

The Levels of Anxiety and Hopelessness of Primary Education Children with Speech Disorders and of Their Parents*

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study was to determine the levels of anxiety and hopelessness of primary education children with speech disorders and of their parents. For the general aim of the research, 23 children who were receiving special education at Bursa BESMER Special Education and Rehabilitation Center and diagnosed with speech disorders and their parents formed the sample of this study with a total of 46 subjects. For the data collection procedure, Beck's Hopelessness Scale was used as an instrument to determine their hopelessness level, motivation loss, feelings about the future and expectations for the future; and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was used to determine their level of state and trait anxiety. Results indicated that the hopelessness, state and trait anxiety levels of children having speech disorders were at medium level; parents' hopelessness level was low and state and trait anxiety levels were at medium level. It was determined that both children's and parents' hopelessness level of feelings and expectation for the future were low; the motivation level was medium for children and low for parents.

Key Words: Speech disorders, anxiety, hopelessness.

INTRODUCTION

The only possible way for individuals to establish effective communication with their environment is by expressing themselves smoothly and easily. And the most effective mode of expressing oneself smoothly and easily is speaking. Speaking; defined by Konrot (1998) as a form of language which is turned into sounds, is a physical, psychological and neuro-physiological process and is the action of coding thoughts by sound symbols with the assistance of auditory and vocal organs (Topbaş, 2001).

Any breakdown disrupting and affecting the flow of speech is regarded as speech impediment (Özsoy, 1981). Even though considered in general terms; speech impediment, delayed speech, vocal failure, articulation disorders, arrhythmia, acuity, brain handicap and disorders related to cleft palate form a part of impediments of speech (Enç, 1981). The negative situations encountered in communication which are defined as "speaking handicaps", "speech disorders", "language and speech disorders", are also defined by such terms as: "delayed speech", "delay in language development", "stammering", "aphasia", "nasal speech", "articulation disorder", "vocal disorder", "aphonia" etc. (Konrot, 1998).

Topbaş, Konrot and Ege (2002) described speech impediment as "breakdown in fulfilling the necessary motor actions such as respiration, vocalization, resonance and pronunciation - articulation for sounds production. Konrot (1998) lists the characteristics of speech of people who have speech impediment as:

- a) Speaking with a pitch exceedingly low to be heard.
- b) Not comprehending the speech with ease.
- c) Annoying the interlocutors by their sounds or outlook while speaking.
- d) Not being able to pronounce a certain sound as expected.
- e) Having difficulties while speaking.
- f) The lack of compatibility of the tongue with stress, intonation and rhythm patterns; lacking these features in speech, monotony.
- g) Syntactic, grammatical and other linguistic deviations.
- h) Having sounds and speech inappropriate for one's age, gender and physical development.

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Breakdown of speech caused by various reasons may create big problems for an individual and these problems may also trouble parents, entourage and teachers as well. A person with a speech impediment will have to struggle hard to overcome the obstacles posed by his/her speech in making himself/herself understood in relations with the entourage and himself/herself, starting right from his/her childhood. Speech impediment may cause not only unity problems both in his/her family and everyday life, but severe difficulties which are obstructive and preventive in his/her education also (Özgür, 2003).

Socialization is a process that follows the individual throughout his/her whole life, and a handicapped individual, who is in this process, is urged to learn the value judgments and role expectations of the society he/she lives in, despite his physiological limitations (Baymur, 1994; Yavuzer, 1999).

Research has indicated that children entering the socialization process with obstacles and obligatory delay in growing in unison with the society created by the inconveniences make them feel anxious and hopeless, for they do not have the same conditions as their coevals, (Özsoy et. al., 1988). People with speech impediment are sometimes laughed at, embarrassed and even excluded from groups. Accordingly, during the course of time individuals with speech impediment avoid communicating with people because of such negative treatments they encounter (Akgün, 2005).

Anxiety is an emotional reaction against unknown dangers or dangers of which the subjects are unknown (Cüceloğlu, 1993) and it is the most common mental and emotional problem that occurs during childhood and adolescence (Wilde, 2008). It is a natural intrinsic condition where one experiences feeling like the values essential for an individual's self-esteem are being threatened (Cüceloğlu, 1993). Some people always live in discomfort and these people are generally unhappy. This type of anxiety is not related to real dangers in the environment and emanates from the individual himself. Here, the individual feels anxious because he/she thinks his/her values are threatened or he interprets the situations as if he/she were in danger. This is called "trait anxiety" (Spielberger, 1966; Quote: Öner & Le Compte, 1985). Trait anxiety which is not directly related to the situation the individual is in, is a characteristic feature.

On the other hand, hopelessness is described as the negative expectations of carrying out a goal and reflection of possibilities of reaching the future true intentions of a person (Dilbaz, & Seber, 1993). Individuals themselves, their negative perceptions about the world or their futures are the most important elements which cause hopelessness (Çuhadaroğlu, 1993).

Although the ones with speech impediment form the majority of the children who need special education (Özgür, 2003), studies on the subject of commonness of speech impediment are very limited. Previous research has shown that 5.56% of students who are in the first level of primary schools have speech impediment, (Öge 2004). Among the individuals who need special education, the children with speech impediment take the first line with a rate of 3.5 % (Zan, 2005). Consequently, it can be said that, in the extent of formal education, starting with pre-school education, the diagnosis and the education of children with speech impediment have become a fundamental necessity (Özgür, 2003). It is also noted that children with speech and language impediment have a prevalence of approximately 8 % of total student population (Kırcaali-İftar, 1998).

A child in a family who needs special education is an emotional burden and a stressful experience for the entire family. The parents face a number of stressful situations like financial difficulties of meeting the new and different needs, limiting the private lives of family members and decreasing the time given to the other members because of the increasing of responsibilities. This situation causes anxiety and hopelessness in parents (Yıldırım, & Conk, 2005).

Along with psychological, social, economical and cultural structures, the intensity of the handicap of their children also affects the anxiety level of parents who have a child who needs special education (Er, 2006).

It was reported that a lot of parents have higher anxiety, depression and low self-esteem levels confronted by the extra stress that the handicapped child brings into the family life (Özşenol et. al., 2003).

Ceylan and Aral (2004) demonstrated that the hopelessness levels of mothers of handicapped children who participate in integrated education were lower than the hopelessness levels of mothers whose children did not participate in such programs.

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of anxiety and hopelessness of primary education children with speech disorders and of their parents. For this purpose; the following questions were attempted to be answered:

1. What are the levels of anxiety of children with speech impediment and of their parents?
2. What are the levels of hopelessness of children with speech impediment and of their parents?
3. Is there any difference between the levels of anxiety and hopelessness of children with speech impediment and of their parents?

METHOD

Participants

For the general aim of the research, 23 children who were having special education at Bursa BESMER Special Education and Rehabilitation Center and were diagnosed with speech disorders and their parents formed the sample of this study with a total of 46 subjects.

Data Collection Tools

For the data collection procedure, Beck's Hopelessness Scale was used as an instrument to determine their hopelessness level, motivation loss, feelings for the future and expectations for the future; and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was used to determine their level of state and trait anxiety.

By the inventory which Spielberger and Gorsuch have begun to develop, it was intended to measure the levels of trait and state anxiety in normal and handicapped individuals. The adaptation of the inventory into Turkish was made by Öner and Le Compte (1985) and it has been used in many studies in Turkey (Ay et al., 2002; Bağlan Sakan et al., 2003; Develi, 2006; Erdul, 2005; Gürsoy, Yıldız, & Gültekin, 2005; Hovardaoğlu, 1997; Ünlü et al., 2006; Yıldırım Doğru, & Arslan, 2008).

The inventory is composed of two sub-scales. In the scales there are "straight" and "reversed" expressions. When the "reversed" expressions are attempted to be graded, the ones which are at a value weight of 1 are converted into 4, and the ones with 4 are converted into 1. In the scale of state anxiety there are 10 (2nd, 4th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 19th and 20th items), and in the scale of trait anxiety there are 7 "reversed" expressions.

Data Analysis Process

The grading of the scales was made manually. Two different keys were used to state the total weights of straight and reversed expressions. For straight expressions, total weighted point of reversed expressions is deducted from the total derived weighted point, and an invariable value is added to this number. This value is 50 for State Anxiety Scale and 35 for Trait Anxiety Scale. The total point value varies from 20 to 80. High points show high anxiety level; low points show low anxiety level (Öner, 1994).

Beck Hopelessness Scale is an effective and trustworthy self-report inventory with 20 items, which was developed by Beck and his colleagues (1974) to measure the extent of pessimism of an individual about the future. The questions are answered as "yes" or "no" and each answer matching with the key gets 1 point; and the ones that do not match get 0. The total point is regarded as "hopelessness point". The lowest point which can be achieved from the scale is 0 and the highest is 20. The points are grouped as: 0-6 is low, 7-13 is medium and 14-20 is high. The questions forming the scales cover the motivational cognitive dimensions. The scale consists of three factors, which are "Emotions about the future", "The loss of motivation", "Expectations about the future" (Beck et. al., 1974).

For the data analysis, the defined statistics were interpreted and T-test was applied.

RESULTS

The findings obtained from this study, which was done to determine the anxiety and hopelessness levels of elementary students showing speech impediment and of their parents, are shown as tables hereinafter.

Table 1: *The test results of the anxiety and hopelessness levels of elementary students showing speech impediment and of their parents*

		N	Average	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	p
Feelings for the future	Child	23	1,04	1,33	0,27	1,51	,138
	Parent	23	0,57	0,72	0,15		
Motivation loss	Child	23	3,17	1,66	0,34	4,16	,000
	Parent	23	1,39	1,19	0,24		
Expectations for the future	Child	23	1,96	1,02	0,21	0,000	1,000
	Parent	23	1,96	1,26	0,26		
Hopelessness	Child	23	7,13	3,27	0,68	2,94	,005
	Parent	23	4,52	2,69	0,56		
State anxiety	Child	23	46,47	7,58	1,58	0,79	,433
	Parent	23	44,73	7,31	1,52		
Trait anxiety	Child	23	47,56	7,79	1,62	,86	,390
	Parent	23	45,65	7,14	1,48		

*p<.05

As seen in the table, the state anxiety point averages of elementary students showing speech impediment are 46,67, trait anxiety point averages are 47,56; their parents' state anxiety point averages are 44,73 and the trait anxiety point averages are 45,65. Although the points of the children with speech impediment are higher than those of their parents, a statistical significant difference was not achieved between the state and trait anxiety point averages of the children and their parents.

Hopelessness level average concerning the emotions about the future of the elementary children showing speech impediment is 1.04, their parents' average is 0.57; the average of hopelessness levels concerning motivation loss of children is 3,17, their parents' 1,39; the hopelessness level of children concerning the expectations about the future is 1,96, and their parents' is 1,96. These results show that children and their parents do not despair in terms of emotions, expectations about the future and motivation loss. However, between the points of children and their parents only in motivation loss a significant difference (p=0,00) stands out. This situation shows that in the term of motivation loss, children are more hopeless than their parents.

Table 2: *Test Results of the Anxiety and Hopelessness Levels of Elementary School-aged Children with Speech Impediment by Gender*

	Gender	N	Average	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Average	sd	t	p
Hopelessness	Girl	9	6,89	3,551	1,184	21	-,277	,784
	Boy	14	7,29	3,221	0,861			
Feelings for the future	Girl	9	0,89	1,167	0,389	21	-,438	,666
	Boy	14	1,14	1,460	0,390			
Motivation loss	Girl	9	3,22	1,922	0,641	21	,109	,914
	Boy	14	3,14	1,562	0,417			
Expectations for the future	Girl	9	2,00	1,000	0,333	21	,160	,874
	Boy	14	1,93	1,072	0,286			
State anxiety	Girl	9	40,66	5,05	1,68	21	-3,699	,001
	Boy	14	50,21	6,57	1,75			
Trait anxiety	Girl	9	45,88	5,77	1,92	21	-,820	,421
	Boy	14	48,64	8,89	2,37			

*p<.05

However, if general hopelessness level is observed, it can be seen that the point average of hopelessness of children with speech impediment is 7,13, and that their parents' is 4,52. While parents feel desperation at a low level, children feel it at a medium level. It is seen that there is a significant disparity ($p=0,005$) between the hopelessness levels of children and those of their parents. The elementary school-aged children with speech impediments feel hopelessness more than do their parents.

As seen in Table 2, the point average of state anxiety levels of girls with speech impediment is 40,66, and their point average of trait anxiety is 45,88; the point average of state anxiety levels of boys is 50,21, and their point average of trait anxiety is 48,64. Although the points of boys with speech impediment are a little higher than those of girls, statistically, a significant difference was not observed between their point averages of trait anxiety. However, between the point averages of trait anxiety, a significant disparity ($p=0,001$) stands out in favor of boys.

The average of hopelessness levels of emotions concerning the future of elementary school-aged children with speech impediment is 0,89 in girls and 1,14 in boys; the average of hopelessness levels concerning motivation loss is 3,22 in girls and 3,14 in boys; the average of hopelessness levels concerning expectations about the future is 2,00 in girls and 1,93 in boys. A statistically significant difference was not detected between boys and girls with speech impediment. These results show that boys and girls with speech impediment do not feel hopelessness about the emotions, expectations, and motivation loss about the future.

However, when their general hopelessness levels are observed, it can be seen that the point average of hopelessness of girls with speech impediment is 6,89, and the average of boys is 4,52. It is observed that the boys and girls with speech impediment feel hopelessness at medium level. Although the point average of boys is a little higher, a statistically significant disparity ($p=0,784$) was not found between the levels of hopelessness of boys and girls.

Similar results were found in studies concerning children who need special education, since there is not enough study concerning the children with speech impediment. In a study conducted by Küçük and Arıkan (2005) to determine the hopelessness levels of hearing-impaired children, it was found that hearing-impaired children felt hopelessness at a medium level.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that children with speech impediment and their parents do not have deep thoughts of hopelessness concerning the emotions, expectations, and motivation loss about the future. However, the data revealed that children with speech impediment feel more hopelessness than their parents concerning motivation loss.

Elementary school-aged children with speech impediment and their parents feel state and trait anxiety at a medium level. It is determined that children feel a little more anxiety than their parents.

It is conceivable that the fact that parents' anxiety and hopelessness levels are lower than their children's originates not only from the fact that they feel at ease because their children receive education and support services in private education institutions, but also because they too benefit from the guiding services given to them. Also, the fact that children's anxiety and hopelessness levels are higher can be associated with the problems the children with speech impediment have in their relations with normally-developing children at school.

The results also showed that any disparity by gender did not exist with regard to the levels of hopelessness concerning emotion, expectations about the future and motivation loss of elementary-school aged children with speech impediment.

The elementary school-aged children with speech impediment feel hopelessness at a medium level. It is determined that children feel more hopelessness than their parents. A statistically significant difference by gender was not found in the levels of hopelessness of the elementary-school aged children with speech impediment.

Although the trait anxiety levels are higher than state anxiety levels in girls with speech impediment, state anxiety levels are determined to be higher than trait anxiety levels in boys. Furthermore, the anxiety levels of boys are determined to be higher than those of girls.

It is conceivable that boys feel more state anxiety because of the reasons such as the expectation that boys should be more active and daring in our society, where different roles are assigned to boys and girls; girls are expected to be more silent and boys to be more enterprising. Dilbaz and Güz (2002) in their studies suggested that anxiety and evasion levels of boys are higher than those of girls in the cases of talking to an authoritative person, talking before an audience, acting, presenting a report orally to a group, opposing a stubborn vendor. This result strengthens the findings of our research. In a study made by Bozak (1982), the points of anxiety of 9-12 year old schoolgirls who had a normal development were determined to be higher than those of schoolboys. Although this result suggests that the anxiety levels of normal boys were lower than girls, it is contrary in boys with speech impediment which is important in showing that speech impediment increases the anxiety level.

As a result, since there are not enough studies on this subject in literature, further research can be profitably conducted by the comparison of anxiety and hopelessness levels of children with normal development and children with speech impediment, together with an investigation of the anxiety and hopelessness levels of children with speech impediment who receive special education and of those who do not.

This study can be replicated by increasing the sample to a larger number with the participation of more children with speech impediment and of their parents. The children with speech impediment should also be encouraged to benefit from the counseling services in their educational institutions more often, in order to decrease their anxiety and hopelessness levels.

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Konuşma Bozukluğu Olan Çocukların ve Ailelerinin Kaygı ve Umutsuzluk Düzeyleri

ÖZ: Araştırmanın amacı, konuşma bozukluğu gösteren çocukların ve ebeveynlerinin kaygı ve umutsuzluk düzeylerini belirlemektir. Araştırmanın örneklemini Bursa BESMER Özel Eğitim Merkezi ve Rehabilitasyon Merkezine devam eden ve konuşma bozukluğu teşhisi konmuş 23 çocuk ve ebeveynlerinden oluşan toplam 46 kişi oluşturmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak; umutsuzluk düzeylerini, motivasyon kayıplarını, gelecek için duygu ve beklentilerini ölçmek için Beck Umutsuzluk Ölçeği ve sürekli ve durumluk kaygı düzeylerini ölçmek için ise Sürekli-Durumluk Kaygı Envanteri kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistik ve T-testi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgulara göre; konuşma bozukluğu olan çocukların umutsuzluk, sürekli ve durumluk kaygı düzeylerinin orta düzeyde olduğu görülmüştür. Ebeveynlerin ise umutsuzluk düzeylerinin düşük, sürekli ve durumluk kaygı düzeylerinin ise orta düzeyde olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Konuşma bozukluğu, kaygı, umutsuzluk.

Amaç ve Önem: Toplumsallaşma sürecine seçme şansı olmadan engelli olarak giren çocukların yaşadıkları olumsuzluklar, çocuğun topluma uyumunu geciktirmekte ve yaşitları ile aynı imkânlara sahip olmamaları nedeniyle umutsuzluğa kapılmakta (Özsoy ve ark., 1988) ve kaygı yaşamaktadırlar. Aile içinde özel eğitime ihtiyaç duyan bir çocuğun olması, tüm aile bireyleri için duygusal bir yük, stres verici bir yaşam deneyimidir. Bundan dolayı, bu çalışmada konuşma bozukluğu gösteren ilköğretim çağı çocuklarının ve ebeveynlerinin umutsuzluk ve kaygı düzeylerini belirlemek amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Araştırmanın genel amacı doğrultusunda, konuşma bozukluğu tanısı konmuş ve Bursa BESMER Özel Eğitim ve Rehabilitasyon Merkezinde özel eğitim alan 23 çocuk ve her birinin birer velisi olmak üzere toplam 46 kişi araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturmuştur. Veri toplama aracı olarak umutsuzluk düzeylerini, motivasyon kaybı, gelecekle ilgili duygular ve gelecekle ilgili beklentileri belirlemek amacıyla Beck Umutsuzluk Ölçeği; durumluk ve sürekli kaygı düzeylerini belirlemek amacıyla Durumluk ve Sürekli Kaygı Envanteri kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistiklere bakılmış ve t-Testi uygulanmıştır.

Sonuç ve Tartışma: Araştırma sonucunda, konuşma bozukluğu gösteren çocukların umutsuzluk ($x=7,13$), durumluk ($x=46,47$) ve sürekli ($x=47,56$) kaygı düzeylerinin orta düzeyde; ebeveynlerin ise umutsuzluk düzeylerinin düşük ($x=4,52$), durumluk ($x=44,73$) ve sürekli ($x=45,62$) kaygı düzeylerinin ise orta düzeyde olduğu saptanmıştır. Gelecekle ilgili duygular ve beklentilere yönelik umutsuzluk düzeylerinin hem çocuklarda ($x=1,04$; $x=1,96$) hem de ebeveynlerde ($x=0,57$; $x=1,96$) düşük düzeyde; motivasyon kaybı düzeyinin ise çocuklarda ($x=3,17$) orta, ebeveynlerde ($x=1,39$) düşük düzeyde olduğu belirlenmiştir. Cinsiyete göre umutsuzluk ve kaygı düzeylerine bakıldığında, kız çocuklarının umutsuzluk ve sürekli kaygı düzeylerinin erkek çocuklara göre daha düşük olmasına rağmen istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılık saptanmamıştır. Durumluk kaygı düzeyinde ise istatistiksel olarak kızlar lehine anlamlı bir farklılık olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca, çocuklar ve ebeveynlerin umutsuzluk ve kaygı düzeyleri arasında fark olup olmadığına bakıldığında, ebeveynlerin puanlarının çocuklara göre daha düşük olduğu görülmüş, fakat istatistiksel olarak umutsuzluk ve motivasyon kaybında anlamlı farklılık saptanmıştır. Dilbaz ve Güz (2002) ile Bozak'ın (1982) araştırmaları da bu çalışmanın sonuçlarını destekler niteliktedir. Bu çalışma daha büyük bir örneklem grubu ile ve konuşma bozukluğu gösterip, özel eğitim almayan çocuklarla karşılaştırılarak da yapılabilir. Ayrıca konuşma bozukluğu gösteren çocuklar ve ebeveynler kaygı ve umutsuzluk konusunda okul rehberlik servislerinden daha fazla yararlanmalıdırlar.