social sciences

MDPI

Article

Parents' Perspectives on Children's Independent Mobility in Selected Rural Towns in South Africa: A Human Capabilities Perspective

Chinyakata Rachel *, Nicolette Vanessa Roman, Shelley Ann Vickerman and Gift Taruwandira Donga

Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of Children, Family and Society, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town 7535, South Africa
* Correspondence: chin.rachie@gmail.com

Abstract: A child's independent mobility is essential to their social, emotional physical, and cognitive development and provides children the opportunity to explore and experience their environment. The freedom of free movement and security from all forms of harm is necessary for achieving the capability of bodily integrity which is one of the essential capabilities necessary for well-being. Despite this, research on child independent mobility in Africa remains limited. Hence, this paper focuses on parents' perspectives on children's independent mobility in rural towns in South Africa to understand the factors that enhance or impede children's independent mobility. This is essential in suggesting guidelines and recommendations to promote the independent mobility of children in South Africa. A qualitative methodology was used as the research approach to guide the collection and analysis of the data. Data were collected from a sample of parents in the community and thematically analysed in ATLAS.ti. From this study, it can be noted that parents were not comfortable with the independent movement of their children due to the issues of safety around the community. This led to the restricted movement of children, supervised movements, accompaniment of children to school, and organising transport to ferry children to and from school. This study, therefore, calls for the involvement of stakeholders from various levels to develop and implement strategies to promote safe and child-friendly environments in the community. This is essential in enhancing and restoring a child's independent mobility.

Keywords: bodily integrity; independent mobility; safety; children's well-being

check for updates

Citation: Rachel, Chinyakata, Nicolette Vanessa Roman, Shelley Ann Vickerman, and Gift Taruwandira Donga. 2022. Parents' Perspectives on Children's Independent Mobility in Selected Rural Towns in South Africa: A Human Capabilities Perspective. *Social Sciences* 11: 540. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11120540

Academic Editor: Nigel Parton

Received: 6 September 2022
Accepted: 16 November 2022
Published: 22 November 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

The Capabilities approach is a contemporary theory of justice developed in the 1980s by Amartya Sen (an economist) and Martha Nussbaum (a philosopher) (Josefsson 2016; Hananel and Berechman 2016). This approach offers an alternative measure of human development deviating from those concentrating on crude economic indicators which do not account for well-being and quality of life (Bloodworth 2006). Due to its influence on the design of policies and its practicality, the human capabilities approach provides inspiration for the United Nations (UN) human development index (UNDP 2016).

The capabilities approach provides insight into what kind of life is dignified enough to be truly human and provides a philosophical underpinning of basic constitutional principles that are essential and should be implemented and respected globally by the governments of all nations as a bare minimum requirement for human dignity (Vashist 2010). This approach, therefore, focuses on what an individual can achieve if provided with certain opportunities or primary goods (Hananel and Berechman 2016). The main notions in the capability approach are "functioning" and "capability". Functioning encompasses those things that an individual can value being and doing such as being healthy, being able to play and being safe, being able to move whilst capabilities are an individual's freedoms to achieve functioning (UNDP 2016; Sahoo and Pradhan 2020). In order to

determine a dignified social minimum in a variety of areas, Nussbaum proposed a list of basic human capabilities with ten separate components that are distinct but equally important and depend on each other (Vashist 2010). According to Nussbaum, every individual must be guaranteed realisation of a minimum basic level of the ten capabilities and one of these capabilities is "bodily integrity" which has to do with the "ability to have freedom of movement, security against violence, sexual satisfaction, and reproductive choice" (Nussbaum 2000, p. 78). Bodily integrity has to be protected in order to safeguard one's ability or the possibility of imagining the self as a whole (Vashist 2010). It cannot be something that one possesses but it's a process that needs protection and recognition from different parties including the legal system (Patosalmi 2009). This approach is particularly relevant to child independent mobility (CIM) and the safety of children, that is, in order for children to achieve their goals and functions, they have to have the autonomy to exercise their freedom of movement and be secure from all forms of assault. It also allows for the assessment of well-being and the freedom that one has to exercise certain functions according to personal preferences (Sen 1982).

Child independent mobility (CIM) refers to the use of public space and the free moment of children younger than the age of 18 years without being accompanied by an adult (Rudner 2012; Page et al. 2008). Kyttä et al. (2015); Bwire and Chacha (2011) describe child-independent mobility as the freedom or opportunity of the child to move around without any restrictions when outside the home without any adult accompaniment. Child-friendly environments involve the promotion of children's everyday freedoms which combines their ability to play, socialise and exercise (Williams et al. 2017). A child's independent mobility can be a foundation for their development and awards the children opportunities to explore and experience their environment (Lam and Loo 2014; Kyttä 2004; Tranter and Sharpe 2012; Carver et al. 2014; Veitch et al. 2006; Alparone and Pacilli 2012; Shaw et al. 2012). On the other hand, the reduced freedom of movement for children could have effects on their behavioural, cognitive, and physical development (Lam and Loo 2014). This could also affect the development of healthy lifestyles, social competency, resilience, and the relationship between children and their environment and subsequently, the development of children's sense of responsibility for their environment (Bwire and Chacha 2011). CIM also has lifelong benefits as it impacts one's mental and physical health later in life (Williams et al. 2017).

Although in some regions CIM is comparatively high, for example in Germany and Finland, overall research around the world on child's independent mobility indicates a sharp decline in CIM (Bhuyan and Zhang 2019; Shaw et al. 2015; Witten et al. 2013; McCurdy et al. 2010; Santos et al. 2013). For example, in the United States and the United Kingdom, child-independent mobility has reduced from 90% to 80% in the 1960/1970s to about 13.5% in the 1990s/2000s (Hillman 1990; Surface Transportation Policy Project 2003). A study Shaw et al. (2015) conducted in 16 countries to evaluate children's independent mobility indicated that South Africa was the country with the least CIM compared to other countries. This might be attributed to the issues of unsafe environments which are part of the South African reality (Schoeppe et al. 2015).

CIM is influenced by a number of factors including proximity, choice and availability of things to do, the presence of road crossings, children's age, gender, and perceptions of safety in both children and adults (Shaw et al. 2015; Behrens and Muchaka 2011). The environment can also determine a child's independent mobility, for example, a study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa, indicated that a child's independent mobility varied across communities, with children from high-income communities being granted fewer opportunities for independent mobility as compared to those from low-income communities (Behrens and Muchaka 2011). In many societies, children are not allowed to go out freely on their own compared as compared to previous generations (Lam and Loo 2014). Children's mobility is often under parental supervision or surveillance (Lam and Loo 2014).

Mobility restrictions stem from different reasons, including concerns over safety (Lam and Loo 2014; Hillman 1990; Carver et al. 2008), parents' view of social dangers

(Carver et al. 2008; Bwire and Chacha 2011), and practical reasons such as convenience or weather conditions and school-imposed restrictions (Bwire and Chacha 2011). Prohibiting children's independent mobility has mainly been on safety grounds (Lam and Loo 2014). Many parents are worried about having their children harmed by busy traffic and by strangers while travelling (Valentine 1997; Shaw et al. 2015). According to a study by Tyagi and Raheja (2021), parents remain gate-keepers for CIM and as such, their perception of the neighbourhood influences CIM. Parents' perception of harm from strangers and road safety are identified as major causes of parents' anxiety (Carver et al. 2008; Santos et al. 2013). Such concerns may contribute to the restriction of CIM by parents. Most areas in South Africa are considered to be unsafe with high incidents of crime and violence which affect the freedom of movement of individuals including adults (South African Police Service 2021; South African Government 2021). In 2021, South Africa saw a 60.6% increase in crime rates, this included an increase in crimes such as rape, murder, and assault among others (South African Government 2021). South African children experience high rates of violence (Ward et al. 2018). Another study conducted in South Africa revealed that children who walk to school feel vulnerable to abductions, physical, verbal and sexual violence, crime, bullying, and even murder (Ngidi et al. 2021). In Cape Town, South Africa there has been a significant shift in the movement of children over the years. In 1976, 49% of their trips to school were on foot or by bicycle, 38% by car, and 13% by train or bus. Another survey conducted in 1992 shows that school trips by foot or bicycle had dropped to 38% whilst those using public transport to 9% and trips by car had risen to 52% (Behrens and Muchaka 2011). In 2009, data collected among nine participating schools in Rondebosch South Africa showed that the trips to school by foot or bicycle had declined to 8%, trips using public transport had declined to 3% and trips by car had increased to 87% (Behrens and Rensburg 2009). This indicates a significant decrease in children's free movement to school.

Narratives on CIM from developing countries remain limited and under-researched (Tyagi and Raheja 2021; Santos et al. 2013; Malone and Rudner 2011). Williams et al. (2017) also reiterated that there is limited research in Africa on CIM and child-friendly cities. Understanding the perceptions of parents towards CIM will support the development of interventions to promote CIM which is essential in enhancing children's well-being. Promoting greater independent mobility might help increase children's physical activity and help in avoiding missing out on the health benefits associated with physical activity (Janssen and LeBlanc 2010). Therefore, this study explores parents' perspectives on children's independent mobility in specific rural communities. This is essential in suggesting guidelines and recommendations to promote the independent mobility of children in South Africa.

2. Materials and Methods

The study made use of the qualitative approach to understand the parents' perspectives on children's independent mobility in the community. The study was conducted in Lamberts Bay and Caledon in the Western Cape Province, Calvinia, in the Northern Cape, and Philippolis in the Free State Province. All four areas are rural towns in South Africa. Participants were parents of one or more children younger than the age of 18 years at the time of the interviews and these were selected using purposive sampling. 61 adults who are parents (26 from Calvinia, 14 from Lamberts Bay, 6 from Caledon, and 15 from Philippolis) participated in this study.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the parents who were selected for inclusion in this study. An interview guide was developed beforehand based on Nussbaum's concept of bodily integrity. The interview contained questions to guide the conversation but probes were also used as follow-ups to the parents' responses. This was essential in obtaining in-depth information from the respondents. The interview guide, consent forms, and information sheets were translated into English and Afrikaans which were the predominant languages in the four areas. Interviews were also conducted in these two areas. The length of the interviews was between 15 and 40 min. Some of the questions

that were asked include: In your opinion, how safe do you feel in your community? How do you feel about your safety and movements in your area? What do you think of the safety and movements of your children? Do you allow your children to move around alone in your neighbourhood (to the school play, etc.)? What are some of your concerns when it comes to the unaccompanied movement of your children?

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's Research Ethics Committee. The research team was trained on the protocol, the purpose of the study, procedures to collect data, data collection instruments, and ethical considerations. All the researchers that were involved in the research had previous research experience and were either pursuing their Master's or PhD. The team was led by the South African Research Chair in Human Capabilities, Social Cohesion, and the Family. The recruitment of parents was carried out by researchers going door to door asking parents older than 18 years to participate and also through community-based organisations. Before participation, the participants were given all the information about the purpose of the study, procedures and their rights in the participation process. After they had understood, they were asked to sign a consent form as a sign of consenting to the participation in the study. The participants' personal details were masked by using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The proceedings of the interview were audio recorded and these recordings were transcribed and translated verbatim using professional services in preparation for analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data inductively. Two researchers were involved in the analysis of the data, and the data were analysed in ATLAS.ti. The process began with the researchers familiarising themselves with the data by repeatedly reading the transcripts. Following this was the generation of codes and reviewing of codes. Thereafter, themes were generated through clustering different codes. These themes were further refined, merged, named, and defined. Subsequently, the analysis report was generated and the themes were presented. From the analysis, a number of themes were developed including the perception of safety and protection in the community, the safety of children, freedom of movement and choice, children's independent mobility, factors affecting children's independent mobility, and strategies to keep children safe. For the purpose of this study, we only included parents' perceptions of the children's mobility and factors affecting children's independent mobility.

Credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The interview guides were translated by language experts into the language the parents understood to ensure the credibility of the data and parents were allowed to respond in those languages. To ensure the transferability of the findings, the parents were purposefully selected and the inclusion criteria were adhered to in order to make sure that the findings were representative of the selected population. Dependability was achieved by having data analysed by different researchers and inconsistencies were discussed and rectified.

3. Results

This section presents the results of parents' perspectives on children's independent mobility in the four communities. Two main themes are presented in this paper which are: (1) Parents' perspectives on the freedom of movement of children which has to do with parents' views on the liberty/freedom of their children's movement from one place to another within their communities and (2) Factors contributing to reduced/lack of independent mobility which explains the reasons why there is perceived reduced children's independent mobility in the studied communities.

3.1. Parents' Perspectives on the Freedom of Movement of Children

This theme presents the data on parents' perception of the freedom of movement of their children and issues of children's immobility. The results from the study denote that most of the parents felt unsafe about their children moving around. Parents described that

they are always worried when their children are outside the home environment and they felt that children could not move freely without experiencing any harm. The likelihood of something bad happening to the child was considered to be very high consequently resulting in their uneasiness. The following statements by the parents describe how they felt uncomfortable with their children moving alone to an extent that they accompanied their children to all the places where they needed to be:

> *Um, you know, then, if my child moves I need to be with . . . If he goes to the shop, I must go with, if he goes to the toilet, I must go with . . .* (Int_Phil_F34yrs)

> *I just want them to be by me because for me that is where they are the safest, under my eye. There are other people but another person won't look after your child like you. From work I am with my children until I go to sleep. If they want to go to someone else then I will go there and sit there for the little bit he plays there. And then there was a time where the drains were open so you had to watch them the whole time.* (Int_Phil_F29yrs)

> *I do not really let them go far away from me, I will also need to see where they are playing. I will have to lock the gate. Let them play in the yard, not far away from me.* (Int_Phil_F26yrs)

The statements by the parents reveal their fear of their children's safety in environments outside the home which limits the independent mobility of children. Children were indicated only to be safe to move when they are under their parents' watch. Additionally, parents felt that they are the only people who can protect their children, which shows evidence of distrust in other people or adults around them in protecting children that are not their own. As such, they keep watch of their children all the time and accompany them to the shops, playgrounds, and other public spaces. This limits the freedom of movement for children due to the fact that without the supervision of parents they cannot move from one place to other without fear of something bad happening to them. When parents are not available to take them to escort them, they are forced to be stagnant.

Furthermore, some of the parents allowed their children to move around without any supervision but they felt that it is not safe for them to move around. This is supported by the statements by some parents who allowed children to walk to school and sports but felt that it was dangerous to do so as anything could happen to the child at any time. The parents indicated this in the following manner:

> *No it's not safe, at all. She can walk when she is going to school because everybody on that time is on move, work, to school, whatever. She is under control nuh, and then most of us, we don't like our children to move alone to school, we hire transport, that they must be taken from home to school and from school to home and then when she is moving alone. . .* (Int_LB_F42yr)

> *No I am very nervous, a person can never be top careful, so I go and fetch, I have transport to fetch my one daughter and drop her in front of the door and my son I also have someone fetches him and takes him to school when I work, so I don't trust.* (Int_LB_F39yrs)

> *My son he always play soccer till late at the hostel and it's almost out of the town. He practice soccer at the white building . . . . . Yes he walks home I always tell him to ask the guy to bring him home because he does not know what is between the bushes and it unsafe and he comes home late especially when they have a soccer meeting.* (Int_Phil_F51yrs)

The above indicates that children in this community cannot move freely from one place to another due to the issues of safety in the community. This has led some parents to opt for assistance from other adults to accompany their children or hire transport in order to transport children between school and home. Although this is a good gesture to ensure the safe movement of children to and from school, some parents may not be able to afford this leaving the children from those families with no option but to walk in the unsafe streets to school. Furthermore, transporting children to and from school also impedes their ability to walk freely as they cannot move independently even over short distances due to safety concerns.

Additionally, parents explained that they were not comfortable with their children being out for long periods and at certain times. This is described by the responses of some of the parents below:

> *I know she's going to shop, okay its 15 minutes, after 15 minutes then I must know okay get up and look where she is now….. Maybe she can be raped because or maybe she can be taken away, I don't know, you see.* (Int_LB_F42yrs)

> *If he's outside, I know he's not always safe but I always look, I always take care and I always check the time when she must be inside or when he must be inside.* (Int_LB_F46yrs)

In places where it is highly unsafe, parents are anxious about the whereabouts of their children all the time. As pointed out by the quotations above, parents are often uneasy when their children are out of the home for longer periods than expected or at certain times. This is a result of their perceived level of safety in their community which makes them worry about the safe movement of their children. Whenever children do not return home in time parents start thinking of the possibility that something bad has happened to them.

3.2. Factors Contributing to Reduced/Lack of Independent Mobility

This theme relates to parents' concerns about dangers outside the home environment which contributes to the reduced or limited independent mobility of children. Most parents brought to light the issues related to the fear for their children's safety and well-being due to the unsafeness of the external environment. Unsafe streets/spaces characterised by drunk driving, substance abuse, gangsterism, and kidnapping are a stark reality.

3.2.1. Unsafe Spaces

The mobility of children is dependent on their safety when they are outside the home environment. The results of the current study suggest that the issue of unsafe spaces is one of the factors contributing to the anxiety of parents in allowing their children to move around or play in spaces outside the home thus resulting in reduced CIM or confined mobility. Some of the parents mentioned this as follows:

> *It's just that parents of today need to look after their children, especially with all the evils. It's very bad to see it. Like, the smoking, coming home late at night and drinking. The children are being trained in that environment from a young age by people to do these things especially at the shebeens and so on.* (Int_Cal_F35yrs)

> *Oh, it isn't very safe here. Here's a lot who uses drugs and a person doesn't know how far they will go so a person should be careful…they uhm, like in drunk and driving and fighting among one another if they have a misunderstanding.* (Int_LB_F39yrs)

> *I would prefer to get out of here and go to a better and quieter place where you can let your children play and, how shall I say, not have to worry about where they are. You will know where they are. But here you can't let them go and play or let them go around the corner…the area is not child-friendly.* (Int_Cal_F32yrs)

The above indicates that limited freedom for young people's mobility is due to the issue of unsafe streets and a lack of safe spaces for children to play and have fun. Due to the lack of recreational facilities in the community, the only places children can play are in the home and in the streets. Nevertheless, these streets are reported to be dangerous because of cars moving around, reports of drunk and driving, gangsterism, and the illegal trade of illicit substances which puts the child at risk of being harmed or ending up involving themselves in dangerous activities that they will be exposed to. This makes parents prevent the independent mobility of their children so as to protect them from experiencing any form of harm or accidents and involvement in gangsterism or substance abuse.

3.2.2. Kidnappings

Fear of children being kidnapped was one of the factors mentioned by the parents that impede their children's independent movement. One parent explained his concern over the kidnappings that take place in their community in the following manner:

> *Well, I am quite concerned about that because nowadays children are abducted, especially where they are moving about alone. Even at schools. Our schools here do not have security. So when your child walks out the school gate you are not sure whether your child will get home—most of the time—because if the child, for example, leaves school at two o'clock and he is not home within 15 minutes, you get very nervous and concerned. Where is he? Where is he playing?* (Int_Cal_M50yrs)

> *One just tries not to lose one's mind. You just hope and trust every time that your child will arrive home safely. I have the ability to protect myself, but what about that kid. He doesn't have the mindset of, okay, I need to run, or I need to make a noise so that I can get the attention of someone else. You see. It's just like…* (Int_Cal_M50yrs)

Some of the parents reported children being kidnapped when they are unsupervised outside the home, at school, or on their way from school, especially when the streets are quiet. People perceive the absence of adults as an opportunity to kidnap or harm children. Such a scenario as mentioned by the parent leads to their reluctance in permitting the independent mobility of their children in their community. Thus, leading to the confinement of children to the home environment or making sure that children are accompanied to and from school. Confinement in one environment might not be conducive for some children because of the limited space which restricts their independent mobility.

4. Discussion

CIM provides children with the opportunity to create, explore and gain mastery over their physical and social environments, which is significant in developing healthy lifestyles, social networks, and environmental competence (McMillan 2005; Malone and Rudner 2011). According to the human capability theory, freedom of movement is essential in achieving bodily integrity which is one of the central capabilities necessary for well-being (Nussbaum 2000). As a particular aspect of an individual's welfare, children's independent mobility should be enhanced for the healthy development of children. This study set out to explore parents' perspectives on children's independent mobility in selected rural areas.

Although evidence suggests that a child's independent mobility is associated with many benefits necessary for the healthy development of children, many parents felt unsafe for their children to move around without the company of a trusted adult. Fear of harm from strangers or distrust of others in the community led parents to keep watch over their children when playing and also to accompany them to and from school. This finding is in line with other studies which indicated parental anxiety when it comes to their children being alone in public spaces (Carver et al. 2008; Santos et al. 2013). Furthermore, data revealed that independent child mobility has been decreasing with generations (Santos et al. 2013; Bhuyan and Zhang 2019; Shaw et al. 2015; Witten et al. 2013) for example, findings from a study conducted in Hong Kong on the determinants of children's independent mobility found out that children could not move freely compared to their parents or grandparents (Lam and Loo 2014). Such change results in adverse effects on the behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and physical development of children (Malone and Rudner 2011; Prezza et al. 2005).

The findings of this study specified that there was decreased independent mobility for most of the children in the area as children would be accompanied to school or parents would organise transport to ferry the children to and from school. In another study conducted in Cape Town, the parents indicated the exposure of children walking to school to road crashes, stranger harm, crime, and molestation (Behrens and Muchaka 2011). This affected the parents' attitude towards children's independent mobility. To support this, road casualties among children are indicated to be high. In 2018, pedestrians accounted

for 39% of reported fatalities in South Africa with a very high share of children among road casualties. Children are very much affected by road crashes in South Africa and are particularly vulnerable as pedestrians (International Transport Forum 2019). Another study conducted in the Western Cape Province indicates that in 2007, 31% of pedestrian road fatalities were children aged 17 years or less, and 16% were children aged 10 years or less (Vanderschuren and Jobanputra 2010). This shows the high rates of children being knocked down by a car, and this confirms the reluctance of the parents in allowing their children to travel unaccompanied. The four studied communities were highlighted as unsafe and having high crime rates, substance abuse, gangsterism, and unsafe streets. Substance abuse rates in South Africa continue to grow each year with the country being among the 20 top countries that are highly consuming alcohol (Mbandlwa and Dorasamy 2020). Substance abuse is associated with several negative outcomes such as crime and road accidents (Ritchie and Roser 2018). Furthermore, in Cape Town alone, according to recent statistics, there were a total of 83 murders reported in 7 days in September 2022 and a total of 32 kidnappings recorded from March 2022 to September 2022 (Stoltz 2022). This shows the high incidence of crime in South Africa. For these reasons, parents restricted their children from moving or playing around without any supervision. The licence to move around for children is mainly granted by their parents on the basis of perceived security and risk (Tyagi and Raheja 2021; Behrens and Muchaka 2011; Santos et al. 2013). In this case, most parents did not permit their children to go out unaccompanied. The unaccompanied movement of children was met with anxiety from the parents for as long as the child is out. Other studies conducted also corroborate these findings, for example, a study by Lam and Loo (2014) indicated that most children's mobility is under the surveillance or supervision of parents. This is reflected by many parents escorting their children to school, and play areas, keeping children on guard or locked indoors ,and restricting them from leaving home as a way of protecting them (Lam and Loo 2014; Behrens and Muchaka 2011). The restriction of children's mobility due to fear of harm impedes one's ability to achieve bodily integrity which is a necessary capability for the well-being of children. As such bodily integrity has to be protected in order to realise the holistic well-being of children (Nussbaum 2000; Patosalmi 2009).

5. Recommendations

CIM is an important part of the well-being and development of children. Ensuring children's opportunities for independent mobility helps them build competencies and develop capabilities needed in achieving functioning in other spheres of life. Therefore, bringing to an end the decline in CIM and safeguarding CIM should be a common concern of a variety of stakeholders, including the family, social, health, school, cultural, youth work, recreation, real estate, and environmental sectors.

Measures to reduce crime in the community such as stricter punishment of perpetrators, community patrols, and safe spaces where children can move and play without any fear of danger should be the focus of the community members, community leaders, stakeholders, and government and non-governmental sectors. There is a need for psychosocial strategies/interventions in the community through the involvement of different stakeholders targeting all individuals in the society so as to reduce some of the factors that exacerbate crime and substance abuse which are some of the factors linked to reduced independent mobility. Campaigns to promote social cohesion in the community are also essential to encourage oneness, coexistence, and the spirit of protecting each other, especially the children in the community. Realistic strategies should be developed and implemented to promote CIM and remove all the barriers. Monitoring and evaluating the impact and continuous improvement of such plans should be prioritised.

Children's independent mobility could be improved by implementing stringent road safety measures, mapping paths for children to cross roads so that they do not encounter traffic, and ensuring that children's needs are taken into consideration during spatial

planning and development. Such will assist in giving the children an opportunity to have independent mobility which is important in realising the bodily integrity capability.

Furthermore, there is a need for the development of informed policies that prioritise children's needs and safety in the community. There is also a need to review the already existing policies' role in advocating for children's independent mobility. Reviews also help to identify gaps that could be addressed in order to promote independent mobility.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, N.V.R. and S.A.V.; formal analysis, C.R.; methodology, C.R.; writing—original draft preparation, C.R. and G.T.D.; writing—review and editing, N.V.R., C.R. and G.T.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This work was funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF), grant numbers 118581, 115460, 118551, and 129581. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NRF.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was ethically approved by the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HS 20/4/29).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [C.R.] on request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest.

References

Alparone, Francesca Romana, and Maria Giuseppina Pacilli. 2012. On children's independent mobility: The interplay of demographic, environmental, and psychosocial factors. *Children's Geographies* 10: 109–22. [CrossRef]

Behrens, Roger, and J. Van Rensburg. 2009. *Results of a Feasibility Study on Non-motorised Travel Initiatives among selected Rondebosch Schools*. Rondebosch Schools Non-Motorised Transport Initiative. ACET Project 11: School Travel Planning. Working Paper 11-01. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Behrens, Roger, and Patrick Muchaka. 2011. Child independent mobility in South Africa: The case of Cape Town and its hinterland. *Global Studies of Childhood* 1: 167–84. [CrossRef]

Bhuyan, Md Rashed, and Ye Zhang. 2019. Diversity of Children's Independent Mobility in Dhaka. *Urbanisation* 4: 59–76. [CrossRef]

Bloodworth, Andrew. 2006. Nussbaum's "capabilities approach". *Nursing Philosophy* 7: 58–60. [CrossRef]

Bwire, Hannibal, and P. Chacha. 2011. An Assessment of Factors Affecting the Independent Mobility of Children in Dar Es Salaam. Paper presented at 30th Southern African Transport Conference (SATC 2011), Pretoria, South Africa, July 11–14.

Carver, Alison, Anna Timperio, and David Crawford. 2008. Playing it safe: The influence of neighbourhood safety on children's physical activity—A review. *Health & Place* 14: 217–27.

Carver, Alison, Jenna R. Panter, Andrew P. Jones, and Esther M. F. van Sluijs. 2014. Independent Mobility on the Journey to School: A Joint Cross-sectional and Prospective Exploration of Social and Physical Environmental Influences. *Journal of Transport & Health* 1: 25–32.

Hananel, Ravit, and Joseph Berechman. 2016. Justice and transportation decision-making: The capabilities approach. *Transport Policy* 49: 78–85. [CrossRef]

Hillman, Mayer. 1990. *One False Move: A Study of Children's Independent Mobility*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

International Transport Forum. 2019. *Road Safety Annual Report 2019 South Africa*. Available online: https://www.itf-oecd.org/road-safety-annual-report-2019 (accessed on 10 June 2022).

Janssen, Ian, and Allana G. LeBlanc. 2010. Systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school-aged children and youth. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 7: 40. [CrossRef]

Josefsson, Jonathan. 2016. Children's rights to asylum and the capability approach. *Ethical Perspectives* 23: 101–30.

Kyttä, Marketta. 2004. The extent of children's independent mobility and the number of actualized affordances as criteria for child-friendly environments. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 24: 179–98. [CrossRef]

Kyttä, Marketta, Jukka Hirvonen, Julie Rudner, Iiris Pirjola, and Tiina Laatikainen. 2015. The last free-range children? Children's independent mobility in Finland in the 1990s and 2010s. *Journal of Transport Geography* 47: 1–12. [CrossRef]

Lam, Winnie W. Y., and Becky P. Y. Loo. 2014. Determinants of children's independent mobility in Hong Kong. *Asian Transport Studies* 3: 250–68.

Malone, Karen, and Julie Rudner. 2011. Global perspectives on children's independent mobility: A socio-cultural comparison and theoretical discussion of children's lives in four countries in Asia and Africa. *Global Studies of Childhood* 1: 243–59. [CrossRef]

Mbandlwa, Zamokuhle, and Nirmala Dorasamy. 2020. The impact of substance abuse in South Africa: A case of informal settlement communities. *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7. [CrossRef]

McCurdy, Leyla E., Kate E. Winterbottom, Suril S. Mehta, and James R. Roberts. 2010. Using nature and outdoor activity to improve children's health. *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care* 40: 102–17. [CrossRef]
McMillan, Tracy E. 2005. Urban form and a child's trip to school: The current literature and a framework for future research. *Journal of Planning Literature* 19: 440–56. [CrossRef]
Ngidi, Ndumiso Daluxolo, Relebohile Moletsane, and Zaynab Essack. 2021. "They abduct us and rape us": Adolescents' participatory visual reflections of their vulnerability to sexual violence in South African townships. *Social Science & Medicine* 287: 114401.
Nussbaum, Martha. 2000. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
Page, Angie S., Ashley R. Cooper, Pippa Griew, Laura Davis, and Melvyn Hillsdon. 2008. Independent mobility in relation to weekday and weekend physical activity in children aged 10–11 years: The PEACH project. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 6: 2. [CrossRef]
Patosalmi, Mervi. 2009. Bodily Integrity and Conceptions of Subjectivity. *Hypatia* 24: 125–41. [CrossRef]
Prezza, Miretta, Francesca Romana Alparone, Carmela Cristallo, and Secchiano Luigi. 2005. Parental perception of social risk and of positive potentiality of outdoor autonomy for children: The development of two instruments. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 25: 437–53. [CrossRef]
Ritchie, Hannah, and Max Roser. 2018. Alcohol Consumption. Available online: https://ourworldindata.org/alcohol-consumption (accessed on 11 October 2021).
Rudner, Julie. 2012. Public knowing of risk and children's independent mobility. *Progress in Planning* 78: 1–53. [CrossRef]
Sahoo, Madhulika, and Jalandhar Pradhan. 2020. Reproductive health care status of the displaced tribal women in India: An analysis using Nussbaum Central human capabilities. *Health Care for Women International* 42: 1–30. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
Santos, Maria Paula, Andreia N. Pizarro, Jorge Mota, and Elisa A. Marques. 2013. Parental physical activity, safety perceptions and children's independent mobility. *BMC Public Health* 13: 584. [CrossRef]
Schoeppe, Stephanie, Mitch J. Duncan, Hannah M. Badland, Stephanie Alley, Susan Williams, Amanda L. Rebar, and Corneel Vandelanotte. 2015. Socio-demographic factors and neighbourhood social cohesion influence adults' willingness to grant children greater independent mobility: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health* 15: 690. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
Sen, Amartya. 1982. *Choice, Welfare and Measurement*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.
Shaw, Ben, Ben Fagan-Watson, Bjorn Frauendienst, Andreas Redecker, Tim Jones, and Mayer Hillman. 2012. *Children's independent mobility: A comparative study in England and Germany (1971–2010)*. London: Policy Studies Institute, University of Westminster, p. 47. Available online: https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/8z178/children-s-independent-mobility-a-comparative-study-in-england-and-germany-1971-2010 (accessed on 2 June 2022).
Shaw, Ben, Martha Bicket, Bridget Elliott, Ben Fagan-Watson, Elisabetta Mocca, and Mayer Hillman. 2015. *Children's Independent Mobility: An International Comparison and Recommendations for Action*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
South African Government. 2021. Minister Bheki Cele: Quarter One Crime Statistics 2021/2022. Available online: https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-bheki-cele-quarter-one-crime-statistics-20212022-20-aug-2021-0000 (accessed on 13 October 2022).
South African Police Service. 2021. South African Police Services: Annual Report 2020/2021. Available online: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202201/saps-annual-report-202021.pdf (accessed on 21 November 2021).
Stoltz, Eunice. 2022. Cape Town Has Had 83 Murders over Seven Days, 32 Kidnappings Since March. Available online: https://mg.co.za/news/2022-09-15-cape-town-has-had-83-murders-over-seven-days-32-kidnappings-since-march/ (accessed on 22 October 2022).
Surface Transportation Policy Project. 2003. Can't Get There from Here: The Declining Independent Mobility of California's Children and Youth, Surface Transportation Policy Project, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, Latino Issues Forum. Available online: http://www.transact.org/ca/Childrens_Report/Kids_Report.pdf (accessed on 22 October 2022).
Tranter, Paul, and Scott Sharpe. 2012. Disney-Pixar to the Rescue: Harnessing Positive Affect for Enhancing Children's Active Mobility. *Journal of Transport Geography* 20: 34–40. [CrossRef]
Tyagi, Megha, and Gaurav Raheja. 2021. Children's independent mobility licence and its association with the built and social environment: A study across neighbourhood typologies in Kolkata. *Children's Geographies* 19: 717–34. [CrossRef]
United Nations Development Programs (UNDP). 2016. Human Development Report: Human Development for Everyone. Available online: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf (accessed on 10 June 2022).
Valentine, Gill. 1997. Gender, children and cultures of parenting. *Growing Up in a Changing Urban Landscape* 4: 53–78.
Vanderschuren, Marianne, and Rahul Jobanputra. 2010. PROJECT REPORT: Phase II: BASELINE STUDY. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303305057_Phase_II_Road_Safety_Baseline_Study_for_the_Western_Cape_SA (accessed on 20 November 2022).
Vashist, Latika. 2010. Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach: Perils and promises. *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 52: 230–66.
Veitch, Jenny, Sarah Bagley, Kylie Ball, and Jo Salmon. 2006. Where do children usually play? A qualitative study of parents' perceptions of influences on children's active free-play. *Health Place* 12: 383–93. [CrossRef]
Ward, Catherine L., Lillian Artz, Lezanne Leoschut, Reshma Kassanjee, and Patrick Burton. 2018. Sexual violence against children in South Africa: A nationally representative cross-sectional study of prevalence and correlates. *The Lancet Global Health* 6: e460–68. [CrossRef]
Williams, Samuel, Hannah Wright, and Felicitas zu Dohna. 2017. *Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods*. London: Arup.
Witten, Karen, Robin Kearns, Penelope Carroll, Lanuola Asiasiga, and Nicola Tava'e. 2013. New Zealand Parents' Understandings of the Intergenerational Decline in Children's Independent Outdoor Play and Active Travel. *Children's Geographies* 11: 215–29. [CrossRef]