

Experiência e relato pessoal sobre pesquisa de cooperação internacional - Brasil, Bulgária e Turquia - que avalia as atitudes em relação à gagueira*****

Experience and personal report about an international cooperation research- Brazil, Bulgaria and Turkey – Attitudes Toward Stuttering

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Abstract

Background: people typically regard stutterers as shy, nervous, introverted, and fearful, a so-called “stuttering stereotype”. Many stutterers are also subjected to teasing and bullying or to illegal discrimination. **Aim:** currently, there are no widely-accepted, standardized instruments used to measure public attitudes toward stuttering around the world. Accordingly, an International Project on Attitudes Toward Stuttering (IPATS) initiative was launched in 1999 to develop such an instrument, named the Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes (POSHA). **Method:** this study compares selected results from three groups of adults from countries in South America (Brazil), Eastern Europe (Bulgaria), and the Middle East (Turkey). Respondents were pooled into three groups according to place-of-residence variable by country and a survey language variable. All of the respondents completed the questionnaire in the primary language of their countries. **Results and Conclusion:** this pilot study suggests that some attitude differences among respondents may be explained by an interaction of national, cultural, ethnic, religious, or language differences, although the relative contribution of each component cannot be determined. In a subsequent tier of survey analyses, ratings by these respondents will be compared with the ratings of respondents from other countries completing the survey in English.

Key Words: Stuttering; Evolution; Social Perception.

Resumo

Tema: as pessoas gagas são frequentemente consideradas como sendo tímidas, nervosas, introvertidas e assustadas. Muitos gagos são submetidos a situações constrangedoras em decorrência da ridicularização ou da discriminação e preconceito ilegal. **Objetivo:** até o momento não existe nenhum instrumento, largamente aceito e padronizado, para medir as atitudes públicas sobre a gagueira. Em 1999 foi iniciado o Projeto de Atitudes em Relação à Gagueira (IPATS) que foi uma iniciativa para desenvolver um instrumento de avaliação de opinião, que foi chamado de Pesquisa de Opinião Pública dos Atributos Humanos (POSHA). **Método:** a experiência aqui apresentada compara os resultados obtidos em três países – Brasil, a Bulgária e a Turquia, como representantes da América do Sul, da Europa e do Oriente Médio. Os participantes foram agrupados segundo seu país e língua de origem. Todos os questionários foram respondidos na língua de origem do participante. **Resultados e Conclusão:** esse estudo piloto sugere que algumas diferenças de atitudes entre os participantes podem ser explicadas pela influência da interação entre a nacionalidade, cultura, etnia, religião e língua materna. A contribuição específica de cada um desses componentes não pode ser determinada. A continuidade do projeto envolverá a análise comparativa entre os resultados dos países de língua materna não inglesa e os de língua materna inglesa.

Palavras-Chave: Gagueira; Avaliação; Percepção Social.

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People typically regard stutterers as shy, nervous, introverted, and fearful, a so-called “stuttering stereotype” (e.g., Shapiro, 1999). Many stutterers are also subjected to teasing and bullying or to illegal discrimination (e.g., Blood, 2000). In response to pejorative attitudes or ignorance by the public, numerous initiatives have been launched, e.g., public awareness or education campaigns, to improve attitudes.

Currently, there are no widely-accepted, standardized instruments used to measure public attitudes toward stuttering around the world. Accordingly, an International Project on Attitudes Toward Stuttering (IPATS) initiative was launched in 1999 to develop such an instrument, named the Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes (POSHA) (St. Louis, Yaruss, Lubker, Pill & Diggs, 2001). A general section compared stuttering to eight other “anchor” attributes, ranging from positive (e.g., “intelligent”) to neutral (e.g., “left

handed”) to negative (e.g., “mental illness”). Detailed sections measured attitudes on stuttering and one or two of the other attributes, followed by a demographic section. To date, more than 1000 respondents have completed questionnaires representing the first two experimental versions of the instrument. Respondents either drew marks across “continuous” scales labeled at the ends and middle with descriptors (POSHA-E1) or circled numbers from 1-9 (or “?”) (POSHA-E2).

This study compares selected results from three groups of adults from countries in South America (Brazil), Eastern Europe (Bulgaria), and the Middle East (Turkey). Respondents were pooled into three groups according to place-of-residence variable by country and a survey language variable. All of the respondents completed the questionnaire in the primary language of their countries. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the study.

TABLE 1. demographic profile.

	Brasil	Bulgária	Turquia
total de participantes	188	14	25
sexo	65% M - 35% H	75% M - 25% H	50% M - 50% H
média de idade	27,4	41,2	29,3
estado civil	68% solteiros	50% casados	54% solteiros
raça	55% brancos	100% europeus	100% turcos
religião	72% católicos	90% cristãos ortodoxos	100% muçulmanos
língua materna	100% Português	100% Búlgaro	100% Turco

Legenda: M = mulheres; H = homens.

Ratings from both the POSHA-E1 and POSHA-E2 were converted to continua with -100 and +100 as the negative and positive extremes and with 0 representing the neutral (middle) rating. Scores for one question on the general section that asked how much respondents knew about the various attributes were converted to 0 (“nothing”) to 100 (“a great deal”). Statistical tests were applied. The data analysis overall revealed more similarities than differences; nevertheless, the following significant differences and noteworthy trends emerged:

. differences were not significantly different among the three groups when stuttering was compared to the other eight anchors, but Brazilians had the lowest *overall impressions* of stuttering, Turks were least likely to *want to be* a stutterer, and Bulgarians reported that they *knew* the least about the disorder;

. for *wanting to be*, stuttering was regarded as among the most negative of the attributes, similar to “overweight,” “wheelchair use,” or “mental illness;”

- . significantly better attitudes characterized Brazilians' likelihood of attributing stuttering etiology to virus or diseases, acts of God, or ghosts/demons/spirits than the other samples. Turks rated the latter two items highest;
- . by contrast, Bulgarians were most likely, and Brazilians least likely, to believe that stutterers should work in jobs requiring talking;
- . Bulgarians least believed that stutterers have reduced intelligence but were most likely to pity a stutterer;
- . Turks were significantly most likely to fill in a stuttering person's words or tell him/her to "slow down" or "relax";
- . Brazilians were least likely to be concerned if their child's teacher stuttered, but most concerned if their own child stuttered.

This pilot study suggests that some attitude differences among respondents may be explained by an interaction of national, cultural, ethnic, religious, or language differences, although the relative contribution of each component cannot be determined. In a subsequent tier of survey analyses, ratings by these respondents will be compared with the ratings of respondents from other countries completing the survey in English.

Personal report

EUA (St. Louis) – This and other pilot studies have fostered some of the first comparable cross-cultural and cross-linguistic data regarding public attitudes toward stuttering. The particular value of this study was that interesting attitudinal similarities and differences were generated across the three countries using translations of one common English survey. Respondents in very

different samples also appeared to comprehend and respond to questionnaires with sufficient similarity and care in order to provide meaningful comparisons.

Brazil (Andrade) – The pilot study involved the participation of 50 speech-language and hearing pathology graduation students in a field activity. The study was developed in two different cities: São Paulo (SP) and Alfenas (MG). A few significant differences between respondents from São Paulo and Alfenas were observed. The main results found in Brazil were: stuttering is regarded as a serious handicap and the public has a great deal of misinformation and confusion about stuttering.

Bulgaria (Georgieva) – The POSHA was distributed in two Bulgarian cities, Sofia (the capital) and Blagoevgrad. Ten students in speech therapy from South West University distributed the questionnaires. There were no obvious differences between respondents from Sofia and Blagoevgrad. The results from Bulgaria included some positive attitudes toward people with stuttering but also some misinformation about this fluency disorder.

Turkey (Trout) – The POSHA was translated and distributed in four western Turkish cities; however, some participants were from eastern Turkey. Respondents' education levels ranged from elementary school graduate to college graduate. The response to the survey was positive; many included return addresses to receive result summaries. Turkish results suggest that religion and culture were influential factors in public opinion about stuttering.

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