

Research Report

Public Attitudes Toward Stuttering in Poland

Aneta M. Przepiorka†, Agata Blachnio†, Kenneth O. St. Louis‡ and Tomasz Wozniak§

†Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

‡West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, USA

§Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland

(Received March 2013; accepted June 2013)

Abstract

Background: People who stutter often experience negative judgments and reactions to their stuttering from the nonstuttering majority. Many are stigmatized because of their stuttering and threatened with social exclusion, placing them at risk for compromised quality of life.

Aims: The purpose of this investigation was to measure public attitudes toward stuttering in Poland.

Methods & Procedures: A sample of 268 respondents (mean age = 29 years; range = 15–60 years) from numerous different geographic and urban-rural settings in Poland filled out a Polish translation of the *Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes–Stuttering (POSHA–S)*.

Outcomes & Results: Polish respondents displayed attitudes toward stuttering and people who stutter that were generally similar or “average” in comparison with other samples around the world from the *POSHA–S* database.

Conclusions & Implications: Although generally typical of other Western societies studied, attitudes of adolescents and adults from Poland were notably different in some ways, such as in the beliefs that emotional trauma or viruses and disease can cause stuttering as well as in the self reaction that they would feel uncomfortable speaking with a stuttering person. Overall, social exclusion and stigma are as likely among Poles who stutter as among most other populations studied.

Keywords: stuttering, attitudes, Poland, *POSHA–S*.

What this paper adds?

What is already known on this subject?

Previous studies have suggested that people who stutter, regardless of their age, are likely to be negatively affected by stereotypes, stigma, and social exclusion. Stuttering affects social relationships, impedes functioning in society, and has detrimental influence on their quality of life.

What this study adds?

This study contributes to the knowledge on the attitudes towards people who stutter primarily as a result of using a standard measure, the *Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes–Stuttering (POSHA–S)*. Using a new Polish translation of the *POSHA–S*, a broadly-selected sample of Polish adults was compared with previous samples using the instrument. Attitudes towards stuttering in the Polish society were generally similar to other samples around the world. Nevertheless, their attitudes were still far from positive and showed much the same stereotypes and potential stigma reported previously, thus very likely affecting the lives of people who stutter in Poland.

Introduction

Stuttering is not only a speech fluency disorder: it also has a social dimension, potentially impeding the individual’s functioning in society seriously and potentially lowering the quality of a person’s life (Craig, Blumgart,

& Tran, 2009). In the literature, stuttering is viewed as a complex and multifaceted speech disorder (Wozniak, 2008), which is manifest as symptoms not only at linguistic, emotional, or physical levels, but in terms social consequences. This disorder has impact on the

Address correspondence to: Aneta Malgorzata Przepiorka, Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Raclawickie 14, PL 20–950 Lublin, Poland; e-mail: aneta.przepiorka@gmail.com