

**10th Congress of
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Stronger together

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Psychological Challenges in Adults Who Stutter

Anna Stoljarova, Master of Clinical Psychology
Sinu Kliinik, Tallinn, Estonia

SHORT INTRODUCTION

Adult stuttering is often accompanied by significant psychological challenges, including social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and avoidance of communication. These difficulties may persist even when speech fluency improves, impacting social participation, professional functioning, and overall quality of life. This e-poster explores key psychological mechanisms underlying adult stuttering and emphasizes the importance of integrating psychological understanding into speech and language therapy and interdisciplinary care.



OBJECTIVE(S) AND METHODS

Objectives

Adults who stutter frequently experience persistent social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and avoidance of communication, which can significantly affect participation in daily, social, and professional contexts. Even when speech fluency improves, psychological distress and maladaptive coping strategies may remain. The aim is to highlight key psychological phenomena associated with adult stuttering and to discuss their relevance for speech and language therapy and interdisciplinary care.

Methods

The e-poster is based on clinical observations from psychological practice with adults who stutter. Psychological experiences and behavioral patterns are described using established theoretical frameworks related to social anxiety, avoidance, and safety behaviors.



RESULTS

Clinical observations indicate that adults who stutter often demonstrate heightened anticipatory anxiety, increased self-monitoring during speech, social withdrawal, and reduced quality of life. To manage distress, individuals may develop various avoidance and safety behaviors aimed at minimizing perceived social exposure.

These behavioral patterns can include restricting participation in speaking situations, altering communication styles, or, in some cases, using external means such as wearing a medical face mask to feel less visible during speech. While such strategies may provide short-term relief, they tend to reinforce anxiety and limit opportunities for adaptive communication experiences.



CONCLUSIONS

Psychological factors play an important role in the experience of adults who stutter and may substantially influence the outcomes of speech and language therapy.

Awareness of anxiety-driven avoidance and safety behaviors is essential for identifying clients who may benefit from interdisciplinary support. Collaboration between speech and language therapists and psychologists can help address underlying anxiety, reduce avoidance patterns, and promote more sustainable improvements in communication and overall quality of life.



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