

Fluency and Flow Experiences in the Daily Lives of People Who Stutter: An Experience Sampling Study

ABSTRACT

Historically, the lived experiences of people who stutter (PWS) have been overlooked in stuttering research and practice (Tichenor & Yaruss, 2022). While studies suggest there is much more to the experience of stuttering than the repetitions, prolongations, and blocks that an interlocutor may note on the surface, traditionally, researchers have not attempted to gain perspective from PWS on their speaking experiences and how their personal and contextual environments shape them (Kathard, 2001; Tichenor & Yaruss, 2022). Moreover, studies have not customarily focused on the moments PWS are fluent and what contributes to it (Constantino et al., 2020). Instead, researchers and practitioners alike have concentrated their efforts on what they observe, often describing speech in binary terms of “stuttered” and “nonstuttered” or “bumpy” and “smooth”, with the goal of decreasing overt disfluency by means of fluency enhancing and/or stuttering modification techniques. While these techniques may increase fluency for PWS, fluency is often gained with effortfulness (Constantino, 2020). Additionally, while the “iceberg beneath the surface” theory acknowledges emotions that PWS may feel, it falls short of describing the inter- and intra- individual dynamics of experiences from the perspectives of PWS and the ways that they shape, and are shaped by, stuttering.

Recently, researchers have emphasized the importance of studying the lived experiences of PWS, stressing that their voices have much to contribute to our holistic understanding (Tichenor & Yaruss, 2022; Kathard, 2001, Constantino, 2020). Doing so can provide knowledge about the moments leading up to stuttering, the thoughts, feelings, and emotions associated with it, and the broader ways it interacts with daily life. To do so, scholars have recently used interviews and life history research (Klompas & Ross, 2004; Kathard, 2001). While these approaches have unveiled individual experiences, they are limited in their insight on human cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior due to recall bias and social desirability (Mesquita, Feldman Barrett, & Smith, 2010; DeMaio, 1984). To circumvent these concerns and capture the breath of the experiences of PWS in real-time, we propose using the experience sampling method.

The experience sampling method (ESM) is a structured diary technique that asks people to self- report on what they are doing, feeling, and thinking in real time across repeated measures (Schwarz, 2012). It adopts the actor’s perspective rather than the observer’s (Schwarz, 2012). This is of vital importance when attempting to broadly understand stuttering because despite commonalities across people, each PWS has a distinctive set of symptoms that change overtime and in space (Bagchi & Reddy, 2021). To date, two studies have attempted to measure real-time experiences among PWS using ESM (Constantino et al., 2020;

Haitaini et al., 2021). Given that these two studies have illuminated dimensions of the lived experiences of PWS, we intend to use ESM further to capture their breath and additionally explore flow experiences (experiences of deep absorption in a present activity). Using 75 adults who stutter, our main study aims to explore how various dimensions of lived experience vary within and between people, with a particular focus on flow experiences. Given that an increase in self-consciousness is often related to an increase in stuttering severity and that loss of self-consciousness is a facet of flow experiences, examining stuttering in relation to dimensions of flow in daily life is likely to be fruitful. (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).