



PERCEPTION OF STUTTERING AMONG PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS-A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT :

General concern about stuttering has increased recently especially in countries like India. This study focuses on “The perception of stuttering among preschool and primary school teachers in Chennai, India.” It was investigated through stuttering awareness questionnaires provided to schools in and around Chennai and documenting results completed by 155 teachers. Based on the results of the study; teachers are aware that the environment plays a vital role in stammering and the children with stuttering (CWS) have the potential to overcome the condition. They did not agree that CWS were quiet and shy. All teachers reported a limited experience of handling CWS, but their responses indicated a desire to do their best to support such children in the classroom. Knowledge about stuttering was, however, considered to be less important to teachers working with specific learning disabilities.

Key words: Awareness; perception; stuttering; preschool; primary school.

INTRODUCTION:

Stuttering is a developmental disorder characterized by frequent and protracted sound prolongations, sound, syllable, word and phrase repetitions and silent blocks that interfere with the efficient production of speech (Bloodstein, 1995; Guitar, 2006) [3]. Wingate (1964) gave a standard definition of stuttering as disruption in the fluency of verbal expression, which is characterized by involuntary, audible or silent, repetition or prolongation in the utterance of short speech elements and words of one syllable [4]. This accounts for “the fact that judgments of overt speech behavior as ‘stuttering’ are made in the ear of the listener” (Yairi et al., 2001) [10]. It is believed that approximately 5% of people will stutter during some part of their lives (Mansson, 2000)[8]. Higher incidence rates have been noted with preschool-age children with findings suggesting that incidence reaches a cumulative rate of 8.5% by three years of age (Reilly et al., 2009)[5] and 11% by four years of age (Reilly et al., 2013)[1]. The incidence of stuttering in young boys is approximately twice that of girls (Yairi & Ambrose, 1999)[11]. Stuttering usually starts between two and six years of age where the children will be either in preschool or primary school[6]. Stuttering is more common in male than in females with the ratio of 1:4[2], but its onset development and recovery characteristics are more favorable for female⁷. The current study is focusing on awareness on the perception of stuttering among pre-school and primary school teachers. Yeakle and Cooper (1986) found that many teachers held unfounded beliefs concerning the etiology of stuttering and the personality characteristics of people who stutter[12]. The literature on awareness and attitudes towards stuttering shows the existence of negative attitudes and lack of awareness and perception of stuttering among school teachers[9].

AIM:

The aim of the study is to explore the perception of stuttering among preschool and primary school teachers and to generate awareness among the teachers for facilitating early prognosis.

METHOD**INSTRUMENT:**

The questionnaire was prepared based on various supportive literature. Face validity was done by the corresponding author, Content, and Construction Validity was done by three SLPs. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part one consists of 13 questions scored using a 5-point Likert rating scale. It consists of three domains General Awareness (three questions), Negative Reaction (four questions), and the Teacher's Role in stuttering (six questions). Part two consists of three questions focusing on the working experience of the teachers and reported experience with CWS. Refer to *Appendix A* for the questionnaire.

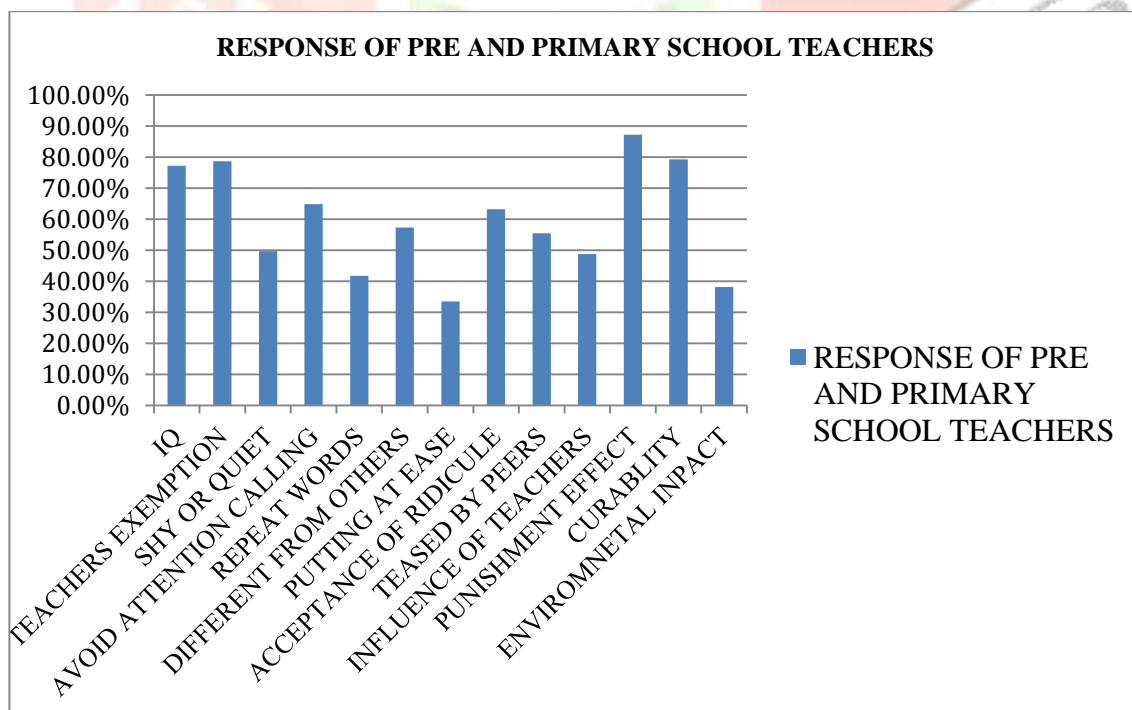
PARTICIPANTS

Schools in and around Chennai were chosen for the study. A total of 250 teachers was invited to fill in the questionnaires. An information sheet giving details of the study was provided to each teacher. Only preschool and primary school teachers (government/private school teachers), were included in the study with work experience greater than one year. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Participation was voluntary and the participants were provided approximately two weeks to complete the questionnaires. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire individually and not to compare their responses with others in their school. They were requested to refer to each statement in Part one of the questionnaires and select a response on a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Part Two interrogated them to supply demographic data, including their teaching experience and reported experience with CWS. A total of 155 teachers filled and returned the questionnaires.

RESULTS

Figure 1.1 is showing the response of pre and primary school teachers on the awareness of stuttering. This diagram elaborates on the general awareness of teachers to stuttering, negative reaction and the role of teacher involved in identifying the onset of stuttering.

Figure: 1.1 showing the responses of pre and primary school teachers.



Number of children with stuttering handled by the teachers:

Based on number of children with stuttering handled by the teachers, they were divided in to three groups. Group-A (N=45) teachers handled 1-3 children with stammering, Group-B(N=83) teachers handled 4-6 children and Group-C

(N=27) teachers handled 7 or more children. Comparing between the groups, reveals that teachers who handled more number of children with stuttering has a better concept towards their role in identifying stuttering, negative reactions that can trigger stuttering and the overall general awareness towards stuttering.

Years of experience in teaching:

Based on years of experience in teaching, teachers were divided in to 4 groups. Group-1(N=38) teachers have 0-3 years of experience, group-2 (N=42) teachers have 4-6 years of experience, group-3 (N=32) teachers have 7-11 years of experience and group-4 (N=43) teachers have 12-20 years of experience. Years of experience in teaching plays a vital role in general awareness of stuttering, negative reaction and teacher's role in identifying stuttering.

(Refer to Tables 1, 2 and 3 below the references)

CONCLUSION

Research shows that the onset of stuttering is identified more in preschool and primary school-age children. Therefore providing awareness to the teachers regarding the age of onset of stuttering, gender differences, primary and secondary behaviors of stuttering; environmental factors decreasing, or increasing stuttering will reduce the incidence and facilitate early identification. Teachers familiar with identifying the occurrence of stuttering behavior in- group/ situational conversations, reading, and different emotional circumstances will help in delineating the risk for stuttering. With increasing awareness, appropriate attention and intervention could be given to CWS at right time.

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Appendix-A

AWARENESS ON THE PERCEPTION OF STUTTERING AMONG PRE SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Stammering is influenced by the child's IQ level					
A teacher should exempt a child who stammers from talking					
Most children who stutter are "shy" or "quiet"					
Teacher should avoid calling attention to a stammering child's speech					
Teachers should make children repeat words until they can produce them fluently					
Children who stammer are aware that they are different from other children					
Children are more fluent when teacher puts the child at ease before speaking					
Children who stutter should be taught to accept and expect to be ridiculed					
Children with stammering may be teased by their peers					
Teachers have a great influence on the children who stutter					
Punishing for stammering behavior will increase fluent speech					
Stammering is a condition that cannot be cured					
Children's environment including peers and parents have an influence					

in decreasing and increasing stuttering					
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Part Two

Please circle the appropriate response

1. Standard/ year you currently teach
 - Preschool (LKG/UKG)
 - Primary School (Std 1/Std 2/Std 3/Std 4/ Std 5)
2. How many children with stammering have you taught over the year?
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7or more
3. Number of years of teaching
 - 0-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-11
 - 12-20

