

Lived Experiences of Caregivers of Children with Neurodevelopmental Conditions in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A Phenomenological Study

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Caregivers of children with neurodevelopmental conditions experience significant multifaceted burdens. However, little qualitative research has been conducted to explore the lived experiences of caregivers regarding the effects of burden and coping strategies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study sought to investigate caregivers' awareness problems, coping mechanisms, and support systems in caring for children with neurodevelopmental conditions. The study was conducted in three public hospitals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia using a descriptive phenomenological technique. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 purposively selected caregivers. The data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework technique. The analysis found six interrelated themes: Awareness and Perception of Neurodevelopmental Conditions, Emotional Responses to Diagnosis and Adaptation, Caregiving Roles and Responsibilities, Multidimensional Burden and Challenges, Coping Strategies and Adaptation Mechanisms, and Support Systems and Structural Barriers. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was used to explain how personal, institutional, and systemic factors explain participants' experiences and interpret caregiving realities. These findings underscore the call for integrated and collaborative efforts to address individual and system-level challenges among caregivers. Enhancing support systems, mitigating stigma, and correcting systemic inadequacies can improve caregiver well-being and optimize care for children with neurodevelopmental conditions.

Keywords: caregiver, lived experiences, neurodevelopmental conditions, qualitative research

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North American Journal of Psychology, 2026, Vol. 28, No. 4, 2553-2571
© NAJP <https://doi.org/10.65696/001c.173379>