

'The Impact of Speech and Language Impairments on 5-to-9-year-olds' Daily Lives'

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Abstract

There is a scarcity of studies that have explored experiences related to the communication, social participation, learning and well-being of children with Developmental Language Disorders (DLD), Speech Sound Disorders (SSD), and Written Language Disorders (WLD). The current study aimed to increase awareness of the fact that, for children with speech and language impairments without an obvious cause, quality of life might be affected. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with three Maltese children aged 5–9 years, one presenting with DLD, one with SSD, and one with WLD, as well as with their parent, Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) and educator. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was employed to pinpoint and explore recurring themes within the dataset. Communication, social participation, learning, and well-being impacted quality of life to varying degrees in the three children. The child with DLD experienced less severe effects on social participation, while his learning, well-being, and communication were impacted considerably. In contrast, the child with SSD did not face challenges in social participation, learning, or well-being, but his communication was affected. Similarly, the child with WLD encountered a less severe impact on social participation, yet her learning, well-being, and communication were affected. These varying outcomes might have been brought about by the interaction of factors internal and external to the child, including age, severity of the disorder and family upbringing. The results have important implications for the holistic management of children with speech and language impairments without an obvious cause. They encourage individuals involved in the lives of children with speech and language impairments to take into consideration their quality of life and seek necessary assistance to enhance it. This research has

the potential to raise awareness among speech-language pathologists of the importance of considering the overall quality of life of children, besides addressing their communication needs.

Keywords: Quality of life, Communication, Social Participation, Learning, Well-being, Developmental Language Disorder, Speech Sound Disorder, Written Language Disorder

