

The impact of stuttering on quality of life of children and adolescents*****

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Abstract

Background: understanding the experience of people who stutter, both in and out treatment, will lead to improved outcomes. Aim: to investigate how stuttering affects the quality of life of children and adolescents who stutter. Method: the Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering - School-Age (OASES-S) was used to assess the impact of stuttering and the Fluency Profile Protocol was used to stuttering severity. Results: these age groups do experience moderate negative impact as measured by the OASES-S. The results showed a tendency toward a positive correlation between severity and the impact of stuttering on quality of life. Conclusion: a better understanding of the impact of stuttering in these age groups provides a needed guide for the development of stuttering treatments and treatment outcomes research.

Key Words: Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences; Quality of Life; Stuttering.

Resumo

Tema: compreender a experiência das pessoas que gaguejam, dentro e fora do contexto de tratamento, conduz a melhores resultados. Objetivo: investigar como a gagueira afeta a qualidade de vida de crianças e adolescentes que gaguejam. Método: o Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering - School-Age (OASES-S) foi utilizado para avaliar o impacto da gagueira e o Protocolo do Perfil da Fluência para severidade da gagueira. Resultados: os grupos estudados experienciam impacto negativo moderado conforme medido pelo OASES-S. Os resultados evidenciam tendência à correlação positiva entre grau de severidade e impacto da gagueira na qualidade de vida. Conclusão: uma melhor compreensão do impacto da gagueira nas faixas etárias estudadas propicia direção necessária para desenvolvimento de tratamentos da gagueira e pesquisa dos resultados do tratamento.

Palavras-Chave: Fonoaudiologia; Qualidade de Vida; Gagueira.

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Introduction

Starting in childhood, people who stutter can suffer consequences that affect their lives. The influence of health conditions upon the quality of life (QOL) has gained attention around the world, according to the policies of the World Health Organization. Therefore, understanding the experience of people who stutter, both in and out treatment, will lead to improved outcomes.

Authors¹⁻² have developed the Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering - Adult version (OASES-A), an instrument based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)³. This classification "(...) replaces the negative perspective of impairment and disability with a positive standpoint".⁴

A key aspect of the ICF is its focus on QOL. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how stuttering affects QOL of children and adolescents who stutter.

Method

The study was approved by Ethics Committee and the responsables have signed the Consent Term. The corpus are composed by 7 subjects from 7 to 12 years old, six males and one female. The instrument for the assessment of the impact of stuttering - a draft version of the Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering for School-Age - (ages 7-12) - OASES-S, was duly authorized for use in this research by the authors. It was translated by a translator and adapted to Portuguese by the brazilian researchers. Stuttering severity was evaluated via Fluency Profile Protocol⁵.

Results

The results regarding the Assessment of Total Impact show: 57,1% classified as moderate; 28,5% mild-to-moderate and 14,2%, moderate-to-severe (Graph 1).

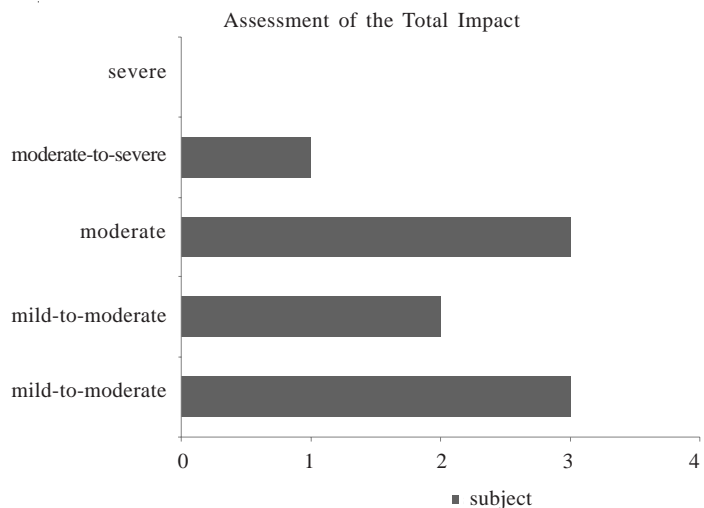
Furthermore, 71,4% reported feeling "very bad" for being called stutterers. An identical percentage indicated that other people's reaction to their stuttering affects them a little. The majority considered that stuttering does not interfere in the communication with parents (71,4%) or teachers (57,1%). A similar percentage (57,1%) indicated that stuttering does not affect their lives neither their ability to make decisions. Most of them (71,4%) reported that the Speech-language therapy does

not interfere negatively in their lives.

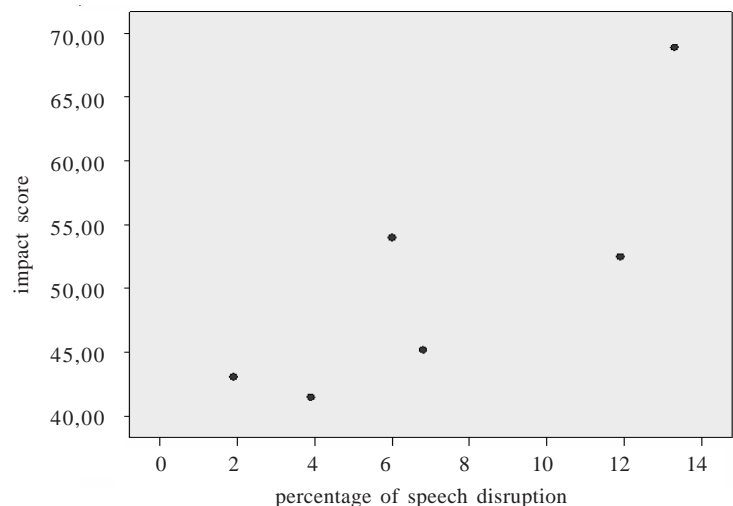
According to the Fluency Profile Protocol⁵, only one subject was not rated as stuttering, according to the reference values, even though he indicated that he feels like stutterer.

To verify the correlation between the variables of the Total Impact of Stuttering and the percentage of speech disruptions (Graph 2) was applied to the Spearman Correlation Test using SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows - version 10.0. The correlation coefficient was rho = 0.771 (significant a = 1.0). The results showed tendency toward a positive correlation between severity and impact of stuttering on QOL.

GRAPH 1. Assessment of the Total Impact of Stuttering



GRAPH 2. Correlation of the Total Impact of Stuttering and the percentage of speech disruptions



Discussion

Studies⁶⁻⁸ show the impact of stuttering on people's life, corroborating our findings. The age groups studied do experience moderate negative impact as measured by the OASES-S and the correlation between overt severity and degree of impact is moderate at best, suggesting that the surface severity does not tell you the whole picture.

The results also demonstrate the importance of Speech and Language Pathology (SLP) therapy for the subjects, similar findings to other authors⁹. This study presents "a new instrument for measuring the overall impact of stuttering through assessment of multiple aspects of the disorder."¹

Conclusion

The study contributes knowledge about the impact of stuttering and supports the use of treatment to improve quality of life in children and adolescents who stutter. It is worth to point out that the instruments - OASES-S and Fluency Profile Protocol demonstrated to be efficient for that purpose. A better understanding of the impact of stuttering in these age groups provides a needed guide for the development of stuttering treatments and treatment outcomes research.

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