

Understanding the Support Needs and Challenges Faced by Family Caregivers in the Care of Their Older Adults at Home [Letter]

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Dear editor

We revisited the article entitled “Understanding the Support Needs and Challenges Faced by Family Caregivers in the Care of Their Older Adults at Home”.¹ The study offers valuable insights into the complex challenges faced by family caregivers in Mekelle, Ethiopia, particularly amid the ongoing conflict in the Tigray region. It identifies key challenges such as financial strain, inadequate communication with healthcare providers, medication management difficulties, and transportation barriers—issues that are further intensified by the conflict. The use of a phenomenological approach to explore these lived experiences is effective, providing a comprehensive understanding of the intricate realities faced by family caregivers. The thematic analysis captures the psychological, emotional, and practical difficulties encountered by caregivers, highlighting the nuanced nature of caregiving in low-resource and conflict-affected settings and underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive support mechanisms tailored to their unique needs.

However, several areas within this study could be strengthened to enhance its depth and relevance. First, while the methodology presents data on demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status, these details are not connected to specific participants in the results. This disconnect prevents readers from associating specific narratives with individual participants, thereby limiting the understanding of how demographic factors may influence caregiving experiences. Integrating demographic information with participant coding would provide a richer context and enable readers to better interpret the findings, illustrating how different factors intersect to shape caregiving dynamics.² Second, while the study employs thematic analysis, the presentation could be enhanced through visual aids such as charts and graphs. Displaying the coding process and thematic breakdowns in visual formats would provide clearer guidance on how the researchers managed and interpreted the data, which is rich with participants’ lived experiences.³ Such visual representations could improve transparency and credibility, helping readers to better understand the analytical process and draw informed conclusions. Third, while the study addresses general caregiving challenges, it does not provide a detailed gender-based analysis. Understanding whether female and male caregivers experience different types of stress or have unique support needs could lead to more targeted support interventions. For example, male caregivers might face different societal expectations or emotional barriers compared to female caregivers, affecting their caregiving roles.⁴ Additionally, the study does not deeply explore how intersecting factors such as age, socioeconomic status, education level, and the nature of the relationship with the care recipient shape these experiences. Future research would benefit from an intersectional approach to examine how these factors interact and affect caregiving in varied contexts. Finally, the study’s recommendations could further explore digital health solutions to address challenges related to healthcare access and transportation. Future studies should investigate the feasibility and implementation of mobile health (mHealth) applications and telemedicine to provide caregivers with remote access to medical advice, psychological support, and training resources.⁵

Overall, this study illuminates challenges faced by Ethiopian family caregivers, providing insights for improved support systems. Enhanced findings can inform caregivers, policymakers, and stakeholders in low-resource and conflict-affected environments.

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Disclosure

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