

Abstract

Using Ervine Goffman to Understand Stigma

Perceptions of stuttering about disabled students in Algerian schools

This doctoral research paper delivers knowledge relevant to social justice. Our paper connects with SDG 4 *Quality Education* and SDG 10 *Reduced Inequalities* within and among countries: discrimination serves to disadvantage individuals in different and invisible ways. Goffman's (1968) ideas on stigma found in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity* dwells upon persons who are not "normal" and how a pressure to conform gives rise to feelings of alienation and exclusion. Stigmatisation establishes a negative other or undesirable tainted persona. It discredits the Individual. The phenomenon known as expressive speech stuttering excludes those experiencing it to a multiplicity of enduring exclusions. Algerian society and its education system is the focus of the doctoral research we report under the two SDGs. Stuttering coupled with the stigma it provokes are known to the diverse stakeholders associated with Algerian schools, speech-language therapists, parents of stutters and language teachers. The research described yields practical and conceptual insights with potential to create a more inclusive and tolerant social environment for an comparatively invisible category of students. Based on the qualitative paradigm the researcher deployed semi-structured interviews, face-to-face in Algeria and virtual to uncover the social worlds of a diverse sample, viz. speech-language therapists, parents of children who stutter, and middle school language teachers. The findings revealed striking differences in knowledge of stuttering held by members of the three groups and also misconceptions about the texture of stuttering. Speech therapists demonstrated a more comprehensive understanding of stuttering whereas parents and teachers were dependent upon them to annex treatment in classroom settings as well as how to conceive of stuttering. Limitations in policy were identified: there was a systemic absence of continuing professional development (CPD) and opportunities for gaining additional expertise in pedagogy. Educational policies gave insufficient recognition to the everyday lives of the stutters in education settings. The main treatment method used in Algeria harnesses a medical model of disability which overlooks the role of environmental barriers in its definition and treatment. The *François La Luche* treatment emphasises abdominal breathing exercises to mitigate energy loss and anxiety that these students experience routinely. Each sample of stakeholders recognized the severely negative impact of stuttering on children's wellbeing noting emotional harms arising from adverse social experience of discrimination and bullying. Moreover, the stigma accompanying stuttering is associated with Algerian cultural norms regarding the performance of normality. Professional staff focused on building positive relationships with children who stutter designed to enhance their self-esteem and raising awareness about the nature of stuttering. Our paper foregrounds the need for targeted interventions to support students who stutter in Algerian schools addressing a stigmatising environment that to date offers limited access to professional learning. The findings also underscore the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to co-create more inclusive environments that promote both academic success and psychological well-being amongst this stigmatised demography in the Algerian education milieu.

Key words: Algeria, schools, stuttering, medical, stigma.