



Short communication

# Extraversion and communication attitude in people who stutter: A preliminary study



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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 13 March 2014

Received in revised form 19 August 2014

Accepted 25 August 2014

Available online 6 September 2014

### Keywords:

Stuttering

Erickson's Communication Attitude Scale

Extraversion

NEO-PI-R

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to determine the correlation between the personality trait extraversion and the communication attitude in people who stutter (PWS).

**Method:** Thirty PWS completed Erickson's Communication Attitude Scale (S-24) (Andrews & Cutler, 1974) as well as a Dutch adaptation of the extraversion scale of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Hoekstra, Ormel, & Fruyt, 1996).

**Results:** The communication attitude scores correlated significantly with the extraversion scores: PWS with a more negative communication attitude were more introvert and PWS with a more positive attitude were more extravert.

**Conclusion:** This result suggests that the S-24 is not only sensitive to communication attitude in relation to speech impairment, but also to the respondent's degree of extraversion. Consequently, assessment of communication attitude needs to be re-thought so as to take personality factors into account.

### Educational

**Objectives:** Readers should be able to: (a) describe the difference between temperament and personality; (b) describe what the S-24 Communication Attitude Scale measures in PWS; (c) describe how the personality trait extraversion may influence the communication attitude in PWS; (d) describe how the extraversion scale is correlated to the communication attitude scale according to the authors of this article.

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## 1. Introduction

In many stuttering therapy models, both personality and temperament are seen as factors that co-determine the development of stuttering. Well-known examples of such models are the Demands and Capacities Model (Starkweather, 1987), the Dynamic multifactorial model (Smith, 1999), The Nine-component model (Riley & Riley, 1980) and the Erasmus four-component model (Stournaras, Bazen, Bezemer, & Borselen, 1980). Several authors studied the influence of temperament or personality factors on stuttering (Bloodstein & Bernstein Ratner, 2007, Chap. 7; Conture, 1990; Guitar, 2006, Chap. 1). Temperament and personality are closely related, but are not the same. Temperament is described as a congenital and stable construct, which does not change in the course of life, while personality is the result of the interaction between environmental influences during childhood and the stable temperament (Anderson, Pellowski, Conture, & Kelly, 2003; Caspi, 1998; Costa

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& McCrae, 2001). Cloninger, Svrakic, and Przybeck (1993) describes personality as the result of temperament and character, where character traits are more conscious, less automatic and more influenced by environment.

### 1.1. Personality

Regarding the emergence of stuttering in children, temperament has been argued to be a critical factor in many studies (Guitar, 2006, Chap. 1; Kagan, Reznick, & Snidman, 1987; Kefalianos, Onslow, Block, Menzies, & Reilly, 2012). Because the present study focused on adults, the relationship between personality and stuttering was studied. Studies comparing personality profiles of people who stutter (PWS) and people who do not stutter (PNS) have generally not found consistent results. Several studies showed that PWS are not different in their personality characteristics from PNS (for detailed review, see Bloodstein & Bernstein Ratner, 2007, Chap. 7; Manning & Beck, 2011, 2013). Other studies however, show specific personality differences between PNS and PWS (Bleek, Montag, Faber & Reuter, 2011; Iverach et al., 2010). For example, Iverach et al. (2010), using the five-factor model of personality, found that PWS are characterized by higher Neuroticism, and lower Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, than PNS. Bleek et al. (2011) replicated this study with a better matched control group. Their findings also showed higher Neuroticism in PWS, but, in contrast to Iverach et al. (2010), they found higher Agreeableness and Conscientiousness in PWS, compared to PNS. Montag, Bleek, Faber and Reuter (2012) investigated the influence of a certain gene (DRD2 C957 polymorphism) on neuroticism in PWS. One of the variants of this gene is associated with higher neuroticism. Another case-control study had associated this gene with a vulnerability for developing speech disorders, such as stuttering (Lan et al., 2009). Thus, this type of gene is associated with neuroticism in PWS and therefore emphasizes the relation between neuroticism and stuttering. However it is not clear whether neuroticism is the cause or the consequence of stuttering.

Differences in personality might lead to interindividual differences between PWS, e.g. in stuttering severity, or in their emotional and cognitive reactions to stuttering. Bleek et al. (2012) investigated such interindividual differences in personality between PWS. They investigated the adverse impact of stuttering on a person's life. One hundred twelve PWS completed both the *NEO Five-Factor Inventory* (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and the *Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering* (OASES) (Yarus & Quasal, 2006). They found a strong positive correlation between scores on the Neuroticism scale and scores on the OASES, and a negative correlation between Extraversion scores and the OASES scores. These results indicate that high Neuroticism, i.e., a tendency to experience negative emotional states (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Hoekstra, Ormel, & Fruyt, 1996), as well as low Extraversion (the tendency to be enthusiastic, assertive and gregarious), are associated with a more adverse impact of stuttering on PWS' everyday life than low Neuroticism and high Extraversion.

In the light of the findings of Bleek et al. (2012) it is possible that personality traits such as extraversion also interact with the attitude towards communication in PWS. An extravert person is assertive, active and more talkative and will possibly have a more positive attitude towards communication than a more introvert person, who is more quiet, reserved and introspective (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Hoekstra et al., 1996). Since communication attitude is considered an important aspect of stuttering and is given a prominent place in stuttering interventions, it seems relevant to investigate how this trait interacts with a person's degree of extraversion.

### 1.2. Communication Attitude

Many studies have shown that PWS have a more negative attitude towards communication than PNS. PWS avoid speaking and avoid situations where speaking is expected (Bloodstein & Bernstein Ratner, 2007, Chap. 7). Quesal and Shank (1978) showed that people with voice or articulation difficulties have a more negative communication attitude than unaffected speakers, but PWS were found to have significantly stronger negative attitudes than people with voice or articulation difficulties. Cox, Seider, and Kidd (1984) established that PWS scored more negatively on communication attitude than recovered PWS, non-stuttering relatives, and typically fluent comparison speakers. These results suggest that stuttering correlates with a negative communication attitude. However, the direction of causation between communication attitude and stuttering remains unclear; a negative attitude can be a risk factor in stuttering, but it can also be a consequence (Brutten & Vanryckeghem, 2003). Brutten and Vanryckeghem (2003) suggest that PWS develop negative communication attitudes in response to their stuttering and to the negative reactions from their environment to their stuttering. These negative experiences lead to negative emotions and thoughts, which are often the reason for avoiding particular speech situations or particular words.

In all studies mentioned here, communication attitude was measured with the same instrument, namely the Erickson's Communication Attitude Scale (generally known as 'S-24'; Andrews & Cutler, 1974), which is also used in the current study. It is a questionnaire that measures the ideas and beliefs of PWS regarding different kinds of situations where oral communication is required. A negative attitude refers to more negative ideas and beliefs in respect to oral communication (Andrews & Cutler, 1974). The S-24 is one of the best-known diagnostic instruments in stuttering treatment and research. Langevin and Kully (2003) emphasize the importance of S-24 results for the indication of the direction for general treatment. For example, PWS with a low score on the S-24, referring to a positive communication attitude, may need less of the cognitive-behavioural component of treatment, comparing to PWS with a high score on the S-24. The questionnaire is also used as an instrument to evaluate treatment success. It can be used to measure the effect of stuttering treatment on the communication

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