

## **Ethnography of the Social and Cultural Perspectives of Childhood Neuro-Developmental Disorders: Implications for Health Seeking**

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**Abstract :** Introduction: The study explored socio-cultural perspectives of childhood disorders and its implications for health seeking. Emphasis was on exploring local understanding and perceptions and how these ideas affect health seeking. Study aim: To explore the socio-cultural perspectives of neuro-developmental disorders and its implications on health seeking behaviour. Methods: The methods used in this study included key informant interviews conducted with health professionals. Parents of the children aged (6-15 years) with neuro-developmental disorders were recruited from the hospital to participate in focus group discussion, participant observation and individual in-depth interviews. Results: The study found out that stigma extended from children to parents and caregivers who were also shunned by community members. Participants described their children as “a gift from God” others described them as “a test from God”. The communities perceive the disorders as a spiritual infliction and always insisted that the children be taken for Acholi cultural and traditional rituals to cleanse children and they believed that mental illness has spiritual linkages. Conclusion: This study gives unique insights into the perceptions of neuro-developmental disorders and health seeking behavior in Gulu District and neighboring communities. The results showed that communities linked disorders to spiritual affliction, misunderstandings between families, bewitching, and other supernatural forces. Some of the participants highly recommended biomedical approaches to prevention, management and control of the disorders.

**Keywords :** ethnography, health seeking, neuro-developmental disorders, socio-cultural

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