



Views Regarding the Provision of Speech Therapy from Individual Who Stammers

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ABSTRACT

The development of normal speech and language is a difficulty faced by stammerers. Meanwhile, the associated social and psychological problems are the factors that contribute to the worsening of the situation. Though all the therapies for stammering are designed after research each therapy has a different impact on the individual due to changes in situations. The same applies to the provision and the difference of opinion among people about the therapist and the therapeutic process. This study aimed to highlight the point of view of stammerers regarding speech and language therapists. The study was based on a qualitative research design. The data was collected from a sample of N=20 using a purposive sampling technique from hospitals all over Pakistan. An open-ended questionnaire was used for data collection and thematic analysis was used for analysis. The results identified 5 major themes i.e. unsatisfactory experience, satisfactory experience, factors enhancing the outcomes of speech therapy, factors related to the client that can impact the process of therapy, and the skills of the therapist. Further, different psychological, social, and environmental factors are explored that impact the therapy process and bring a change in the perspective. Further, resources are required to improve the training environment of Speech and Language pathologists.

Keywords: stammering, provision, Speech and language pathologist, confounding factors, therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Stammering is a disorder of communication that can be identified by disrupted speech (Gordon, 2002). Stammering includes repetition of syllables, prolongation of

words, disturbance in the normal flow of speech, blinking of eyes, jerking jaws, and involuntary body movements as secondary associated behaviors (Yaruss et al., 2002). Stammering is a disorder that affects a broader range and aspects including physical health, mental health, family life, and social interaction. A person suffering from stuttering can have negative emotional, social, and cognitive reactions impacting the quality of life of the affected person (Nonis et al., 2022). Stammering is found to be difficult in speech that is smooth in flow. Sometimes stutterers find it difficult to speak words (Klompas & Ross, 2004). For a Stammerer, it is not only audible distortion heard by others but a cluster of feelings that starts with a sense of impatience, feeling caught, and feeling of losing control, leading to psychological disturbance (Tichenor & Yaruss, 2019). Currently, stammering is considered a multi-factor disorder that has a proper diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, fifth edition (DSM-5) which is named childhood-onset fluency disorder (Regier et al., 2013). Stammering can be classified into three types known as developmental stammering (observed during early childhood), neurogenic stammering (raised due to any nerve damage or a traumatic brain injury) and psychogenic stammering (starts after an emotional trauma) (Ashurst & Wasson, 2011).

Stammering comes with multiple challenges including both psychological and social perspectives. Bullying and teasing by companions, stereotyping, and associated anxiety are commonly seen impacting therapy (Hayhow et al., 2002). Relationships of stammerers with family, siblings, and partners also have a huge impact on the ways stammerers perceive the situations impacting their quality of life (Beilby, 2014). For dealing with these and other similar issues speech therapy is always considered a cornerstone intervention as it helps in developing coping strategies and ways to control stammering (Donaghy & Smith, 2016). The methodologies followed by speech therapists rely on the diagnosis of people who stammer forming a structured pathway towards improved communication fluency hence making quality of life better. The basic elements of speech therapy revolve around counseling regarding diagnosis, educating the client and the family, change facilitation, and increasing self-monitoring efforts (Freeburn & Baker, 2023).

Despite all therapeutic techniques, the impact of therapy is non-significant if the response from the individual is not positive. It is observed that an insight into the intrapersonal and interpersonal process helps smooth the healing path for the stammerers. Like people suffering from other disorders, stammerers might also have positive and negative attitudes towards the therapy. Some stammerers approach therapy with positivity and hope for an improvement in speech fluency while others show resistance. A few attitudes that are commonly observed in therapy are optimistic and open-minded (considering therapy as an opportunity, Skeptical or Doubtful (unsure about the effectiveness of treatment), Anxious or fearful (those who have fear of judgment), resistant or avoidant (who consider confronting difficult), frustrated or dis-hearted (one suffering from stammering from long term). A positive attitude and approach can increase engagement and motivation (Plexico et al., 2005), while a negative or resistant attitude can lead to limited progress, frustration, and missed opportunities related to growth (Fonagy & Allison, 2014). Further, a negative and

resistant attitude leads to limited progress and a decreased opportunity for growth. Different techniques are used for the stammerers including some common features like duration and timing, the format of therapy, and the use of correct technology (Costelloe et al., 2015). This paper focused on identifying the prevalence and related aspects of stammerers.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is a type of research design that is used to find detailed information about the selected topic (Erickson, 2012). The semi-structured interview technique was used as a data collection technique. The study was completed in 6 months. The sample was collected using a non-probability sampling technique. The total sample consists of 20 clients who were taking therapy for stuttering. Participants of both genders who were 18 years and above and had mild, moderate, or severe stammering were part of the study. Clients who had received less than 16 sessions of therapy were excluded from the study. The data was collected from different counseling and therapeutic centers in Abbottabad, Peshawar, Kashmir, Gilgit, Swat, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore.

Tools

A semi-structured interview was used. This is a type of interview that has focus but still provides investigators a margin to explore and understand (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The semi-structured interview is a blend of open-ended and close-ended questionnaires (Adams, 2015). The questionnaires were made concerning the literature. This questionnaire was used as a guide for data collection. Probing questionnaires were also included to get more and more information from the participants.

Data Collection Synthesis And Analysis

The data was collected from major cities in Pakistan. The eligible participants were contacted via online sources like e-mail. After taking the verbal consent the semi-structured interview was conducted as per availability. All questions were asked one by one with good time to respond. The information was recorded along with observation of verbal and non-verbal cues and all information was transcribed later on. All ethical protocols including confidentiality were maintained throughout the interview.

The data analysis in qualitative research depends on the nature of the research and the data gathered. The selection of data analysis also depends on the literature through which the research is designed. The most common approach to data analysis in the public health sector is thematic analysis (Green et al., 2007). Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting meaning (themes) from a set of qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

RESULTS

The current research was conducted to explore the views regarding the provision of speech therapy to individuals who stammer.

Table 1: Theme 1, Negative and unsatisfactory experience of stammerers during speech therapy

S.NO	SUB- THEME	CODES
1	Dissatisfaction towards therapy	No improvement after therapy
2	Dissatisfaction towards therapist	Lack of guidance of stammering from therapist Therapist not explained cause of stammering Therapist was not knowledgeable about therapy Less empathetic Not satisfied from therapist

Theme Description:

This theme is related to the negative experiences of participants during therapy sessions, in terms of both speech therapy and therapist services, and participants were not satisfied with the outcomes of therapy.

In subtheme 1, the participant shows dissatisfaction with the therapist as they do not provide proper guidance to patients regarding stammering therapy, and the outcome was also not satisfactory.

In sub-theme 2, the participant discussed their experience and stated that the therapist was unable to deliver stammering techniques and other services, and showed dissatisfaction.

Table 2: Theme 2, Satisfactory experience of stammers during speech therapy

S.NO	SUB- THEME	CODES
1	Satisfaction with the therapist's participation during therapy	Good efforts by therapist Therapist listened actively Satisfied from therapist Satisfied from strategy of stammering Provided guidance for stammering
2	Provision of guidance about process	Good treatment strategy Therapist guided about techniques Therapist guided for generalization of techniques

3	Guidance about generalization of techniques	Therapist provided guidance related to difficult situation that trigger anxiety Therapist refer to psychologist for anxiety management
4	Provision of coping strategy	Therapist explain cause of stammering Therapist discussed prognosis with client
5	Procedural insights of therapist about stammering	Therapist was knowledgeable about stammering and therapy Improvement in fluency Positive outcome of therapy

Theme description

In this theme, the patient expresses satisfaction with their speech therapist for providing them with stammering-overcoming techniques and a referral system to a psychologist for anxiety management.

In sub-theme 1, the participant describes how the therapist helped them manage stammering-related issues by actively listening to them when they had a stammering problem and by giving them advice on how to speak fluently.

In sub-theme 2, the participant was satisfied with techniques provided by a therapist that offered a variety of strategies for managing stammering, and applying those strategies into practice produced notable progress

In sub-theme 3, the patient highlighted that the therapist guided them in anxiety and pressure situations and briefed them on how to control anxiety-triggering situations. The therapist also referred them to psychologists for better treatment in anxiety management.

In sub-theme 4, the participant indicates that the therapist gave an explanation of the causes and reasons for stammering, and also guided about the goal setting and improvement that could result from them. The therapist also briefed about the expected progression of treatment and recovery time.

In sub-theme 5, the participant conveyed that their therapist was knowledgeable and skilled about stammering. After receiving treatment from the skilled therapist, the subject experienced improvements in their stammering and their fluency.

Table 3: Theme 3, Factors that enhance outcome of speech therapy

S.NO	SUB- THEME	CODES
1	Environmental support for improvement	Public speaking can help to improve stammering Supportive environment improve fluency
2	Extend and modify sessions for improvement.	Therapist should increase session time Therapist should give group sessions

Theme description

This theme illustrates how improvements can be strengthened by modifying speech therapy methods and environment.

In sub-theme 1, Participants suggest that if stammer speaks in front of an audience, it can help improve their fluency, and support from family and friends is also important in improving their fluency.

In sub-theme 2, the participant suggested that arranging therapy sessions two or three times a week or expanding their duration and group sessions with other stammers could help with recovery.

Table 4: Theme 4, Impact of therapeutic skills and methods on stammering

S.NO	SUB- THEME	CODES
1	Qualification and experience of therapist for better outcome	Therapist should be knowledgeable/ qualified Therapist should have experience related stammering therapy
2	Therapist Positive behavior and support for improvement	Therapist should work according to need of patient Therapist should help in generalization of techniques Support from therapist improve fluency Therapist should be cooperative/friendly/kind Therapist should actively listen Empathy should be present for better therapy provision professional attitude of therapist will be helpful in therapy
3	Insight of stammering in therapist	Therapist should be as self-stammer

Theme Description:

This theme illustrates how improvements can be strengthened by modifying speech therapist qualities and positive communicative behavior.

In sub-theme 1, the participant highlighted the importance of a therapist's expertise in stammering when implementing treatments. The participant stresses how crucial it is for the therapist to be qualified and have previous experience dealing with stammers to effectively improve fluency.

In sub-theme 2, the participant explains the significance of the therapist's behavior during therapy. The participant believes that to provide an environment where the participant feels comfortable disclosing their difficulties, the therapist

should behave in a kind and sympathetic manner. The participant thought that this could help with fluency improvement.

In sub theme3, the participant discusses the therapist's own stammering experience. The participant makes the suggestion that if the therapist has stammered, they may feel the difficulties more deeply and have a deeper knowledge of the situation. The participant thinks that the therapy may be more successful because the therapist herself stammered.

Table 5: Theme 5, Client-related factors affecting success of therapy

S.NO	SUB- THEME	CODES
1	Practicing of techniques for improvement	Practice of stammering techniques improve fluency
2	Treatment on time for improvement	Early intervention improve fluency
3	Own self-assurance for improvement	Self-confidence improve fluency

Theme Description:

This theme centers on the elements unique to each client and how those elements may affect the course of therapy.

In sub-theme 1, the participant believes that if the therapist gives stammering treatments and the individual practices and applies them in their daily lives, the stammering would probably decrease, leading to positive therapeutic outcomes.

In sub-theme 2, the participant explains that parents should start their child's treatment as soon as possible if they have a history of childhood stammering. It is thought that early intervention will facilitate the process and help in future prognosis.

In sub-theme 3, the participant thinks that if a person lacks confidence, they have to focus on developing their inner confidence. The participant believes that having more self-confidence can help one manage their stammering more effectively.

DISCUSSION

Stammering is a widespread disorder in society. Although several therapies and treatment options are currently in use, the effectiveness of these therapies and the satisfaction of people who stammer with these therapies is the area of investigation in this study. The demographic characteristics of the present research are supported by

previous research conducted to find stammerers' opinions about therapy (Hayhow et al., 2002). The current research also aimed to find participants' experiences with speech therapy, the advice given by therapists regarding the management of stammering, the particular approaches recommended, and the extent to which these techniques improved fluency. This study used interview techniques to provide great insight into participants' individual experiences with stammering also multiple themes and sub-themes were explored.

Theme 1, explored the presence of dissatisfaction in stammerers regarding speech therapy. Two sub-themes were explored indicating some uncertainty towards therapists and different therapeutic techniques. The results found were consistent with previous research (Allen et al., 2014), an online survey indicated issues regarding therapy, therapists, and service delivery methods. Individual differences were another reason for dissatisfaction which played an important role (Kelly et al., 2020).

Few individuals showed great satisfaction with their therapists and reported significant improvement in fluency via speech therapy. It was also found in a study that different attitudes of people who stammer significantly impact their improvement (Lindsay & Langevin, 2017). The handling of psychological aspects of stuttering like anxiety and depression along with stuttering itself is also highlighted in this theme by the client. An improvement in associated psychological conditions was observed in the present theme. These results were in line with the literature highlighting the importance of interventions regarding stuttering (Everard & Howell, 2018).

The findings of this study indicated optimism regarding the results of speech therapy. The result has also indicated an improvement in perception regarding self (in terms of speech fluency and confidence) and speech therapy (results gained through therapy) which is justified through literature (Venkatagiri, 2005). The second theme in the results also indicates participant satisfaction with techniques that were guided by a speech therapist, and participants were satisfied with these techniques and used them in their daily lives, such as prolonged speech, easy onset, and light content. Literature also supports these results that prolonged speech and its variant could be an effective technique for reducing the severity of stuttering and increasing fluency (Venkatagiri, 2005).

The third theme identified all the factors and supportive techniques that have enhanced the impact of speech therapy including public speaking, a positive environment, session duration, and group therapy. All these contributing factors have improved the quality of therapy along with its effectiveness and are considered positive contributing factors by the patients and this was also supported by the literature (Costelloe et al., 2015).

In theme 4, the therapist's skill was highlighted. The way a therapist deals with clients has an impact on overall satisfaction and results of therapy. The therapist's expertise, experience, and qualification result in insight development. An expert therapist handles the situation smartly and also modifies the technique according to the needs of the client. This modification can help the client to go follow therapy without getting burdened (Allen et al., 2014). The fifth theme identified during the

present study highlighted all confounding factors that can positively impact the therapeutic results. The sub-themes identified were the amount of practice done by the client, timely intervention, and improved self-confidence. In the current study, the effort made by the stutterer to make therapy effective is one of the contributing factors (Ingham et al., 2012).

LIMITATIONS

The current study has a few limitations that should be considered by future researchers. As size of the sample taken was small because it was difficult to approach a pool of clients who needed therapy due to a lack of awareness about speech therapy. As therapies need time to properly work and show results, clients may develop negative opinions regarding intervention due to time constraints and lack of adherence to therapy.

CONCLUSION

The study on the provision and perception of stammerers regarding speech therapy has provided people with a perspective regarding the provision of stammering and its therapeutic aspect. The study emphasized different areas of therapy that can be improved for better prognosis and also focused on different positive and negative aspects of therapy through the client's perspective. The role of the environment and its impact on therapy was also highlighted in the present research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that could act as a gateway for future research are that speech pathologists must have specialized training and experience to deal the clients effectively. Improvement of resources is also required for better assessment. Also, this study could be extended to quantitative research to explore different areas of stammering.

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