

# Attitude of Students towards Stuttering in Secondary School in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria

Ukwuije, Chinedu Kelechi. PhD

Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt

Email: [chinedukelechi23@gmail.com](mailto:chinedukelechi23@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *Stuttering means having difficulties in rhythm, sound, syllable, word and phrase repetitions, or flow of speech cut in the form of extension or block form. The study investigated the attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area IN Rivers state. The sample of 200 students was used from 8 selected secondary schools in the Local Government Area. Stratified random sampling technique was used and the instrument for the study was a questionnaire tagged "Attitude of Students towards Stuttering (ASTS)". The data collected were analyzed with mean and standard deviation for research questions, while the hypotheses were tested with independent t-test statistics. The study found out that attitude of students significantly influence stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, and it also revealed that there is negative relationship and negative stereotype towards students who stutter. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers and students should give the student time to speak and maintain eye contact while they were talking to you. No-one likes to be interrupted or have others finish their sentences or look away mid-sentence.*

**Keywords:** Attitude, Stuttering, student's relationship, negative stereotype

## Introduction

Stuttering is a disorder of speech fluency characterised by repetitions of sounds, syllables, or whole words; sound prolongations; or blocks of airflow during speech (Guitar, 2015). Stuttering is a communication disorder that disrupts the smooth, forward flow of speech. People who stutter experience disruptions in their speech fluency as well as adverse affective, cognitive, and behavioural reactions that stem from these disruptions (Bennett, 2014). These reactions seem to occur, at least in part, from the anticipation of negative reactions from listeners toward stuttering (Bloodstein, 2013).

Stuttering is an age old problem. As long as people have been talking, some have been afflicted with this disorder. Throughout history, a number of famous people including Prophet Moses, St. Paul, Sir Isaac Newton, Winston Churchill, King George VI and western singer Mel Tillis stuttered. Stuttering does not seem to have interfered with the accomplishments of these individuals. There are more than fifteen million people who stutter in the world today, and the majority is children (Zenit, 2017).

Stuttering can be found in all parts of the world in all cultures and races. It affects people of all ages regardless of intelligence or socioeconomic status. Incidences of stuttering date back to biblical times; it has been suggested that there are indications of stuttering behaviour in reports about Moses (Garfinkel, 2015).

Thus, "stuttering is apparently as much a disorder of communication as it is of speech; the receiver (listener) is at least as important as the sender (person who stutters) in the interchange" (Van Riper, 2016). Students' reactions to stuttering have been considered important for many decades. Johnson (2011) surveyed people who stutter and found that stuttering in front of a close friend or family member was perceived as less embarrassing than stuttering in front of strangers. Johnson concluded that students' reactions influence people who stutter in a variety of ways, and that students should make people who stutter feel as comfortable as possible by: acting and speaking so that the stuttermaker will feel secure in one's presence and also feel that he/she is being accepted as an individual and has nothing to lose by stuttering.

There is a common misconception by students that an individual who stutters is less intelligent than a typical fluent speaker which often results in discrimination and limited opportunities in life (Boyle, 2012). Additionally, it is also common for an individual who stutters to feel negative feelings and attitudes about his or her communication abilities. Avoidance behaviours and limited interaction with others are frequent resulting effects on the social behaviours of a person with a dysfluency such as stuttering (Guitar, 2015).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth investigation of fluent speakers' (Students) attitudes toward stuttering and people who stutter to gain a more thorough understanding of attitudes toward people who stutter and how these attitudes may affect interactions between them and fluent speakers (students).

## Statement of the Problem

Oftentimes, there is this feeling of apprehension when a student is confronted by a fellow student who stutters. Sometimes in an honest effort to help, teachers are often perplexed because a stuttering child becomes more shy, less talkative and responsive to their efforts and the speech interruptions become more frequent and pronounced. Would it be best to supply words as soon as any stuttering commences? This emotional reaction is due both to how the person who stutters think of themselves because of their speech and how they perceive what society thinks of them (whether true or not). This reaction can be extreme and greatly impact the quality of life a person who stutters. Many persons who stutter are fearful of speaking situations, especially ones that are

stressful or over the telephone. They are so afraid of stuttering that they try to avoid these situations and certain words they know they will stutter on; or they avoid speaking altogether.

Several studies conducted on stuttering and stutterers have been shown to be negative. Some of the characteristics found were concerned with personality traits such as self-esteem, anxiety, intelligence, extroversion and introversion, social appeal, emotional stability, social adjustment, stress level, sensitivity, shyness, fear, insecurity and quietness. This makes some students see stutterers as less important and laughing and making jokes. In view of this, this study aims at investigating the attitude of fluent-speaking students towards students who stutter.

### Aim and Objectives the Study

The aim of the study is to examine attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically this study intends to;

1. Examine the attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
2. Assess student's relationship towards students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
3. Ascertain students' negative stereotype on students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

1. What is the attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
2. What is the relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
3. What extent does students' negative stereotype influence students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Attitude of students does not significantly influence stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area
2. There is no significant relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area
3. Students' negative stereotype does not significantly influence students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

### Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The study was carried out in Obio/Akpor Local government area in Rivers state, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of secondary schools in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers state. The sample of the study was 200 students from 8 selected schools in the local government area, 20 students are selected from each of the schools. Stratified random sampling was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher – constructed questionnaire tagged “Attitude of Students towards Stuttering (ASTS). There were four response modes for each item rated (4) strongly disagree (SD), (3) disagree (D), (2) agree, (A) and (1) strongly agree (SA). Two experts in measurement and evaluation validated the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The data obtained were analyzed according to research questions and hypotheses, using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

### Presentation of Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

**Hypothesis 1:** Attitude of students does not significantly influence stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

**Table 1: Mean and t-test of attitude of students towards stuttering**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
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Attitude of Students	120	69.83	7.080	198	11.91	1.96	Significant
Stuttering	60	44.04	2.63				

The result of the data analyzed showed that the mean attitude of students was 69.83 and SD of 7.08 while Stuttering had mean score of 44.04 and SD of 2.63. The result shows that there is a difference on attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Since the t-cal of 11.91 is greater than t-critical =1.96, this is accepted. Hence, this implies students attitude significantly influence stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

**Table 2: Mean and t-test of students and students who stutter**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Students relationship	110	58.27	0.88	198	0.706	1.96	Rejected
Stuttering	90	41.31	0.73				

Table 2 shows the summary of sample t-test on the relationship between students and students who stutter. It shows that the mean students who speak fluently are 58.27 and SD of 0.88 while students who stutter were 41.8 and SD of 0.73. The result shows that there is a relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Since the t-cal of 0.706 is less than t-crit =1.96, this is rejected. This shows that there is a significant negative relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

**Research Question 3:** What extent does students' negative stereotype influence students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

**Hypothesis 3:** Students' negative stereotype does not significantly influence students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

**Table 3: Mean and t-test of students' negative stereotype towards students who stutter**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Students' negative stereotype.	130	86.96	8.48	198	6.82	1.96	Significant
Stuttering	70	43.86	6.77				

Table 3 shows the summary of independent sample t-test on the students' negative stereotype on students who stutter. It shows that the mean students' negative stereotype was 86.96 and SD of 8.48 while students who stutter were 43.86 and SD of 6.77. The result shows that there is a negative stereotype influence on stutters. Since the t-cal of 6.82 is greater than t-crit of 1.96, this is accepted. This implies that Students' negative stereotype significantly influence students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

**Discussion of Findings**

Firstly, the study revealed that there is a high level of negative attitude of students towards stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers state. This findings were in line with Hugh-Jones & Smith (2014), who suggested

that students' attitudes or beliefs related to stuttering may actually have an influence on how bullying was managed which was one reason why it was important for teachers to have knowledge or training related to stuttering. Blood (2010) examined the self-esteem, perceived stigma, and disclosure practices of 48 adolescents and young adults who stutter reported that stutter worry about what others think of them during times of dysfluency, especially when first meeting someone, and worrying that their stuttering may affect the kinds of social relations they expect to have.

Secondly, the findings also indicated that there is significant negative relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. This present study was in agreement with an earlier study by (Mooney & Smith, 2013 who states that stuttering may cause young children to miss the opportunity to develop confidence with their peers. This feeling of a lack of confidence felt by some stutters may not be unfounded; data show that secondary school age students perceive their peers who stutter more negatively than those who do not stutter (Langevin & Hager, 2011).

Thirdly, the result of this study also revealed that students' negative stereotype significantly influence students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. In line with this finding, Gabel (2016) pointed out that school-aged students making negative comments about stuttering or laughing as they viewed a video clip of a man stuttering as he read a poem. People who stutter unfortunately live in an environment where the general public often stigmatize or stereotype them due to their stutter (Blood & Tellis 2010).

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that attitude of students significantly influence stuttering in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The study also revealed that there is negative relationship between students and students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Finally, the study showed that students' have a negative stereotype towards students who stutter in secondary school in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. The students should be informed that there is no link between intelligence and stuttering.
2. Teachers and Students should give the student time to speak and maintain eye contact while they are talking to you. No one likes to be interrupted or have others finish their sentences or look away mid-sentence.
3. Teachers should not pretend that stuttering doesn't exist. They should make sure the student get appropriate help. Evidence-based treatments are available, but stuttering gets harder to treat with age, with early treatment strongly recommended for school-aged children.
4. More awareness should be made by government, school and private bodies to enlighten the general public about stutters and how to relate with them.
5. School counselors should counsel stutters to build their self-esteem and remind them they are equal and important as other students.

### Implications of the Study

1. School counselor is to inquire the attitude of students towards stutters and how to enlighten them about stuttering.
2. Once positive attitude are establish between students and stutter, follow up should be maintained.
3. Counselor should be careful not to put all their attention on stutters and feel less concern on other student's needs.

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