

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF STUTTERING ON CHILDREN AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study looked at the psychosocial impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State. A total of 210 counsellors participated in the study, they were randomly selected from each of the senatorial districts in Kwara State. The instrument used for the research was a self-developed questionnaire titled Psychosocial Impact of Stuttering Questionnaire (PISQ). The hypotheses were analyzed using chi-square at 0.05 alpha level of significance. In carrying out this research three null hypotheses were formulated for this study. This study revealed that there was no significant relationship based on gender, working experience and educational qualification. It was therefore recommended that counsellors should assist children who lack confidence as a result of a stuttering problem. Counsellors can also help resolve the psychosocial and emotional problems that go with speech disfluency.

Keywords: Stuttering, Children, Counsellors and Psychosocial.

Introduction

Stuttering also known as stammering is a speech disorder that is often characterized by disruption of the normal fluency and flow of speech. And often involves a person repeating or prolonging words, sounds syllables or phrases (Adeniyi, 2017 & Nall 2019). The National Institute of Deafness and other communication disorder (2010) explained that 5% of children are stutterers, while 1% of them will continue to stutter even as adults. Noidqvist (2015) revealed that stuttering is common with boys than girls. The reasons some people stutter than others are yet to be known but many

scientists believe that stuttering may be an inherited trait (Newman, 2017).

As a result of the prolongation, repetition and blocky speech formation which involves muscular tweak, stutterers often demonstrate some strange behaviours such as the banging of tables and blinking of eyes while communicating. Stamping of feet and body tapping are a common occurrence among people who stutterers (Brutten & Vanryckeghem 2007 & Bloodstein & Bernstein 2008). Adeniyi (2017) revealed that about one percent of the world population stutters. It has been discovered that stuttering can be inherited from parents (Newman). The abnormality could occur in the process of human formation in the womb, Noidqvist (2015) confirmed that brain configuration has a way of affecting speech formation.

Guitar (2017) explained that children that stutter are always tense, fearful and insecure about their disfluency. In the same vein, Zebrowski (2015) confirmed that the majority of people who have these problems find it difficult to cope with the psychosocial impact of stuttering. This is because the weakness of such an individual is noticeable by all. Children who stammer find it difficult to accept themselves (Nall, 2019). Danhoff (2010) revealed how people who stutter live in fear, and shame as a result of their speech disorder.

These children go through a lot of stress in trying to conceal their weakness and anxiety. According to Jezer (1997), these set of people go through emotional torture and they often develop some coping strategy skills of accepting themselves. Jezer (1997) further noted that simple tasks such as saying one's name, answering the telephone or giving a speech in the public can be frustrating also, children who stammer are often ridiculed, marginalized which may result in inferiority complex and even emotional torment (Beilby, 2014). Children that have a problem with speech find it difficult to relate with peers thereby isolating themselves (Sanju, Choudhury & Kumar 2018). The ability to express oneself and communicate with others gives children self-worth. When this is lacking,

such an individual might develop psychosocial problems. Meadowbrook (2004) noted that there is some psychological problem that could emerge as a result of stuttering and this includes fear, shame low self-esteem, anxiety e.t.c. (Messenger, Onslow, Packman & Menzies 2004).

According to Medicine.net (2017), there is currently no known cure for stuttering however, certain therapies have been known to ameliorate stuttering. However, children who stutter can be helped by professional counsellors and speech pathologist through the application of varieties of language and speech therapeutic services (Ginsberg & Wexler, 2000). Lindsay and Langevin (2015) study revealed that people with stuttering challenge appreciates the fact that the counselling process assists them in coping with emotional triggers.

Oladele (1997) defined counselling as a process through which a trained counsellor assists an individual to resolve an area of conflict so that the individual can make a better-informed choice in decision-making. It is a special kind of relationship between the client (counselee) and the counsellor or vice-versa. It involves a situation whereby the counsellor attempts to use his professional training skills, expertise and experience to help the client overcome an area of conflict, or block which hitherto has hindered them inter and intra-personal relationships. In perspectives study, several variables can influence the perception of respondents; such variables include age, gender and working experience. Stuttering is a challenge that is often accompanied by emotional stress and as such, children with this problem often need the assistance of the counsellor. According to Marquié and Huet (2000), the age, confidence and judgement of individuals influence the knowledge domain. The older a person becomes the more mature such an individual relates to the environment. The age of the counsellor can influence the way they relate with clients, especially in the counselling process. Stutterers often display some acceptable behaviours such as anger, especially when they find it difficult to express themselves. Mature and experienced counsellors are always

aware of when they are experiencing these feelings and try to assist by giving necessary support (Yates, Colbrunn & Hudock 2018).

Stuttering is a disorder in speech formation. Adriaenssens Bryers and Struy (2015) noticed that stuttering is a common problem among developing children while the prevalence rate is high among males (Juste, Sassi & Andrade, 2012). Yovetich, Leschied, and Flicht (2000) researched self-esteem of school-age children who stutter, Zebrowski (2005) worked on counselling people who stutters. This study intends to investigate the psychosocial impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State. It will also consider different variables like age, gender, working experience, educational qualification and religion.

Research Question

- (1) What are the psychosocial impacts of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

- Ho₁:** There no significant relationship in the psychosocial impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on gender
- Ho₂:** There is no significant relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on working experience
- Ho₃:** There is no significant relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on Educational Qualification

Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive survey method for this study. The target population for this study were all counsellors in Kwara State. At the first stage, all the three senatorial districts in Kwara State were purposively selected. Secondly, a simple random sampling technique was employed to select five government own schools in each of the senatorial districts, hence, a total of 15 schools participated in the study. Finally,

purposive sampling technique was also used to select seventy counsellors from each senatorial districts thus, a total of 210 respondents responded to the questionnaire. A self-design instrument tagged Psychosocial Impact of Stuttering Questionnaire (PISQ) was used for this study. The instrument has two sections; Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents while section B was made up of 15 items which entail information that elicits a response on the psychological impact of stuttering on school children. The four-point Likert Type scale format used in section B as thus; Strongly Agree – 4 points Agree - 3 points, Disagree - 2 points and strongly Disagree-1 point. The validity of the instrument was ascertained before use. Draft of the questionnaires was given to four experts for vetting, sequel to their suggestions, necessary amendments were made and it was finally adjudged to be suitable for this study. The reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method at an interval of four weeks and a reliability index of 0.71 was obtained. The data collected for this study were analysed using chi-square statistical method. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researcher and a research assistant in the three Senatorial Districts. The administered questionnaires were collected on the spot.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the psychosocial impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State?

Table 1: Mean and Rank Order on the Psychosocial Impact of Stuttering on Children

Item No.	Stuttering can lead to psychosocial problems such as:	Perception by Gender			Chi-Square Value	Rank
		Gender	Agree (SA + A)	Disagree (D + SD)		
13	Difficulty in expressing self	Male	92 (78.6%)	25 (21.4%)	0.91	1 st
		Female	85 (91.4%)	8 (8.6%)		
1	Lack of confidence	Male	92 (82.1%)	20 (17.9%)	0.89	2 nd
		Female	82 (83.7%)	16 (16.3%)		
7	Embarrassment as a result of the difficulty to pronounce some words	Male	80 (79.2%)	21 (20.8%)	0.88	3 rd
		Female	87 (79.8%)	22 (20.2%)		
6	Frustration while attempting to communicate	Male	76 (76%)	24 (24%)	0.88	4 th
		Female	89 (80.9%)	21 (19.1%)		
8	Deliberate isolation when they find it difficult to express themselves	Male	78 (72.2%)	30 (27.8%)	0.87	5 th
		Female	84 (82.4%)	18 (17.6%)		
5	Avoidance of discussion due to anxiety	Male	80 (72.1%)	31 (27.9%)	0.81	6 th
		Female	76 (76.8%)	23 (23.2%)		
9	Self-anger	Male	86 (74.8%)	29 (25.2%)	0.79	7 th
		Female	69 (72.6%)	26 (27.4%)		
2	Fear of association with a peer group	Male	74 (68.5%)	34 (31.5%)	0.77	8 th
		Female	80 (78.4%)	22 (21.6%)		
10	Shame due to stammering	Male	74 (69.8%)	32 (30.2%)	0.76	9 th
		Female	77 (74%)	27 (26%)		
11	Emotional trauma	Male	73 (69.5%)	32 (30.5%)	0.75	10 th
		Female	75 (71.4%)	30 (28.6%)		
12	Ridicule from mates	Male	71 (67.6%)	34 (32.4%)	0.68	11 th
		Female	74 (70.5%)	31 (29.5%)		
15	Reluctance to participate in peer activities	Male	65 (66.3%)	33 (33.7%)	0.54	12 th
		Female	76 (67.9%)	36 (32.1%)		
3	Stigmatization	Male	70 (62.5%)	42 (37.5%)	0.37	13 th
		Female	68 (69.4%)	30 (30.6%)		
14	Shyness in the public	Male	67 (60.4%)	44 (39.6%)	0.32	14 th
		Female	67 (67.7%)	32 (32.3%)		
4	Poor self-concept	Male	83 (64.3%)	46 (35.7%)	0.31	15 th
		Female	47 (58%)	34 (42 %)		

Table 1 shows that Item 13 with a Chi-square mean score of 0.91 rank 1st with 92 males and 85 females representing (78.6%) and (88.5%) respectively agreeing, while 25 males and 11 females representing (21.4%) and (11.5%) respectively disagreeing to the Item which states that stuttering can lead to the psychosocial problem such as difficulty to express self. Item 1 with a Chi-square mean score of 0.89 rank 2nd with 92 males and 82 females representing (82.1%) and (83.7%) respectively agreeing, while 20 males and 16 females representing (17.9%) and (16.3%)

respectively disagreeing to the Item which states that stuttering can lead to the psychosocial problem such as lack of confidence. Item 7 with a Chi-square mean score of 0.88 rank 3rd with 92 males and 85 females representing (78.6%) and (88.5%) respectively agreeing, while 25 males and 11 females representing (21.4%) and (11.5%) respectively disagreeing to the Item which states that stuttering can lead to the psychosocial problem such as embarrassment as a result of the difficulty to pronounce some words. Item 4 with a Chi-square mean score of 0.31 rank 15th with 83 males and 34 females representing (61.5%) and (45.3%) respectively agreeing, while 46 males and 34 females representing (40.4%) and (35.4%) respectively disagreeing to the Item which states that stuttering can lead to the psychosocial problem such as poor self-concept.

All the items were accepted as having psychosocial impact of stuttering on children because the fifteen items have their criterion mean greater than 0.05. This implies that irrespective of the gender of the respondents (students), they still do not differ in perception with regards to the psychological impact of stuttering on children.

Hypothesis One: There no significant relationship in the psychosocial impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on gender

Table 2: Chi-square Showing the Psychological Impact of Stuttering on Children as Perceived by School Counsellors in Kwara State Based on Gender

Gender		Stuttering		df	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Decision
		Disagree	Agree				
Male	Observed	60	63	123	0.32	3.84	Accepted
	Expected	58.0	65.0				
Female	Observed	39	48	87	0.32	3.84	Accepted
	Expected	41.0	46.0				
Total				210			

Table 2 showed that the calculated value of 0.32 and a critical value of 3.84 at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the calculated value of 0.32 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05, this implies that there is no significant

relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on gender. This implies that irrespective of the gender of the respondents (students), they still do not have any relation concerning the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on working experience

Table 3: Chi-square Showing the Psychological Impact of Stuttering on Children as Perceived by School Counsellors in Kwara State Based on Working Experience

Experience		Stuttering		df	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Decision
		Disagree	Agree				
1 - 5 year	Observed	70	65	135	0.47	3.84	Accepted
	Expected	67.5	67.5				
6 years +	Observed	35	40	75			
	Expected	37.5	37.5				
Total				210			

Table 3 showed that the calculated value of 0.47 and a critical value of 3.84 at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the calculated value of 0.47 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05, this implies that there is no significant relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on working experience. This implies that irrespective of the working experience of the respondents (students), they still do not have any relation concerning the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on Educational Qualification

Table 4: Chi-square Showing the Psychological Impact of Stuttering on Children as Perceived by School Counsellors in Kwara State Based on Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification		Stuttering		Df	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Decision	
		Disagree	Agree					
First Degree	Observed	62	63	125	1	0.24	3.84	Accepted
	Expected	58.0	65.0					
Postgraduate	Observed	39	46	85				
	Expected	40.0	45.0					
Total				210				

Table 4 shows that the calculated value of 0.24 and a critical value of 3.84 at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the calculated value of 0.24 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05, it implies that there is no significant relationship in the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State based on educational qualification. Thus irrespective of the educational qualification of the respondents, they still do not have any relation concerning the psychological impact of stuttering on children as perceived by school counsellors in Kwara State.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that stuttering can lead to difficulty in expressing self and lack of confidence which is a major psychological problem among school-age children. From the perception of the school counsellor, all these psychosocial problems are traceable among stutters. In the same vein, Devore (2014) observed that children with speech disorder have a low perception of themselves which often result in a poor social relationship with their peers. When children develop an inferiority complex, it negatively impacts the way they relate with people around them. Scientifically, the cause of stuttering is yet to be known, but the researcher wants to know the perceived views of counsellors on the causes

of stuttering among children. Counsellors believe that stuttering is majorly caused by genetic factors. This corroborates the findings of Jezer (1997) who affirmed that though the cause of stuttering is unknown many scientists suspect that stuttering may be linked to an inherited trait. This is an assumption that is not medically proven.

Male and female counsellors did not have any relation in their opinion on the psychological impact of stuttering on children. It is assumed that the way male and females react to issues is different. This is in line with the view of McKie (2010) who revealed that the female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy while that of the males is directed at understanding and building systems. However, in this study, the perception of the respondents are the same. Stuttering is a common disorder among males than females. Irrespective of gender, Guitar (2012) affirmed that people who are different in speech are often stigmatized

The years of working experience of the counsellors did not influence their perception. This might be as a result of an upshot of the different experiences the respondents have encountered in the process of discharging their duties. Counselling is based on the assumption that every individual in any society has had, is having and will have a problem that he alone cannot solve. (Makinade, 1983). Counsellors are trained in a variety of therapeutic process which they employed in addressing issues such as depression, anxiety, addiction, substance abuse, suicidal impulses, stress, low self-esteem and grief (Idowu, 2017). As such, students who have challenges often visit the school counsellor. Zundel (2003) emphasized that no matter the input of the speech therapist, the emotional responses of a client who stutters cannot be underestimated and this calls for the intervention of an experienced professional counsellor.

Irrespective of the counsellor's educational qualification they all agreed on the psychological impact of stuttering. In the view Aheneku (2010) educational qualification and level of information a person is exposed to, have a way of influencing one's perception. The similarity in opinion might

be because children with speech defect often experience emotional torture, especially when discussing as confirmed by Claudia, Maria, Fabiola, Ana and Beatriz (2014). Stammers most times look extremely tensed, out of breath and sometimes their speech may be completely blocked. Blocked in the sense that their mouths may be in the right position to pronounce a word but no sound comes out. This is enough to cause psychosocial problems.

Conclusion, Counseling Implications and Recommendations

The gender, the experience that the counsellors have obtained over the years and their educational level notwithstanding, their views were still similar as regards the psychosocial effect of stuttering on school children. The findings of the study also revealed that counsellors generally agree that children with stuttering problems have difficulty in expressing themselves.

The study also noted that counsellors generally agree that children who stutter can develop lack of confidence. This study thus recommends that school counsellors should expose children who stutters to some strategies on how they can cope with the psychosocial impact of stuttering considering the negative effects it has on them at least as perceived by the school counselors. They can be taught on how to be assertive and develop emotional enhancement skills.

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