THE NECESSITY OF IMPROVING INFORMATION-CONSULTING SYSTEM OF SPEECH THERAPY SUPPORT REGARDING THE STUTTERING ISSUES IN THE EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to discover the level of awareness, knowledge and perceptions of the pedagogues on the perspectives and the ways of overcoming stuttering and the role of the psychological-pedagogical environment. The theoretical basis for this study was obtained throughout the analysis of 32 scientific-pedagogical sources that address the issues of understanding the problems in the information-consulting field during the process of overcoming stuttering. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to outline the gaps in the psychological and pedagogical support provided to stuttering people and to identify the level of awareness of the pedagogical staff of the educational settings regarding these issues. In total 100 employees: 77 pedagogues (30 teachers, 30 subject teachers, and 17 educators) and 23 special pedagogues working in the field of psycho-pedagogy took part in the current survey.

The results stated that the perception about the real edges of overcoming stuttering formed in the society in Armenia was very limited and the efficiency of speech therapy work was low. Due to absence of professional speech therapy information-consulting system and lack of highly qualified specialists, 59% of the respondents convinced that overcoming the stuttering was impossible. The findings of current study indicated the need to develop the information-consulting system and recommendation guidelines for pedagogues to support children in process of overcoming stuttering, as well as the methods of cooperation between the family members and speech therapists.

Key words: speech therapy support, information-consulting system, "stable method of stuttering speech regulation", stuttering triad (tree), logo-phobia, verbal-non-verbal manifestations

of stuttering, "portrait of a stuttering person", educational environment for overcoming stuttering.

INTRODUCTION

Research on communication problems has been expanded more than ever in recent years. This was most likely due to the neuropsychological state of the society, which was experiencing the most difficult times of stress in the last century. Today, "logo-neurosis", which is one of the main characteristics of stuttering, is found in almost 5% of patients (Onslow, 2022; Tichenor, Constantino & Yaruss, 2022). In the modern world, many hardened approaches to this issue have changed, new technologies, methods, even remote technologies for overcoming stuttering continue to be created like "Lidcomb Therapy" and programs (Onslow, 2022), "Method of stable regulation of stutterers' speech" regardless of the age, severity of stuttering (Harutyunyan (Andronova), 1993).

In addition, the practical studies showed that the knowledge and information of these issues were quite limited in the practical field. Moreover, the main problems of this field were related, first, with the lack of knowledge, experience, as well as with the lack of information on the systemic management of speech therapy support system regarding the organizational side of the issue and the use of effective methods (Evangelos, 2015; Erickson, Bridgman, Furlong, & Stark, 2022).

The motivation for such research was the difficulties arising during the professional activity of speech therapists while using "Stable regulation of stutterers' speech" methodology of Harutyunyan L. Z. (Andronova) (Andronova, 1986; Harutynyan (Adronova), 1993). Most of the difficulties were related to the obstacles that arise in information-consulting field during the overcoming of stuttering with the realization of the newly staged speech in the social environment (including educational settings) and in the normal life situations.

Having many years of experience in this field (1997-2022), it was possible to highlight the important role of those psychological and pedagogical mechanisms of overcoming stuttering, through which arise a need to "control", "support", "restrain", "encourage", "punish", "evaluate" the person who passes speech therapy sessions of overcoming the stuttering. Due to the complexity of overcoming stuttering process that associated with the development of volitional qualities, motivations, and number of other personal characteristics among these people. Therefore, many researches stated that this path seemed to be "impassable" not only for people who wanted to get rid of stuttering, but also for professionals, educators, psychologists and their families (Cozart &

Wilson, 2021; Grigoropoulos, 2020; Giavrimis, Papanis, Panitsides & Papastamatis, 2011; Saratikyan, 2008; Furnham, Davis, 2004; Tsiplitaris, 2000; Schindler, 1955;). As well as, the other studies confirmed the role of the family and educational institutions in the process of overcoming stuttering (Tomisato, Yada & Wasano, 2022; Guttormsen, Yaruss, & Næss, 2021; Scot, Williams, 2013; Meyers, 1973).

Many obstacles became obvious during professional work such as the ignorance of educators and psychologists, using just formal readiness, which was manifested by latent or hidden intolerance, scepticism or indifference. The existence of these phenomena was the reason to study their causes and manifest in a more detailed way. Therefore, the effectiveness of problem-solving mostly depends on the knowledge, skills, abilities, disposition, attitude or motivation that specialists had and on the influence of the environment. Accordingly, this study aimed at discovering the level of awareness, knowledge and perceptions of the educators regarding the perspectives and ways of overcoming stuttering and the role of the psychological-pedagogical environment, to justify the need of improvement of the information-consulting system related to the stuttering issues in educational settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of overcoming stuttering in the 21st century still poses a great challenge not only for speech therapists and psychologists, but also to all those who deal with this problem. Speech therapy consultation was known to be one of the primary areas of speech therapy support provided by a specialist to the beneficiary, to the family or other stakeholders to understand the type of speech developmental disorders, mechanisms, manifestations, prevention and coping strategies, also their role and functions in that process.

Throughout a speech therapy consultation often a speech therapy diagnoses was given, or by the use of the differential diagnosis, already existing ones were verified. During the initial "screening" consultations, the main correctional work framework, the key issues of correctional programs were introduced, since very often the effective consultation had not only preventive, but also a corrective significance (Saratikyan, 2008; Huges, Gabel, Goberman, & Huges, 2011). Depending on the speech therapy phase, the content and course of the consultation and intervention could be changed. Usually, speech therapy consultation was provided not only to people with speech disorders and their families, but also to teachers, educators, psychologists, social educators

and to the others who deal with the speech disorders' problems (Kathy, 1993; Law, et. al, 2002; Saratikyan, 2008; Smirnova, 2011).

Nowadays the educational reforms have expanded the role and participation of the educational settings in speech therapy works and obviously, they have become more important, especially for stuttering people (Law, et. al, 2002). The term information-consulting system for stuttering people has been separated from the general consultation schema and used in this study for the first time to emphasize the peculiarity of their counselling approaches. Since the effectiveness of corrective work in this type of speech disorder was very problematic and controversial and often related to the low level of public awareness about stuttering.

In contrast to the other speech disorders the content of stuttering work envisages an inseparable, continuously accompanying process of the two main areas of speech therapy support (information-consulting and correctional intervention). In addition, as we already have mentioned the scope of speech therapy intervention with stutterers was considered to be beyond the scope of speech therapy room and family environment, that itself even more increased the role of the information-consulting system. The questions that arise in this system became more important in terms of investing in the educational environment, as people who overcome stuttering turn to speech therapists most intensively at preschool and school age (Dragons, 2011; Erickson, Bridgman, Furlong & Stark, 2022). These circumstances were the reason for in-depth studies of the school environment, because the difficulties of both expressing and overcoming stuttering are becoming more acute particularly in the school environment. Even when stuttering children were in the process of overcoming it, they did not get rid of the fact being different from the others, because the ritual of overcoming stuttering itself separate the child from the others. For example, they can speak with a synchronized hand movement, slowly, with accented accents, etc. (according to the methodology of Harutyunyan, (Andronova)). And these phenomena cause serious difficulties for them. For this reason, the psychological and pedagogical support became more important, since if speech therapy mainly developed the verbal skills, therefore the continues work at school provided an opportunity to improve verbal skills and get rid of communication complexes. Despite the above mentioned, the theoretical analyzes showed that a class (group) consisting of a teacher (educator) and learners *"… is a team with bilateral relation*s" as Fradelos Evangelos called it (Evangelos, 2015, p .4-5). Teachers often did not know how to deal with their stuttering students, to talk to them about stuttering, or to ignore it, how to deal with children who

were ridiculed, despised or insulted the stutters (Erickson, Bridgman, Furlong, & Stark, 2022; Evangelos, 2015;). It was well-known that for stuttering children it is extremely important how they treat to their own speech, as communication difficulties often affect their emotional and behavioral spheres, causing anxiety, stress, and frustration (Evangelos, 2015; Voulgari, 2012; Dragons, 2011; Koubias, Foustana, 2003).

The sense of low self-esteem in a unique way made these children be apart from the student community. It turned out that the friendly attitude of the teachers and the pupils can negatively affect the behaviour of stuttering children, causing difficulties in a group communication. Especially among the groups of school-age children dominated the fact to be evaluated according to the external and by physical characteristics; they used to quickly distinguish children who differ from them in clothes, appearance, language, behavior or by the other circumstances. Responding sharply to these differences, they often demonstrated verbal or non-verbal aggression. Therefore, stuttering children started to struggle not only to "speak well", but also to defend themselves, to express themselves, to be succeeding (Papadioti-Athanassiou, 2000; Papadimitriou, Vlassopoulou, 2006; Kneisl, Wilson, Trigoboff, 2009; Onslow, 2022). These questions pose special and particular difficulties to children who have decided to get rid of communication complex, because speech therapy intervention with its unique requirements make them face with the same difficult problems as well, for example, they have to speak "with their hands, slowly" throughout the process (according to the requirement of Harutyunyan's methodology). Teachers and children face with difficult problems, as many use techniques stayed new for their peers, classmates, and for other people around them.

Based on the above mentioned, there was a need to find out what were the most problematic issues that pedagogues, psychologists and others faced with in terms of stuttering and especially to the process of overcoming it, as well as clarifying the need to improve information-consulting work in the educational settings. For this end, the research objectives were defined, and accordingly the research methods and the main directions of the research were selected and developed.

METODOLOGY

The theoretical basis for this study was obtained based on the analysis of about 32 scientific-pedagogical sources that address the following:

- The forms and statement of the speech therapy support particularly in speech therapy interventions for the stutterers.

- The role of educational settings in overcoming the psychological and pedagogical difficulties of stuttering children.

- The importance of professional cooperation to increase the efficiency of speech therapy work.

- Attempts to implement modern methods and approaches of overcoming stuttering obstacles.

- The crucial importance of speech therapy consultation's information factor for the effectiveness of speech therapy work (Gerwin, Walsh & Tichenor, 2022; Connery, et. al, 2021; Grigoropoulos, 2020; Huges, Gabel, Goberman & Huges, 2011; Smirnova, 2011; Saratikyan, 2008; Law, et. al, 2002; Harutyunyna (Andronova) 1993; Kathy, 1993).
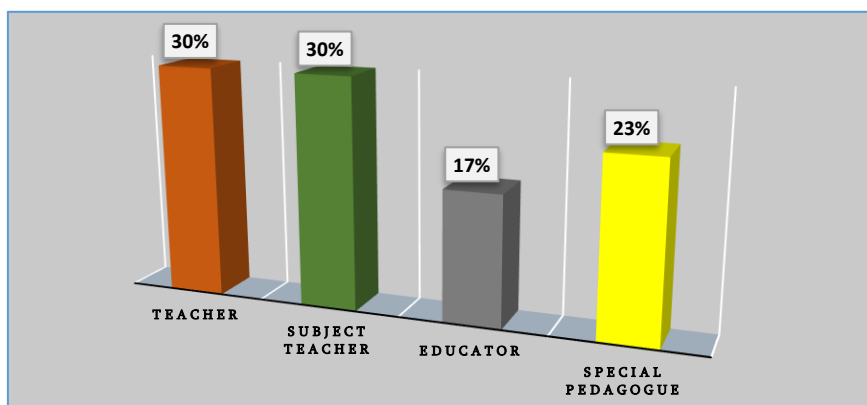
Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to outline and identify the gaps in the psychological and pedagogical support system provided to people being enrolled in the process of overcoming stuttering; and the issues of awareness of the pedagogical staff in the educational settings.

PARTICIPANTS

According to the nature and specificity of the research question and in order to assure the research trustworthiness, during the process of research participants' selection several factors were considered to be important such as pedagogical mastery, pedagogue's personal qualities, and level of psychological and pedagogical knowledge. As well as participants' age, educational degree, gender, and professional criteria were taken into account. The study involved in total 100 employees working in the field of psycho-pedagogy, from age 18-58 years old (40% 26-33 years old), 77% of them were pedagogues (30% teacher; 30% subject teacher; 17% educator) and 23% were special pedagogues (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Participants of the study.

The survey was conducted in a number of schools and psycho-pedagogical support centers in Yerevan, Armavir and Shirak regions. In addition, the study included pedagogues and educators who had the opportunity to work with stuttering children and adolescents during their psycho-pedagogical activities.

DATA COLLECTION

Current research data collection was done while combining the following qualitative and quantitative methods:

- Literature review
- In-depth interview
- Questionnaire

The use of each method was done based on specific problem solving requirements. The participants of the study and regions were selected by sampling method. Questionnaire, interviews and in-depth interviews allowed to substantiate the gaps in the process of providing psychological and pedagogical support to people overcoming stuttering and raise the awareness' issues of the pedagogical staff in the educational settings.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of this research data was carried out using quantitative methodology and descriptive data analysis method (Trochim, William 2006). Accordingly, the answers of 100 participants were generalized and presented in the form of numerical patterns (Yadov, 2007). Measurement scale was used to conclude descriptive statistics for the variables, which included the respondents' personal opinions and awareness about psychological and pedagogical support

provided to people in the process of overcoming stuttering. Descriptive data analysis was carried out taking into consideration the following:

- The perceptions of the speech therapy support system for stutterers.

- Awareness of speech therapy methods, means, and ways of overcoming stuttering.

- The perception, attitude, approaches regarding the required methods and content of cooperation between speech therapist, family members, and psychologist.

- The perception, attitude, approaches for defining the role of family in the process of overcoming stuttering.

- The knowledge, skills and abilities absorbed to the "therapeutic" procedures of speech therapy in assisting stutterers to overcome communication difficulties.

- The opinions and suggestions on the effectiveness of the speech therapy counseling and intervention provided to stutterers.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Current research used the data obtained throughout the analysis of about 32 scientific-pedagogical sources, considering the importance of primary knowledge about stuttering and its manifestations based on the following standpoints:

- Stuttering is impossible to overcome without live contact and social environment impact.

- Stutterers should use only the speech they "acquired" after leaving the speech therapy rooms.

- In order to overcome a stable pathological condition (according to Harutunyan's well-known methodology), the speech must be reinforced in any life situation.
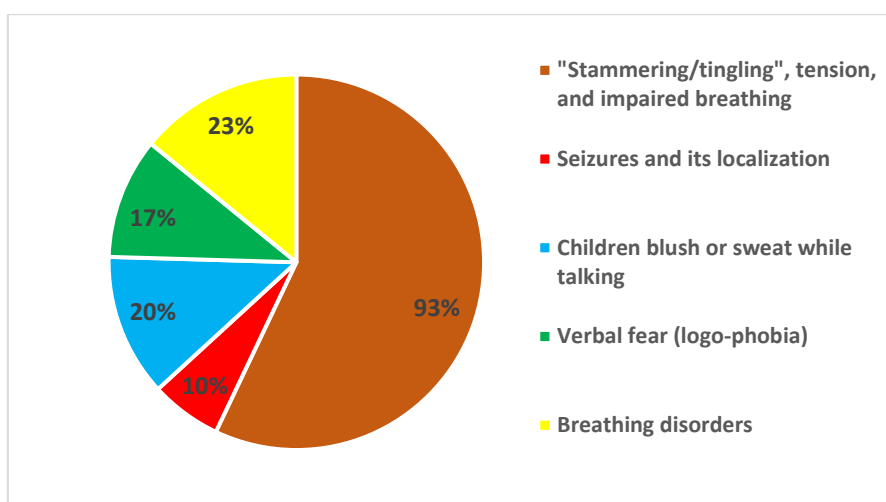
Stuttering people need to live with a new word, implement it according to the principle of gradual development: first slowly, then proportionately, then speaking at a normal pace with the help of moving the word synchronously with the hand (Tichenor, Constantino, & Yaruss, 2022; Eichorn & Donnan, 2021; Furnham, Davis, 2004; Andronova, 1986; 1993).

Thus, as a result of the interviews with 77 pedagogues and 23 special educators on "Verbal, non-verbal, and psychological" manifestations of stuttering, 93% mentioned the presence of "stammering/tingling", tension, and impaired breathing. 10% of the participants (mainly special pedagogues) reported about seizures and its localization (verbal component), 20% mentioned

about the disorders of the autonomic nervous system that emerged when "Children blush or sweat while talking". None of the participants revealed to the posture of stuttering person ("Portrait of a stuttering man") (Andronova, 1989; Harrison, 2015; Gerwin, Walsh & Tichenor, 2022; Onslow, 2022) and about the features of sound (non-verbal expression). Only 17% reported about verbal fear (logo-phobia) and its manifestations (psychological manifestation), and 23% mentioned about the breathing disorders which could be noticed among stuttering children (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Perceptions of pedagogues about verbal, non-verbal, and neuro-psychological manifestations of stuttering.

For the participants the desire to hide the stuttering mainly expressed with the description "being ashamed" (76%), but nobody declared about the accent side of the speech, defects or absence of natural movements (non-verbal expression), also to be silent or "silent stuttering" (Psychological component). Only 17% of respondents noticed that stuttering children used the trick of replacing the supportive movements of "difficult words" with easy one (verbal exclusion). The above-mentioned results determined that teachers and special educators working with stutterers did not fully understand the essence of the stuttering. Just due to the received academic education, they were able to define the stuttering only with some fundamental characteristics, describing that as a disturbance of the speed and fluency of the speech.

The conducted survey showed that 74% of the respondents consider working with stuttering children of pre-school or primary school age to be meaningful. According to them, at
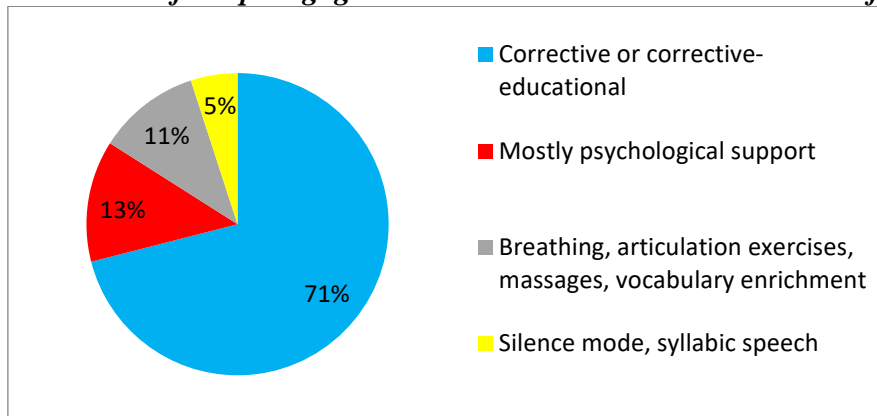
this age it was possible to help children socialize in the classroom by inspiring, encouraging or using other pedagogical methods. Meanwhile, helping high school stutterers was difficult or impossible, as communication difficulties already became strong and inspiration was low. 26% of the pedagogues (teacher, educator, subject teacher) had no idea what to do with a pupil who stutters at that age, as pedagogical communication with them was already difficult. At the same time 85% of pedagogues based on their own experience, stated that even speech therapists and psychologists avoided working with high school pupils (including adolescents and the adults). According to them, most specialists avoided working with people of this age, mainly because they did not know the appropriate methods, tools and techniques. ***"…School psychologist or speech therapists suggested that the teachers demand the answers of the assignment in written form, try not to ask such children a lesson in front of the class, and some even mentioned the approach of asking them a lesson separately"***. Special educators (17%) believed that they should "prompt how they should breathe, speak, be able to help themselves by speaking in syllables." According to the results, the given educational and correctional work to these children in pedagogical processes had less effectiveness not only due to a lack of knowledge, but also lack of competent professional support provided to the teachers (Grigoropoulos, 2020; Huges, Gabel, Goberman & Huges, 2011; Harutyunyna (Andronova), 1993,p.39-55).

Reviewing the awareness of the participants related to the methods which considered to be effective for overcoming stuttering, only 5% answered completely, mentioning "The method of stable regulation of stutterers' speech" developed by Harutyunyan, (Andronova). By the way, the answers to the questions about the methods of overcoming stuttering were mostly incomplete, unfinished or fleeting, without declaring the information about the author's methods. The pedagogues mainly mentioned about the "speech therapy", "psychological" methods, and the special pedagogues mentioned the "syllabic", "communicative", "behavioral" methods, that in general did not reveal the content of the work aimed at overcoming stuttering.

To the question "what kind of intervention did speech therapy support involve?" 71% of the respondents answered "corrective or corrective-educational", 13% mentioned "mostly psychological support", 11% mentioned "breathing, articulation exercises, massages, fine and gross motor skills, amplification of sounds, enrichment of vocabulary", only 5% who had a special pedagogical education, mentioned about "silence mode, syllabic speech" (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Awareness of the pedagogues related to the methods and means of overcoming the stuttering.

Concluded results declared that the recorded responses not only did not reveal the ways to overcome the stuttering, but also contained unnecessary statements (ex. amplification of sounds or development of fine motor skills, etc.) that revealed the content of speech therapy support in a dim light.

Research indicated that participants had incomplete awareness regarding the necessary psychological and pedagogical conditions for working with stutterers. About 85% of pedagogues did not know what to do with a child receiving speech therapy support in the classroom or at school, believing that the corrective work should be done in the speech therapy room only. About 15% thought that there was something to be done in the classroom as well, but they were not aware "what and how?" Participants supposed that the appropriate environment for working with the stutterers was speech therapist's room. None of them mentioned about the space, the lighting, the equipment, the furniture needed for working on the floor, the comfortable chairs, and so on. By the way, even the special pedagogues did not mention that.

The analysis of the collected data stated that the pedagogues did not express a sufficient position regarding the complete involvement and the necessity of the families to participate in corrective work for overcoming stuttering. None of them gave a comprehensive picture of the consultation process given to the stutterers and their family members, about the speech therapy diagnosis, intervention, and related methods, tools, or techniques. The amplification of this question was important, since for completely overcoming the stuttering presupposed close cooperation of all environmental circles directly related to the person, including entire understanding of each other's functions (Harutyunyna (Andronova) (1993), "How to treat

stuttering", p. 39-55; Huges, Gabel, Goberman & Huges, 2011; Grigoropoulos, 2020). According to the data analysis, the participants assumed a big difference in participation and involvement, being aware that families should participate to some extent, but the opportunities and the need for full involvement was considered inappropriate. 37% of pedagogues believed that parents should be involved in speech therapy work just to be aware of what was done with the child, attend classes regularly, 41% thought that they need some speech therapy tasks at home and about 22% found it difficult to give an answer. The analysis of the results showed that pedagogues did not see the need of family members to be fully involved in the speech therapy work. In addition, it became clear that the respondents almost had no idea about the organization of speech therapy work with stutterers, the psychological, pedagogical and speech therapy aspects of family support. In general, they did not know what kinds of speech therapy tasks were relevant for giving families for overcoming child's stuttering, what were their psychological and pedagogical aspects.

Conducted surveys and interviews showed that the respondents generally did not have information about the dimensions of parents' involvement in the speech therapy support processes. Exploring the question about the educators' responsibilities dealing with a stuttering child in the classroom, group, or at school, became clear that almost 65% had no idea what they should do, 24% thought that speech therapists should inform them what to do, and only 11% mentioned about the importance of having permanent contact with families and accomplishing regular interdisciplinary cooperation. They were unaware of the requirements that were given to the children, not informed about the principles for involving them in the pedagogical processes and about the intentional work in the class to address the specific speech therapy problems of children receiving medical intervention in the classroom. In this regard, 65% of the special educators had mentioned about the conversations with families or children (with unclear subject), art therapy activities (without clarifying the specific goals), and the requirements for following speech therapy instructions. About 17% out of them found it difficult to answer, and 18% declared that it was just a speech therapy task. Nobody mentioned the need to introduce new communication skills in real life; moreover, even after the relevant prompt they had no idea about the implementation of specific ways, methods and approaches.

Qualitative dates of this study also confirmed the statement, that respondents almost had no idea what to do with children who were involved in the process of overcoming stuttering, while attending a class or training for the first time after "treatment", they did not follow speech

therapist's instructions to straighten newly staged speech.

In addition, according to the example of Harutyunyan (Andronova)'s methodology, the conducted interviews on the topics of the "Ways of introducing the basics of methods aimed at overcoming stuttering in the educational environment", and "The connection between family support and pedagogical cooperation for overcoming stuttering", affirmed that psychologists and pedagogues working with the stutterers had misconceptions about the edges of overcoming the stuttering and the need for full involvement of the families in that processes.

This was evidenced also by the fact that the researchers considered stuttering to be an insurmountable, recurring or not fully overcoming issue. In-depth interviews and conversations with them showed that the perception of overcoming the stuttering among the respondents was formed mainly by the severity of the stuttering (moreover, they were mainly determined by the external manifestations of their stuttering-stammers), by the speech therapists' professional training and by the existing stereotypes about the "treatment" of stuttering (this was evidenced by the fact that the participants did not have any scientific/professional justification, why did they think so).
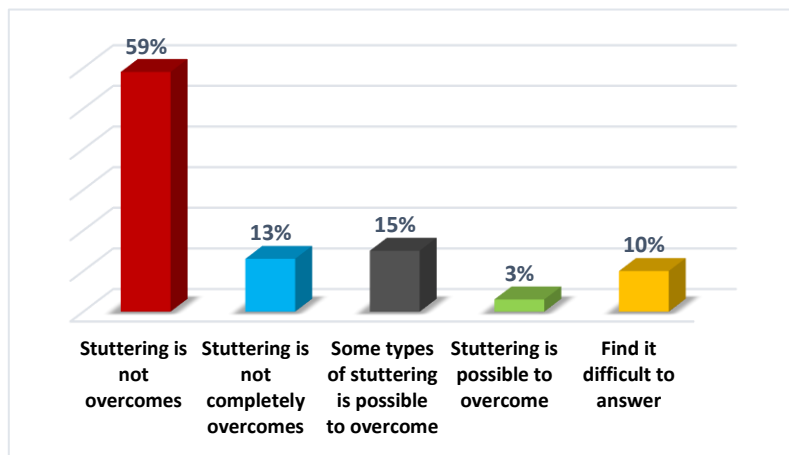
Meanwhile, as it was known, many other conducted surveys stated that the degree of stuttering severity assessment and stuttering overcoming possibilities totally based on the other factors (Gerwin, Walsh & Tichenor, 2022; Evangelos, 2015; Harrison, 2015; Voulgari, 2012; Dragons, 2011; Koubias, Foustana, 2003). Moreover, there was a paradoxical truth, as Andronova confirmed "The more severe the stuttering, the better it is treated" (Tichenor, Constantino, & Yaruss, 2022; Eichorn & Donnan, 2021; Andronova, 1986; 1993).

The conducted surveys and recorded results of the interviews, as well as the lived contacts with the respondents allowed concluding that the information-consulting field for overcoming stuttering in Armenia was quite unstructured and challenging. Most of the respondents did not have a clear idea about the real edges of overcoming the stuttering. Almost 59% convinced that it was impossible to overcome the stuttering, 13% believed that stuttering did not overcome completely, since it could be repeated, the other 10% found that difficult to answer, and 15% believed that only some types of stuttering were possible to overcome, and the others not. And only 3% of the respondents believed that there were possibilities to overcome stuttering because they had seen concrete treated people, but only few of them knew the used methods and could clearly name the Harutyunyan's "Stable regulation of stutterers' speech" method for overcoming

the stuttering (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Perception of the pedagogues about the edges of overcoming the stuttering.

Taking into account the above mentioned, current research tried to find out the respondents' opinion on the need to raise awareness of this issue. It turned out that while considering the interdisciplinary cooperation to be very important in this field, they did not know to whom refer when the stuttering was newly discovered. In this case 45% thought they had to refer to the speech therapists, by the opinion of 31% they had to refer to the doctors, and 24% mentioned the need to get support from the psychologists. While working with the stutterers, they mainly expected support from speech therapists. 100% of the respondents testified about the need to explore the problem, to expand the information field and to provide consultation, while stating that they never got any developed content and consistent collaboration from the speech therapists.

The result of done work stated that their concerns related to the stuttering child had single-core but multi-vector targets. For example, they usually asked "how" to be sure that a child would not stutter when answering a lesson "-this question they refer to the speech therapist, to the psychologist, sometimes even to the neurologists, but they did not get a final and clear formula from any specialist. Given approach suggests that the respondents of the research had limited perception of stuttering which did not allow them to analyze its mechanisms and content, so the addressed question cannot be answered.

Research showed the serious gaps were existing in the information field on how sustainable overcome the stuttering. It turned out that participants considered possible to overcome stuttering

when the child did not stammer. However, they had no idea that sometimes their supposed "disappearance" could be only a short-term effect of speech therapy intervention, as long as the **"stuttering triad"** or the **"stuttering tree"** was not **"destroyed"** (Andronova, 1993).

CONCLUSION

The results of current research stated the limited perceptions about the real edges of overcoming stuttering formed in the society in Armenia, also about the presence of low efficiency of speech therapy work; the passive implementation of effective methods; the absence of professional speech therapy consultation; about the lack of highly qualified specialists and relevant information. Taking the above mentioned into account, there was a need to develop the content of advices and recommendations for the pedagogues to support children in process of overcoming the stuttering, as well as the methods of cooperation between the family members and speech therapists.

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