

**8th Conference of the International  
Society for Child Indicators  
Oral Presentation**

**Time use among children home alone in Khomas region, Namibia**

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Theme: Child poverty, inequality and child welfare research

Subtheme: Child care arrangements

### **Thematic importance**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) enshrines children's rights to care, play, and participation in family and social life. How these materialize when children are unsupervised by adults has been poorly studied, thus hindering decision-making and further research.

### **Introduction and objectives**

Spending time without adult supervision is a common practice for schoolchildren worldwide. Typically, boys and girls tend to differ in terms of their experiences being home alone, with cultural implications on their use of their free time. While most of the existing studies on children's experience of being home alone consider Western populations, few/no studies explore children's experiences staying home alone in African countries, specially in Namibia. Therefore, this study describes differences in the free time of boys and girls living in Namibia who have experienced staying home alone.

### **Method**

Participants of this study were 778 students who answered yes to the question "Have you ever stayed home alone?". Their ages varied from 10 to 14 years ( $M = 12.16$ ;  $SD = .79$ ), 59.5% identified themselves as girls and 40.5% as boys. Instruments They also completed 14 items concerning the frequency of children's out-of-school activities (helping around the house, taking care of brothers/sisters/other family, working with family, doing other work (not family), having classes after school, doing homework, going to religious places, watching tv, doing sports/exercise, relaxing, talking having

fun with family, playing outside, using social media, playing electronic games, doing nothing/resting). Answers ranged from 0 (never) to 5 (every day). Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test differences between boys and girls and their frequency of free time activities.

### **Results**

The frequency of helping around the house and doing homework was higher for girls than for boys. Boys had significantly higher means for time spent working with and without family, watching tv, doing sports/exercise, playing outside, using social media, and playing electronic games. For all other activities there were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls.

### **Conclusions and implications**

Results indicate significant differences amongst boys and girls who stay home alone, when it comes to their use of time. Whereas girls seem to be more directed to fulfil domestic and educational responsibilities, boys may be encouraged to engage in work, but also to have fun. The risks and implications for healthy development associated with these behaviours need to be addressed in the context of gendered norms and expectations.