

Dr.

Henrietta M. Nyamnjoh**Lost in the madding crowd:****Accelerated adulthood of Ethiopian migrant children in South Africa**

Studies on child migration often focus on single narratives: children as accompanying minors, as 'luggage,' or as a source of anxiety for adults. While recent research has rightly acknowledged children as active agents capable of influencing family life, much of the scholarship still allows adults to dominate the discussion of children's migration experiences.

This paper addresses a critical gap: the experience of migrant children who are intentionally robbed of their adolescence and fast-tracked into adulthood. Drawing on research with Ethiopian minors in South Africa's Western and Eastern Capes, this study explores the notion of accelerated transition to adulthood among child migrants.

We argue that the standard binary of children as either passive 'luggage' or fully self-activating 'agents' fails to capture the complexity of this process. Instead, we use these concepts to nuance the single narrative approach, exploring how children transition from being 'luggage' to self-activating their agency. The key finding is that the drive to move from a 'border' (a burden/minor) to a 'boss' (an independent adult/provider) is the calculated price these children yield to. This accelerated transition enables them to change the standard of living for their families left behind, but at the cost of their own 'teenagerhood.'

Keywords: Ethiopian Migrant children, Accelerated adulthood, children as luggage and children as agents, migrant agency, South Africa.

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