

Emotional reactions among adults who stutter, and the impact on everyday life.

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Abstract. The project aims to identify the stuttering impact on everyday life among adults. The study is directed by The Norwegian Stuttering Association, in collaboration with Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, the University of Oslo, and Statped sørøst, department for speech and language disorders. The project involves 82 participants and includes both quantitative and qualitative data. Our attention is primarily directed toward the qualitative data derived from 15 participants who stutter with varying severity: Personal interviews, interviews in focus groups, and written information. The project has highlighted following themes associated with the stuttering experiences: Shame and embarrassment; loneliness; negative self-evaluation, continuous anxiety of novel situations, the importance of peers' support. The participants choose different kinds of responses to cope with the challenges within social and work contexts.

1. Background

Despite the fact that there are many people who stutter, research into the disorder has received little attention in Norway. Most of the international studies on stuttering focus on children who stutter; studies of adults are rarer.

For many individuals who stutter, the disorder incorporates much more than a motor speech difficulty. Stuttering may create additional social and psychological challenges in daily life as a consequence of the importance of speech and communication in our daily lives. Flexible therapeutic approaches are therefore needed to deal with this complexity (Ward 2006; Bloodstein & Ratner, 2008). Many PWSs experience stuttering as a loss of control, with following frustration and negative thoughts. Loss of control and loss of the belief that one can speak in social situations can further lead to avoidance behaviors and social withdrawal. Based on research, stuttering can have a negative impact on the working career, too. Stuttering can limit career and educational choices for quite a high number of PWS (Gabel et al., 2004; Bricker- Katz, Lincoln & Cumming, 2013; Brian et al., 2011). Hence, the associated consequences of stuttering can, to a greater or lesser extent, reduce the individual's quality of life (Craig, Blumgart & Tran, 2009; Bricker-Katz, Lincoln & McGabe, 2009, 2010; Yaruss, 2010; Inglingstad & Steine, 2013)). The participants choose different kinds of responses to cope with the challenges within social and work contexts. For many PWS, the daily life with a speech disorder can significantly affect their social experiences and hence potentially affecting psychosocial and psychological adjustment. In spite of and for some individuals, severe psychological and psychosocial consequences of stuttering, research has mainly focused on children. Clinical experience shows that quality of life and psychological health can be significantly improved in adults when treatment is tailored to their specific needs (Craig, Blumgart & Tran, 2009; Euler et al., 2014).

2. Methodology

Data for this project were gathered from adult speakers who stutter. The age range of the participants is 18 to 78. The study combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The participants' personal narratives and experiences are highlighted. The project covers the following themes associated with stuttering experiences: Shame and embarrassment, loneliness, negative self-evaluation, continuous anxiety of novel situations, the importance of peer support, and positive and negative strategies for managing work and life despite the stuttering.

Quantitative approach: A survey was distributed to the members of the Norwegian Stuttering Association. 77 individuals responded. The quantitative data have been analyzed and systematized, and is presented in a master thesis by Inglingstad & Steine (2013).

Qualitative approach, derived from 15 participants who stutter: Semi-structured, individual- and group interviews have been used to find out from the clients' themselves what they consider to be important factors for their own development or what they consider as important changes in the quality of life.

3. Results

Both the quantitative and qualitative data have been analyzed and systematized. Theoretical and practical implications of the study will be presented later.

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