



Knowledge and Perceptions of Stuttering: Perspectives from Pre-Service Educators

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Background

Stuttering is a condition that is believed to affect every ethnic group (Ward, 2006). Despite incidence and prevalence reports indicating that approximately one percent of adults stutter and up to five percent of children under age six stutter (Yairi & Ambrose, 2013), very few studies have been conducted to assess teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward stuttering (Lass et al., 1992; Ruscello et al., 1992). The purpose of the proposed study is to examine pre-service educators' perceptions and knowledge of stuttering. This is important information, as children spend a significant amount of time in the classroom and stuttering can impact educational and social performance. As such, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage a classroom with a child who stutters.

Purpose & Methods

This study measured pre-service educators' knowledge and perceptions of stuttering. An anonymous survey, comprised of 16 quantitative and qualitative questions, was distributed to undergraduate students in Marshall University's Education Department via e-mail. Knowledge, professional involvement, perceptions, and reactions were assessed using quantitative Likert-scale questions. Open-ended questions assessing real-life scenarios concerning students who stutter in the general education classroom were included but are not presented in this data analysis.

Results

One-hundred-nineteen undergraduate students studying education completed the survey. The tables in the results section show the findings on several of the questions related to knowledge (primarily etiology) and perception of stuttering. This sample is only from students at Marshall University, but plans are underway to send the survey to a number of different education programs across the country to generate a more representative sample of students.

Results

Stuttering is caused by	Genetics	Trauma	Oral Motor Coordination Deficits	Speaking Too Fast
Strongly Agree	4 (3.6%)	10 (9%)	20 (18%)	6 (5.4%)
Agree	38 (34.2%)	58 (52.3%)	71 (64%)	40 (36%)
Disagree	35 (31.6%)	17 (15.3%)	6 (5.4%)	38 (34.2%)
Strongly Disagree	4 (3.6%)	1 (0.9%)	3 (2.7%)	11 (9.9%)
Unsure	30 (27%)	25 (22.5%)	11 (9.9%)	16 (14.4%)

Stuttering is	A Type of Speech Disorder	A Type of Language Disorder	A Type of Psychological Disorder
Strongly Agree	46 (41.4%)	21 (18.9%)	6 (5.4%)
Agree	62 (55.9%)	57 (51.4%)	46 (41.4%)
Disagree	1 (0.9%)	16 (14.4%)	23 (20.7%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	11 (9.9%)	12 (10.8%)
Unsure	2 (1.8%)	6 (5.4%)	23 (20.7%)

Compared to people who do not stutter, People who Stutter...	Have more difficulty getting a job	Are less intelligent	Perform lower academically
Strongly Agree	12 (12.2%)	1 (1.02%)	1 (1.02%)
Agree	44 (57.1%)	2 (2.04%)	6 (6.1%)
Disagree	19 (19.4%)	21 (21.4%)	44 (44.9%)
Strongly Disagree	4 (4.08%)	72 (73.5%)	32 (32.7%)
Unsure	19 (19.4%)	2 (2.04%)	15 (15.3%)

People who Stutter...	Know what they want to say	Try to avoid talking or speaking situations	Can learn techniques to manage their stuttering
Strongly Agree	57 (58.2%)	37 (37.8%)	36 (36.7%)
Agree	37 (37.8%)	40 (40.8%)	53 (54.1%)
Disagree	1 (1.02%)	10 (10.2%)	2 (2.04%)
Strongly Disagree	1 (1.02%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.02%)
Unsure	2 (2.04%)	11 (11.2%)	6 (6.1%)

Discussion & Future Directions

General knowledge of the causes of stuttering was limited, while perceptions of stuttering were mostly positive. Roughly 38% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that genetics play a role in the cause of stuttering. At the same time, 47% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that stuttering is a psychological disorder. Eighty-two percent strongly agreed or agreed that stuttering is a result of oral motor coordination complications, while 70% strongly agreed or agreed that stuttering is a language disorder. Regarding perceptions of stuttering, it was found that 94% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that people who stutter are less intelligent than those who do not stutter. Furthermore, 95% strongly disagreed or disagreed that they would avoid talking to someone who stutters. 95% of participants strongly agreed or agreed they would wait for the person who stutters to finish speaking before responding to them.

A common theme in results was a lack of knowledge of the etiologies of stuttering, as well as the overall impact stuttering has on a stuttering individual's quality of life. Going forward, the survey should be redistributed to pre-service educators across the country to assess how knowledge of stuttering varies based on demographics. Qualitative questions assessing real-life scenarios concerning students who stutter in general education classrooms should be analyzed and discussed. Results of will allow researchers to discern possible education options for those pre-service educators who will encounter stuttering in the general education classroom. Researchers believe implementation of knowledge-based material will improve teachers' knowledge of stuttering and better ensure quality of education for students who stutter.

References

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