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Teacher Perceptions of Stuttering

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Abstract

Stuttering is a largely misunderstood communication disorder, which can have long-term effects for people who stutter. A predominantly negative stuttering stereotype exists; previous research has found many groups, including teachers, subscribe to the stereotype. The current study investigated teacher perceptions of children who stutter and stuttering using a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative findings were based on a 15-item semantic differential scale and a 32-item attitudinal statement scale. The qualitative findings were based on two semi-structured interviews. Generally, in this study teachers provided positive or neutral ratings for the semantic differential adjective pairs and the attitudinal statements. These findings suggest that for this group of teachers that they appear not to adhere to a strong negative stereotype for children who stutter. Teachers' ratings indicated that they did not view stuttering as a barrier to academic achievement. With respect to use of strategies to assist children who stutter, the teachers ratings indicated they were unsure about the best strategies to use. Their ratings also indicated they were unsure about the nature and etiology of stuttering. The results indicated that perceptions of children who stutter are changing and that teachers may not adhere to a negative stuttering stereotype. Education about stuttering and experience with people who stutter may facilitate change in teacher's perceptions and attitudes towards children who stutter.

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