Attitudes toward Stuttering: A Look at Selected “Helping” Professions

Ann Beste-Guldborg, PhD
Nichole Campanale, MS
Review of the Literature:

– Listeners often hold negative views of stuttering and people who stutter (Abdalla & St. Louis, 2011; Allard & Williams, 2008; Cooper & Cooper, 1996; Klassen, 2001; Mayo, Mayo, Jenkins, & Graves, 2004; Mitchell, McMahon, & McKee, 2005).

– Many professionals who interact with, support, and have influence over people who stutter are among those with negative attitudes
  
  
  – **School Administrators** (Lass, et al.,1994; Yeakle & Cooper, 1986)
  
  – **Health Care Workers** (Silverman & Bongey, 1997; Yairi & Carrico, 1992)
  
  – **Employers** (Hurst & Cooper, 1983)
  
  – **Vocab Rehab Counselors** (Hurst & Cooper, 1983)
  
  – **SLPs** (Lass et al., 1989; Turnbaugh, Guitar, & Hoffman, 1979)
Review of the Literature:

- Some recent investigations have noted a shift in attitudes (Cooper & Cooper, 1996; Klassen 2001; Swartz, Gabel, & Irani, 2009)

- Still the stuttering stereotype exists (Bloodstein & Ratner, 2008; White & Collins, 1984)

- PWS are often characterized by others and by the media as nervous, shy, frustrated, anxious, un-heroic, tense, weak, reactionary, and guarded (Basshardt, 2006; Burley & Rinaldi, 1986; Gabel, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Swartz, Gabel, Irani, 2009)
Review of Literature:

– What is a stereotype?
  
  – A stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category, its function is to simplify complex social information or rationalize conduct in relation to that category (Allport, 1958; Fox, 1992).

– Stereotypes allow people to have false beliefs, to exclude, to group together, and to diminish (Crocker, Major, & Steel, 1998; Smart, 2001).

– Consider the prevalence of media portrayals of PWS as criminals, villains, unintelligent, or damaged (Basshardt, 2006; Johnson, 1987; Johnson, 2008).

– Misinformed beliefs affect occupational, educational, and social opportunities (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Goffman, 1963; Klein & Hood, 2004; Klompas & Ross, 2004, Yaruss & Quesal, 2004) and can expose PWS to prejudicial and discriminating attitudes as well as bullying (Boyle, Blood, & Blood, 2009).
So at this time:

– A current understanding of the beliefs and attitudes toward stuttering and PWS within various “helping professions” is important.

– Members of these professions play critical roles in providing support, assistance, and opportunity for PWS.

– Their attitudes and actions can have a significant impact on the self-perception of PWS affecting them personally, socially and professionally (Guitar, 2006; Dorsey & Guenther, 2000; Ezrati-Vinacour & Levin, 2004; Hulit & Wirtz, 1994; Yaruss & Quesal, 2004).
Purpose of the study

– This study examined the beliefs and perceptions of law enforcement, health care, mental health, and educational personnel toward stuttering using the Public Opinion Survey on Human Attributes-Stuttering (POSHA-S).

– **Purpose:** to determine current attitudes of people within selected “helping professions” toward stuttering and PWS as well as to discern any significant differences between the groups.

– Results will contribute to the current understanding of public attitudes toward stuttering and may inform public awareness and educational campaigns.
Research Questions:

– What are the attitudes of law enforcement, health care, mental health, and educational personnel toward stuttering and people who stutter?

– Is there a difference in attitudes between professions?
Method:

- 422 respondents with membership in the health care, mental health, education, and law enforcement professions were recruited for this study.
- Electronic links sent to 2072 potential respondents from published professional email lists and listservs. Participants were asked to pass survey on as they saw fit.
- The *Public Opinion Survey on Human Attributes-Stuttering (POSHA-S)*, a well-developed, standardized instrument designed to measure public attitudes toward stuttering (St. Louis, 2011) was used to collect the data.
- Data coded according to standard *POSHA-S* procedures and converted to a -100 to +100 scale, where higher scores reflect more positive attitudes & lower scores reflect more negative attitudes.
Demographics:

– Overall response rate was 20.37%
  – Mental Health Workers = 98
  – Health Care Workers = 101
  – Education Personnel = 128
  – Law Enforcement Personnel = 95

Median Age:

– Mental Health Workers = 45
– Health Care Workers = 39
– Education Personnel = 41
– Law Enforcement Personnel = 36
Demographics- (unremarkable)

- Gender: More females responded to the survey (55%) than males (46%) except law enforcement (80/20%)

- Age and Education:

  The mean age of respondents in this sample was 40.25 years ($SD=16.17$), with a range from 18 to 68.

  The mean number of years of schooling was 16.94 ($SD=2.69$)

  Mental Health Workers had most education (18.75 years)

  Law Enforcement least (15.5 years)

- Income: Among friends and family (+40.25);

  Compared to others in the US (+38.75).
Demographics-

Knew a person who stuttered:

– Mental Health Professionals 80%
– Health Care Workers 78%
– Educational Professionals 64%
– Law Enforcement 53%

**2 respondents reported themselves as a PWS**
Data Analysis:

- Components (clusters of items)
  - Traits/Personality
  - Help,
  - Cause,
  - Potential,
  - Accommodating/Helping,
  - Social Distance/Sympathy,
  - Knowledge/Experience,
  - Knowledge Source

- Sub-scores (clusters of components)

  Beliefs About PWS (BEL) -- Those external to respondent

  Self Reactions to PWS (SR) – Those internal to respondent

- Overall Stuttering Score (OSS) --(mean of the 2 sub-scores)

- Statistical analysis – Percentages, Means, Standard Deviations, MANOVA
Results:

Human attributes

- Overall respondents had somewhat negative impressions of people who are obese, those with mental illness, and PWS.

- When asked if they would want to be a person who was mentally ill, obese, or a person who stuttered most respondents showed very negative responses.

- Respondents knew the least about people who have stuttering disorders, followed by mental illness, obesity, and left-handedness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSHA-S Human Attributes</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M (-100 to +100)</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall impression of a person who...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is obese</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is left-handed</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has a stuttering disorder</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is mentally ill</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is intelligent</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would want to be a person who...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is obese</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-82</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is left-handed</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has a stuttering disorder</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-86</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is mentally ill</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-91</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is intelligent</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount I know about a person who...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is obese</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is left-handed</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has a stuttering disorder</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-45</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is mentally ill</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is intelligent</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Know PWS:

– 69% knew someone who stuttered –
  – Mental Health—80
  – Health Care—78
  – Education—64
  – Law Enforcement--53

– 131 respondents did not know a PWS
– 2 respondents reported themselves as a PWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Following are people I have known with stuttering disorders…</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close friend</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the attitudes of law enforcement, health care, mental health, and educational personnel toward stuttering and people who stutter?

### Selected Component Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSHA-S Component Scores</th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
<th>Health Care</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Law Enforcement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traits/Personality</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating/Helping</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Distance/Sympathy</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Experience</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Source</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the attitudes of law enforcement, health care, mental health, and educational personnel toward stuttering and people who stutter?
Are there significant differences?

Sub-scores, OMI, & OSS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>BEL</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>OSS</th>
<th>OMI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping Professions</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications:

– Biggest implications is that there is a need for training and education among these helping professions with regard to stuttering and PWS.

– The education needs to be aimed at:

  – The “stuttering stereotype”
  – Ways to help
  – Increasing comfortableness
  – Getting accurate information out there

*Very important because*-- *these professionals interact with, support, and have influence over people who stutter on a regular basis*
Limitations of the Study:

- The small sample size
- The low response rate
- Snowball sampling offer
Questions
References


References


References


