

Experiences and expectations of adults who stutter attending Speech and Language Therapy for stuttering in Sri Lanka.

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Background: Over the years, the role of adults who stutter in stuttering treatment has evolved from being a passive recipient to an ‘expert’ partner in the collaborative therapeutic process. Therefore, understanding the client’s experiences and expectations regarding stuttering treatment has been recognized as an integral element of an effective therapeutic process. Although several global studies have explored the experiences and expectations of adults who stutter in relation to stuttering treatment, it is an uncharted area related to speech and language therapy in the Sri Lankan context.

Objective/s: The study explored experiences and expectations of adults who stutter attending speech and language therapy in Sri Lanka.

Methods: This study used a generic qualitative approach. Online semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 adults who stutter who were attending or had attended speech and language therapy within the past two years at a state university clinic in Sri Lanka. All interviews were conducted in Sinhala language via Zoom. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, translated into English language, and analyzed using a thematic analysis.

Results: Four themes emerged from the data: 1) limited awareness of stuttering and its management, 2) impact of stuttering on adults who stutter, 3) experiences of coping with stuttering before attending therapy, and 4) perceptions towards successful management of stuttering. Most of the participants’ experiences before successful management depicted narratives of negative emotions and reactions followed by a lifestyle dominated by avoidance and restriction. The majority of the participants’ expectation of therapy was to improve fluency. Many participants reported that their expectations for therapy were met and that therapy made a positive difference in their lives. Furthermore, the participants indicated multiple personal, therapeutic, and social factors that contribute to achieving successful outcomes from therapy.

Conclusion/s: The current study emphasizes the importance of individualized therapy, designed by considering all the unique perceptions and needs of individuals related to their quality of life to improve the likelihood of successful therapeutic outcomes. The study reveals that being absolutely fluent is not a necessary criterion for the successful management of stuttering. In addition, the findings highlight the need to promote awareness of stuttering and its management and the profession of speech and language therapy among the Sri Lankan public.

Key words: *Adults who stutter, Speech and language therapy, Management of stuttering, Qualitative, Sri Lanka*