

PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD STUTTERING IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Introduction: In Bulgaria most of the preschool children aged 2-6 years attend all-day kindergartens. Usually there are speech therapists working at these institutions. They work without parental attendance during the sessions. This could be considered as a hypothetical cause for lack of knowledge among parents about stuttering and the ways

Method: To meet the purpose of this study was used Parent Attitudes toward Stuttering Inventory (PATSI) which is a part of the Cooper Personalized Fluency Control Therapy for Children (PFCT-C) by Cooper & Cooper (2003). This inventory is a check-list with 25 statements relevant to awareness of stuttering, parental feelings and behavior. The parents have to put a check if they agree or do not agree with the statement. PATSI was approbated at two kindergartens in Blagoevgrad town. In the study were included 10 parents of stuttered children.

Results: All the parents filled up required statements. There are no identical answers between parents regarding the 25 statements (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Discussion:

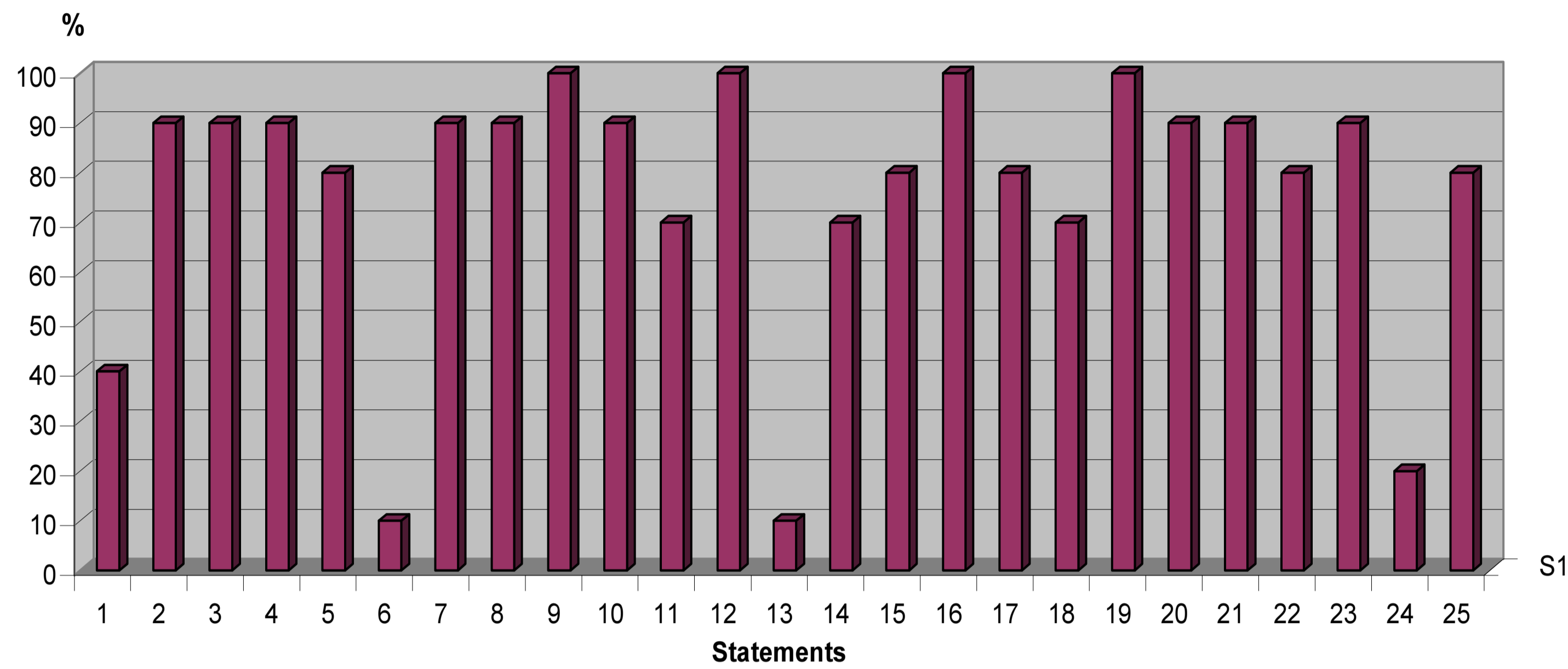


Figure 1. Results of Parent Attitudes toward Stuttering Inventory.

Table 1. Results of Parent Attitudes toward Stuttering Inventory.

| Statement No | Subject No | S 1 | S 2 | S 3 | S 4 | S 5 | S 6 | S 7 | S 8 | S 9 | S 10 |
|--------------|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Most of the time I feel I just do not know what to do about my child's stuttering | agree | not agree | not agree | agree | agree | agree | agree | not agree | not agree | agree |
| 2 | I guess I frequently believe that if I ignore the stuttering, it will probably go away | not agree | not agree | not agree | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 3 | I do have doubts if speech therapy is necessary for my child | not agree | not agree | not agree | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 4 | In thinking about my child's stuttering, I sometimes have the feeling that I might have caused it | not agree | not agree | not agree | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 5 | Stuttering is probably a mental or an emotional problem | not agree | not agree | not agree | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 6 | Stutterers seem to have certain personality traits | not agree | not agree | not agree | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 7 | I guess it is best not to talk about my child's stuttering with my child | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 8 | I would agree that parents should help the stuttering child avoid speaking situations in which the child has trouble | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 9 | I doubt if my child will ever be able to talk without stuttering being a big problem | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 10 | Teachers should not make my child answer questions in class if they think my child will stutter on the answer | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 11 | Sometimes I have the feeling that my child could stop stuttering if a little effort was put to it | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 12 | I had best encourage my child to plan to do things where there is little demand on speech | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 13 | I worry a great deal about my child's stuttering | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 14 | Sometimes I find myself wondering if other children will pick up stuttering from playing with my child | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 15 | If my child would stop worrying about the stuttering, it would probably go away | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 16 | It seems to me that sometimes my child uses the stuttering as a way of getting attention | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 17 | I should not expect my child to do as well in school because of the stuttering | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 18 | My child's stuttering has been getting progressively worse over the last year or so | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 19 | In comparison with others I have known who stutter, my child's stuttering is bad | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 20 | I think that I should punish my child in some way each time I hear the stuttering | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 21 | Frankly, I am embarrassed in public when I hear my child stutter | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 22 | I am afraid that if I talk with my child about his or her feelings about the stuttering, I may make it worse | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 23 | There is little doubt in my mind that my child is emotionally different from other children because of the stuttering | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 24 | I have found that telling my child to stop and start over again when he or she stutters has been helpful | agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |
| 25 | I doubt if the way I feel or act has any effect on my child's stuttering | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree | not agree |

All the parents are worry about their child's stuttering and they think that their children will be able to recover fluency; may be it is a normal reaction for each parent having a problem with his child; parents always want the best future for their children. Sometimes this may have negative result regarding stuttering. Yairi & Ambrose (2005) mentioned that parents of stuttered children are over-protective and experience higher level of anxiety about their children.

Like a positive could be discussed a fact that all the parents do not agree their children use stuttering to get attention. They do not think that in comparison with other stuttered children their child's stuttering is bad and do not agree their child have to be encouraged to do things with little demand on speech. It is a proof that they are observing child's speech behavior in different situations and are trying to get answers on many questions regarding child's stuttering.

Nearly to 90% of them do not have doubts for necessarily of treatment and do not believe that if they ignore the stuttering, it will go away. They do not believe it is best not talk about their child's stuttering with the child and to help child avoid difficult speaking situations. As well, parents do not agree that the child should be punished each time after stuttered speech. The results are not surprising, because we know that usually paents are trying to find an own way for interaction with their children and through this way they could find some proper modes. However, it does not mean they will be able to help their children without professional advices, because half of them (50%) do not know what to do about their child's stuttering. If we take into consideration the fact that children have received treatment because of the stuttering for 6-9 months, it means that parents were not advised how to proceed at home. In this way we could not expect positive results from the treatment offered by the speech therapist at kindergarten (see Yairi & Ambrose, 2005 for different modes of parental involvement).

Like another positive result would be discussed this concerning Statements 21 & 23: 90% of parents does not agree they feel embarrassed in public when their child stutter and there is little doubt that their child is emotionally different from other children because of the stuttering. A favorable attitude towards child's stuttered speech and emotionality could be helpful in the process of treatment. Both children and their parents will be able to communicate and interact with friends, relatives and strangers without negative feelings because of stuttering.

Most of them (70%) do not agree the child could stop stutter if a little effort was put to it and if he/she stop worrying about stuttering it will go away but in contrast to this statement they have found (80%) that telling their child to stop and start over again when stutter is helpful way to reduce stuttering. Again, here we can find the important role of speech therapist; he/she has to give advices when and how parents can ask their child to "start over again" (see Onslow, Packman, Harrison, 2003; Yairi & Ambrose, 2005).

80 % of parents believe that stuttering will not have an effect on academic success at school and they are aware that if they talk with the child about his/her feelings about stuttering it will not become worse. Most of them are sure that their behavior has not effect on child's stuttering. For all of these statements we can apply different opinions mentioned in the literature of Logopedics by the scientists (Bennett, 2006; Bloodstein, 1995; Johnson, 1959; Yairi & Ambrose, 2005, etc.).

Conclusion: One of the problems in Bulgaria is that at kindergartens speech therapists work without involving parents in speech therapy. All of parents included in the study are clear about necessarily of logopedical treatment but they are not a part of it.

Although data show parents found some proper ways for interaction with their children, they are not certain how to do the best for them. It is important speech therapists to discuss with parents specific features of stuttering and to give them advices how to communicate with their children.

In the literature of logopedics are presented different programs, approaches and methods for early stuttering intervention. It is a personal choice which one to implement in the process of therapy. It depends of the child's and parent's personality, and the speech therapist's skills.

One of the most important conclusion is that parents have to be involved in the process of stuttering assessment and therapy. They have to attend in logopedical sessions as a real partner. In this way we can expect effectiveness from the therapy.

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