

Self-esteem of 8-16 year old persons who stutter: Effects on speech behavior and therapy

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- Self-esteem of children and adolescents who stutter
- Method
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Definition self-esteem

- In psychology self-esteem reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth.
- Self-esteem refers to a person's disposition to evaluate him- or herself positively or negatively in a spontaneous, automatic, or unconscious manner.

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Introduction

- Clinical questions:
 - Is there a difference in self-esteem between stuttering and nonstuttering school-age children?
 - Does self-esteem influence therapeutic parameters like duration of therapy, avoidance behavior, use of speech techniques, psychic strain ...?

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Results of former studies

- Studies on self-esteem of children and adolescents who stutter are inconsistent:

Findings from the 50's and 60's indicate that this group has a lower self-esteem than the nonstuttering children and adolescents
(Fiedler&Wepman 1951; Wallen 1960; Trombly 1965; Gildston 1967)
- Younger studies demonstrate: the self-esteem of stuttering children and adolescents is **not different** from that of nonstuttering children or adolescents

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- Yovetich, W.S. et al. 2000

25 cws (7.1-11.9 years)

Result:

No differences concerning five dimensions of self-esteem compared to normative data of this age group

- Blood, G.W. et al. 2003

48 adolescents who stutter (14-18 years)

Result:

No significant differences in self-esteem compared to control group

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Method

171 school-age children who stutter (8.00-15.11)

129 male and 42 female participants

**were tested during their ambulant therapy
(all over Germany)**

with 2 questionnaires

1. „Self-esteem-test“ for children and adolescents

2. „Questionnaire Speech- and Therapy-Data Stuttering“

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Methode

■ „Self-esteem test for children and adolescents“
„*Aussage-Liste zum Selbstwertgefühl für Kinder und Jugendliche – ALS*“ (Schauder, T. Weinheim 1995)

- is a standardized test – control sample of 520 children -
for children and adolescents from 8.00 to 15.11 years

- the ALS provides data about general self-esteem and
specific data concerning self-esteem in family, school
and peer group

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Method

■ „*Fragebogen Sprech- und Therapiedaten bei Stottern*“
„*Questionnaire Speech- and Therapy-Data Stuttering*“

Questionnaire provides data about

- duration of therapy
- avoidance behavior
- use of speech techniques
- psychic strain
- severity of stuttering

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Results:

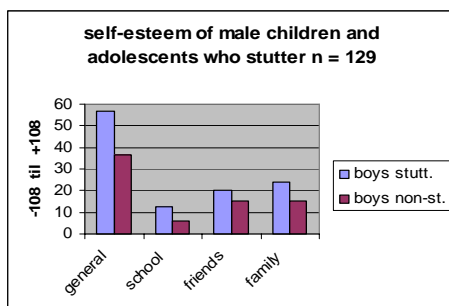
**1. Self-esteem of stuttering children and
adolescents compared to nonstuttering
control group**

categories: general self-esteem
school
family related self-esteem
peer group

**2. Self-esteem of male cws compared to
female cws**

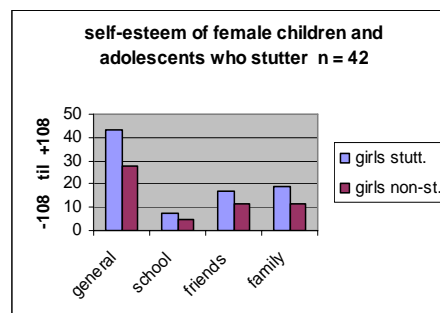
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Results self-esteem :



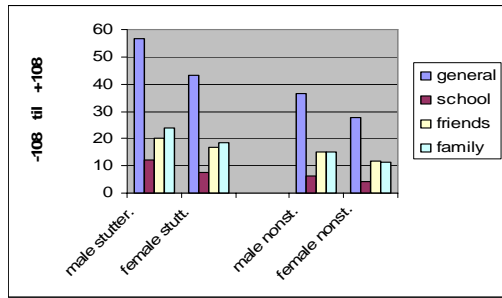
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Results of self-esteem



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Self-esteem stuttering cws vs. nonstuttering cws



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Self-esteem male stuttering cws vs. male nonstuttering

Results of t-test (n = 129) :

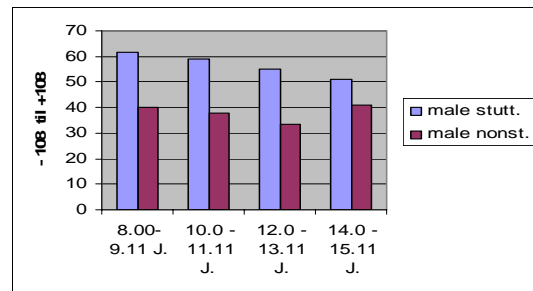
- significant difference in all areas of self-esteem

Self-esteem female stuttering cws vs. female nonstuttering

■ Results of t-test (n = 42) :

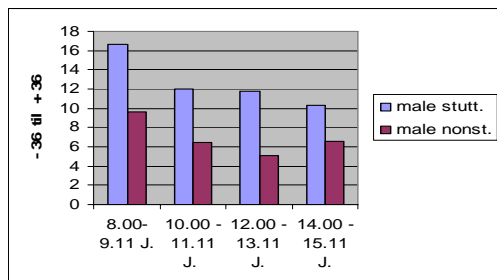
- significant difference in general, family related and peer group related self-esteem
- no significant difference in school related self-esteem

Self-esteem of age groups:
General self-esteem of male cws declines with increasing age !



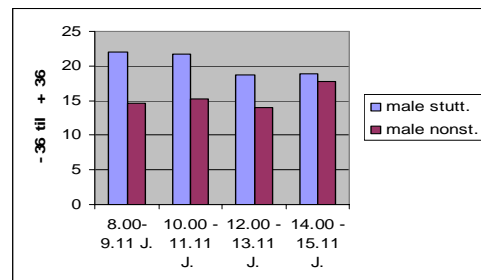
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Self-esteem of age groups:
School related self-esteem of male cws declines with increasing age !



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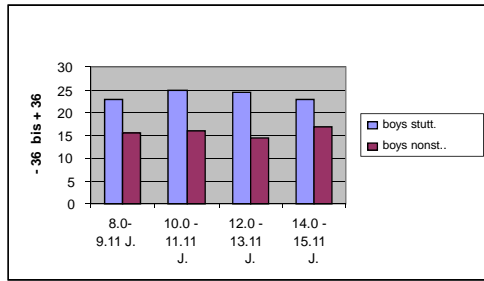
Self-esteem of age groups:
Peer group related self-esteem of male cws declines with increasing age !



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Self-esteem of age groups:

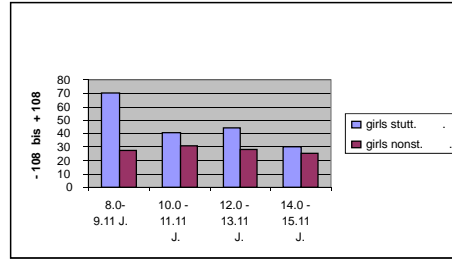
Family related self-esteem of male cws



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Self-esteem of age groups:

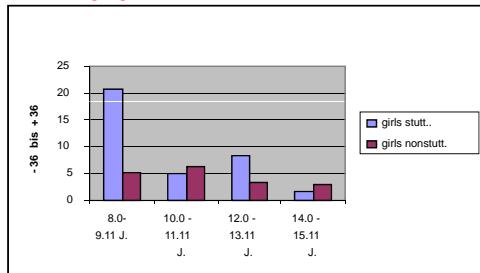
General self-esteem of female cws declines with increasing age !



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Self-esteem of age groups:

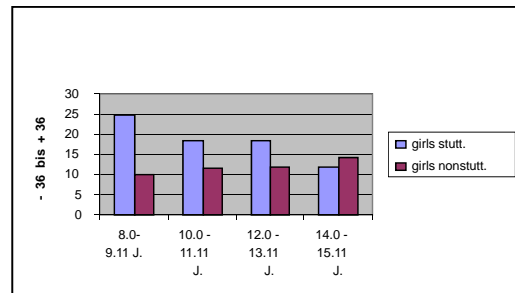
School related self-esteem of female cws declines with increasing age !



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Self-esteem of age groups:

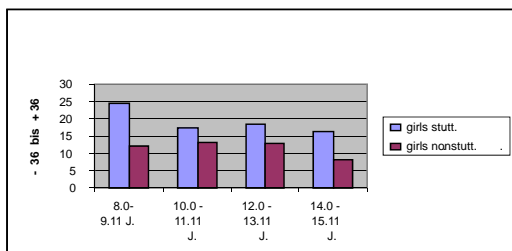
Peer group related self-esteem of female cws declines with increasing age !



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Self-esteem of age groups:

Family related self-esteem of female cws declines with increasing age !



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Self-esteem of age groups
male stuttering vs. normative data

Results of t-test:

- significant difference for the 3 age groups **8 – 13.11** years in all areas of self-esteem
- significant difference for the **14 – 15.11** years age group only in family related self-esteem

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**Self-esteem of age groups
female stuttering vs. normative data**

Results of t-test:

- significant difference only for the **8 - 10.11** years age group in all areas of self-esteem
- significant difference for the **14 – 15.11** years age group only in family related self-esteem

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Self-esteem in school, family and peer group according to age groups:

Self-esteem of male and female cws declines with increasing age !

School related self-esteem shows the most noticeable decline of self-esteem !!!

Exception:

Family related self-esteem

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Percentage of male children who stutter with low and very low self-esteem (all age groups)

	male all n = 129		female n = 42	
self-esteem general	6	4,6 %	5	14,0 %
self-esteem school	11	10,0 %	10	28,6 %
self-esteem peer group	11	8,5 %	6	16,6 %
self-esteem family	7	6,2 %	4	9,5 %

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Percentage of male and female adolescents who stutter with low and very low self-esteem (age group: 13.00 – 15.11)

	female n = 24 %		male n = 55 %	
self-esteem general	4	17,3	5	9,0
self-esteem school	10	41,6	8	14,5
self-esteem peer group	6	25,0	8	14,5
self-esteem family	3	12,5	4	7,2

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75 % of all stuttering children and adolescents with low and very low self-esteem are within the age group of 13.00 – 15.11 years

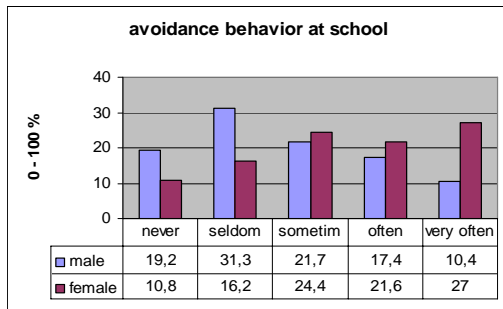
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Results correlations between:

- Self-esteem and avoidance behavior
- Self-esteem and psychic strain
- Duration of therapy and use of speech techniques
- Duration of therapy and psychic strain

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Avoidance behavior at school (8-15.11 years)



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Correlation: self-esteem and avoidance behavior male cws

Male cws with low general self-esteem show significantly more avoidance behavior in school, family and peer group than male cws with higher self-esteem.

avoidance school $r = -,284^{**}$; $p < .01$ Spearman bi.
avoidance family $r = -,379^{**}$; $p < .01$ Spearman bi.
avoidance peer group $r = -,356^{**}$; $p < 0.1$ Spearman bi.

Comparable correlations for school, family and peer group related self-esteem !

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Correlation: self-esteem and avoidance behavior female cws

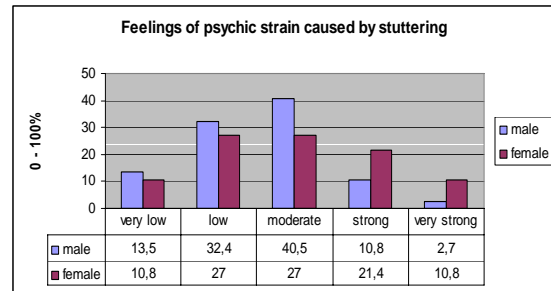
Female cws with low general self-esteem show significantly more avoidance behavior in school and peer group (not within family !)

avoidance school $r = -,631^{**}$; $p < .01$ Spearman bi.
avoidance peer group $r = -,575^{**}$; $p < 0.1$ Spearman bi.

Comparable correlations for school, family and peer group related self-esteem !

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Correlation: self-esteem and psychic strain



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Correlation: self-esteem and psychic strain

Female cws with low general self-esteem show significantly higher feelings of psychic strain caused by stuttering than female cws with high self-esteem

female cws $r = -,337^*$; $p < .05$ Spearman bi.

Male cws do not show this significant correlation !

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Correlation: use of speech techniques and duration of therapy

Female cws with a longer duration of therapy show a significantly higher use of speech techniques than female cws with shorter duration of therapy.

female cws $r = ,392^*$; $p < .05$ Spearman bi.

Male cws do not show this significant correlation !

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Correlation: duration of therapy and psychic strain caused by stuttering

Male cws with a longer duration of therapy show significantly less feelings of psychic strain caused by stuttering than male cws with shorter duration of therapy

Male cws $r = -.248^{**}$; $p < .01$ Spearman zweis.
Female cws $r = .139$; $p < .39$ Spearman zweis.

Female cws do not show this significant correlation !

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Summary and discussion of results:

- The self-esteem of male cws (age 8.00 to 13.11) is significantly higher than that of nonstuttering children
- But: Self-esteem of male cws declines with increasing age! At age 14.00 to 15.11 no significant difference (except family related self-esteem)
- The self-esteem of female male cws (age 8.00 to 10.11) is significantly higher than that of nonstuttering children
- But: Self-esteem of male cws declines with increasing age! At age 12.00 to 15.11 no significant difference (except family related self-esteem)

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How to explain the high self-esteem for younger children who stutter?

- „secondary gain factor“
- problem of the sample

Summary and discussion of results:

- 75% of the stuttering children and adolescents with **low** or **very low** self-esteem are within the age group 13.00 – 15.11 years
- 42% of the 13.00 – 15.11 year old **female** cws have a low or very low school related self-esteem
- male and female cws with **low self-esteem** show significantly **more avoidance behavior**
- female cws with **low self-esteem** show significantly **more psychic strain** induced by stuttering

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Conclusion:

The group of 13 -16 year old male and female adolescents who stutter represent an outstanding problematic group and a challenge for the therapist!

What are the therapeutical interventions we should focus on?

Options for therapy

- use of standardized measuring instruments for self-esteem (and school anxiety tests) for this age group
- therapy with homogeneous age groups
- focusing on school related matters: sessions in classes; focus on transfer at school, ...
- if necessary: recommend psychotherapy

Difference between male and female school-age children who stutter

- Female adolescents who stutter very often have an extremely restricted self-esteem at school (and peer group)
- The lower the self-esteem of female cws the stronger are their feeling of psychic strain caused by stuttering
- Even a longer duration of therapy does not significantly reduce their feelings of psychic strain caused by stuttering

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Options for therapy with female adolescents who stutter:

- > Improvement of interventions in desensitization -> more counselling / cognitive restructuring than confrontation therapy
- > lighten the burden at school, contact school; focus on transfer of speech techniques at school;
- > build up „experience groups“ of female adolescents and young women who stutter
- > if necessary: recommend psychotherapy

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What we need:

More gender specific research!

More knowledge about female persons who stutter !



Thank you for
your attention !

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