"We can't play baseball anymore because the lagoon overflowed": The leisure constraints for children living in an informal settlement in Colombia[1]

"Ya no podemos jugar al béisbol porque la laguna se desbordó": Los límites en el ocio de las niñas y los niños que viven en un asentamiento informal en Colombia

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Abstract

Research on children's leisure constraints in deprived contexts has been carried out through quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, the data come primarily from national surveys or children's parents' narrative accounts—only a few have considered children as research participants—. Consequently, parents, professionals, and researchers only know partially the constraints children experience on their leisure. Therefore, this research explores the leisure constraints of children living in an informal settlement in Colombia from their points of view under the Leisure Constraints Theory. This research found that children experience multiple structural and interpersonal constraints on their leisure beyond the lack of economic resources. Among these constraints, we found a unique leisure constraint for these children. In conclusion, our results showed that their parents' economic resources and the leisure offers prevent them from forming their leisure preferences, and leisure constraints prevent them from turning their favorite leisure activities into serious leisure experiences.

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Introduction

In 2000, Jackson developed the following question: "Will research on leisure constraints still be relevant in the twenty-first century?" (Jackson, 2000, 62). Although this question was asked over twenty years ago, researchers today find leisure constraints research —from a qualitative perspective— essential to discover the inequalities concerning leisure opportunities and to study the leisure of minority groups based on their place of residence, gender, nationality, and so on (Samdahl, 2005; Stodolska et al., 2019).

Therefore, this article explores the leisure constraints of school-age children living in a deprived context from their points of view under the Leisure Constraints Theory. Accordingly, we applied interviews, photos, drawings, and mock-ups with a group of children living in an informal settlement in Colombia. Based on their narrative accounts, we found that children experience structural constraints linked to their social and physical environment, their parents' lack of economic resources, and the lack of institutional support for their favorite leisure activities. Furthermore, household chores are structural constraints for girls especially.

Besides the previous limitations, we found interpersonal constraints related to children's position in society, where children's leisure is affected by adults' behavior. Although children find ways to engage in positive leisure experiences despite these constraints, such prevent children from forming their leisure preferences and turning their favorite leisure activities into serious leisure experiences, except for football.

Current research on children's leisure constraints
By going to the literature, most children's leisure constraints in deprived contexts have been studied from a quantitative lens where data come specially from national surveys in fields such as economy (Roelen et al., 2010) and politics (Liou, 2017). For example, Roelen et al. (2010) identified through a household survey that the most pressing areas children living in poverty in Vietnam are deprived of are drinking water, sanitation, and leisure. The latter considered as not having toys or books. Likewise, Liou (2017) proved that children in poverty in Taiwan were more likely to be deprived of leisure activities, through indicators of child poverty and social exclusion. These two examples show that the study of children's leisure constraints in a deprived context is not necessarily framed in the Leisure Constraints Theory, it does not use the expression "leisure constraints" and is out of the leisure studies field.

On the other hand, from a qualitative perspective, there have been initiatives revealing how social class influences youth activity participation, but from children's parents' point of view. For example, Bennett et al. (2012) found that working-class children in the United States participated less in structured activities than middle-class children, especially when they were outside the school. Besides, Outley and Floyd (2002) interviewed school-age children, but their focus was children's parents' strategies to provide them with leisure opportunities in a socially isolated neighborhood in the United States. Outley and Floyd (2002) found that the insecurity in their neighborhood, their parents' working hours and low incomes pushed their parents to turn to the extended family, the church, civic organizations, and after-school programs to provide children with leisure opportunities.

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Like the quantitative research endeavors, the study of children's leisure constraints from a qualitative perspective has been conducted out of the Leisure Constraints Theory. Although they provide valuable information, use of Leisure Constraints Theory from a qualitative perspective will help to provide children's experiences with limelight and to explore the different constraints children's experience on their leisure from their points of view.

Leisure Constraints Theory

Leisure constraints have been defined by Jackson (2005) as those factors affecting the formation of leisure preferences and preventing the participation and enjoyment of people in leisure activities. In (1991), Crawford, Jackson and Godbey proposed a hierarchical model of factors deterring the "pursuit of leisure activities". These factors are grouped in three named intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints. Intrapersonal constraints are related to individual factors, such as ethic of care, lack of self-entitlement, and lack of (perceived) self- skills. Additionally, interpersonal and structural constraints are related to interpersonal relationships, such as lack of appropriate partners, and "contextual analytic levels" respectively, such as lack of time for leisure activities, lack of recreational areas, excessive cost, and so on (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993).

Some examples of studies relying on the Leisure Constraints Theory —both as a theory or as a conceptual tool— from a qualitative perspective are research conducted by Stodolska et al. (2019) and Vandermeeschen et al. (2016). Stodolska et al. (2019), for example, developed an ecological model of constraints drawn on the constraints narrated by African Americans, Latin Americans and Asians in their access to the leisure programs provided by a district park. This model consists of four types of constraints: individual, interpersonal, contextual and systemic. Among the constraints experienced by the participants were the cost of leisure activities (individual), the insecurity of the area connecting their houses with the park (contextual), the lack of information about leisure programs (individual), language barriers (individual), discrimination (interpersonal), and their immigration status (systemic).

Additionally, Vandermeeschen et al. (2016) relied upon Jackson's (2005) theory on leisure constraints and Collins and Kay's (2014) theory on sports barriers to explore the constraints people in poverty experience in their sport participation. Collins and Kay (2014) divide these constraints into three types: structural, mediating and personal constraints. Structural constraints have to do with the social and physical factors in the environment, while mediating constraints refer to a person who decides who is in or out of a sport game. Besides, personal constraints relate to the lack of time, money, skills and so on of a person. According to their findings, poverty did not necessarily prevent participants from practicing in sports, but it reduced the variety of sports available and the opportunities they had.

Having as reference these two previous investigations and the Leisure Constraints Theory as a conceptual tool, this study explores how school-age children living in an informal settlement in Colombia experience constraints on their leisure and the implications of such for their leisure and lives.

Methodology

In this study, we turned to different qualitative methods given that our research participants were children. Among the methods used, we implemented group interviews, drawings, the photo-elicitation technique, and mock-ups to extract children's perceptions about their leisure constraints. Each of these methods

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prompted the divulgence of different and complementary information about children's leisure and lives. Regarding children's interviews, questions involved their families, their friends and their neighborhood. The following were the questions that elicited the most information about the constraints these children face on their leisure time:
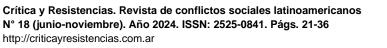
- What activities would you like to practice that you cannot?

- What do you think about your neighborhood?

- What do you think is needed in your neighborhood?

- What do you not like to do during your free time?

- What play, sport, or free time activity do you not feel interested in?

- What activities would you propose to a new neighborhood child to have fun?

- Why do you assist in the activities offered by civic organizations?

- What do you do during the break at school?

Later we used drawings to confirm children's verbal responses and to get extra information. Therefore, children were invited to draw the activities they do for fun and the activities they would like to practice but they cannot. Later, they explained their drawings. Such activity was preceded by the creation of mock-ups where children were invited to redesign a place they would like to improve in their neighborhood. To that end, children were provided with wooden sticks, play dough, glue, paint boxes, and paintbrushes for this activity. Children later explained why they wanted to renovate such places. In the last activity, children were provided with disposable cameras, where they were invited to take pictures according to the following questions:

- What do you do on weekends?
- What do you do after school?
- What bores you?
- What do you like or dislike the most about your neighborhood?
- What do you do during your free time?
- What do you like to do during your free time?

These last two questions make the difference between free time and leisure time, because having free time does not mean having leisure time. Children were explained how to use the cameras by taking some random pictures with and without the flash depending on the light. Some children were surprised because disposable cameras did not show the picture instantly as telephones do. Then children kept the camera for one week and took the pictures according to the questions' guidance. Next weekend, the children delivered the camera to the principal researcher who developed the pictures in a print shop.

Three weeks after the children received the cameras, they were invited to a subsequent interview where they saw their photos developed. Later, they described them and said why they had taken them (to know more about the advantages but also the ethical challenges of the photo-elicitation technique with these children, see (AUTORA)). Before these three activities, children received informed consent. Children also received the child assent form, where the purpose of the research, the activities in which children were invited to

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participate, and the gift they would receive for their participation (e.g., school materials) were described. It is worth mentioning that getting children's parents' signatures was complex because parents were rarely at home on weekends. They had to work to get daily sustenance.

Some mothers, volunteers, and the community leader were interviewed as well. Although their narrative accounts were not analyzed —because the study was focused on children as research participants— their responses provided us with more information about children's environment. Mothers, for instance, were asked about family activities during the weekend and the factors they thought were preventing their children from doing their favorite leisure activities in the neighborhood. Besides, they were asked about the reasons why they allowed their children to attend the activities provided by civic organizations and the activities they would like their children to practice. Finally, the community leader was asked about what he thought children needed to play with and have fun in the neighborhood.

Research context
The informal settlement where the research was conducted is located nearby Bogotá. Here, people displaced by the Colombian armed conflict and families from both rural and urban areas have settled down. Some of the reasons why these families arrived here are the high prices of the land inside the city, the little public housing, and better job opportunities in the city compared to the rural area. This informal settlement has been considered the area with the highest level of poverty surrounding the capital city, where houses have been self-built—some of them in landslide areas or without building approval—as have been the primary school and the leisure facilities.

This informal settlement is of approximately 628 houses where 3.000 families live. This had no playground but had a rudimentary soccer field built on sand, two churches, some bars, stores, and a community center—albeit all in very poor conditions—. For children, there is a wooden house for their activities, known by the children as TET. The semi-structured group interviews and drawings with the children were conducted in such wooden house.

Participants
Our participants were 14 children between 6 and 12 years of age. All these children attended school and participated in the activities offered by the different civic organizations in their neighborhood. These organizations offered football training and tournaments, handicrafts, and recreational and religious activities for no cost to children and their families. These activities were developed mainly during the weekends.

List of children's names (pseudonyms)	Age	Children's favorite leisure activities
Mario	11	Baseball
Mia	10	Skating, cheerleading, cooking, reading, writing fairytales on the computer
Lucia	9	Playing traditional games
Jimena	10	Playing traditional games
Lola	10	Playing traditional games
Lucas	8	Handicrafts, making castles

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		with the sand, going to amusement parks
Daniela	9	Playing with dolls, planting, making swings with recycled materials
Sergio	11	Soccer, going to amusement parks
Daniel	11	Going to the church
Pablo	10	Making kites with recycled materials, playing on the mobile phone
Marta	10	Playing in the computer
Mateo	8	Playing video games
Adrian	12	Watching T.V. and playing traditional games
Marcela	6	Playing with dolls

Table 1. Participating children and favorite leisure activities.
Source: elaborated by the author

Analyzing data

In order to analyze children's narrative accounts, their responses from the interviews and their descriptions of their drawings and pictures were first transcribed, and then two types of analysis were conducted. The first was an inductive analysis where labels were created based on what the children expressed. For this first analysis Descriptive and Emotional Coding were used. Descriptive Coding allows to inventory and organize the information, while the Emotions Coding allows to identify the feelings children may have experienced during their interviews, according to the intonation of their claims and their facial expressions (Fernández Núñez, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). This last codification was chosen since the purpose of this research is to know the children's subjective experiences about their leisure constraints.

In this context, the labels created from these two codifications were: leisure activities, reasons to like such activities, leisure constraints, strategies to deal with leisure constraints, leisure places, people and institutions involved, positive and negative opinions regarding the neighborhood and events of insecurity in the neighborhood. Both Descriptive Coding and Emotions Coding allowed a first analysis that was the basis of a later interpretative analysis. In this second analysis the labels of the previous codings, in addition to children's most outstanding and recurrent ideas were organized and interpreted based on predetermined categories taken from Leisure Constraints theory (Crawford et al., 1991).

The categories and subcategories developed based on Leisure Constraints Theory were the following:

(1) Category: Leisure Constraints
 Subcategories: structural constraints and intrapersonal constraints
(2) Consequences of leisure constraints

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The leisure constraints category was defined as the factors that constrain children's formation of leisure preferences and their participation and enjoyment in leisure activities (Jackson, 2005). This category was divided into structural and interpersonal constraints. The next category, Consequences of leisure constraints, point out the consequences of children experiencing leisure constraints for their leisure and children themselves. The following table shows the defined categories and subcategories of analysis, their description, and the themes worked on in each.

Category	Description	Subcategories	Theme
Leisure constraints	Factors that constrain children from forming their leisure preferences, as well as their participation and enjoyment in leisure activities	Structural constraints	**Physical and social environment** Living on a non-flat ground with limited space; poor quality of leisure facilities; there is no playground in the neighborhood for children; insecurity. **Lack of economic resources** **Lack of institutional support for leisure activities** **Assist with household chores for girls.**
		Intrapersonal constraints	**Children's position in society** Children are affected by the actions of adults; parents work on weekends.

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Consequences of leisure constraints	Consequences of children experiencing leisure constraints for their leisure and children themselves	Impossibility of forming leisure preferences by children.
		Impossibility of transforming children's favored leisure activities into serious leisure experiences

Table 2. Categories and subcategories of analysis.
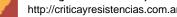Source: elaborated by the author

Analysis of photos and drawings

The photos taken by children and their drawings, although were not codified, were examined based on the questions articulated by Mathison and Freeman (2009) for analyzing visual data: "What is portrayed? And what common experiences are invoked?" Specifically, for the pictures, the question included, "What are the physical features of the image? And who or what is the setting?" (p.161). According to these authors, photographs are very useful because researchers can make argumentative claims about the analysis of the data based on these images. Klitzing (2004) also suggests some questions—questions she used to analyze the pictures taken by homeless women related to their leisure— that were considered to examine children's pictures: "What information was similar to the verbal interviews? And what information was added to the verbal interviews?"

Results

Although children living in informal settlements have meaningful leisure activities, they face different constraints on their leisure participation. Some of these constraints are structural type related to the physical and social environment, particularly living on not flat ground, the poor quality of leisure facilities, and insecurity. Lack of economic resources and institutional support, as well as household chores for girls, as structural constraints, limit the practice of children's favorite leisure activities as well. Additionally, these children face interpersonal constraints where childhood itself becomes a constraint on their leisure, especially when leisure occurs on the neighborhood's soccer field.

Although children participating in this investigation respond to their leisure constraints mostly by attending the activities offered by civic organizations, their leisure constraints prevent them from forming their leisure preferences and turning their favorite leisure activities into serious leisure experiences. Below, we present the constraints these children face on their leisure, supported by children's quotes, drawings, mock-ups, and photographs. Photographs taken inside children's homes were removed to protect children's and their families' privacy.

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Children's structural constraints
Constraints of the physical and social environment

Some of the constraints children face on their leisure are related to the poor condition of leisure facilities, insecurity, and living on a non-flat ground with limited space. This latter constraint became visible when we asked Mario, 11 years old, where he practiced baseball: "in the lagoon, [he referred to when the lagoon was dried up], but we cannot play baseball anymore because the lagoon overflowed" [see Figure 1].

Figure 1. The overflowed lagoon.
Source: photo taken by Mario

Afterward, he was asked if his parents allowed him to take out the baseball equipment and he replied, "they allow me, but I am scared because the ball leaves and gets lost if you hit the ball hard. It has to be on the grass, on something flat, big, where there is space". The same constraint came up when Lucía, 9 years old, explained a picture she had taken of some holes in the ground. She commented, "I don't like this in the neighborhood [see Figure 2], because when you are there, you can fall down. Everything was flat, but a man started taking out some rocks and the land collapsed. He started to dig and dig to find a pipe". What Lucía described may overlap with the following theme about children's position in society related to children's dependency not only on adults' economic resources but also on their actions.

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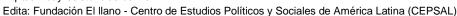Andrea Díaz Hernandez y Myriam Fernanda Torres

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Figure 2. Holes on the ground. Photo taken under the instruction: photograph what you don't like about your neighborhood.
Source: Photo taken by Lucía, 9 years old.

In Mia's 10-year-old explanation of her drawing, it can also be seen how some of her favorite leisure activities cannot be practiced because of the terrain in the neighborhood. Mia, 10 years old, drew herself skating when children were asked to draw the activities they would like to practice but cannot. When she explained her drawing, she exclaimed, "skating! Because here you cannot, but I can when I go down [she referred when she goes out from her neighborhood] [see Figure 3]".

Figure 3. Drawing of Mia skating.
Source: Drawing made by Mia, 10 years old.

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The children also mentioned the poor condition of the leisure facilities in the community that prevents them from enjoying their favorite leisure activities thoroughly. For instance, some children said that the sand covering the soccer field was not a healthy environment to play. Jimena, 10 years old, expressed it this way: "I am not allowed to go to the soccer field. My mom says is too dangerous and I can hurt myself. The field has a lot of sand and has not been fixed".

Others noted that the sand got into their nose, eyes, lungs, and feet producing them smelly feet. Hence, perhaps, some of the children put a "synthetic floor'" to their ideal soccer field when asked to create a mock-up of the place in the neighborhood they would like to improve. In the same activity, Jimena, 10, and Lola, 10, redesigned the TET [wooden house for children's activity in the neighborhood], as it is in a precarious condition. Jimena and Lola commented: "I want to improve the TET because if there is an earthquake or something God forbid, it can fall or when children are jumping" [see Figure 4].

Figure 4. Redesign of the wood house TET.
Source: mock-up elaborated by Jimena, 10 years old, and Lola, 10 years old.

Four of the five mock-ups designed by children were leisure facilities that they would like to improve. This proves the poor condition of the facilities they use for their leisure, which ends up constraining their enjoyment of their favorite leisure activities. Among the mock-ups, there were the redesign of the wooden house TET, three ideals soccer fields, and an ideal store. Another wish in improving these leisure facilities was to be able to share with the family. Lucas, 8 years old, said the following when he was invited to explain his mock-up "I wanted to improve the soccer field so that parents can come to watch [Lucas created some stands with wooden sticks] and enjoy along with them [with their children]".

Finally, insecurity is another of the constraints for these children's leisure. For example, Daniela, 9 years old, said that she was bored when her mother did not let her and her siblings go out. When asked why her mother did not let them go out, Daniela replied: "when we are locked up, it is because the other time they killed a person there on the fields we go to and also that day other people were fighting with the police, shooting".

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As discussed in this section, the physical and social environment constraints for these children's leisure are related to the low quality of leisure facilities and insecurity. In addition, living in a risky area, where the land is not uniform and the space is limited, seems to be a unique constraint for children in informal settlements compared to other children in contexts of poverty.

Lack of economic resources

As Jackson (2005) mentions, leisure constraints prevent the formation of leisure preferences. This assertion became tangible when children were asked about the activities they would like to practice but could not. Surprisingly, some children did not mention activities such as riding a bike or skating. When they were asked about these activities, Jimena, 10 years old, exclaimed, "if we had!" referring to a bike or skates. Then children started mentioning what they did not have. Lucas, 8 years old, even said, "neither a tablet".

They later explained that they did not have these sports objects because of their parents' lack of economic resources. Jimena said, "because there is no money. They [bikes] cost 70,000 pesos, and the new ones 150,000"4. On the other hand, Pablo, 10 years old, commented that his mother had not bought him or his sisters a bicycle for Christmas because his mother did not have the economic resources. This example shows that the things parents cannot afford may influence children's formation of leisure preferences. This category also coincides with the interpersonal constraint children's position in society, since children depend on their parents' economic resources and are affected by the actions of adults.
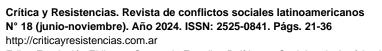
For example, when 9-year-old Daniela was asked what she found boring, she replied, "I get bored when I am locked up in the house". Then, she explained, "When my mom isn't paid, my mom doesn't like to go out and do not invite us something [answer to the question: why do you stay locked up? In this way, children's dependence on their parents' resources reduces the time children spend outdoors and their possibilities of doing an activity other than soccer or those offered by civic organizations.

Lack of institutional support for leisure activities

Soccer associations in the neighborhood have enabled children to turn their soccer practice into more serious leisure. However, other activities or sports are difficult to turn into more serious leisure due to the lack of institutional support and infrastructure.

When we asked Mario where he practiced baseball, besides mentioning that he had stopped practicing it because the lagoon had overflowed, he also mentioned that the "trainer" (the children did not know where this man came from) left the community. Mario said, "because the man left. My uncle said because of problems. He left with his wife". Moreover, although some children mentioned the different activities provided by their school (e.g., basketball, volleyball and tennis), especially secondary school children, primary school children complained about the size of the schoolyard at their school. When Lucia, 9, was asked what she did during the school break, she replied, "we have two breaks in the morning and in the afternoon. During the break with my friends we play 'chicle americano' [a game that consists of jumping on an elastic rope] and during the other break we get bored and start walking around the schoolyard. There is almost nothing to play, they don't let us go out, and the schoolyard is very small".

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4 As a reference, 70,000 Colombian pesos are equivalent to 17.48 U.S. Dollar. And 150,000 Colombian pesos are equivalent to 37.45 U.S. Dollar.

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Accordingly, the offer of neighborhood's leisure activities reduced to football practice and the absence of a leisure offer during the school break —along with the reduced space of the schoolyard— comprises children's leisure structural constraints preventing children from forming their leisure preferences. In the case of girls, household chores add to the previous structural constraints as they relate these activities with their free time.

Household chores for girls
Although children did not mention explicitly household chores as a constraint to their leisure, some children, particularly girls, associated free time with these types of activities. When 9-year-old Daniela was asked what she did on the weekend, she said, "I study, do my homework and help my mom wash the dishes. On Sundays, I always come to the workshops [civic organizations' activities]. On Saturdays, I spend time in the house, help clean the house, wash the pots and clean the stove". Her sister, Lucia, 9, responded in a similar vein when asked what she did in her free time, "I help wash the dishes, clean the house, make the beds, and that's it". Nevertheless, for some of these children, it is better to do household chores than do nothing. Lucía, 9 years old, expressed it in this way: 'I like washing the dishes because that is better than being sitting or doing nothing.'

As seen so far, the structural constraints for these children go beyond the lack of economic resources. Living on a non-flat ground, the poor quality of leisure facilities and insecurity in their neighborhood make up children's leisure constraints, along with the lack of institutional support for activities other than football and household chores particularly for girls. In addition to this, children's position in society turns into children's intrapersonal constraint because their leisure is affected by adults' behavior and actions in their neighborhood.

Children's intrapersonal constraints
Children's position in society
As previously mentioned, when children were invited to create a mock-up of a place in their neighborhood they would like to improve, three of the five mock-ups were the neighborhood's soccer field. Some of them mentioned the poor condition of this place, but also the adults' behavior that affected children's leisure. What Sergio, 11 years old, said about his mock-up explains this situation: "we put many players in both teams because when one is playing, the bigger [adults] kick you off the soccer field, and you can't play anymore, and we put these players to show equity".

Other children mentioned that adults used to consume alcohol, tobacco, and psychoactive substances on the soccer field and participate in fights and criminal theft activities in this same space. Daniel, 11, commented on the adult gambling that took place in this leisure space. According to Daniel,

Adults fight each other: they bet and then the other team that had lost says that they had won because they had marked a goal. Then I want to make another field in the middle, I divided the field in two so that one is for the big ones [adults] and the other for the small ones [children] [see Figure 5].

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Figure 5. The ideal soccer field.
Source: Mock-up created by Daniel, 11 years old, and his siblings.

Pablo, 10 years old, also mentioned fights among adults when we asked him when he got bored: "I get bored when people are fighting." Then, when he was asked about what he thought was needed in his community, he replied, "it needs a zone only for children and another zone for adults. Adults sometimes fight each other a lot, and for this reason we do not like it." Finally, their parents' working hours also represent a constraint to their leisure. Daniela, 11, said that one of the activities she would like to do but could not was going to the park El Tunal [a district park] with her mother, father, and siblings. However, they didn't go that Sunday because her mother was working.

As seen so far, children living in informal settlements encounter different constraints for their leisure. Among these constraints are structural constraints but also interpersonal constraints. However, these constraints do not prevent children from having and engaging in positive leisure experiences, as children find ways to respond to such constraints with the help of other people and institutions. For instance, when Sergio, 11 years old, was questioned about the reasons he attended civic organizations' activities, he explained was the way her mother lets him go out. His mother, for security reasons, only lets him and his siblings go out if they participated in the activities offered by these organizations. Furthermore, soccer associations have helped children to regain their entitlement to the neighborhood's soccer field. The community agreed that children train all sundays morning in the soccer field in company of volunteers.

Consequences of leisure constraints for children's leisure and children themselves
As Mario explained, he stopped playing baseball because the lagoon had overflowed, and the 'trainer' left. Additionally, he did not like to take out the ball of his house because it could get lost quickly due to the ground of the neighbourhood. What Mario replied when he was asked with who he played baseball, supports the idea that the leisure of these children could hardly turn into more serious leisure, "with my mom; she throws me the ball, and I bat or she bats or throw me the ball away, and I catch the ball with the glove".

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This latter argument is unfortunate when knowing the reasons why children start loving an activity or sport. For instance, Mario said, "I did not like [baseball] before. My uncle told me to go down [to the lagoon], and then we started playing, and one day I hit the ball, and the ball left far away; since then, I like baseball...I like it since the day I did a home run; I batted the ball very hard". Moreover, what their parents are able to afford along with the leisure offer provided by civic organizations and the primary school also prevent children from forming their leisure preferences, except for football. When children do not have the chance to form their leisure preferences and to practice serious leisure, they have fewer opportunities to benefit from serious leisure, to develop a sense of participation and belonging in a group related to their favourite leisure activities.

Conclusion and discussion

Studying the leisure constraints of children living in an informal settlement in Colombia, under the Leisure Constraints Theory from a qualitative perspective, enabled us to identify some unique leisure constraints for these children (e.g., living on a not flat ground) and the consequences of such constraints on their leisure and on children themselves. These children's leisure constraints prevent them from forming their leisure preferences and turning their favorite leisure activities into serious leisure experiences.

As Vandermeershcen et al. (2017) point out, all people face some kind of constraints to their leisure; however, those living in poverty face more constraints with higher intensity. In this study, children face multiple barriers limiting their favourite leisure activities and leisure opportunities, except for football. It is interesting to observe that some of the constraints identified in this study were experienced as well by other children living in poverty, but in economically developed countries. For example, Similar to the Outley and Floyd's (2002) findings, insecurity in the neighborhood makes parents rely on civic organizations to provide children with safe places for playing.

Researching how children living in an informal settlement experience leisure constraints also helped us to reveal the substantial role of civic organizations. Unfortunately, civic organizations have limited human and financial resources to provide children with a wide leisure offer. Finally, knowing that the leisure of these children could hardly turn into a more serious leisure, we might investigate how we could give continuity and stability to children's favorite leisure activities as well as democratize leisure objects to not be subject to what parents can or cannot afford.

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