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Experiences of adults with neurological communication disorders using aided Augmentative and Alternative Communication systems in a lower-middle income country

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Introduction: Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems play a key role in the assistance of people with communication impairments, acquired or congenital. It maximizes the individual's functional levels by providing an effective communication for their daily needs.

Objective: This study aims to identify the types of AAC systems used by adults with acquired communication impairments and describe the adult AAC experience, particularly the facilitators and barriers faced when using an aided AAC system in the local context.

Method: A qualitative study was conducted to identify the facilitators and barriers of using aided AAC systems. 8 adult participants with complex communication needs who use aided AAC, and their communication partners were recruited to the study. Semi structured individual interviews were conducted as face to face and online. All the interviews were video recorded and analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: Writing, communication board, typing, and Avaz app were the aided AAC methods used by participants in this study. The overall experience of AAC use was positive for both adults and their caregivers. The study identified several barriers and facilitators that had an impact on effective AAC use, some specific to the adult population. In most cases the AAC user and their family was well informed of the recommended AAC system by the clinician. Caregivers suggested changes to high tech devices, which they envisioned would lead to higher user satisfaction.

Conclusion: This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the advantages and limitations of the many available aided AAC systems, which then allows a more conscious recommendation based on the patient's need.