in Ethiopia (Morrow, 2010).

While these culturally embedded practices ensure the transmission of traditional knowledge and survival skills, they also raise critical questions regarding children's rights, education, and well-being. Policies aimed at improving child welfare and educational access must take into account these cultural dimensions, balancing the need for economic participation with the imperative to uphold children's rights to education and personal development (Camfield, 2011). A nuanced approach that respects local traditions while promoting sustainable development and child protection frameworks is essential to fostering a holistic understanding of childhood in Ethiopia.

Despite recent reforms emphasizing children's rights, economic realities often dictate that children contribute to family income. Rural families, in particular, face immense pressures that necessitate the participation of their children in labor, often at the expense of their education and leisure time. Studies indicate that children as young as five years old are engaged in work, significantly limiting their opportunities to partake in activities considered essential for growth and development (Tassew et al., 2010).

---

## The Concept of Work in Childhood

Work among children in Ethiopia encompasses various forms, each influenced by socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and geographical disparities. Children commonly engage in:

**On-farm Activities:** Many rural children are involved in tasks such as ploughing, weeding, and harvesting. These activities often span entire days during planting and harvest seasons and are physically demanding, reflecting the agrarian lifestyle endemic to much of Ethiopian society.

**Off-farm Activities:** Urban children may seek employment outside the household in sectors such as construction, street vending, and petty trading. Studies indicate that while boys predominantly engage in these off-farm roles, girls remain largely confined to domestic responsibilities, such as cooking and cleaning.

**Domestic Work:** This is a critical area where gender dynamics are stark. Girls are predominantly responsible for household chores and sibling care, which limit their leisure time and educational opportunities.

Research shows that while these roles impart essential skills and contribute to family well-being, they also significantly limit children's opportunities for education and play (Chuta, 2007). The heavy workload can lead to fatigue, decreased academic performance, and a lack of social engagement with peers.

## The Importance of Play in Development

Play is increasingly recognized as a fundamental component of child development, critical for cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Research indicates that play acts as a medium through which children can explore their environment, experiment with social roles, and develop vital communication skills (Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006).

However, in Ethiopia, many children are deprived of adequate time for play due to the necessity of contributing to household labor. Alemayehu (2012) found that children engaged in economic activities struggle to find time for play, resulting in adverse effects on their health and social development. The lack of unstructured playtime stifles creativity and can lead to behavioral issues as children have fewer outlets for emotional expression.

Cross-cultural comparisons highlight the critical importance of play in a child's life. For instance, while children in Western countries may have designated playtime

integrated into their school curricula, Ethiopian children often face a stark reality of divided attention, balancing economic responsibilities with academic obligations to the detriment of their play experiences.

### **Play and Work as the Tasks of Childhood**

The conceptualizations of play and work as the major tasks of childhood tend to contrast in most societies living in the global north and global south countries. In most societies in the global north, childhood is often featured by play and it is often conceptualized as the expressions of the natural spirit, as a medium to know (study) or facilitate the growth and development, and to treat and diagnose mental health problems of children (Smith, 2010). In these societies, children in their preschool years are often expected to spend most of their time playing at their schools and homes. Miller and Almon (2009), for instance, have found out that a preschool child in London on average spends 40% of its daytime engaged into free play. According to Smith (2010), children, in these societies, if engaged into the adults' world of work, are believed to be exposed to harmful experiences.

Rather than engaged into play activities, children living in the global south, particularly in the contexts of Ethiopia, appear to be preferred to engage into work activities beginning from their earlier childhood ages. Research evidences from the rural Amhara and Oromo communities of Ethiopia reveal that beginning from the age of six, adults expect female children to fetch water, clean house and animal dung, grind crops and weed croplands, and male children to look after animals at the fields, prepare farmlands and many other activities (Ayele, 2007; Nardos, 2007; Tassew et al., 2010) (see Table 1).

**Table-1: Gender differences in child work by the type of activities**

| <b>1. On-farm activities</b>  |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Ploughing/ digging            | Commonly for boys   |
| Weeding                       | Both boys and girls, especially older children (12 years and above) |
| Harvesting                    | Both boys and girls, but more typically boys                        |
| Planting/ transplanting       | Both boys and girls   |
| Irrigation                    | Both boys and girls   |
| Herding                       | Both boys and girls, but more boys as age increases                 |
| Folder collection             | Boys  |
| <b>2. Off-farm activities</b> |   |
| Terracing                     | Both boys and girls   |

**3. Non-farm activities**

|                                       |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Construction workers                  | Boys and sometimes girls |
| Mini-bus conductors                   | Commonly boys            |
| Household maids                       | Commonly girls           |
| Waiter, kitchen hands                 | Both boys and girls      |
| Apprentice in garages/<br>workshops   | Only boys                |
| Brokering/ shoe shining/<br>portering | More commonly boys       |

**4. Non-farm/market-related activities**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Loading goods on pack<br>animals     | Both boys and girls, but commonly boys      |
| Crushing stones for sale             | Only boys                                   |
| Collecting rock salt                 | Only boys                                   |
| Collecting firewood/ dry<br>cow dung | Both boys and girls but more commonly girls |
| Street vending                       | Both boys and girls but commonly girls      |
| Sex-related work                     | Both boys and girls but more often girls    |

**5. Domestic work activities**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Collecting fuelwood | Both boys and girls                          |
| Fetching water      | Both boys and girls, but girls as grow older |
| House cleaning      | Only girls                                   |
| Cooking food        | Only girls                                   |
| Caring for siblings | Both boys and girls but more often girls     |

Adapted from ‘*Child labor, gender inequality and rural/urban disparities: how can Ethiopia’s national development strategies best address negative spill – over impacts on child education and well-being?*’ by Tassew et al., 2010, p. 6).

Another study conducted on 1500 rural households in Ethiopia suggested that about 92% of children (age four to 14 years) have at least one household work responsibility and close to 50% have two or more work responsibilities (Aberra et al., 2003). Furthermore, a study carried out on a sample of 318 rural and urban working children (age 10 to 14 years) in 1996/1997 in Bangladesh, The Philippines, Ethiopia, and the Central American Countries (El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua) to investigate children’s perspectives on how they spend their daily life indicated that these children spend most of their time being engaged into the

activities of school, various forms of work and domestic chores, and that they spend little time being engaged into play and recreation activities (Woodhead, 1998). This study further indicated that although work constituted a major part of children's daily rhythms (see Figure 1), 73% of them reported to have positive attitude towards the work they were engaged in as it tends to provide them economic support to their family (63%), opportunity to develop skills (46%), and to increase occupational self-esteem and social relationships (29%).

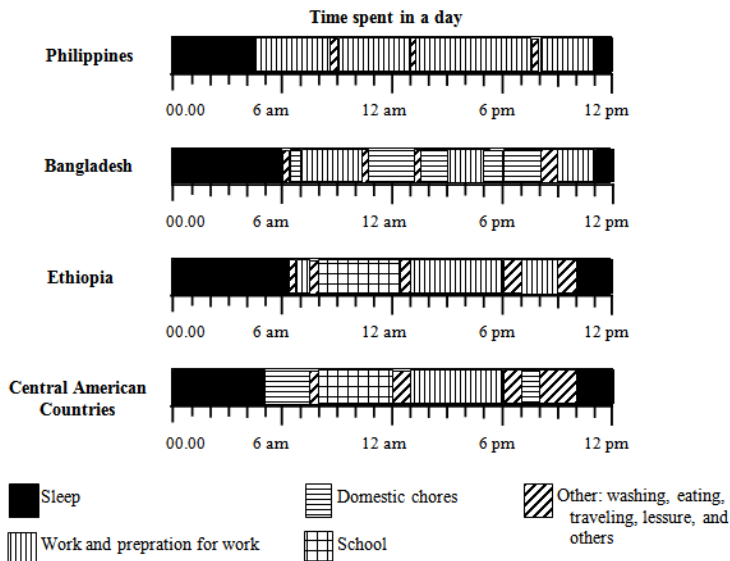


Figure-: *The daily rhythms of working children. Adapted from 'Children's perspectives on their working lives: A participatory study in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua' by Woodhead (1998, p. 32).*

The above evidence revealed that the daily rhythms of children in most communities of Ethiopia appear to be occupied mostly with work activities. But this does not mean that children living in these situations are not totally engaged in play activities. Although children in the global south could not have separate time and space to play as of the global north, they tend to play while they are working (Woodhead, 1998). The perspectives of children reported in Woodhead's (1998, pp. 60-61) study indicated that children spend a playful time while they are at work. Woodhead reported that a snack vendor in Ethiopia talked about her experience that:

*I feel happy when I get the chance to watch TV in bars and also sell ... When I see a person with his money being drunk and losing himself, I laugh ... I feel happy when a customer comes smiling.* (Woodhead, 1998, pp. 60 - 61)

Even a female child sex worker in Addis Ababa spoke of her good times by stating that “men entertain us [including her friends] by buying us drinks, good food and drive us round the city”. Similarly, in the Philippines, a young girl thought the plantation where she was working was her playground by stating that “*I can play while working ... cutting canes is fun*”, and a boy enjoyed the challenge of working with his father by stating that “*I enjoy working with my father, especially when we climb the mountain to gather firewood*”. And the chore of having to fetch water among farm workers in El Salvador bring fun that “*going to get water is fun because we go to the river and have fun at the well*” (Woodhead, 1998, pp. 60-61). Furthermore, a study carried out before four decades on elementary school students in Addis Ababa city also indicated that children in their school break time engaged into various forms of local play such as, ‘*cuculu*’, ‘*kumbe*’, ‘*segno makiseghno*’, ‘*teter*’ (Sahlu, 1970).

### **Beliefs on Child’s Play and Work**

Comparative evidence of the beliefs on the values of play among Koreans and European Americans, Taiwanese, and the US and Hong Kong revealed that parents in these countries acknowledge the benefits of play to children’s development (Farver et al., 2000; Holmes, 2001; Pan, 1994). Parents of these cultures, however, ascribe play to be beneficial to varying aspects of development of children. Whereas the Koreans give importance to the social benefits of play, European American mothers placed a higher value of play to the cognitive development of children (Farver et al., 2000). Another study in Taiwan also indicated that Taiwanese educated mothers acknowledge the value of play in children’s physical and cognitive development (Pan, 1994). Besides, the comparison of the US and Hong Kong parent’s views about the benefit of play indicates that more than the US mothers, Hong Kong mothers emphasize the role of play in children’s self-expression and education (Holmes, 2001).

Research evidence about the views of adults in Ethiopia about the values of play to child development are generally insufficient. A study on the patterns and practices of play among 120 purposefully selected practitioners (counselors, social workers, psychologists, and school teachers) working with children in six areas of Ethiopia, including, Jimma, Addis Ababa, Adama, Bahirdar, Hawasa, and Dredawa towns

indicated that play tends to be beneficial to different aspects of child development (Alemayehu, 2012). Participants in this study were asked to rate 42 specific issues raised on the developmental and therapeutic benefits of play to children based on a five-point-scale. Accordingly, mean ranks of the responses of the participants to these items indicated that play has important values to children's recreation (4.91), psychomotor development (4.53), cognitive development (4.41), social interaction (4.31), moral development (3.84), self-awareness (3.60), child right (3.43), and therapeutic function (3.07) (Alemayehu, 2012). Other evidence particularly relevant to the therapeutic roles of play in the Ethiopian contexts also indicated that play has important contributions to enhance the self-concept and academic performances of children (Brhanu, 2010) and to treat behavioral and emotional problems, such as attachment insecurity, trauma, depression, and severe bereavement experienced by abused and orphaned children (Quere & Conticini, 2013).

However, evidence from inter scale upnscriptions and study reports on different research areas, and proverbs spoken in different languages of Ethiopia appear to 'belittle' the above evidence on the values of play that parents and community members tend to expect children to be reserved from play and involved into work activities so that they can scale-up their skills. A qualitative study carried out in Gedeo, Southern Ethiopia, for seven months in 2005/2006 on 46 children (age 11 to 15 years) showed that parents prefer their children not to play during their earlier years (Abebe, 2010). Parents, in Abebe's (2010) study, prefer their children to develop certain competencies related to such tasks as running errands, tending cattle, collecting and splitting fuel wood, harvesting grass, weeding, chopping *Enset*<sup>5</sup>, fetching water, milking, cooking, sweeping floors, washing, making, and serving coffee.

In addition, in a study intended to investigate the 'resilience and well-being of urban Ethiopian children', an interviewee mother showed her implicit negative view about play by stating that "my 12-year-old daughter, 'Amina', was failed from the school ... because she likes to engage into play activities more than her learning. We [family members] even call her from the place where she plays to do household chores' (Camfield, 2012, p. 406). Moreover, as oral literature in the form of proverbs indicate the beliefs of parents and the society as a whole (Dereje, 1996), the following two proverbs commonly spoken among the Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrigna, Shinashagna, and Konsogna speaking communities, similar to the above

---

<sup>5</sup> Enset is a banana-like plant, with a stem and root that can be processed for food.

interviewed mother, connote the negative views that they held about play (Dereje, 1996, Ministry of Language, Culture and Sport, 1982).

ለልጅ ጨዋታ፤ (Leliji cewata,)

ለባለጌ ቧልታ። (lebalegie bualta.)

meaning: play to a child and jest or joking to a loafer should be prohibited, because play is regarded as a loafing activity like jest. Similarly, the following saying appears to depict an implicitly negative view about children's play among the communities.

ክልጅ አትጫወት፤ (Keliji atichawot)

ይወጋሃል በእንጨት። (yiwogahal benchet.)

meaning: do not play with a child as he/she may pierce you with a sharp wood, which implies that since a child may cause harm, adults should not provide any chance to play with a child.

Appealing for the lacuna of relevant empirical evidence, the scanty data presented above seem to reveal that play is believed among parents in Ethiopia to have no apparent benefit to children. Similarly, parents in the Mexican culture recognize play as a superfluous activity of children (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2002). Similar to the Ethiopian parents, Tamis-LeMonda and its colleagues indicated that in Mexican culture, children's participations in work and work-related activities are deemed fare more important than their participation in play activities.

The higher value given to work than play as a defining feature of childhood in Ethiopia tend to be *partly* related with the values attached to children in Ethiopia. As the Ethiopian culture gives high values to religious beliefs (Abebaw, 2007), the view of 'what a child is' tends to be dictated by religious sculptures that children are *Lord/Allah given creatures* (see GENESIS 4:1; JOHN 18:16 in the Holy Bible; and SÛRAH 2:233; in the Noble Qur'an). Similarly, research findings indicated that children in Ethiopia tend to be considered as assets to the parents (Abebe, 2008) and as source of prestige and security to the family (Poluha, 2004). These views of adults about children tend to encourage children to work than to play to generate income, to support family, and to develop skills necessary for future adult life (Woodhead, 1998).

### Child Play and Work as related to Schooling

Scholars mainly from the global north emphasized on childhood play by relating it with learning and schooling as important phenomena to children’s development. One simple (but important if considered seriously) indicator of such emphases could be the relatively broad coverage given to ‘play’, ‘learning’, and ‘schooling’ in the child development sections of their textbooks ‘usually’ used in developmental psychology (e.g., Papalia & Olds, 1990; Pikunas & Albrech, 1961; Santrock, 2006). References of ‘work’ in the child development sections in these textbooks are rare, and if discussed, it is often linked to the negative effects it exerts on children’s development (see Papalia & Olds, 1990). However, a study conducted in the global south context in Ethiopia to investigate children’s perspectives on work and school using fieldwork interviews, observations, and narrative stories of school children demonstrates that “*children and childhood in the Ethiopian context constitute ‘work’, ‘education’, and ‘play’*” (Alebachew, 2009; p. 1013).

Moreover, in the global north context, play and learning are inseparable aspects of schools that, through play, children can learn lessons at school, and through learning, they can also engage in play activities (Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006). Although work tends to be valued more than play in some Ethiopian adult communities, as indicated above, the national curriculum of kindergartens<sup>6</sup> (interchangeably used with preschools, at least in Amharic language) and major legal documents of Ethiopia revealed play as a characteristic feature of kindergartners and as a medium to teach children, and as a basic right of children. The curriculum stated that:

*የአጸደ ህጻናት ዘመን [እድሜያቸው ከ3 እስከ 6 ዓመት የሆነ] ትምህርት በአመዛኙ ጨዋታ ነው። ህጻናት እንዲገነቡቸው የሚፈለጉ እሴቶችና ጭብጦች ግንዛቤ የሚያገኙት በጨዋታ መልክ ሲቀርቡ በመሆኑ ጨዋታ የበለጠ ትምህርት እንደሆነ መገንዘብ አስፈላጊ ነው። ጨዋታ ህጻናት የራሳቸውን ምንነት ከመረዳት አልፎ የሌሎችን ሰዎችና ነገሮች ባህሪያት የሚረዱበት መሳሪያ ነው። ከዚህም ባሻገር የማሰብ፣ የቋንቋ፣ ማህበራዊ፣ አካላዊና ስሜታዊ እድገቶቻቸው እውን ሊሆን የሚችሉት በዚህ በጨዋታ ነው። በመሆኑም በዚህ ደረጃ የሚሰጡት የትምህርት ዓይነቶች ሙሉ በሙሉ በጨዋታና ተግባራዊ ክንውኖች ተቃኝተው ለህጻናቱ መቅረብ እንዳለባቸው ይታመናል (Kindergarten Curriculum, 1998 E.C, p. i.*

The above excerpt from the kindergarten curriculum of Ethiopia appears to give higher importance to the values of play to preschool children. It literally indicates

---

<sup>6</sup> I found different terminologies used in Amharic language, such as ‘mewaele hitsanat’ (መዋዕለ ህጻናት), ‘atsede hitsanat’ (አጸደ ህጻናት), ‘kidme medebegna’ (ቅድመ መደበኛ), and ‘zero kifil’ (ዘሮ ክፍል), which might refer either kindergarten or preschool.

that the year of kindergarten education is mostly the time of play. Since children can understand values and contents better when they are presented through play, it is necessary to consider play as valuable as the lessons itself. Beyond understanding themselves, play also serves children as a tool to understand other people and things. Moreover, the thinking, language, social relationships, physical and emotional development of children become real through play. Therefore, it is believed that the syllabi thought to children at this level ought to be delivered through play and other practical activities.

More importantly, play is often considered as the most basic right of children. The entitlement of children the right to play during childhood is enshrined in major conventions and charters Ethiopia has ratified and developed. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) in article 31, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 2002) in article 12, and above all the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995) in article 36 affirm that children have absolute right to play and have fun with their peers during their formative ages. These international, regional, and national documents assure children the benefit of a satisfying and playful life during their earlier developmental stages.

Play spaces and materials are often important components of play activities to children (Miller & Almon, 2009). According to Miller and Almon, over the past 50 years, the predominant site of children's free play in the global north has moved from public spaces on the street to semi-public spaces such as separate public playgrounds, school yards and early childhood settings. In addition, most children in the global north preschools prefer to play more through computer-generated games than ever in the past (Miller & Almon, 2009). Even though evidence about children's play spaces and materials appears to be unavailable in the Ethiopian case, the analyses of the physical structures of government preschools (see Save the Children Sweden, 2011, for detail) reveal that most of these schools' neglect and/or lack the required material and manpower inputs to children's play. This tends to suggest that although children are expected to spend their preschool years playfully as indicated above in the kindergarten curriculum and legal documents, these children do not have suitable access of spaces and materials to play at their preschools.

### **Outcomes of less Engagement into Child Play and more into Work**

So far, the different positions given to play and work as the tasks of childhood in the contexts of global south and north are discussed. Children in the global south,

particularly in Ethiopia, are often required to do what adults do in their day-to-day chores beginning from age six. They appear to have no such formal time, material, and space for playing during their childhood. Nonetheless, play researchers asked what happens to those children who are withdrawn of play experiences. According to Lauer (2011), play deprivation is the notion given to too little or no experiences of play during early childhood that adversely affect the development of children. Children examined deprived of physical play at their earlier ages tend to manifest ill body muscle and skeletal system development (Miller & Almon, 2009). More recently, chronic play deprivation during the period between birth and seven years has been linked to negative developmental outcomes, such as, impaired brain development, lack of social skills, depression and aggression on the children (Lauer, 2011). Furthermore, by reviewing a series of play studies, Smith (2010) concluded that when children are deprived of the opportunities to play, they over-compensate or rebound when given the opportunity and that this need seems to be greater for boys than for girls.

More engagement into work and less into play activities seems to deter children of the global south from enjoying the unfringeable need and right to play in the standards of the global north (People in need Ethiopia, 2009). This deterrence of children from play, however, might not be linked to child negative developmental outcomes. A survey conducted on a sample of 3000 children (age 11 to 12) and caregivers of eight materially poor urban community of Ethiopia, for instance, showed that many children living in this condition compared to the European American children are reported to be more resilient, i.e., they have higher level of emotional wellbeing (Camfield, 2012).

## **Results**

### **Forms of Work among Ethiopian Children**

The reviews indicate that the categories of work children engage in vary widely based on geographic location, socio-economic status, and cultural expectations.

#### **1. On-farm Activities:**

- Children are often tasked with a range of responsibilities; older children usually assist with essential farming practices, such as ploughing, sowing, and harvesting.
- While boys frequently take on labor-intensive roles such as ploughing and herding cattle, girls engage in tasks focused on food preparation and gathering firewood (Tassew et al., 2010).

## 2. **Off-farm Activities:**

- In urban settings, children may work in informal sectors, which include construction sites, markets, and service-oriented jobs.
- Research indicates that the prevalence of street vendors, particularly boys, is significant, with their earnings contributing to family income, which is critical in impoverished neighborhoods.

## 3. **Domestic Work:**

- Domestic chores dominate the lives of girls and often include cleaning, cooking, and caring for younger siblings. The division of labor within households reflects broader societal expectations regarding gender roles.
- A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveals that many girls are expected to fulfill these responsibilities before they even reach adolescence, underscoring the urgency of addressing gender disparities in labor (ILO, 2017).

## **Patterns of Play and Its Availability**

The patterns of play among children in Ethiopia reveal patterns of disparity, heavily influenced by socio-economic status and geographical location.

### 1. **Types of Play:**

- In rural areas, play is often spontaneous and occurs during brief respites from work. Children create games from their environment, engage in physical activities, and partake in informal group play. However, the limited amount of free time significantly constrains these opportunities.
- Conversely, children in urban contexts may have more structured play opportunities through schools or community programs. Yet, financial constraints often inhibit access to organized sports or recreational facilities, leading to inequities even within urban populations.

### 2. **Challenges to Play:**

- A substantial barrier to play is the intertwining of economic responsibilities with childhood. Children who are deeply entrenched in labor activities report minimal free time; Alemayehu (2012) identified a direct correlation between hours worked and diminished playtime.
- Societal attitudes that prioritize economic contribution over leisure further exacerbate this issue. Due to cultural constructs that view children primarily as laborers, the significance of play is often overlooked, leading to a detrimental imbalance in childhood experiences.

---

## Gender Dynamics in Childhood Tasks

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping childhood experiences in Ethiopia, influencing the tasks assigned to children and their opportunities for play.

### 1. Work Responsibilities:

- Evidence suggests that boys participate more extensively in labor outside the home, including agricultural work and income-generating tasks in urban settings. In contrast, girls tend to be confined to domestic chores and care responsibilities (Tilahun, 2002).
- This division not only reinforces traditional gender roles but also results in significant educational disparities, as girls often miss school to fulfill domestic duties, achieving lower educational outcomes over time.

### 2. Access to Play:

- Gender disparities further extend to access to play. As girls typically engage in domestic work, they frequently forfeit opportunities to partake in social games or recreational activities, which can hinder their socialization and life skills development.
- Conversely, boys may participate in more organized play but still face challenges from their labor responsibilities. The differing expectations on boys and girls cultivate an environment where gender norms dictate the nature and quality of childhood experiences.

## Challenges and Implications

The findings illustrate a troubling reality for many Ethiopian children caught in the dichotomy of work and play. The constant balancing of labor responsibilities with a lack of play opportunities poses several challenges:

### 1. Educational Attainment:

- Engagement in child labor profoundly impacts educational outcomes. Children who are required to work often struggle to keep up with their studies due to fatigue and time constraints, leading to high dropout rates (Lauer, 2011).
- Without adequate education, these children face limited opportunities for advancement in adulthood, perpetuating cycles of poverty.

### 2. Mental and Physical Health:

- The chronic stress associated with balancing work and limited play can lead to potential mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. Children deprived of play miss out on critical opportunities to express themselves,

engage socially, and develop coping mechanisms essential for their emotional well-being.

- Additionally, the physical demands of labor contribute to health risks, such as malnutrition and physical injuries, further compounding the disadvantages they face.

## **Conclusion, Implications, and Themes for Research Investigations**

### **Conclusion**

In this summary of readings, topics such as play and work as tasks of children in the global north and south, the beliefs about play and work, play and work as related to schooling, and the outcomes of play deprivation were discussed. Although these discussions tend to be less comprehensive due to various reasons, inter alia, the availability of research evidence on play and work in the Ethiopian context, the following conclusion appears to be reached.

Work is valued more than play as a task of childhood among the different communities of Ethiopia although practitioners working with children, the preschool curriculum, and major legal documents of Ethiopia suggest children to play during their earlier ages. Unfortunately, preschools, as relatively favorable settings to children to play, tend to have no adequate play spaces and materials for children to play.

The engagement of most children in Ethiopia into work activities than play tends to result in ‘pathological’ developmental outcomes in the views of the global north. However, work is a part and parcel of everyday ‘normal’ rhythms of children in Ethiopia and in this regard, work is outside of the tasks conventionally ascribed to the definition of childhood in the global north, at least for this part of children’s life.

In conclusion, this desk review has examined the intricate dynamics of work and play in the lives of Ethiopian children, revealing the profound challenges they face amidst economic pressures and societal expectations. The critical balance between work and play is essential for healthy physical, cognitive, and emotional development, yet many children are denied this fundamental aspect of childhood.

The review underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms that prioritize children’s rights to education and play. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative effort among government bodies, non-governmental organizations, communities, and parents to foster environments that recognize children as rights-

---

holders, ensuring they are afforded the opportunities necessary for holistic development.

Ultimately, by shifting focus from viewing children primarily as laborers to recognizing their right to a childhood filled with play, education, and healthy development, Ethiopia can cultivate a generation equipped with skills and knowledge to build a brighter future for themselves and their communities.

### **Implications for Preschool Education**

The aforementioned discussions of play and work in the contexts of global north and south as the tasks of childhood tend to imply some matters to preschool education. The following are some of them.

- ψ Children at their early years attend preschool education programs often to acquire preliminary skills for the subsequent more advanced education and to maintain their interests to learn through play (Penn, 2010). Thus, since children spend little free time to play due to engagement into works, schools need to provide children the opportunity for play that can contribute to their optimal development.
- ψ Implementations of school curriculum through play and the legal rights of children to play, and the campaigns to mitigate child work could be effective if they are complemented with the views and the practices of the wider society as there tends to be differences observed between the beliefs of parents (communities) in the one hand and practitioners, school curriculum and legal documents on the other hand.

### **Some Themes Identified for Research Investigations**

In the process of compilation of this reading summary, the researcher faced dearth of research evidence particularly relevant to the Ethiopian contexts. Thus, based on summary of the readings and own personal observations, issues related to the themes of the (a) typological classifications, (b) developmental changes, (c) involvement of adults in the facilitations and provisions time, space and materials, and (d) gender differences and socio-cultural views of the values of play and work need to be investigated through researches in the various contexts of Ethiopia.

---

## References

- Abebaw, M. (2007). Child rights in Ethiopia: Discussion of Ethiopian realities and implications. In Belay Tefera and Abebaw Minaye (Eds.), *Child rights, childhood education and the use of mother tongue in schools: A voyage to reconstructing the Ethiopian child*. Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference of Ethiopian Psychologists' Association, 122-151. Addis Ababa.
- Abebe, T. (2010). *Trapped between disparate worlds? The livelihoods, socialization and school contexts of rural children in Ethiopia*. Unpublished research report.
- Abebe, T. (2008). *Ethiopian childhoods: A case study of the lives of orphans and working children*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- Abebe, T., & Kjørholt, A. T. (2009). Social actors and victims of exploitation: Working children in the cash economy of Ethiopia's South. *Childhood*, 16(2), 175-194.
- Abebe, W. (2010). *Child labor, gender inequality, and rural/urban disparities: How can Ethiopia's national development strategies best address negative spillover impacts on child education and well-being?* Young Lives Ethiopia.
- Aberra, M., Kifle, W/m., & Indreas, L. (2003). Child labor and associated problems in a rural town in Southwest Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Public Health Associations*, 17 (1), 45 - 52.
- ACRWC. (2002). *African charter on the rights and welfare of the child*.
- Alebachew Adem. (2009). My shop is my school: Children's perspectives on work and school in a multi-ethnic town in Southern Ethiopia. In S. Ege, H. Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, 1013 – 1024.
- Alemayehu, H. (2012). The pattern and practices of play among practitioners working with children in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research*, 1(11), 28 – 42.
- Ayele, T. (2007). Growing up in towns and countryside in Amhara society. In E. Poluha (Ed.), *The world of girls and boys in rural and urban Ethiopia*, 67 - 92. Forum for Social Studies and Save the Children.
- Bluebond-Langner, M., & Korbin, J. E. (2007). Challenges and opportunities in the anthropology of childhoods: An introduction to "children, childhoods, and childhood studies". *American Anthropologist*, 109(2), 241-246.
- Bourdillon, M. (2006). Children and work: A review of current literature and debates. *Development and Change*, 37(6), 1201–1226.

- Boyden, J. (1997). Childhood and the policy makers: A comparative perspective on the globalization of childhood. In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (pp. 190-229). Routledge.
- Boyden, J. (2013). We're not going to suffer like this in the mud": Educational aspirations, social mobility, and independent child migration among populations living in poverty. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43(5), 580-600.
- Boyden, J., Ling, B., & Myers, W. (1998). *What works for working children?* UNICEF/Save the Children.
- Brhanu, N. (2010). Efficacy of play therapy on self-healing and enhancing life-skills of children under difficult circumstances: The case of two orphanages in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences*, 6(2), 1 - 9.
- Camfield, L. (2011). Every household is different: Meanings of well-being and children's time-use in three Ethiopian communities. *Children's Geographies*, 9(2), 219-231.
- Camfield, L. (2011). Each night I am crying': Children's experiences of risk and vulnerability in Ethiopia. *Children & Society*, 25(6), 387-399.
- Camfield, L. (2012). Resilience and well-being among urban Ethiopian children: What role do social resources and competencies play? *Soc. Indic. Res.*, 107, 393 - 410. doi: 10.1007/s11205-011-9860-3
- Chuta, N. (2007). Conceptualizations of children and childhood in Bishoftu, Oromia. In E. Poluha (Ed.), *The world of girls and boys in rural and urban Ethiopia*, 119 - 156. Forum for Social Studies and Save the Children.
- CRC. (1989). *The United Nations convention on the rights of the child*. UN General Assembly Document A/Res/44/25.
- Dereje, G. (1996). ደረጃ ገብሬ። (አ.ኤ.አ. 1996)። በልጆች ላይ የሚገኙ ምሳሌያዊ ንግግሮች ናሙናዊ የይዘት ትንተና፤ በአማርኛ፣ በአሮምኛና በትግሬኛ ምሳሌነት። In Habtamu Wondimu (Ed.), *Research papers on the situations of children and adolescents in Ethiopia*, 175 - 198. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Printing Press.
- Farver, J., Kim, Y., & Lee-Shinn, Y. (2000). Within cultural differences: Examining individual differences in Korean American and European American preschoolers' social pretend play. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 31, 583-602.
- FDRE. (1995). *The constitution of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa.

- Holmes, R. (2001). Parental notions about their children's playfulness and children's notions of play in the United States and Hong Kong. In S. Reifel (Ed.), *Theory in context and out: Play & Culture Studies*, Vol. 3, 291–314.
- Holy Bible.(n.d.). *King James version*. China, Second printing Hendrickson publisher edition.
- International Labour Organization. (2017). *World report on child labor: Economic vulnerability, social protection, and the fight against child labor*. ILO.
- James, A., & Prout, A. (2015). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. Routledge.
- Kindergarten Curriculum. (1998 E.C). *የአገሪቱ ህጻናት ትምህርት መርሃ ትምህርት (ተሻሻሎ የቀረብ)። (1998 ዓ.ም) ። አዲስ አበባ፣ ሥ/ት/ዝ/ጥ/ም/ ኢኒስቲትዩት።*
- Lauer, M. L. (2011). Play deprivation: Is it happening in your school setting? *American Journal of Play*, 3 (4), 465 - 488. doi: 10.12738/estp.2014.5.2393
- Lauer, S. (2011). The impact of child labor on educational outcomes in Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Education & Sciences*, 6(1), 1–20.
- Miller, E., & Almon, J. (2009). *Crisis in the kindergarten: Why children need to play in school*. Report by the U.S. Alliance for Childhood, September, 42-45. Retrieved on March 18/2015, from [www.eddigest.com](http://www.eddigest.com)
- Ministry of Language, Culture and Sport (1982 E.C). (የኢትዮጵያ ቋንቋዎች አካዴሚ ባህልና ስፖርት ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር።) (1982 ዓ.ም)። *የአማርኛ ምሳሌያዊ ንግግሮች። (የመጀመሪያ እትም)። አዲስ አበባ። አርቲስቲክ ማተሚያ ቤት።*
- Morrow, V. (2010). Should the world really be free of child labour? Some reflections. *Childhood*, 17(4), 435-440.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (1994). *Children's life worlds: Gender, welfare and labour in the developing world*. Routledge.
- Noble Qur'an.(n.d.). *English translation of the meanings and commentary*. Madinah, K.S.A, Kink Fahd Complex.
- Pan, H. (1994). Children's play in Taiwan. In J. Roopnarine, J. Johnson, and F. Hooper (Eds.), *Children's play in diverse cultures*, 31–50.
- Pankhurst, A. (1992). *Resettlement and famine in Ethiopia: The villagers' experience*. Manchester University Press.
- Pankhurst, A., Crivello, G., & Tiumelissan, A. (2016). Children's work in family and community contexts: Examples from Young Lives Ethiopia. *Oxford Department of International Development Working Paper*.
- Pankhurst, R. (1992). *A social history of Ethiopia*. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- Papalia, D. & Olds, S. W. (1990). *A child's world: Infancy through adolescence*. (5th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

- Penn, H. (2010). Shaping the future: How human capital arguments about investment in early childhood are being used in poor countries. In N. Yelland (Ed.), *Contemporary perspectives on early childhood education*, 49 – 65. USA: New York, Open University.
- People in need Ethiopia. (2009). *A study on the situation of child labor in Ethiopia: Review of existing studies and brief assessment*. Addis Ababa. Unpublished material.
- Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pikunas, J. & Albrecht, E. (1961). *Psychology of human development*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Poluha, E. (2004). *The power of continuity: Ethiopia through the eyes of its children*. Uppsala: Nordic African Institute.
- Poluha, E. (2007). *The world of girls and boys in rural and urban Ethiopia*. Forum for Social Studies.
- Quere, V. & Conticini, A. (2013). A paradigm shift in psychological services for vulnerable children: Clinical outcomes in the use of play and creative art therapies in Ethiopia. Play Therapy Africa. Unpublished project report.
- Sahlu, H. (1970). *Play and games in Addis Ababa*. Unpublished Senior Essay Submitted to Department of Elementary Education, Hilesellassie I University.
- Samuelsson, I. P. & Johansson, E. (2006). Play and learning - inseparable dimensions in preschool practice. *Early Child Development and Care*, 176 (1), 47–65. doi: 10.1080/0300443042000302654
- Santrock, J. W. (2006). *Life-span development* (10th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Save the Children Sweden. (2011). Corporal punishment of children in Ethiopia: Desk review. Ethiopia: Addis Ababa. Unpublished report.
- Smith, P. K. (2010). *Children and play*. United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Uzgiris, I. C., & Bornstein, M. H. (2002). Play in parent - child interactions. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Being and becoming a parent*, 5, 221-241. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Tassew, W., Bekele, T., Jones, N., & Abel, B. (2010). *Child labor, gender inequality and rural/urban disparities: how can Ethiopia's national development strategies best address negative spill-over impacts on child education and well-being?* Young Lives Ethiopia.
- Tilahun, S. (2002). Beyond the pyramid: Some issues of childhood in Ethiopia. *Institute of Educational Research Flambeau*, 9 (2), 47 - 58.
- United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. UN General Assembly.

- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Woodhead, M. (1998). *Children's perspectives on their working lives: A participatory study in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua*. A report from the Radda Barnen Project.
- Woodhead, M. (1999). Reconstructing developmental psychology-some first steps. *Children & Society*, 13(1), 3–19.
- Woodhead, M. (2009). Childhood studies: Past, present and future. In *Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., & Honig, M.-S. (Eds.), The Palgrave handbook of childhood studies* (pp. 17-28). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yeshanew, Y. T. (2024). Cultural influences on child development in Ethiopia: Perspectives from cultural experts. *Authorea*.  
<https://doi.org/10.22541/au.170663703.32273472/v1>