The experience of stuttering among people who stutter from the ultra-orthodox and secular community in Israel

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Abstract

Stuttering is a disorder which is manifested during a communicational interaction, and is experiential in nature. While the etiology for stuttering is still in question among researchers, most agree that the experience of stuttering may be highly related to various factors, of which environment plays a significant role. The environment of an individual has been described in circles (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), to depict the different layers which encompass the person in his daily life, such as family, friends, educational or work settings and strangers. Beyond those, the largest external circle of Bronfenbrenner (1979), i.e., the macro-system, represents society or culture. The behavior and approach of society to the PWS has been described repeatedly as crucial towards the quality of life and coping strategies of the PWS. Negative attitudes and stereotypes towards PWS have been reported in several countries from around the world (Kuwait, Turkey, China) and specific behaviors towards PWS within African countries or Indian tribes have been described. Nevertheless, only few researches have explored the experience of stuttering within the social context. The present qualitative study explored the experience of stuttering within two opposing social groups in Israel: the ultra-Orthodox Jews and the secular Jews, in order to characterize the different needs of PWS in these groups and identify differences in their ability to cope with their stuttering, which might be the result of their specific social context. Eight adult PWS were recruited for this study, between the ages of 22-62 years: four ultra-Orthodox Jews and four secular Jews. In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant separately for two hours on average, using a semi-structured format which consisted of nineteen open ended questions. Questions included various topics, e.g. child and adolescence memories of living with stuttering, the influence of stuttering on the individual, self attitudes toward stuttering. After concluding the interviews, a transcript of each interview was achieved and analyzed. Analysis of the transcriptions was performed using concept driven and data driven strategies. Holistic reading of interviews suggested four main dimensions: the experience of stuttering across the life span, coping strategies with the stuttering, the experience of therapy, and personal insights. Each of these was then categorized into categories and sub categories. Initial analysis demonstrated a great emotional content, different anxiety experiences and special speech roles among ultra-orthodox interviewees in comparison to the secular
Our findings describe the experience of stuttering and its relation to the social context. However, it is also suggested that the experience of stuttering is "universal" and despite the different circumstances, similarities may be found in the individual's coping strategies and experiences with therapy. Following the presentation of findings, clinical implications will be suggested.

Keywords: Ultra-orthodox; Social impact; Religion; Experience of stuttering

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