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The perceived impact of stuttering on career advancement and prejudice following disclosure in South Africa

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A research article submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business

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Supervisor Name: Dr Johnny Matshabaphala

DECLARATION

I, Patience Lerato Rakumako, declare that this research article is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before by any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Patience Lerato Rakumako

Signed at….Broadacres….on the….27th….day of….February 2024….

DEDICATION

This research article is dedicated to my husband, Thato Rakumako, and our daughter, Oratilwe Rakumako. Thato, your unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities has been my driving force throughout this journey. Your sacrifices and understanding during late nights and weekends dedicated to this research article has been the bedrock upon which this work stands. My dearest daughter Rati, you have made me stronger and brought a level of fulfilment beyond my wildest expectations. Thank you both for supporting me throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the influence of stuttering on career advancement given the discrimination people who stutter encounter after disclosure in South Africa. Focused on the professional obstacles encountered by people who stutter (PWS), the study explores their inclination towards careers involving limited public speaking. Addressing gaps in existing literature, it contributes by examining the impact of disclosure and determining equal opportunities for individuals with and without speech impairments. Authors of previous research have highlighted the importance of categorising stuttering as a disability.

To fulfill the research objectives, a qualitative research design was used, specifically incorporating the use of interviews. The study involved conducting interviews with six individuals who have a history of stuttering and are employed in South Africa. The interviews explored the participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to stuttering and its impact on career advancement. The interviews were conducted virtually, recorded in audio format, and transcribed for analysis. The study revealed the multifaceted impact of stuttering on career advancement emphasizing the profound awareness of the condition rooted in childhood experiences and associating it with nervousness or pressure. Career challenges varied, with some facing obstacles in interviews, while others asserted that stuttering did not impede their professional growth. Post-disclosure, the majority reported a supportive workplace atmosphere, with rare instances of bias.

This research supports business practices by raising awareness of the challenges PWS face in the workplace and advocating for inclusive policies, equal opportunities, and supportive environments.

KEYWORDS: Advancement, Career, Disclosure, Discrimination, Stuttering

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWS	Adults who stutter
PWS	People who stutter
PWNS	People with no stutter
QOL	Quality of life
NQF	National qualifications framework
WHO	World health organisation
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps
NIDCD	National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
SSOC	Stuttering Stigma in Organisational Communication
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

This research examined the influence of stuttering on career advancement given the discrimination people who stutter encounter after disclosure in South Africa

1.2 Background of the study

Stuttering is a rhythmic communication impairment in which a person understands exactly what they want to say but is unable to clearly articulate themselves due to recurring sound prolongation (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). People who stutter (PWS) repeat syllables, avoid certain words, and use replacement words or phrases (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). Research indicates that stuttering affects less than 1% of the population, and numerous methods have been developed to treat it (Yairi & Ambrose, 2012). The condition is not uncommon in society, although the influence on Quality of life (QOL) has yet to be evaluated (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). According to the findings of a study conducted by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019), PWS are distinct from people with no stutter (PWNS) because they are satisfied with their employment and are less susceptible to discrimination. PWS can be subjected to discrimination because they see their stuttering as a disability given the negative stigma that society places on PWS as well as a general lack of knowledge and comprehension of the phenomenon of stuttering (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). This can be attributed to the fact that society has a stereotypical view of people who stutter.

Ellis and Hartlep (2017) examined six African American PWS as part of their research and discovered that stuttering played a significant role in both academic achievement and the overall learning experience. Most individuals viewed stuttering as a form of verbal handicap; as a result, this influenced their choice of employment and their sense of self-identity later in life (Ellis & Hartlep, 2017). In addition, Daniels, Gabel, and Hughes (2011) came to the same conclusion, that PWS struggled with reading

out loud and had a poor social identity. The experiences that PWS have had in the past mould them later in life, such as the career decisions that they make.

1.3 Research problem

According to Yaruss and Quesal (2004), research has not determined stuttering to be a disability. As a result, there is no universally accepted list of personal variables that are responsible for stuttering. People often think of those who stutter as having a social identity, which is how they define themselves in relation to others (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004). Social identities are significant in a variety of social situations, such as the workplace, and can impact personal judgments of one's position as an employee in relation to one's fellow employees.

Research demonstrates that there is a lack of awareness surrounding stuttering, as well as a negative stigma associated with it (Boyle, 2018). PWS are concerned about the stereotyping that society sets on them, which is a factor that contributes to the prejudice that comes along with having a stutter. Stuttering is seen as a disability by many people and those who stuttered as children are more likely to suffer prejudice in the workplace as adults and this continues to become a barrier even if they outgrew their stuttering (Boyle, 2018).

PWS encounter discrimination when trying to advance their careers. Research indicates that PWS encounter challenges in the professional environment, and this has been proved by Seitz and Choo (2021) that many people have a dim view of the skills that PWS poses. When compared to PWNS, PWS reported more instances of discrimination and less overall happiness in the workplace. Many studies, including one by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019), have shown that people with disabilities continue to face prejudice even after they have found gainful employment (Garcia, Laroche, & Barrette, 2001).

1.4 Research questions

The list of fundamental research questions that will be addressed are as follows:

1. How does the perception of career advancement opportunities among individuals who stutter relate to their preference for job roles involving limited public speaking?

2. What workplace discrimination experiences do individuals who stutter encounter after disclosing their stutter, impacting their access to equal opportunities in comparison to individuals who do not stutter?

3. How is stuttering perceived and classified in the South African corporate context, particularly as a disability in relation to employment practices and accommodations?

1.5 Rationale

While previous studies have piqued researchers' curiosity in this subject, no studies have conclusively shown why stutterers choose to keep their condition concealed or how exposing it might help them (Boyle, Milewski, & Beita-Ell, 2018). Therefore, whether PWS try to hide their condition from others is likewise unproven (Boyle, 2018).

Understanding the complexity of the quality of life (QOL) for PWS requires consideration of various factors often overlooked in previous attempts to explain it. This is because only a single metric, a global QOL rating, was used to assess the quality of life (Boyle, Milewski, & Beita-Ell, 2018). It would be helpful to get a more balanced view of QOL if it were separated into education and employment. There may be more value in the literature if qualitative research analysed people who stutter.

Participating in the study will emphasize the necessity of better understanding the disclosure practices of PWS and their QOL. Although Boyle, Milewski, and Beita-Ell (2018) have revealed the beneficial impacts of disclosure, relatively few research focuses on the amount of openness and its impact on career advancement.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

a) The research was primarily focused on employees based in Gauteng province and excluded other provinces in South Africa.
b) Designed for people who are currently employed with no limitations regarding their tertiary qualifications.

1.7 Definition of terms

a) Advancement: Refers to the process of progressing in one's profession or occupation by gaining greater experience, knowledge, skills, and responsibility. It typically involves moving up the hierarchy of an organization or industry, taking on higher-level roles, and earning higher salaries and benefits (Callanan, 2003).
b) Career: A person's progress and development through life, especially in their work or profession (Coupland, 2002). It may also involve learning, growth, and achievement of personal and professional goals, as well as the pursuit of one's interests, passions, and values (Yates, 2022).
c) Disclosure: Refers to the act of revealing or sharing information about oneself to others (Boyle & Gabel, 2020). This information can be personal, private, or sensitive in nature, and may include details about one's thoughts, feelings, experiences, behaviours, or identity (Boyle & Gabel, 2020).
d) Discrimination: Signifies the unfair or biased treatment of individuals or groups based on specific characteristics or attributes, including disability (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). It can come in many forms such as, exclusion, denial of opportunities, and unequal treatment (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). Discrimination can occur at different levels, such as individual, institutional, or societal, and can have significant negative effects on the targeted individuals or groups, such as psychological distress, social isolation, and reduced opportunities (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).
e) People who stutter: PWS repeat syllables, avoid certain words, and use replacement words or phrases (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009).
f) People with no stutter: People with no speech disorder (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009)
g) Quality of life: How someone sees their place in life and how that affects their happiness, joy, and fears (WHO, 2023). It also refers to an individual's subjective perception and evaluation of their overall well-being and satisfaction with different aspects of their life, including physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, living conditions, and access to resources and opportunities (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004).
h) Stuttering: A rhythmic communication impairment in which a person understands exactly what they want to say but is unable to clearly articulate themselves due to

recurring sound prolongation (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). PWS repeat syllables, avoid certain words, and use replacement words or phrases (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009).

1.8 Assumptions

a) In contrast to participants who stutter severely, those who stutter slightly may have an impact on the findings of the study.
b) Individuals who are affected by stuttering may diagnose themselves with the condition rather than seek a professional diagnosis.
c) There may be no evidence to show the age when the stuttering was established.
d) Respondents may be sensitive to being open and honest about the disclosure of stuttering in the workplace because they may be attracted to performing work that requires less public speaking. As a result, they may feel discriminated against for their own career choices when they're not open and honest about their stuttering.

1.9 Summary

Chapter one is an introduction to the perceived impact of stuttering on career advancement and prejudice following disclosure in South Africa. Stuttering is a rhythmic communication impairment in which a person understands exactly what they want to say but is unable to clearly articulate themselves due to recurring sound prolongation. The research will be conducted in Gauteng where employees will be interviewed to investigate stuttering as a disability, the negative stigma that society places on people who stutter, and the discrimination in career advancement opportunities for people who stutter.

The three key questions that will be addressed in the research are:

1. How do individuals who stutter perceive their career advancement opportunities, and do they tend to prefer job roles that involve limited public speaking?

2. What experiences of workplace discrimination do individuals who stutter encounter after disclosing their stutter, and how does this impact their access to equal opportunities compared to individuals who do not stutter?

3. How is stuttering perceived and classified in the South African corporate context? Is stuttering widely recognized as a disability, and what are the implications of this recognition on employment practices and accommodations?

In the second chapter, an empirical literature review delves into key themes, exploring the influence of stuttering on career progression, the workplace discrimination encountered by people who stutter, and examining whether stuttering is recognized as a disability within the South African context.

The third chapter of this study examines the impact of stuttering on career advancement and discrimination faced by individuals who stutter. Using a qualitative method of interviews, the participants' lived experiences are explored, barriers, and societal attitudes influencing their career paths. Topics such as data collection, population, methods of sampling, methods of data collection, research instruments, statistical analysis, and ethical factors to consider are examined in this chapter.

The fourth and concluding chapter centers on discussions and findings, emphasizing potential limitations of the study, and makes suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to the research conducted by Klein and Hood (2004), people who stutter think that their condition hinders their capacity to grow in their careers and find work. Klein and Hood (2004), explain that men more than women have this perception, whilst white people are more likely to believe that stuttering has less of an influence than individuals of other ethnicities. Furthermore, Klein and Hood (2004), explained that for individuals to overcome stuttering, counselling is essential, and objectives need to be defined to fully understand the influence that stuttering can have on one's career.

Recent research conducted by McAllister, Collier, and Shepstone (2012) does not evidence that stuttering may have an impact on the process of finding employment. In addition, individuals who stuttered from a young age were not at a disadvantage in comparison to PWNS as they found employment within a month of the start of their working career (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012). They also did not get a salary that was lower than that of PWNS, nor were they assigned work that was below the educational level they held (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012).

Research conducted more recently by Limura and Miyamoto (2020) shows that individuals in the workplace have a good attitude and are patient with PWS, whereas earlier research by Boyle (2018) demonstrates that society still has a negative attitude toward those who stutter in the workplace. McAllister, Collier, and Shepstone (2012) support Boyle (2018) by providing an explanation of why PWS are likely to be discriminated against when they reach the age of 50 since they are placed in roles that are lower than their social class. McAllister, Collier, and Shepstone (2012) further elaborate that managerial roles require an individual who can communicate effectively and clearly. Therefore, frequently PWS avoid these roles because they believe they may not stand a chance when compared to PWNS as they may not be able to carry out the responsibilities "effectively."

Yaruss and Quesal (2004), have shown that the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) can be used to demonstrate the

effects that stuttering has on an individual's communication, life experiences, and the inability to participate in activities, all of which adversely affect an individual's overall quality of life. This is because there are numerous internal as well as external variables that impact PWS, and as a result, the experiences of PWS might vary (Irwin, 2023). Hence, even though stuttering has been officially recognized as a handicap in several countries worldwide, a significant number of people who stutter view the "disability" in a negative light (Irwin, 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review of Literature

According to Klein and Hood (2004) 70% of PWS feel that stuttering hampers their career advancement and 26% say that stuttering might raise once probability of getting fired. In the findings of the Klein and Hood (2004) study, those who stutter are under the impression that the condition lowers their overall performance. Further evidence from Klein and Hood (2004) reveals that PWS believe that they have a decreased likelihood of being promoted if they are competing against a PWNS. It is argued that most employers are more inclined to view PWNS in a more favourable light than they do with PWS.

The research conducted by Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013) reveals that stuttering has a significant influence on PWS because it restricts speech, which in turn makes it difficult for PWS to clearly express themselves. In addition, activities such as making phone calls and engaging with individuals are prerequisites for most employment, which can be challenging for PWS since they are afraid of receiving negative feedback and so having their ability to execute the job critiqued (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013).

According to Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) to minimize discrimination against those who stutter in the workplace, it is essential that PWS are prepared in the workplace regarding employment expectations and that line managers are involved in the career trajectory of a person who stutters. This is because discrimination against those who stutter in the workplace can have a negative impact on their ability to advance in their careers (Seitz & Choo, 2021).

Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) explain that most employers do not have adequate understanding regarding stuttering, therefore the department of human resources is the one responsible for implementation to ensure that people who stutter are also considered for vacancies whenever positions are advertised. This guarantees that all candidates are given an equal opportunity by the recruiters. Furthermore, it is equally important to educate employees and employers about stuttering for instance educating them on effective listening strategies such as allowing people who stutter to finish their sentences when they are speaking (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).

In contrast, a recent study conducted by Seitz and Choo (2021) explains that people who stutter continue to face discrimination in the workplace, which is primarily due to the stigma that surrounds stuttering. More explanation comes from Seitz and Choo (2021) who state that to address the stigma of stuttering in the context of organizational communication, a stuttering stigma model is necessary. Along the same lines as Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) the model by Seitz and Choo (2021) demonstrates that line managers can educate themselves about disabilities and begin thinking differently, thereby showing respect for those who are different in the workplace.

According to the NIDCD (2017) stuttering is a speech impairment that is characterized by the repetition of words, sounds, and syllables. Stuttering is seen as a disability in several countries; but, in a few other countries, it is regarded instead as a speech issue and is not regarded as a disability (Bailey, Harris, & Simpson, 2014). In contrast a significant number with PWS do not regard or choose not to recognize themselves as disabled (Irwin, 2023). Yaruss and Quesal (2004) describe stuttering as a handicap or impairment, where a handicap describes the impact of communication difficulties and impairment refers to speech patterns that are affected by stuttering. Yaruss and Quesal (2004) concur that stuttering should be categorized as a handicap due to the prejudice and great pressure that people who stutter experience during interviews.

This study will make use of all the main themes that are discussed above, such as the influence that stuttering has on career advancement, the discrimination that people who stutter encounter in the workplace and understanding the definition of stuttering as a disability in South Africa.

2.3 Research Gaps

A comprehensive summary of the findings based on the research themes are provided in Annexure 3.

Research gaps in stuttering and career advancement highlight limitations in understanding the impact on job performance (Klein & Hood, 2004). McAllister, Collier, and Shepstone (2012) discuss the broader consequences of self-stigma, whereas Logan and O'Connor (2011) emphasise the importance of exploring suitable occupations for People Who Stutter (PWS). Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) highlight the difficulties in recruitment and the limited attention given to employed individuals who stutter. In occupations that need frequent communication, issues arise from the necessity to investigate the implications of self-stigma (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) and the challenges in recruitment processes (Klein & Hood, 2004; Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). The employment opportunity gap indicates the need to investigate the satisfaction of PWS in lower-status positions (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012). The disability gap related to stuttering is due to a deficiency in incorporating a disability studies perspective (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022) and understanding the ICF framework in clinical or research environments (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004).

2.4 Theoretical Review

2.4.1 *PWS and career advancement*

PWS have been shown in several studies, like the one carried out by Klein and Hood (2004), to be at a disadvantage when it comes to the job market. According to the data presented in Klein and Hood (2004), stuttering has also influenced the advancement of a person's career. When it concerns employment, many who stutter believe that if they had not stuttered, they would have had better jobs and would be able to do much better in their present position if they had not stuttered. In addition, the research conducted by Klein and Hood (2004) it was found that 20% of the people who took part in the survey have in the past declined a job opportunity because to their stuttering. The study by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) found that those

who stuttered reported lower levels of job satisfaction and experienced more discrimination than PWNS, therefore this supports the study by Klein and Hood (2004) that states that stuttering can be a handicap in the workplace. These two findings support the concept by Logan and O'Connor (2011) that explains that people who stutter may face occupational stereotyping and be confined to specific roles within the workplace.

2.4.2 *PWS in occupations with fewer communication demands*

The findings of a study that was carried out by Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013) indicate that the workplace can be a particularly challenging environment for those who stutter. PWS were under the impression that they were expected to have perfect verbal communication skills; therefore, they frequently had feelings of discomfort when carrying out their assigned duties (Klein & Hood, 2004). Individuals who took part in the survey for the research that was carried out by Klein and Hood (2004) indicated that they feel that having a speech disorder makes it more difficult for them to attain the sort of work that they are interested in. This was greatly influenced by unpleasant conduct that coincided with unfavourable beliefs that exist in the workplace towards those who stutter (Klein & Hood, 2004). PWS did not place a high value on careers that needed higher sociability and communication; rather, PWS favoured employment that forced them to have less social engagement (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). This was further evidenced by McAllister, Collier, and Shepstone (2012) explaining that the increased probability of individuals who stutter occupying lower-status roles mirrored their inclination to steer clear of occupations seen as demanding strong verbal communication skills. Therefore, the types of employment that were available to PWS were limited to those that required less communication, which resulted in a decline in both career freedom and happiness in the workplace (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).

2.4.3 *Proposition 1*

Individuals who stutter prefer job roles with limited public speaking.

2.4.4 *Discrimination after disclosure in the workplace*

According to Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013), most people with a speech disorder are reluctant to disclose their condition for fear of receiving unfavourable reactions from other people. Even though some PWS believed that going public about their stuttering helped them cope better at work (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013). One of the participants involved in the study that was carried out by Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013) disclosed that admitting her stuttering to the people she worked with provided her with a sense of control because her stuttering was no longer a secret to her co-workers. A participant with the same perspective concurred that disclosure gives one the feeling that they are in control of the situation. Nonetheless, most people who stammer who participated in the study had trouble disclosing their condition. This problem was largely caused by fear over the reactions and judgments of others when they stuttered (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013).

According to Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) discrimination stems from the belief that stuttering is a disability and a social stereotype. This is caused by a lack of awareness about stuttering as well as the unfavourable opinion that society has of PWS. Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) therefore explained that those who stuttered as children are the most stigmatized since society views them as having a learning disability.

Ellis and Hartlep (2017) conducted interviews with six African American men and discovered that the reactions of peers and teachers to PWS was a big influence on the negative feelings and experiences that the participants experienced. Findings by Klein and Hood (2004) suggest that PWS perceive that stuttering is a hindrance in the workplace. Furthermore, given the prevalence of a negative stereotype regarding stuttering, Logan and O'Connor (2011) point out that PWS may suffer prejudice after disclosing their condition.

2.4.5 *Opportunities afforded to PWS compared to PWNS*

According to Seitz and Choo (2021) studies such as Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) and Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013) have been carried out to

clarify the disadvantages that people who stutter face. This is because PWS are at a greater disadvantage in the labour market than PWNS, and this is due to gender differences among PWS and PWNS (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). In addition, males who stutter are less likely to look for work than females who stutter (Seitz & Choo, 2021).

Studies by Seitz and Choo (2021) have underlined the significance of effective communication in the professional environment, which is vital for creating relationships inside the organization. Nevertheless, the narrowness on effective communication stigmatizes persons with speech dysfunctions. It is this reason that PWS may be overlooked because of their inability to compete with PWNS in terms of communication skills, therefore PWS may find it difficult to advance in their careers (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Consequently, this is the reason why PWS may opt to avoid employment that requires exceptional oral communication skills. This further explains why there is a greater likelihood that people who stutter may work in jobs with a lower level of prestige (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012).

2.4.6 *Proposition 2*

Stuttering has a role in discrimination in the workplace as well as in job satisfaction.

2.4.7 *Stuttering as a disability*

Disabled people who stutter account for 1% of the total population NIDCD (2017). In the research article by Seitz and Choo (2021), it was reported that Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019), as well as Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013), indicated that most individuals who stutter encounter employment discrimination and express dissatisfaction with their jobs. According to Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) a communication disorder may be considered a disability due to the distinctive nature of the impairment. The way in which stuttering is stigmatized in society is unique, even though it has different characteristics with other communication disorders as it is a condition that overlaps with language and communication and that it has its own unique characteristics (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Stuttering, for instance, is frequently portrayed humorously in the media and as an indication of a mental

weakness, in contrast to other communication problems such as loss of hearing, which are more frequently portrayed as isolated individuals who are dependent on others (Seitz & Choo, 2021).

Recent research in South Africa was undertaken by Isaacs and Swartz (2022) to address the crippling concerns of stuttering. Several research participants saw stuttering as a disability, but they focused more on issues pertaining to social inclusion and the perception of being a misfit in social settings. Those who did not consider stuttering to be a disability said that a disability is generally associated with a physical impairment and did not consider stuttering to be a genuine disability, and as a result, they showed compassion toward those who struggled with disabilities (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022). All the males who took part in this study felt oppressed and, as a result, struggled to navigate the workplace environment due to their stutter. On the contrary, there was reluctance to being labelled disabled due to the stigma associated with stuttering (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022).

2.4.8 *Proposition 3*

Implementing anti-stigma tactics in the workplace, along with promoting a deeper understanding of stuttering among employees, is an effective strategy for employers to support PWS.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Underpinnings: Career Advancement, Discrimination, and Stuttering as a Disability are central key concepts to this study and are defined as follows.

The central theme of this study is based on PWS. People who stutter are people with a rhythmic communication impairment in which they understand exactly what they want to say but are unable to clearly articulate themselves due to recurring sound prolongation (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). PWS repeat syllables, avoid certain words, and use replacement words or phrases (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009).

The term "career" has been defined in various ways by scholars and researchers. According to Coupland (2002) career can be defined as the progress and development through life, especially in their work or profession. A career is often described as a series of jobs, roles, or positions held by an individual over time, which form a pattern of experiences that shape their skills, knowledge, and attitudes. It may also involve learning, growth, and achievement of personal and professional goals, as well as the pursuit of one's interests, passions, and values (Yates, 2022). Whilst the term advancement is defined as the process of progressing in one's profession or occupation by gaining greater experience, knowledge, skills, and responsibility. It typically involves moving up the hierarchy of an organization or industry, taking on higher-level roles, and earning higher salaries and benefits (Callanan, 2003). In addition, Chetana and Mohapatra (2017) describe advancement as difficult and uncertain because employers must consider both individual career goals and the growth of the company, hence the employee's career planning and the organization's career management work together to make the career advancement process work well.

Discrimination is the unfair or biased treatment of people or groups due to specific features or characteristics, like disability (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). Different kinds of discrimination include, but are not limited to, being left out, denied opportunities, and treated differently (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). Discrimination can occur at different levels, such as individual, institutional, or societal, and can have significant negative effects on the targeted individuals or groups, such as psychological distress, social isolation, and reduced opportunities (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).

Given that stuttering is a rhythmic communication impairment in which a person understands exactly what they want to say but is unable to clearly articulate themselves due to recurring sound prolongation (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). PWS repeat syllables, avoid certain words, and use replacement words or phrases (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). According to literature stuttering is a disorder that impacts workplace communication and is commonly associated with social stigma (Seitz & Choo, 2021).

In discussions on disability, the term "disability" is commonly viewed as uniform, potentially leading to an underestimation of the diversity within the impaired community (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Bailey, Harris, and Simpson (2014) and Isaacs and Swartz (2022) define disability through the social model, which highlights that disability is not a natural trait of a person but is instead caused by societal and environmental obstacles that hinder individuals with impairments from fully engaging in society. This perspective emphasizes the importance of addressing these barriers and promoting inclusion and accessibility for disabled people (Bailey, Harris, & Simpson, 2014). In contrast Isaacs and Swartz (2022) argue that stuttering can be considered a disability when viewed through this lens, as it can create social and environmental barriers that limit the participation of people who stutter in various aspects of life.

2.5.1 *Career Advancement Theory*

Klein and Hood (2004) used a survey to examine the influence of stuttering on work performance and employability. The Klein and Hood (2004) study investigated how stuttering impacts one's chances of getting recruited or promoted, how it interferes with work performance, and if PWS decline career prospects because of their stuttering. The study also investigated how gender, ethnicity, and the degree of stuttering might influence the opinion that stuttering is a handicapping condition.

The Klein and Hood (2004) study successfully accomplished its aim of investigating the influence of stuttering on employment prospects and work productivity. The findings of the survey by Klein and Hood (2004) suggest that individuals who stutter perceive their condition as a hindrance in the professional setting. A significant majority of the respondents, exceeding 70%, concurred that stuttering reduces the likelihood of securing employment or advancing in one's career (Klein & Hood, 2004). In a recent investigation, it was discovered that a significant proportion of individuals who stutter, specifically over 33%, perceive their stuttering to have a negative impact on their work performance (Klein & Hood, 2004). Moreover, approximately 20% of these individuals have declined a promotion or employment opportunity due to their stuttering. The Klein and Hood (2004) study validates the research question of whether it is difficult for PWS to advance in their careers.

The limitations of the Klein and Hood (2004) study was that the population consisted of individuals who had minimum interaction with the National Stuttering Association (NSA), a stuttering support group. The results may not apply to all PWS, therefore PWS who don't think their stuttering affects them may not have joined the support group, biasing the results. Finally, the study used self-report data, which may be biased and not reflect job performance or employability (Klein & Hood, 2004).

Klein and Hood (2004) suggest that future research should assess the differences in views of PWS who belong to a support group and those who do not about the impact of stuttering in the job. This might aid in determining if the study's findings are applicable to the overall population of PWS.

Another study conducted by McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) aimed to explore the potential negative effects of stuttering on the educational and occupational achievements of individuals who stutter, in comparison to those who do not experience this speech disorder. The study successfully accomplished its objective. The present study's results indicate that stuttering does not have a noteworthy effect on academic achievements. However, the investigation reveals a marked correlation between stuttering and occupations of lower status at the age of 50.

The McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) study relied on self-reported data from parents to identify stuttering individuals at age 16 which posed a potential limitation, as it did not provide an accurate representation of the actual degree of stuttering among the group. This study, however, did not delve into the effects of stuttering on job satisfaction or other employment-related factors beyond the socioeconomic status of one's occupation. The McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) study is subject to certain limitations, particularly regarding the possibility of missing data because of non-response. Therefore, this potential limitation may have had an impact on the findings of the study.

McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) suggest a possible direction for future research to investigate the relationship between employment satisfaction and occupational status among individuals who stutter. Specifically, McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) seek to determine whether those who stutter and occupy lower-status positions report satisfaction with their employment. This statement suggests

that there is a need for additional research to investigate the underlying factors that contribute to the tendency of individuals who stutter to avoid professions that demand proficient verbal communication skills. Such research could shed light on the psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence the career choices of people who stutter. By exploring this topic, researchers could gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by individuals who stutter in the workplace and identify potential interventions to support their career development and success. This supports the research question in this paper, which is whether PWS choose employment that require less public speaking.

Two studies were completed by Logan and O'Connor (2011) to evaluate the factors that influence judgements of occupational appropriateness for stuttering speakers and non-stuttering speakers. In Experiment 1, participants assessed a speaker's communication skills, personal characteristics, and job suitability while listening to audio recordings of the speaker stuttering for 32 jobs, as well as how they thought the jobs required speaking and what kind of education they needed. In Experiment 2, people listened to a recording of another adult speaking normally or pretending to stutter. They gave the same scores as they did in Experiment 1. Logan and O'Connor (2011) aimed to address a research gap on the factors that impact views of suitable occupations for PWS compared to PWNS.

The study by Logan and O'Connor (2011) successfully accomplished its aim of investigating the variables that impact the perception of occupational appropriateness for individuals who stutter and those who do not stutter. The literature review examined the results of two experiments that shed light on the factors that impact occupational suitability ratings for individuals who stutter and those who do not. Specifically, the studies explored the influence of perceived speaking demands, educational requirements, and personal attributes on these ratings. By analysing these findings, one can gain an understanding of the complex variables that shape perceptions of occupational suitability for individuals with and without stuttering. Logan and O'Connor (2011) shed light on the possibility of job stereotyping and/or role confinement that PWS may face in their work environments, which supports the research question in this paper, which is whether it is difficult for PWS to advance in their careers?

The Logan and O'Connor (2011) study limitations are twofold. Firstly, it solely focuses on the perceptions of occupational suitability among non-stuttering adults. Secondly, it does not incorporate the viewpoints of individuals who stutter. The study has limitations in that it solely focuses on the perceptions of occupational suitability that are based on audio recordings of speech. This approach may not be comprehensive enough to fully capture the complexities of communication that occur in real-world work settings. The Logan and O'Connor (2011) study has limitations in that it only focused on a restricted number of occupations. Thus, further research is warranted to investigate the perspectives of PWS regarding occupational appropriateness across a broader spectrum of job types (Logan & O'Connor, 2011).

It is evident that the present study is closely related to previous research conducted by Klein and Hood (2004), Logan and O'Connor (2011) and (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012). These studies have investigated the challenges faced by PWS in their career advancement. This present study seeks to expand upon existing research by examining the correlation between individuals with a history of stuttering and their inclination towards professions that involve minimal public speaking. Additionally, it aims to provide an understanding of the perceptions of people with a history of stuttering regarding the suitability of various job types. Finally, this research aims to validate the proposition that people with a history of stuttering may face challenges in advancing their careers.

2.5.2 *Discrimination Theory*

Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) apply qualitative interpretation to investigate the effects of stuttering on the occupational experiences of individuals who stutter. Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) pursued to investigate the significance that PWS attribute to their work experiences, as well as determine the overarching themes associated with the influence of stuttering at work. Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) shed light on the challenges that individuals who stutter face in the workplace. The findings indicate that stuttering can create a cycle of negative evaluation and self-stigma, which can lead to feelings of self-doubt (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013). Therefore, these results highlighted the need for

greater awareness and support for individuals who stutter in the workplace (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013).

Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) successfully accomplished their aim of investigating the effects of stuttering on the occupational interests of individuals who stutter, as well as identifying the meaning they derive from these experiences. According to Seitz and Choo (2021), Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) used the interpretative phenomenological analysis method to examine the interview transcripts of nine individuals who stuttered. The aim was to explore the impact of stuttering at work (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Seitz and Choo (2021) stated that the analysis by Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) revealed four overarching themes that were related to this phenomenon. These themes provided insight into the experiences of individuals who stuttered and the challenges they faced in the workplace (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Overall Seitz and Choo (2021) revealed that Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) shed light on the complex nature of stuttering and its effects on work performance. The Seitz and Choo (2021) study backed by the Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) study shed light on the topic of self-stigma in stuttering and highlighted the importance of conducting additional research to explore this phenomenon.

The Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) study has limitations, as the sample size was limited, consisting of only nine participants. This may have implications for the external validity of the results, as the findings may not be applicable to larger populations. The reliance on self-reported data is a potential limitation, for Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) as it may introduce bias and limit the accuracy of the findings. Despite this limitation, Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) provide valuable insights into the topic at hand and contribute to the existing body of literature on the subject. Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) exclusively examined the workplace experiences of individuals who stuttered and did not delve into the broader implications of stuttering on their personal lives.

Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) propose that further investigation is warranted to examine the impact of self-stigmatisation on the experience of stuttering. Specifically, Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) recommend that research delve into how self-stigma may serve as a mediator for self-esteem and confidence

among proficient and skilled individuals. As mentioned by Seitz and Choo (2021), Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) suggest the need for additional investigation into the topic of self-stigma as it pertains to stuttering, particularly beyond the workplace environment.

As reported by Seitz and Choo (2021) another study by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) aimed to investigate the correlation between workplace discrimination, vigilance, and job satisfaction in PWS, and compared these findings with PWNS. The investigation by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) sought to contribute to literature on this topic by providing empirical evidence on the potential impact of discrimination on the psychological well-being of individuals who stutter in the workplace. The study design involved a comparative analysis of data collected from two groups, with a view to identifying any significant differences in the variables under investigation. The study's results could significantly impact the creation of programmes for the development of interventions aimed at reducing discrimination and promoting job satisfaction among individuals who stutter. Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) tried to examine the potential mediating role of prejudice and awareness on the relationship between stuttering and job satisfaction.

Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) achieved their objective of investigating the correlation between workplace prejudice, awareness, and job satisfaction in PWS, while also drawing comparisons with those who do not stutter. In their investigation, it was discovered that the association between stuttering and job satisfaction is influenced by discrimination and vigilance. Individuals who stutter were found to encounter greater levels of discrimination and vigilance in comparison to their non-stuttering counterparts.

The limitations of the Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) study included the limited sample size used for the investigation. Additionally, the selection of exclusively employed individuals may restrict the usefulness of the results. Furthermore, Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) solely examined the potential mediating effects of workplace prejudice and awareness on the correlation between stuttering and job satisfaction. However, they did not investigate the influence of other variables such as workspace conditions or social support. Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019)

failed to evaluate the potential influence of job satisfaction on other consequential factors, such as mental health or overall quality of life.

Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) suggested potential future works that could be explored, which include:

- The need for conducting extensive and varied research to investigate the correlation between stuttering, employment discrimination, awareness, and job satisfaction.
- Exploring the correlation between various forms of employment discrimination and job satisfaction among individuals with stuttering disorders.
- Evaluating the influence of employment conditions and social support on the job satisfaction of PWS, thus providing valuable insights into the ways in which organisations can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment for individuals with speech impediments.
- Delve into the potential effects of job satisfaction on individuals who stutter, examining the possible implications for their mental health and overall quality of life.

The present research study will add to literature already written on this subject by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) by providing empirical evidence on the potential effects of discrimination in the workplace after disclosure and, as a result, investigate whether PWS and PWNS are given equal opportunities. Therefore, the research question in the current study is justified.

An additional study by Mancinelli (2018) examines the impact of self-disclosure on various aspects of stuttering, including how bad the person thinks it is, how comfortable they are, how much cognitive work they have to put in, and how anxious they are. The research by Mancinelli (2018) involved a structured conversation between a person who stutters and a fluent speaker. The results shed light on the potential effects of self-disclosure in this context. Mancinelli (2018) sought to examine the potential advantages of self-disclosure for individuals who stutter, comparing outcomes in both self-disclosed and non-disclosed scenarios. Mancinelli (2018) aimed to investigate the impact of two experimental conditions on the delivery of speech and verbal proficiency. Mancinelli (2018) measured the overall count of syllables produced

and the proportion of syllables stuttered in both conditions. The findings shed light on the potential effects of these conditions on speech production and fluency.

Mancinelli (2018) suggests that there were no notable variations in the cognitive-affective factors among the experimental groups. Mancinelli (2018) suggests that self-disclosure by individuals who stutter at the beginning of an interaction may not significantly affect their cognitive-affective or speech condition. The study's objective was to determine if self-disclosure had a significant impact on self-perception of how bad the person thinks it is, how comfortable they are, how much cognitive work they have to put in, and how anxious they are during a structured conversation with a fluent speaker. However, Mancinelli (2018) did not fully achieve this objective.

The limitations of this paper include:

- Mancinelli (2018) used a structured conversational task, which may potentially limit the extent to which a natural, unstructured conversation is accurately represented.
- Mancinelli (2018) did not allow individuals who stuttered to exercise their ability to avoid stuttering by utilising techniques such as speaking slowly, substituting words, or remaining silent.
- Furthermore, the research conducted suggests that the impact of self-disclosure on cognitive-affective variables is not entirely clear, as no significant differences were found in these variables.
- The study's sample size of 25 adults who stutter was relatively small, which could potentially limit the applicability of the findings.
- Lastly, the research conducted by Mancinelli (2018) lacked the evaluation of the long-term impact of self-disclosure on the individual's self-evaluation of how bad the person thinks their stuttering is, how comfortable they are, how much cognitive work they have to put in, and how anxious they are when stuttering.

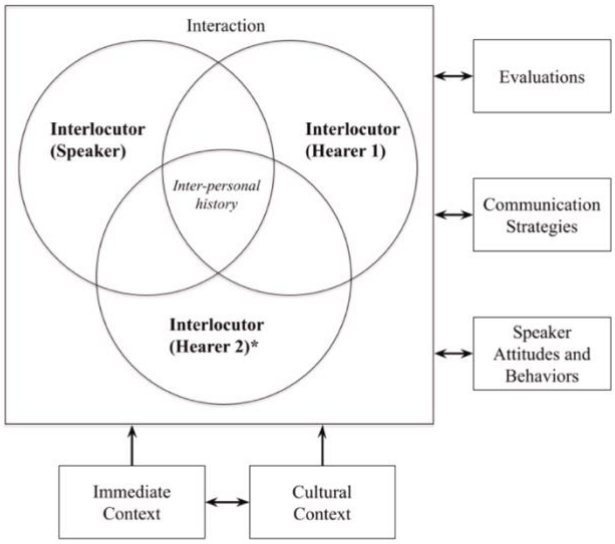
Mancinelli (2018) proposes that future studies should investigate the long-term impact of self-disclosure on various aspects of stuttering, including self-perception of how bad the person thinks it is, how comfortable they are, how much cognitive work they must put in, and how anxious they are. Furthermore, the research must be conducted in an authentic conversational setting to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects (Mancinelli, 2018).

2.5.3 *Stuttering as a Disability Theory*

Seitz and Choo (2021) did not evaluate any theoretical framework in their study. Seitz and Choo (2021) proposed a theoretical model, known as the Stuttering Stigma in Organisational Communication (SSOC) model, which aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the negative perceptions linked with stuttering in the workplace. The model is designed to identify effective strategies that organisations can employ to mitigate the negative effects of this stigma. Using this model, Seitz and Choo (2021) hope to contribute to the development of more inclusive and supportive workplace environments for individuals who stutter.

Seitz and Choo (2021) aimed to construct a theoretical framework, (SSOC) model, to gain a deeper comprehension of the stigmatisation process linked to stuttering in professional settings. Additionally, Seitz and Choo (2021) aimed to pinpoint effective approaches that organisations can adopt to mitigate the impact of stigma. The study effectively accomplished its aim by conducting an in-depth examination of the SSOC model and its potential impact on disability research within the context of organisational communication.

Figure 1: Model of Stuttering Stigma in Organisational Communication (SSOC)



Source: Seitz and Choo (2021)

The limitations of the study by Seitz and Choo (2021) include:

- The SSOC model, which is rooted in a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, may not provide a complete understanding of the intricate nature of stuttering stigma in the context of organisational communication.
- Seitz and Choo (2021) highlight a potential limitation of the model, as it fails to consider the unique experiences of individuals with regards to stuttering and the associated stigma. The absence of this consideration may limit the model's applicability and accuracy in predicting outcomes for individuals with varying experiences of stuttering and stigma. Additional research is required to investigate the impact of individual differences on the model's effectiveness and to develop more comprehensive models that account for these factors.
- The literature review centres on the topic of stuttering as a distinct disability, with no consideration given to other disabilities or interrelated identities.
- It is important to note that the strategies outlined in the model may not be universally applicable or effective in all organisational contexts.
- The literature review reveals that the study by Seitz and Choo (2021) lacked empirical evidence to substantiate the efficacy of the strategies outlined in the proposed model.

Seitz and Choo (2021) suggest several avenues for future research, including:

- Applying the SSOC model to study additional communication issues to build a body of research on stigma and interaction.
- Conducting empirical research to evaluate the performance of the model's suggested strategies.
- Analysing how leadership and organisational culture affect stigma reduction.
- Examining the experiences of PWS in various organisational contexts and business sectors.
- Examining how stigma affects PWS’ ability to advance in their careers.

In a separate study Isaacs and Swartz (2022) investigated the perspectives of young adult men in South African who stutter on the topic of stuttering as a potential disability. Isaacs and Swartz (2022) explored the participants' understandings of the nature and implications of stuttering as a disability. This study aimed to emphasise the

significance of utilising a disability studies framework in investigating the encounters of individuals who stutter. The objective of Isaacs and Swartz (2022) was to enhance intervention techniques that can effectively cater to the disabled requirements of such individuals.

Isaacs and Swartz (2022) successfully accomplished their aim of investigating the perceptions of young adult South African men who stutter with regards to the potential classification of stuttering as a disability and the way it may be categorised as such. Isaacs and Swartz (2022) examined the various ways in which men perceive stuttering. The findings revealed that some participants viewed stuttering as a manageable speech disorder, whereas others conceptualised it as a disability (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022). These individuals subjectively positioned themselves as either disabled or non-disabled men based on their understanding of stuttering. Isaacs and Swartz (2022) highlight the significance of adopting a disability studies perspective when investigating the encounters of PWS and improving intervention techniques to effectively cater to the disabled requirements of these individuals.

The paper has a few limitations, which include:

- The study by Isaacs and Swartz (2022) exclusively focused on young adult South African men who stutter. As a result, the application of the findings to other age groups or populations may be limited.
- Furthermore, Isaacs and Swartz (2022) did not incorporate the perspectives of other stakeholders, including family members, speech-language therapists, or employers, which could have provided an understanding of the experiences of PWS.
- Additionally, Isaacs and Swartz (2022) did not delve into the interconnection of stuttering with other identities, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or gender, which could have provided a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of people who stutter.
- Lastly, Isaacs and Swartz (2022) relied solely on self-reported data, which could be influenced by social desirability bias or other response biases.

Isaacs and Swartz (2022) suggest future research should:

- Consider the viewpoints of other parties involved, such as family members, speech-language therapists, or employers, to give a more thorough picture of the lives of PWS.
- Create intervention plans that take a disability studies-informed approach and effectively cater to the special requirements of PWS.

In an additional investigation by Yaruss and Quesal (2004) they introduce a framework, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), which offers a comprehensive classification system for characterising health status and the concept of disablement. This multidimensional framework presents a new approach to understanding the experience of disability. Yaruss and Quesal (2004) examine the application of this framework to the experience of stuttering, with the aim of demonstrating the nature of disability. The framework is analysed in relation to its ability to provide insight into the experience of stuttering, which is used as a case study for the purposes of this investigation. Through this analysis, Yaruss and Quesal (2004) seek to contribute to the broader discussion on disability, shedding light on the complexities of this phenomenon and the ways in which it can be understood and addressed.

The absence of a clearly defined research question or objective is noted in the study by (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004). Yaruss and Quesal (2004) introduce the ICF framework as an approach to understanding disabilities. (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004) further explores the application of this framework to the phenomenon of stuttering, providing an analysis of the experience of stuttering as a disability. The achievement of the study's objective remains uncertain, therefore posing a challenge.

The absence of an in-depth explanation of the research methodology used by Yaruss and Quesal (2004) could hinder the possibility of replicating the investigation. (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004) centres on the phenomenon of stuttering and its subjective experience. The findings by Yaruss and Quesal (2004) may not be applicable to other health conditions or disabilities. The paper under consideration presents a theoretical framework and discussion, without offering any empirical data or analysis.

The present study aims to address gaps in previous research. Specifically, prior studies by Isaacs and Swartz (2022) have identified the need to classify stuttering as

a disability and to further investigate the application of the ICF framework to stuttering (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004). The present study seeks to build upon these important areas of research. This literature review aims to build upon the previous research conducted by Yaruss and Quesal (2004) and Isaacs and Swartz (2022) by exploring the phenomenon of stuttering within the corporate context of South Africa. Specifically, this review seeks to investigate whether stuttering is regarded as a disability in this context.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Table 1: Conceptual Framework

Context	Concept
Any South African employee based in Gauteng (Low percentage of people who stutter (PWS) worldwide and currently <1%)	
This research examines the influence of stuttering on career advancement given the discrimination people who stutter encounter after disclosure in South Africa	
1. The perception of stuttering as a disability. 2. There is a negative stigma that society places on people who stutter (impatience with people who stutter) 3. PWS encounter discrimination when trying to advance their careers (people have a dim view of the skills that PWS poses)	1. People don't have enough knowledge about the disorder and its impact thereof. 2. Proficient communicators have less patience for people who stutter because they feel they are better communicators. 3. There are certain requirements that need to be met when applying for a job e.g., Excellent verbal communication skills matched with stringent recruitment processes
Solution:	

Changes in recruitment procedures and HR policies to accommodate people with speech disorders and educate professionals and employers about the disorder

Source: Author (2024)

The question of whether stuttering can be considered a disability is a topic of much debate. The debate is whether stuttering, due to its influence on effective communication, should be considered a disability (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Others contend that stuttering is simply a speech disorder and should not be considered a disability (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022). This issue raises important questions about how we define disability and the implications of such definitions for individuals who stutter.

The perception of stuttering as a disability is a topic of interest in the field of communication disorders (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022). The impact of stuttering on an individual's communication abilities and quality of life has been widely studied (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). The social stigma associated with stuttering can lead to negative attitudes and discrimination towards individuals who stutter (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). As such, it is important to understand the experiences of those who stutter and work towards creating a more inclusive society (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022).

The issue of career advancement for PWS is a topic that has been widely discussed in recent years. Discrimination has been identified as a significant barrier to their progress, hindering their ability to achieve their full potential (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). The need for greater awareness and understanding of this issue is crucial to ensure that PWS are not unfairly disadvantaged in their pursuit of career success (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).

The current level of awareness and understanding surrounding PWS and its associated effects appears to be insufficient among the general population (Limura, et al., 2018). According to this theoretical review, individuals who possess advanced communication skills may exhibit less tolerance towards individuals who stutter due to their perceived superiority in communication abilities (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).

Furthermore, the importance of meeting specific requirements when applying for a job is noteworthy. Which includes the combination of rigorous recruitment procedures and exceptional verbal communication abilities.

This research suggests implementing changes to recruitment procedures and HR policies to better accommodate PWS. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of educating professionals and employers about the disorder to promote a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

2.7 Summary

The study at hand appeared to have strong connections to prior research carried out by Klein and Hood (2004), Logan and O'Connor (2011) and (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012). The present studies have delved into the various obstacles encountered by PWS in their pursuit of professional growth and development. The study at hand aims to build upon prior research by exploring the association between PWS and their propensity towards careers that require limited public speaking. The study seeks to explore the perspectives of people with a history of stuttering regarding the suitability of different job types, with the goal of providing a more comprehensive understanding of this topic. This study seeks to confirm the proposition that individuals who have previously experienced stuttering may encounter obstacles in their professional development.

In addition, this study contributes to the existing literature on workplace discrimination, building on the work of (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). By examining the empirical evidence surrounding the impact of disclosure on workplace discrimination and seek to determine whether individuals with and without speech impairments are afforded equal opportunities in the workplace.

Lastly, the study at hand endeavours to fill in the gaps that have been identified in prior research. The authors of previous research have highlighted the importance of categorising stuttering as a disability Isaacs and Swartz (2022). This study aims to expand upon the significant research conducted by Isaacs and Swartz (2022), with a specific focus on the perception of stuttering as a disability in the context of the corporate environment of South Africa.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the perceived influence of stuttering on career advancement, with a particular focus on the discrimination encountered by people who stutter after disclosing their condition. By delving into the lived experiences and narratives of individuals who stutter, this study seeks to uncover the nuanced ways in which stuttering shapes career trajectories and the barriers encountered along the way.

Using a qualitative research approach, this study employed various methodologies such as interviews, observations, and narrative analysis to gather rich and in-depth data (Queiros, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). By giving voice to the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals who stutter, the study provided valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by this population and shed light on the ways in which their career paths are influenced by societal attitudes and discrimination.

An overview of the methodology is provided in this chapter, which covers topics such as data collection, population, methods of sampling, methods of data collection, research instruments, statistical analysis, and ethical factors to consider.

3.2 Research Approach

Research studies can utilise several methodologies such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches. Quantitative research, as defined by Queiros, Faria, and Almeida (2017), focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, correlations, and statistical trends in a population or sample. On the other hand, qualitative research aims to comprehend behavioural trends by exploring the opinions and experiences of real individuals, considering contextual factors and the meanings attributed by participants (Queiros, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Qualitative research utilizes non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, to delve deep into the subject matter, gathering rich and comprehensive data.

Mixed research methods combine both quantitative and qualitative techniques within a single study to ensure a comprehensive understanding. This approach enables

researchers to examine statistical patterns alongside the nuanced perceptions and meanings associated with the phenomena being studied, offering a multifaceted exploration of complex research questions (Migiro & Magangi, 2011).

For this study, a qualitative research method was adopted. This approach allows for an open and exploratory investigation of behaviours within society, generating nuanced and contextually rich findings (Querios, Faria, & Almeida, 2017).

By giving prominence to the words and experiences of individuals who stutter, researchers gain valuable insights into the diverse and meaningful lived experiences of people with stuttering, shedding light on how this speech impediment influences their career advancement.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Research paradigms provide a comprehensive structure that influences the approach, methodology, and analysis of studies (Reham & Alharthi, 2016). Three commonly recognised research paradigms are Positivism, Interpretivism/ Constructivism, and the Critical Theory (Reham & Alharthi, 2016).

The philosophy of positivism centres on the importance of empirical observation and quantitative data in establishing objective and universal laws (Reham & Alharthi, 2016). In contrast, interpretivism centers on qualitative analysis and the exploration of subjective meanings (Reham & Alharthi, 2016). Meanwhile the Critical Theory serves as a framework for analyzing power dynamics and social injustices, employing qualitative methods to challenge existing structures and foster social change (Reham & Alharthi, 2016).

The aim of the study is to explore the subjective experiences of individuals who stutter through the interpretivist lens. This research paradigm emphasises the use of qualitative methods to gain insights into the lived experiences of individuals who stutter, including their coping strategies and social interactions.

3.4 Research Design

This study uses an interview research design which is an appropriate method in a qualitative study on the topic of stuttering and its influence on career advancement for several reasons. Interviews allow for a deep exploration of individuals' experiences, perspectives, and emotions. Stuttering and its impact on career advancement can be complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of PWS. Through interviews, researchers can delve into the personal narratives, challenges, coping strategies, and successes of participants, providing rich and detailed data (Asenahabi, 2019).

The advantages of an interview research design include:

- **Personal perspective:** Interviews provide a platform for participants to express their personal perspectives and narratives (Monday, 2020). This method allows individuals who stutter to share their unique experiences, thoughts, and feelings related to their careers. By giving participants a voice, interviews empower them to convey their stories in their own words, shedding light on the individuality and diversity within the stuttering community.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** The interview format allows for flexibility and adaptability in accommodating the communication needs of participants who stutter. This allows participants to express themselves at their own pace and adapt to questioning styles to suit individual communication preferences. This flexibility ensures that participants feel comfortable and empowered to share their experiences openly and authentically (Monday, 2020).
- **Rich and detailed data:** Interviews generate rich and detailed data by capturing participants' detailed accounts, personal and emotional experiences (Monday, 2020). The interactive nature of interviews enables researchers to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions, interpretations, and the social and psychological consequences of stuttering in professional settings.

  While the interview research design offers useful insights into the experiences of individuals, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations in this study:

- **Subjectivity and bias:** Interviews rely on participants' subjective accounts, which can be influenced by their personal perceptions and interpretations (Monday, 2020). Participants may selectively recall, or present information based on their own biases or desire to present themselves in a certain light. To mitigate these researchers must be mindful of potential biases and use techniques such as comparing information from different sources or conducting multiple interviews with participants.
- **Restricted generalizability:** The results of the interviews may not be applicable to a broader population. The experiences of individuals who stutter in career advancement and discrimination may vary significantly based on factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and professional background (Monday, 2020).
- **Memory bias:** Participants may struggle to recall past experiences accurately, particularly when discussing long-term career trajectories and instances of discrimination (Monday, 2020). Memories can be influenced by time, emotions, and cognitive biases, leading to inaccuracies or incomplete information.

Overall, the interview research design in this study offers the advantage of providing in-depth, personal, and contextually rich data, allowing researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals who stutter and the influence of stuttering on their career advancement (Asenahabi, 2019). By obtaining participants' perspectives and narratives, interviews contribute to a more detailed and authentic portrayal of the challenges, resilience, and potential areas for improvement in addressing the discrimination faced by individuals who stutter in professional environments.

3.5 Population and Sample

The population for this study are PWS in Gauteng, South Africa who are formally employed. The sample size will be 6 participants as stuttering is relatively less common compared to other speech conditions as stated by Klompas and Ross (2003), and the subset of individuals who stutter and are employed in South Africa may be even smaller (NSA, 2023). As such, it may be challenging to find many participants who meet the specific criteria of the study. Several factors were also considered when determining the population, like bias in results of the study which may be introduced if

only a specific subset of PWS with tertiary education were interviewed. These individuals with tertiary education may have unique experiences and opportunities that differ from those without such qualifications. Therefore, this could skew the results and make it difficult to draw accurate conclusions about the overall impact of stuttering on career advancement and discrimination. Furthermore, by excluding individuals without tertiary education, one may miss out on valuable insights and perspectives.

It is important to note that stuttering can affect individuals across various educational backgrounds and professions, and their experiences are equally important in understanding the overall impact on career advancement and discrimination. Limiting the focus to a specific qualification level may result in an incomplete understanding of the complex dynamics involved.

To ensure a more comprehensive and inclusive study, a broader sample of PWS will be employed that encompasses a range of educational backgrounds, qualifications, and employment statuses. This approach would provide a more holistic understanding of how stuttering influences career advancement and the discrimination encountered by PWS following disclosure, capturing a wider range of experiences and perspectives within the stuttering community.

Table 2: Demographic representation of participants

Participant number	Role	Race	Gender	Age	Years of experience
Participant 1	Fleet manager	African	Male	39	17
Participant 2	Software architect	African	Male	35	11
Participant 3	Expert client advisor	Asian	Male	26	8
Participant 4	Project manager	African	Male	33	10
Participant 5	Principal engineer	African	Male	36	12
Participant 6	Wealth advisor	White	Male	49	28

Source: Author (2024)

3.6 Sampling Design

This study will employ a purposive sampling technique which entails purposefully choosing individuals who have particular traits or experiences relevant to the research study (Rahi, 2017). In this study, purposive sampling is used to target individuals who

stutter and are employed in South Africa. These participants are solely selected based on stuttering.

By targeting this specific population, this allows for in-depth and comprehensive insights into the experiences and challenges faced by individuals who stutter in their career advancement. This targeted approach ensures that the participants possess direct personal experience with stuttering, thereby strengthening the study's relevance and credibility.

Snowball sampling will also be considered if reaching the target population proves to be a challenge or when it is difficult to obtain a comprehensive list of potential participants, as this may be the case for individuals who stutter in South Africa. By leveraging participants' networks and referrals, this will gradually expand the sample size and increase the diversity of perspectives represented in the study (Rahi, 2017).

3.7 Data Collection

Data collection is important in this study as it will help answer research questions providing a deep understanding of the experiences of PWS in relation to career advancement and discrimination. For this study, the data collection method chosen focused on stuttering and its influence on career advancement considering the discrimination faced by PWS following disclosure. The data collection method chosen was semi-structured Interviews, as these interviews follow a flexible structure with predetermined set of questions to guide the conversation. However, there is room for participants to provide detailed responses and share their unique experiences related to stuttering and career advancement. Semi-structured interviews are essential in this study as they allow for flexibility, depth, and participant engagement. They enable researchers to gather rich qualitative data, capture the participant's perspective, and explore the complexities of stuttering and its impact on career advancement and discrimination (Kabir, 2016).

The targeted participants are PWS who are currently employed in South Africa. By selecting individuals who stutter who are formally employed, this study ensures a representative sample that reflects the experiences and challenges faced by this specific population. Thus, enhancing the validity and applicability of the findings to the

broader context of individuals who stutter in the workplace. Furthermore, by focusing on employed individuals, one can also compare experiences of those who have faced unemployment due to stuttering-related discrimination. Therefore, this analysis can provide pertinent insights into the distinct challenges and opportunities related to career advancement for individuals who stutter.

3.8 Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

This study uses an interview research design as interviews allow for a deep exploration of individuals' experiences, perspectives, and emotions. By conducting interviews, participants actively engage in a dialogue with the interviewer, sharing their personal stories, insights, and concerns in their own words (Kabir, 2016). This approach promotes a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and allows for clarifications and follow-up questions to gain a comprehensive understanding.

The interview guide is grouped into different sections that pertain to the topic of stuttering and its influence on career advancement considering the discrimination faced by individuals who stutter following disclosure. The grouping of questions helps to organize the content and ensures that relevant aspects of the research topic are covered systematically.

The interview guide provided in the annexure will be grouped as follows:

Section 1: Introduction and Participant Background:

Questions related to the participant's name, race, gender, age, job title, level/ grade in the organisation, department, and length of service.

Section 2: Interview Guide

Stuttering, Career Advancement and Job preference

Questions exploring the participant's personal experience with stuttering, including questions focusing on the impact of stuttering on the participant's career advancement, such as opportunities for promotion, job satisfaction, and perceived

barriers or challenges. Furthermore, specific information about any formal diagnosis or therapy received for stuttering.

Personal information such as name and surname will be omitted in the final results of the interview to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Disclosure and Workplace Discrimination:

Questions examining the participant's experiences of discrimination following the disclosure of their stutter, including instances of bias, prejudice, or negative reactions in the workplace.

Perception of Stuttering as a Disability:

Inquire about the participant's perspective on whether stuttering is considered a disability in the South African corporate context. Furthermore, question participant on policies within their organization that reflect the perception of stuttering as a disability or non-disability.

Workplace Support:

Inquire about any specific measures or initiatives taken by the participant's organization to support employees who stutter.

Recommendations and Future Outlook:

Questions allowing the participant to recommend improvements for enhancing career advancement opportunities for PWS.

The interview will be conducted through virtual audio recordings. The interview guide will serve as a tool to facilitate the interview, providing the opportunity to delve deeper into participants' answers and pose additional questions as needed. The interviews will be conducted virtually and the participants' consent will be obtained before the audio-recording to ensure accurate data collection. Furthermore, confidentiality and privacy of the participants' information will be maintained throughout the interview process.

3.9 Data Analysis

This study will employ thematic analysis as the data analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique that entails identifying themes, patterns, and significant codes in the data. (Rebecca, Ann, Ewa, & Anna, 2021). The interview guide will be carefully examined and coded to find ideas, concepts, and opinions that are recurring related to stuttering, career advancement, and discrimination. The coding process involves systematically labelling and categorizing the data to capture the central themes and recurring patterns identified in the participants' answers. These themes will be analysed, compared, and interpreted to fully comprehend the experiences and viewpoints of people who stutter in relation to their career advancement and the discrimination they face (Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are pivotal in the execution of research on sensitive topics such as stuttering, the following ethical considerations will be addressed in this study:

3.10.1 *Informed Consent*

Participants were provided with detailed information about the study, its purpose and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time (Cacciattolo, 2015). Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study.

3.10.2 *Voluntary participation*

Participation in the study is entirely optional, and individuals opting not to participate or withdraw will not encounter any negative consequences (Cacciattolo, 2015).

3.10.3 *Confidentiality and Data Management*

Participants' privacy and confidentiality will be strictly maintained. Identifying information such as names and surnames will be anonymized and omitted from the final results. Data will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher.

3.11 Summary

In Chapter 3, the study focuses on exploring how stuttering influences career advancement, specifically examining discrimination encountered after disclosure. Utilizing qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and narrative analysis, the research delves into the nuanced experiences of individuals who stutter. The chapter introduces the research paradigm of interpretivism, emphasizing qualitative analysis to understand subjective experiences. A purposive sampling design is employed, targeting employed people who stutter in South Africa. Interviews are chosen as the data collection method, allowing for in-depth exploration. Thematic analysis is proposed for data analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, are outlined.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to delve into critical aspects of the professional experiences of people who stutter, seeking to understand their perspectives on career advancement, job preferences, and the challenges they face in the workplace. The primary focus will be based on three key research questions.

These three key research questions were grouped into different sub questions that pertain to the topic of stuttering and its influence on career advancement considering the discrimination faced by individuals who stutter following disclosure. The grouping of the key research questions helped to organize the content and ensured that relevant aspects of the research topic were covered systematically.

The interview guide containing questions related to the three key research questions may be found in Annexure 4.

4.2 Thematic analysis and coding

Table 3: Overview of themes and codes

Theme	Code	
Perceptions of stuttering as a disability	Codes in this theme revolve around how stuttering is perceived, particularly in the context of disability	• Absence in HR policies • Lack of recognition in job applications • Perception as non-disability
Workplace support	Codes here capture the level of support provided within the workplace for individuals who stutter.	• Lack of accommodations for lower-level employees • Indirect support
Workplace initiatives	Codes in this theme explore specific measures or initiatives taken by organizations to support employees who stutter.	• Lack of formal initiatives

Theme	Code	
Career advancement opportunities	Codes here focus on improvements and changes suggested for enhancing career advancement opportunities for individuals who stutter.	• Inclusive HR policies • Consideration in recruitment policies
Personal strategies for career advancement	Codes under this theme highlight personal strategies or suggestions for career advancement despite stuttering.	• Emphasis on individual excellence
Employee coping strategies	This theme explores the strategies employees employ to cope with stuttering in a professional setting.	• Silence as a coping mechanism • Handing over communication
Emotional impact	Codes here focus on the emotional toll stuttering may take on individuals in a workplace environment.	• Impact on confidence • Managing uncomfortable questions
Leadership perception	This theme explores how leadership perceives stuttering and its influence on the work environment.	• Lack of visibility in policies
Personal responsibility	Codes in this theme focus on how participants perceive personal responsibility concerning career advancement.	• Personal Excellence Overcoming Stuttering

Source: Author (2024)

The diverse perspectives of the participants contributed significantly to a comprehensive understanding of stuttering within professional contexts. The varied range of experiences illuminated the intricate interplay between individual encounters with stuttering, workplace dynamics, and organisational policies. As the thematic analysis unfolded, it became apparent that each participant provided a unique lens through which the broader narrative of stuttering in the workplace was constructed.

Within the context of thematic analysis, the significance extended beyond the identification of recurring themes to an acknowledgment of the subtle nuances present in each participant's narrative. The analysis endeavoured to uncover these intricacies, revealing the individualised nature of participants' interactions with stuttering and their professional environments. The inclusion of multiple voices assumed paramount importance in this analysis. This inclusion not only enriched the overall narrative but

also accentuated the diverse strategies, coping mechanisms, and perspectives employed by individuals who stutter. In addition, the recognition of limited representation within specific themes, such as workplace initiatives, highlighted the essential for more inclusive research practices capable of capturing a broader spectrum of experiences.

Essentially, the participants' voices served as foundational elements for fostering a more holistic understanding of stuttering in professional spaces. Their narratives not only contributed to the ongoing discourse but also extended an invitation for further exploration into areas such as workplace initiatives, emotional well-being, and the evolving landscape of career opportunities for individuals who stutter.

4.3 Research question one

How does the perception of career advancement opportunities among individuals who stutter relate to their preference for job roles involving limited public speaking?

The research question aims to explore the participants' awareness of their stuttering, exploring the duration of their awareness and whether they have sought formal diagnosis or therapy for their stuttering. This inquiry provides insights into the personal experiences, attitudes, and actions related to stuttering, helping to understand how individuals perceive and address their speech challenges over time. It further seeks to explore the impact of stuttering on individuals' career advancement by investigating personal experiences. It aims to uncover the challenges and barriers individuals with stuttering have encountered in their professional journeys. By addressing how stuttering influences career progression, the research aims to provide insights into the unique obstacles individuals face in the workplace due to their speech condition. This question contributes to understanding the nuanced relationship between stuttering and career development, offering valuable perspectives on the professional challenges and opportunities that individuals with stuttering may encounter. In addition, it focuses on exploring the job preferences of individuals with stuttering in relation to public speaking. The aim is to understand whether individuals with stuttering tend to favour job roles that have limited public speaking requirements. By investigating this aspect, the research seeks insights into how the presence of

stuttering may influence occupational choices and whether individuals consciously or subconsciously opt for roles that align with their speech preferences.
This question contributes to a broader understanding of how stuttering impacts career decisions and job preferences, shedding light on the potential ways in which individuals navigate their professional lives based on their speech condition.

4.3.1 *Stuttering awareness and diagnosis*

The participants who were interviewed have known about their stuttering since childhood, some even for over 30 years. Stuttering tends to happen more when they're nervous or under pressure. A few participants mention family connections to stuttering. Despite this awareness, most haven't gone for a formal diagnosis or therapy. One person had school-arranged speech therapy due to financial constraints. The responses give different viewpoints on stuttering, considering when it starts, family influence, and how society sees it. Their personal stories provide a nuanced understanding of how stuttering has shaped their self-perception and choices.

> *Since primary school in Grade 5. It's over 30 years now - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*

> *I think all my life I've been stuttering. And it comes at different times. If it makes sense, where especially if I'm nervous or if I'm under pressure - Participant 2: African Male 35 years, Software architect*

> *So I've been aware of it ever since I was a child. I think it has happened ever since I spoke. I can't say a particular age, but I feel like the moment I started speaking I had it. My father apparently also had one, so it seems like it was kind of passed down, but my father sort of lost his in high school, I'm told. But with me, from the time I was small and then formal sort of like speech therapy. I did go to quite a few within, maybe like the primary school time. I don't remember much in high school. I did go to a couple of speech language therapists for a little while, but never really stuck with it. So yeah, there was sort of a formal diagnosis, I would say, but I didn't really go for therapy to treat it - Participant 3: Asian Male 26 years, Expert Client Advisor*

So I've been aware of my stutter since like I was very young, maybe when I started talking…
Umm, so, well I did not see it as anything that needs to be diagnosed really. Because, I mean, you know, the stutter was normal – Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer

I've stuttered since birth…the school arranged speech therapy for me at primary school, because my parents could not afford to take me to formal speech therapy - Participant 6: White Male 49 years, Wealth Advisor

4.3.2 *Stuttering and career challenges*

The participants shared varied experiences regarding how stuttering affected their career advancement. Overall, perspectives varied, with some facing hurdles while others felt unimpeded in their professional growth despite stuttering.

Participant 1 discussed challenges in interviews and public speaking, emphasizing the struggle to articulate thoughts promptly.

Firstly, when it comes to interviews, sometimes I struggle to express myself because pronouncing the vowels and getting them out can be difficult and therefore I tend to repeat words. It can be challenging, as I have to wait a bit before I can articulate my thoughts. Therefore, people may perceive it negatively, as if I don't know the answer, but you are just struggling to get the words out - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager

Participants 4 and 5 expressed that stuttering did not hinder their career advancement, attributing success to experience and skills.

No, I wouldn't say that it is kind of influenced my career advancement. Umm, I think what is influence on my career advancement is solely my experience…and my work ethic. And the skills that I've developed over time that have helped me to advance but stuttering has not played any role in my career advancement. I've never faced any challenges or barriers due to stuttering, but what I would say is

that, umm, obviously it does affect you sometimes on a day to day basis; if you want to express yourself on a certain thing, or maybe you are trying to say something and then and then you have to now change the whole sentence because there is one word that you cannot utter – Participant 4: African Male 33 years, Project Manager

No. I feel like I still manage to get a fair chance in my career advancement and development as the guys who do not stutter. Stuttering has not come to be some form of a stumbling block in my career - Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer

Participant 6 acknowledged the impact on client interactions, noting the need to develop resilience against negative reactions over time.

Umm yeah, I think you can relate. If you stutter, I think it puts you immediately on the back foot when it comes to client speaking and client facing… so over the years I had to become thick skinned to indirectly to face or to face off any negative impacts, like laughs, comments that people or clients make so yeah - Participant 6: White Male 49 years, Wealth Advisor

4.3.3 *Job preference*

Most of the participants in the study do not express a tendency to prefer job roles that involve limited public speaking due to their stuttering. While one participant actively avoids public speaking due to his stutter, the rest demonstrate adaptability and confidence in handling public speaking roles despite their speech condition. Confidence is highlighted as a factor that can moderate stuttering. Overall, the findings indicate a diverse range of approaches and attitudes, with a notable portion of participants not limiting their job preferences based on the requirement for public speaking.

Yes, yes. Definitely I avoid talking in public by all means - Participant 2: African Male 35 years, Software architect

No. I'm not selective, really. Even a job that umm requires me to speak a lot, I'll still take it. The reason being I feel like a stutter can be controlled or moderated by our confidence. So if you're confident in what you're saying, you tend to stutter less. Well in my case, I tend to stutter less when I'm confident in what I'm saying, compared to when I'm under a lot of pressure to prove a point, or when I'm less confident in what I'm saying – Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer

4.3.4 *Summary of question one*

Participants in the study displayed a profound awareness of their stuttering, tracing it back to childhood, with varying durations, and highlighting its correlation with nervousness or pressure. While some acknowledged family connections to stuttering, formal diagnosis and therapy were not pursued by most, citing financial constraints or viewing stuttering as a normal part of speech. The narratives provide a nuanced perspective on how stuttering shapes self-perception and choices.

Regarding career challenges, experiences varied among participants. While Participant 1 expressed struggles in interviews and public speaking due to difficulty articulating thoughts promptly, others, like Participants 4 and 5, emphasized that stuttering did not hinder career advancement. Participant 6 acknowledged the impact on client interactions, necessitating the development of resilience against negative reactions.

In terms of job preferences, a majority of participants did not exhibit a tendency to avoid roles involving public speaking due to stuttering. Confidence emerged as a moderating factor, allowing individuals to handle public speaking roles easily. The findings displayed diverse attitudes and approaches, with many participants not limiting job preferences based on the requirement for public speaking.

4.4 Research question two

What workplace discrimination experiences do individuals who stutter encounter after disclosing their stutter, impacting their access to equal opportunities in comparison to individuals who do not stutter?

The research question seeks to explore the workplace experiences of PWS. It explores whether participants have disclosed their stuttering, the responses received, and potential impacts on professional growth. It further delves into instances of discriminatory or prejudiced behaviours following stuttering disclosure, seeking specific examples. In addition, it focuses on the participants perceptions of others attitudes toward stuttering at work, examining potential misconceptions or stereotypes encountered. In summary, the question aims to provide insights into the workplace dynamics, disclosure outcomes, and attitudes surrounding stuttering, contributing to a better understanding of the challenges individuals with stuttering may face in professional settings.

4.4.1 *Disclosure*

Participants shared varied experiences regarding the disclosure of stuttering in the workplace. One participant disclosed, but felt it wasn't taken seriously nor was it seen as a barrier, it did however convey a perception that others doubt his understanding of certain issues. This sentiment suggests a potential bias or misjudgement regarding the participant's competence or knowledge when communicating with senior leaders.

> *I have, and also they notice basically… but they don't take it seriously. They don't take it as a barrier… And also when you're addressing senior management on certain issues, people tend to think, yeah, you don't know what we're doing, but basically you know what you are doing… Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*

Whilst the rest of the participants never disclosed their stuttering, one participant noted playful teasing but no significant impact on their career. Personal growth was mentioned positively, with one participant using their experience to identify and

improve their weakness, leading to an improvement in their communication skills. Overall, the responses indicate diverse approaches to disclosing stuttering, with mixed perceptions of its impact on professional growth and workplace dynamics.

> *No, no. I have never disclosed, you know…and it has not affected my career in any way - Participant 2: African Male 35 years, Software architect*

> *I never disclosed it. I think they could always sense it, or they could always see it when I spoke in meetings… I was grouped or labelled as a stutterer - Participant 6: White Male 49 years, Wealth Advisor*

> *I've never disclosed it. I've never had to… have I been teased about it? Of course. Has it been a form of bullying? Yes, but more so in a playful manner, not in a very, very bad way, I would say - Participant 3: Asian Male 26 years, Expert Client Advisor*

> *On the personal growth I'll say it has assisted me because I was able to identify my, my weaknesses and work on them...So whether it takes me time and all of that, as long as I get my point across - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*

4.4.2 *Bias post disclosure*

Most of the participants unanimously reported no instances of discriminatory or prejudiced behaviours in the workplace following the disclosure of their stuttering.

> *No, no – Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*
> *No, absolutely not – Participant 3: Asian Male 26 years, Expert Client Advisor*
> *No, no. I've never experienced anything of that nature – Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer*

Participant 3 noted that, despite having a slight stutter, it doesn't hinder their work, and if it were more severe, it might become a topic.

…but I will say that you know, we have to put in the exception for the fact that I don't stutter to a full extent. It's a very slight manner and I feel like it doesn't hinder anything. I feel like if it was bad, it would be a topic, but it's not - Participant 3: Asian Male 26 years, Expert Client Advisor

Participant 4 mentioned jokes from close acquaintances, but without offense.

…it just has been jokes maybe…It would probably be, maybe people that I'm very close to, so I wouldn't take any offence from them –Participant 4: African Male 33 years, Project Manager

Only Participant 6 mentioned colleagues making fun of their speech impairment, indicating a rare occurrence.

Some of the colleagues…they made fun of me – Participant 6: White Male 49 years, Wealth Advisor

Overall, most participants did not face discrimination related to their stuttering in the workplace reflecting a generally supportive and accepting atmosphere.

4.4.3 *Perceptions of stuttering*

Overall, participants shared diverse perspectives on attitudes toward stuttering in the workplace. There were mentions of misconceptions, such as the assumption of unpreparedness during interviews or presentations. Stereotypes included the belief that individuals with stuttering may avoid speaking roles or doubt themselves. Instances of impatience were noted, particularly when stutterers took longer to express themselves. Concerns were raised about labelling and the tendency to associate stuttering with lower intelligence or uncertainty. The feedback highlighted a need for greater understanding, patience, and a recognition of individual capabilities beyond stuttering challenges.

The main one is that you don’t know what you are presenting and also in interviews, you’re not sure of your answers and also some people tend not to

have time and so they think I am wasting time and all of that - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager

I think there's a misconception of if you were having to do something that's more a speaking role that oh, you wouldn't be comfortable with that, because of your stutter - Participant 3: Asian Male 26 years, Expert Client Advisor

Yeah well, the impatient people: they get a bit irritated when you are trying to make your point and you keep on going on and on - Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer

…they label you and immediately they think you are not intelligent, you are uncertain - Participant 6: White Male 49 years, Wealth Advisor

4.4.4 *Summary of question two*

The participants demonstrated varied experiences in disclosing their stuttering at the workplace. One participant who disclosed felt it wasn't taken seriously, potentially leading to a perception of incompetence when addressing senior management. Others never disclosed but experienced playful teasing, with no significant impact on their careers. Personal growth was highlighted, with one participant using their experience to identify weaknesses and improve communication skills.

Post-disclosure, the majority reported no instances of discriminatory behaviour, indicating a generally supportive workplace atmosphere. Bias or jokes were mentioned by a few, but these instances were rare and not deemed offensive.

Regarding perceptions of stuttering, participants pointed out misconceptions and stereotypes, such as assumptions of unpreparedness, avoidance of speaking roles, and doubts about intelligence. Impatience from colleagues when stutterers took longer to express themselves was noted, emphasizing the need for greater understanding and recognition of individual capabilities beyond stuttering challenges in the workplace.

4.5 Research question three

How is stuttering perceived and classified in the South African corporate context, particularly as a disability in relation to employment practices and accommodations?

This research questions aim to explore the perception of stuttering as a disability in the South African corporate context. Participants were asked to share their views on whether stuttering is considered a disability and whether there are observable instances or policies within their organizations that reflect this perception. The question seeks insights into the level of accommodations and support provided for individuals who stutter in their workplace. In addition, participants were asked to describe any specific measures or initiatives implemented by their organizations to support employees with stuttering. The overall objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of the corporate environment's stance and actions related to stuttering.

4.5.1 *Views on stuttering as a disability*

Participants hold varied views on whether stuttering should be considered a disability in South Africa. One participant asserts that it is, citing challenges in job opportunities due to stuttering. Another suggests varying levels of severity and questions if it's a disability or a condition. Some participants don't perceive it as a disability, emphasizing personal competence over circumstances. There's a call for more research to raise awareness about speech challenges. Differences arise regarding the impact on job performance, with one participant noting the potential misperception of intelligence. Overall, perspectives highlight the complexity in categorizing stuttering as a disability.

> *So it needs to be recognised in South Africa because it is a challenge…I could have got the job but because of my stuttering and taking time to answer questions I didn't get those roles - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*

> *So maybe the severity should then inform whether there can perhaps be a category that can be classified as a disability - Participant 4: African Male 33 years, Project Manager*

So in my view, I don't think we should put it under a disability because at some point they're able to talk properly like me, and then at some point I stutter - Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer

4.5.2 *Employer views on stuttering*

Across various organizations, participants generally perceive stuttering as non-disability since policies and instances of recognition are lacking in their organizations. Participant 1 highlights the absence of stuttering in HR policies and job applications, emphasizing the need for attention and inclusion.

> … I've seen different policies, HR policies. It is not included for the companies that I have worked for. *I've never seen stuttering as a disability, even when I apply for jobs on different platforms.*
> *Once companies start realising that just being inclusive of all the different disabilities in the country, I think you can get the best out of your employees - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*

Others echo the sentiment, noting the topic is rarely discussed, leading to a lack of awareness and support. Participants express that stuttering is overlooked in management and organizational policies.

> *No, no, not in my organisation. I think being exposed, being on the management level and growing up as well with the same organisation, I've never really come across any policy that has to do with stuttering - Participant 4: African Male 33 years, Project Manager*

Overall, there's a unanimous indication that stuttering is neither recognized nor treated as a disability within the workplace, highlighting a need for increased awareness and inclusivity in corporate policies.

4.5.3 *Workplace support level*

Participants express varied experiences regarding support for stuttering in the workplace. While some in management feel insulated from negative reactions and note indirect support, there is a shared sentiment that broader accommodation and formal policies are lacking. The absence of specific assistance programs is highlighted, and participants stress the need for comprehensive support structures. Self-confidence among those who stutter is noted, but challenges in managing it without formal recognition persist. The importance of patience and allowing individuals time to express themselves is emphasized, reflecting cultural inclusion in one organization. Overall, there is a consensus on the need for more robust and inclusive support mechanisms for stuttering in the work environment.

> *…because I'm at a management level, your support is even better they cannot even you know make remarks and all of that…But what about lower level employees? - Participant 1: African Male 39 years, Fleet Manager*

> *…I think people who stutter actually are self-aware of that so they do possess some kind of confidence in the roles that they play in the workplace.*
> *I've never heard anything like employee assistance programmes (EAPs) or speech therapies being visible at the workplace - Participant 4: African Male 33 years, Project Manager*

> *In our organisation, the culture is trying to be as accommodating as possible. So even if you stutter, or if you have got any other condition that is not related to stuttering, but any condition that could make you take longer to make your point we'll give you the platform, the opportunity to go through until you have made your point - Participant 5: African Male 36 years, Principal Engineer*

4.5.4 *Measures and support from employer*

Participants report minimal specific measures or initiatives within their organizations to support employees who stutter. Some highlight informal support from close team members, enabling individuals to delegate communication tasks. Mental health

support is acknowledged in one organization, but comprehensive initiatives for stuttering remain lacking. A participant notes the organizational culture's general accommodation for diverse communication styles, emphasizing patience and providing individuals the platform to express themselves fully. Overall, the absence of formalized support mechanisms for stuttering is evident, indicating a potential area for improvement in fostering inclusive workplaces.

> *So there are times I hand it over to individuals who can talk properly and can deliver my message - Participant 2: African Male 35 years, Software architect*

> *We take mental health very seriously or have in the last few years, so I think that there would be support given to certain people - Participant 3: Asian Male 26 years, Expert Client Advisor*
> *No. I've never seen any kind of support either from HR or from management…- Participant 4: African Male 33 years, Project Manager*

> *No there's nothing. I've never seen anything, no - Participant 6: White Male 49 years, Wealth Advisor*

4.5.5 *Summary of question three*

Participants suggest several improvements to enhance career advancement opportunities for individuals who stutter. First, there's a consensus on incorporating stuttering into HR policies as a recognized disability, providing a foundation for understanding and support. Participants emphasize the need for accommodations during interviews, such as extended time or a more calming environment. Additionally, introducing a questionnaire to assess how organizations can assist stutterers, including access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or speech therapy, is recommended. Some participants highlight the importance of self-advocacy during interviews, openly addressing stuttering to foster understanding. Finally, personalized career development conversations and formal career paths within organizations are proposed to nurture employee growth.

4.6 Summary

This chapter summarises the key findings from the study where interviews were conducted with 6 participants who stutter. Following the three research questions which were presented in this chapter, participants were asked to share their experience of stuttering, seeking to understand their perspectives on career advancement, job preferences, and the challenges they may have faced in the workplace.

The participants displayed a profound awareness of their stuttering, attributing it to childhood experiences and connecting it with nervousness or pressure. While family connections were acknowledged, formal diagnosis and therapy were often neglected due to financial constraints or a perception of stuttering as a normal part of speech. Career challenges varied, with some facing obstacles in interviews, and others asserting that stuttering did not impede their career advancement. In addition, confidence emerged as a key factor in handling public speaking roles. Post-disclosure, the majority reported a supportive workplace atmosphere, with rare instances of bias or jokes. Suggestions for improvement include recognizing stuttering as a disability, incorporating it into HR policies, and fostering self-advocacy during interviews.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The discussion chapter delves into the comprehensive analysis of the study's findings, providing insights into the nuanced experiences of individuals who stutter in the workplace. Addressing each research question, the discussion aims to contextualize the results within existing literature, exploring the implications for stuttering awareness, career challenges, disclosure dynamics, perceptions, disability perspectives, employer views, and workplace support.

5.2 Research question one

How does the perception of career advancement opportunities among individuals who stutter relate to their preference for job roles involving limited public speaking?

5.2.1 *Stuttering Awareness and Diagnosis*

The study reveals a profound awareness of stuttering among participants, aligning with the findings of Yairi & Ambrose (2012) that stuttering is often recognized since childhood. The mention of family connections resonates with the notion of a genetic component discussed by (Klein & Hood, 2004).

Klein and Hood (2004) and Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) suggest that individuals who stutter might not pursue formal diagnosis or therapy due to perceived disadvantages in the job market and workplace discrimination. This is consistent with the finding that many participants did not seek therapy, citing financial constraints or viewing stuttering as normal.

5.2.2 *Stuttering and Career Challenges*

The varied experiences in the study mirror the diversity found in the literature. Participant 1's struggles in interviews align with the notion that stuttering can impact

communication skills in professional settings (Klein & Hood, 2004). In contrast, Participants 4 and 5 express that stuttering did not hinder their career advancement, which contradicts the literature's emphasis on workplace challenges for PWS.

The literature emphasizes the disadvantages faced by PWS in the job market and career advancement (Klein & Hood, 2004). Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) and McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) support this, suggesting limited career freedom and lower job satisfaction for individuals who stutter. The findings, especially Participant 6's resilience in client interactions, contribute to the discussion of adapting to workplace challenges.

5.2.3 *Job Preference*

The literature, including Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) and Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013), suggests that PWS might prefer jobs with fewer communication demands. The findings provide a nuanced perspective, with confidence emerging as a moderating factor, allowing participants to handle public speaking roles comfortably.

5.3 Research question two

What workplace discrimination experiences do individuals who stutter encounter after disclosing their stutter, impacting their access to equal opportunities in comparison to individuals who do not stutter?

5.3.1 *Disclosure in the Workplace*

The study provides valuable insights into the varied experiences of disclosing stuttering at the workplace (Boyle & Gabel, 2020). Participant 1's disclosure highlighted potential biases and misjudgements regarding competence when addressing senior management.

The literature, particularly Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013), aligns with the findings, emphasizing the reluctance of individuals who stutter to disclose their condition due to fear of unfavourable reactions. The sense of control and coping

mechanisms post-disclosure is consistent with Bricker-Katz, Lincoln and Cumming (2013) insights.

5.3.2 *Bias Post Disclosure*

The majority of participants in the study reported no instances of discriminatory or prejudiced behaviours post-disclosure. Some noted playful teasing, but it was not deemed offensive. This reflects a generally supportive workplace atmosphere.

The literature by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) and Ellis and Hartlep (2017) supports the findings, indicating that discrimination and prejudice stem from societal stereotypes and lack of awareness about stuttering. Negative reactions and prejudice may be more prevalent in certain contexts, as highlighted in the study.

5.3.3 *Perceptions of Stuttering*

The study reveals diverse perspectives on attitudes toward stuttering in the workplace. Misconceptions, stereotypes, impatience, and concerns about labelling were highlighted, indicating a need for greater understanding and patience.

The literature supports the findings, with studies by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) and Klein and Hood (2004) indicating that society's negative stereotypes about stuttering contribute to discrimination and prejudice. The belief that stuttering hinders effective communication is in line with Seitz and Choo's (2021) perspective on the impact of communication skills on job opportunities.

5.4 Research question three

How is stuttering perceived and classified in the South African corporate context, particularly as a disability in relation to employment practices and accommodations?

5.4.1 *Views on Stuttering as a Disability*

The study reveals diverse perspectives among participants regarding whether stuttering should be considered a disability in South Africa. One participant

emphasizes the challenges in job opportunities due to stuttering, while others question the categorization based on varying levels of severity. Some participants do not perceive stuttering as a disability, emphasizing personal competence over circumstances.

The literature by Seitz and Choo (2021) and Isaacs and Swartz (2022) supports the findings, highlighting the unique challenges individuals who stutter face in society. Stuttering is portrayed differently in the media, and social inclusion issues are prevalent, contributing to the complex views on whether stuttering should be classified as a disability.

5.4.2 *Employer Views on Stuttering*

The study indicates a general perception among participants that stuttering is not recognized as a disability within various organizations. Policies, HR applications, and discussions about stuttering are lacking, emphasizing the need for attention and inclusion.

This aligns with the literature by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019), indicating that discrimination stems from a lack of awareness about stuttering and the absence of recognition of it as a disability in workplace policies. The emphasis on inclusivity and awareness in the study resonates with the need for anti-stigma tactics in the workplace, as suggested by Proposition 3.

5.4.3 *Workplace Support Level*

The study showcases varied experiences regarding support for stuttering in the workplace. While some in management feel insulated from negative reactions, there's a shared sentiment that broader accommodation and formal policies are lacking. Participants stress the need for comprehensive support structures.

The literature by Seitz and Choo (2021) emphasizes the challenges faced by individuals who stutter in advancing their careers due to societal stereotypes. The study aligns with this, highlighting the need for more robust and inclusive support

mechanisms, including Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and speech therapies, to foster an inclusive work environment.

5.4.4 *Measures and Support from Employer*

The study indicates minimal specific measures or initiatives within organizations to support employees who stutter. The absence of formalized support mechanisms for stuttering is evident, indicating a potential area for improvement.

This is consistent with the literature by Isaacs and Swartz (2022), which highlights the struggles of individuals who stutter in navigating the workplace environment. The need for personalized career development conversations and formal career paths resonates with the literature suggesting that creating opportunities for career advancement is crucial for individuals who stutter (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004).

5.5 Summary

Aligned with Yairi and Ambrose (2012), the study emphasises the need of early stuttering awareness and highlights potential genetic influences. According to Klein and Hood (2004) and Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019), it notes PWS might avoid formal diagnosis due to workplace discrimination fears or financial constraints.

Contrary to prevailing literature, the study, referencing Klein and Hood (2004), Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019), and McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012), challenges stereotypes by showcasing diverse career experiences where stuttering did not hinder progress. Confidence, influenced by job preferences, is explored, echoing (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013).

Disclosures of stuttering reveal biases in line with Boyle and Gabel (2020) and reluctance rooted in societal stereotypes, supported by (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013). Surprisingly, the post-disclosure environment is generally supportive, aligning with findings by Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) and Ellis and Hartlep (2017).

Views on stuttering as a disability, employer perspectives, and workplace support draw from Seitz and Choo (2021) and Isaacs and Swartz (2022), indicating diverse participant outlooks. The absence of formalized support mechanisms within organizations, were in line with Isaacs and Swartz (2022), signalling a potential need for improvement in fostering inclusivity for PWS in the workplace.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research findings, delving into the perceived influence of stuttering on career advancement following disclosure. It contributes insights into the experiences of individuals who stutter, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of career advancement, job preferences, workplace challenges, and disclosure. Furthermore, potential constraints and limitations encountered during the research process are discussed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's scope. It also offers recommendations derived from the research findings, aiming to enhance inclusivity and support for individuals who stutter in professional settings. Lastly this chapter summarises the key findings and implications, wrapping up the study and offering a comprehensive view of the impact of stuttering on career advancement post-disclosure.

6.2 Conclusion to the research problem: To examine the perceived influence of stuttering on career advancement post disclosure

The research reveals a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences. The study highlighted the profound awareness individuals with stuttering have regarding their condition, tracing it back to childhood experiences and associating it with nervousness or pressure. Formal diagnosis and therapy were often neglected due to financial constraints or the perception that stuttering is a normal part of speech. Career challenges varied, with some facing obstacles in interviews, while others asserted that stuttering did not impede their professional growth. Confidence emerged as a key factor in handling public speaking roles, and post-disclosure, the majority reported a supportive workplace atmosphere, with rare instances of bias or jokes.

Recommendations include recognizing stuttering as a disability, incorporating it into HR policies, and fostering self-advocacy during interviews.

6.3 Propositions revisited

6.3.1 *Proposition 1*

People who stutter prefer job roles with limited public speaking

The study explores Proposition 1, suggesting that individuals who stutter may be inclined toward job roles with limited public speaking. Examination of the transcripts reveals instances where participants discuss challenges related to expressing themselves and how this may affect their involvement in certain work activities. For example, Participant 1 mentions struggling to articulate thoughts during interviews, possibly leading to a perception that they do not know the answer. This struggle may influence their inclination to participate in activities that require effective verbal communication. Additionally, Participant 2 highlights the impact of stuttering on public speaking and presentations, indicating a potential avoidance of such activities.

These findings align with Proposition 1, suggesting that the challenges associated with stuttering may steer individuals toward activities where the demand for fluent verbal expression is perceived to be lower. The study indicates that the influence of stuttering on communication dynamics can impact the types of activities individuals feel comfortable engaging in within a professional setting (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012).

6.3.2 *Proposition 2*

Stuttering has a role in discrimination in the workplace as well as in job satisfaction.

The study addresses Proposition 2, proposing that stuttering plays a role in workplace discrimination and job satisfaction. Analysis of the transcripts reveals insights into participants' experiences related to discrimination and satisfaction in their professional environments.

Regarding workplace discrimination, participants, particularly Participant 1, discuss challenges faced during interviews where the struggle to express themselves may lead to negative perceptions. The study suggests that stuttering can influence how individuals are perceived by colleagues, potentially contributing to discriminatory attitudes or biases.

Concerning job satisfaction, the study highlights instances where participants express challenges associated with stuttering in professional contexts. For example, Participant 1 mentions the difficulty in interviews and public speaking, which can impact satisfaction with certain aspects of their job. Participant 4 also emphasizes the importance of recruitment policies, indicating potential implications for job satisfaction related to career advancement opportunities for individuals who stutter.

Therefore, the study provides support for Proposition 2, indicating that stuttering can be a factor in workplace discrimination and can influence job satisfaction, particularly in situations where effective communication is crucial (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019).

6.3.3 *Proposition 3*

Implementing anti-stigma tactics in the workplace, along with promoting a deeper understanding of stuttering among employees, is an effective strategy for employers to support PWS

The study addresses Proposition 3, which suggests that employers may assist people who stutter (PWS) by implementing anti-stigma tactics and providing employees with a deeper understanding of what it's like to stutter. Examination of the transcripts provides insights into participants' perspectives on the support they receive from their employers.

The analysis reveals that there is a lack of formal initiatives or policies addressing stuttering in the workplace, as mentioned by Participant 4. This indicates that anti-stigma tactics specific to stuttering may not be well-established in the organizations represented by the study participants. However, there are instances of indirect support

mentioned by Participant 2, such as colleagues showing patience and providing opportunities for clarification.

While there might be room for improvement in terms of formal anti-stigma tactics, the study suggests that some level of support is present in the form of understanding and patience from colleagues. Therefore, while Proposition 3 may not be explicitly confirmed in the study, there are indications that informal support mechanisms exist, and the need for more formalized anti-stigma initiatives is implied (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022).

6.4 Contribution of the study

The study provides insightful information about the experiences of people who stutter, offering a nuanced understanding of how stuttering influences self-perception, career choices, and workplace dynamics. By exploring the perceived impact of stuttering on career advancement, the study contributes to literature on workplace inclusivity and sheds light on the challenges faced by individuals with speech conditions. The study offers practical recommendations to enhance workplace support, including the incorporation of stuttering into HR policies, accommodation during interviews, and personalized career development conversations. The research also identifies and addresses misconceptions and stereotypes associated with stuttering, contributing to a more informed and empathetic understanding of this speech condition in professional settings. Through the participants narratives, the study promotes awareness, advocacy, and understanding, fostering an environment where individuals who stutter can openly address their challenges and contribute effectively in their careers.

6.5 Limitation

The limitations of this study include a sample size that is relatively small, consisting of six male participants, which may limit the findings' applicability to a larger population. Additionally, the study primarily relies on self-reported experiences, introducing the possibility of response bias or subjective interpretation. The participants were recruited from Gauteng, and their experiences may not fully represent the diverse perspectives

of individuals who stutter across diverse cultural backgrounds, professional settings, and gender identities. Furthermore, the study primarily focuses on the participants' perspectives and does not include perspectives from employers or colleagues, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of workplace dynamics.

6.6 Recommendations

For future studies examining the impact of stuttering on career advancement, the current research suggests several key recommendations. Firstly, expanding the participant pool is crucial, encompassing individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds, professions, gender identities, and varying degrees of stuttering severity. A more extensive and varied sample would enhance our comprehension of the nuanced experiences of PWS in professional settings. It is crucial to note that there is limited research conducted on women who stutter, emphasizing the necessity to prioritize addressing this gap for a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, including perspectives from employers, colleagues, and other stakeholders would provide a holistic view of how stuttering is perceived and managed in the workplace.

Another recommendation involves investigating existing workplace policies related to speech conditions. This entails analyzing the effectiveness of these policies and identifying areas that may require improvement. A comparative analysis of policies across different organizations and industries could provide valuable insights into best practices.

Furthermore, future studies should assess the effectiveness of interventions and support mechanisms for individuals who stutter in the workplace. This evaluation could involve examining the impact of speech therapies or awareness programs. Additionally, expanding the geographical scope of the study to include participants from various countries and cultural backgrounds would contribute to a more globally representative understanding of the challenges faced by individuals who stutter professionally.

Lastly, researchers should explore the impact of technological advancements and the rise of remote work on the experiences of individuals who stutter. This includes investigating how virtual communication platforms and flexible work arrangements

influence their professional interactions. Addressing these recommendations in future studies will improve our comprehension of the relationship between stuttering and the workplace and create more welcoming and encouraging work settings.

6.7 Summary

This research illuminates the multifaceted impact of stuttering on career advancement (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009). Participants' narratives unveil nuanced experiences, shaping self-perception, career choices, and workplace dynamics. By exploring the perceived influence of stuttering, the study contributes to workplace inclusivity literature, offering practical recommendations for support (Boyle, 2018). It identifies and challenges stereotypes, fostering understanding. Despite limitations, the findings enhance awareness and advocate for tailored workplace strategies (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004). As individuals who stutter navigate their professional journeys, this research strives to foster empathy and contribute to environments where diverse voices are not only heard but embraced, paving the way for more inclusive and supportive workplaces.

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Annexure

1. Literature Matrix Chapter 1

Author (Year)	Organisational Problem	Research Problem	Conceptual Frame used	Population and Sample	Research Gap
Ashley Craig; Elaine Blumgart & Yvonne Tran (4 May 2009)	The effects of stuttering and how it impacts the overall quality of life for adults	The study assesses the impact of stuttering and how it affects the quality of life of adults who stutter and previously underwent treatment	Qualitative research Interview, video recording, and a combination of email and telephonic interviews for those who were unavailable during interviews	200 adults who stutter aged 18-85 years, in comparison with 200 adults who do not stutter aged 18-85 years	Further research is required to develop treatments that are efficient, and a broad quality-of-life metric must be used in further studies
Laura W. Plexico; Megan-Brette Hamilton; Haley Hawkins and Stephen Erath (25 October 2019)	Workplace discrimination and job satisfaction for people who stutter	The study assesses the association between workplace discrimination and job satisfaction for people who stutter and those who do not stutter	Qualitative research A survey using flyers, email, and social media	Participants aged 19 and above. 258 respondents completed the survey, however, 233 met the qualifying criteria and only 164 were included in the final analysis.	The study doesn't involve issues relating to recruitment and HR policies. The sample size is relatively small. Unpack gender gaps relating to people who stutter (income and treatment of male vs female)

Author (Year)	Organisational Problem	Research Problem	Conceptual Frame used	Population and Sample	Research Gap
Michael P. Boyle; Kathryn M. Milewski, and Carolina Beita-Ell (10 October 2018)	The disclosure of having a stutter and how it affects one's quality of life	This study assesses the disclosure of people who stutter and the connection between the quality of life	Qualitative research using a survey.	322 people aged 18 and older who stuttered. Respondents were grouped into different life subgroups (low, medium, and high)	A broad quality-of-life metric must be used in further studies and most participants had previously sought help in therapy
Joseph F. Klein and Stephen B. Hood (13 August 2004)	The effects of stuttering in relation to the ability to get a job and perform well in that job	The study assesses stuttering in relation to one’s performance and employability	Qualitative research using a survey.	232 people who stutter (PWS) who are aged 18 and older	The respondents had higher educational levels and better employment; therefore, results may be skewed against a random sample that does not have the same educational level or job.

Table 4: Literature Matrix Chapter 1

2. Literature Matrix Chapter 2

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
(Klein & Hood, 2004)	Qualitative research using a survey. n= 232 people who stutter (PWS) who are aged 18 and older	The argument of the paper is that PWS believe that stuttering can have a negative impact on their employability and job performance.	(Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.
(McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012)	Qualitative research using data that was readily available. N= 217 participants whose parents reported they stuttered at 16 years, and 15,694 PWNS.	The argument was whether stuttering has a negative impact on education and employment outcomes for PWS, compared to PWNS.	(Yairi & Ambrose, 2012) (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009) (Klein & Hood, 2004) (Logan & O'Connor, 2011)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.
(Logan & O'Connor, 2011)	Qualitative research. 30-40 min session were held where participants	The main argument of the paper is that people who stutter may face occupational stereotyping and/or role entrapment in work settings,	(Klein & Hood, 2004)	The paper does not explicitly state who the authors disagree with. The authors present their

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
	completed a questionnaire about a prerecorded speech sample of a PWS. n= 116 Adults who do not stutter in experiment 1 and 2	and that this may be due to others' perceptions of which occupations are most suitable for PWNS and PWS.		own findings and interpretations based on their research.
(Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019)	Qualitative research. A survey using flyers, email, and social media. Participants aged 19 and above. n= 258 respondents completed the survey, however, 233 met the qualifying criteria and only 164 were included in the final analysis.	The argument of the paper is that workplace discrimination and vigilance mediate the relationship between stuttering and job satisfaction, and that people who stutter experience higher levels of discrimination and vigilance compared to people who do not stutter.	(Klein & Hood, 2004) (WHO, 2023) (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004) (Ellis & Hartlep, 2017) (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009) (Logan & O'Connor, 2011) (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013)	Qualitative research method. n= 9 participants who stuttered, consisting of six males and three females, with ages from 29 to 61 years	The argument was that stuttering is problematic in the workplace as it perpetuates an expectation of being judged by others, leading to feelings of shame and doubt in people who stutter.	(Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009) (Klein & Hood, 2004) (Logan & O'Connor, 2011) (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.
(Limura & Miyamoto, 2020)	Online questionnaire n= 730 adults in Japan. However, only 671 respondents were analysed.	The argument of the paper is that public attitudes toward people who stutter in the workplace can be influenced by their face-to-face experience with people who stutter.	(Klein & Hood, 2004) (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009) (WHO, 2023) (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019) (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012) (Limura, et al., 2018)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
(Ellis & Hartlep, 2017)	Qualitative research. n= six African American adult males who stuttered	The argument of the paper is that stuttering has a significant impact on African American males, particularly within educational contexts.	(Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.
(Seitz & Choo, 2021)	A theoretical paper that develops a research model based on a literature review.	People who stutter face stigma in the workplace, which can affect their communication with others.	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019) (Klein & Hood, 2004)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors.
(Boyle & Gabel, 2020)	The research method used in this study was a semi-structured interview. n= 12 adults who stutter.	The main argument of the paper is that the process of disclosing stuttering is complex and involves several components, including history, the disclosure itself, and the perceived outcomes of the disclosure.	(Boyle, 2018) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors or studies.

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
(Mancinelli, 2018)	The research method used in this study was a conversation held with a fluent speaker. n= 25 adults who stutter.	The key argument of the paper was to investigate the effects of disclosure on the self-perception of stuttering severity, comfort, cognitive effort, and anxiety in a structured conversational interaction with a normally fluent speaker. The study also aimed to evaluate the benefit of disclosure from the perspective of the person who stutters in a self-disclosed and non-disclosed condition.	(Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009) (Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors.
(Limura, et al., 2018)	The research method used in this study was a questionnaire survey. n= 303 participants	The main argument of the paper was that although many people in Japan have heard of stuttering, their knowledge and understanding of the condition is limited.	(Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors.
(Isaacs & Swartz, 2022)	Interviews (two focus groups discussions) n= 15 men who stutter ages 20–39 years	The argument was that a disability studies approach is important when examining the lived experiences of people who stutter. This approach has been largely absent in studies	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Boyle, 2018)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors.

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
		investigating the experiences of PWS.	(Bailey, Harris, & Simpson, 2014)	
(Boyle, 2018)	Web survey. n= 324 adults who stutter in the United States.	The argument of the paper was to document the experiences of enacted stigma and felt stigma in adults who stutter, investigate their relationships to each other, and investigate their relationships to global mental health.	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004) (Craig, Blumgart, & Tran, 2009)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors.
(Bailey, Harris, & Simpson, 2014)	The authors have reflected on their own personal journeys. n=3 Authors (Bailey, Harris, and Simpson)	The argument is that the social model of disability separates the impairment from the process of disability and is relevant to stuttering and speech and language therapy.	(Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)	There is no information in the paper to suggest that the authors disagree with any authors.
(Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)	Description of the research method used are not provided.	The paper argues that the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is a useful tool for understanding and addressing the	(WHO, 2023)	(Yaruss, 1998)

Author (Year)	Methods	Arguments	Who do they agree with	Who do they disagree with
		complex nature of disability and health.		

Table 5: Literature Matrix Chapter 2

3. Summary of Research Gaps

A summary of the findings based on the research themes are provided using below sources for further analysis.

Theme	**No. of Articles**	**References**	**Research Gap**
PWS and career advancement	4	(Klein & Hood, 2004) (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012) (Logan & O'Connor, 2011) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019)	Klein and Hood (2004) do not look at the impact of stuttering on job performance or employability, nor does the study explore potential interventions or strategies for addressing the perceived negative impact of stuttering in a work setting. McAllister, Collier and Shepstone (2012) highlights issues of self-stigma in stuttering, which has broader implications beyond the workplace context. Logan and O'Connor (2011) notes that while previous research has examined the experiences of PWS in work settings, there has been little research on the specific factors that influence perceptions of which occupations are most suitable for PWS and PWNS. According to Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) challenges with recruitment processes were not addressed. Furthermore, the scope of responses was limited because only PWS who were currently employed were surveyed.

Theme	No. of Articles	References	Research Gap
PWS in occupations with fewer communication demands	5	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Klein & Hood, 2004) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019) (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012) (Limura & Miyamoto, 2020)	Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013) highlights the need for examination of the issues of self-stigma in stuttering, which has broader implications beyond the workplace context. The study does not explore potential interventions or strategies for addressing the perceived negative impact of stuttering in a work environment (Klein & Hood, 2004). Challenges with recruitment processes were not addressed (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). Research is needed to determine whether PWS are satisfied with their employment despite working in lower-status jobs (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012).
Discrimination after disclosure in the workplace	8	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019) (Ellis & Hartlep, 2017) (Seitz & Choo, 2021) (Logan & O'Connor, 2011) (Boyle & Gabel, 2020) (Mancinelli, 2018) (Limura, et al., 2018)	Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, and Cumming (2013) highlights need for further examination of the issues of self-stigma in stuttering, which has broader implications beyond the workplace context. Challenges with recruitment processes were not addressed (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). The Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, and Erath (2019) study may have disproportionately swayed the results to say PWS have elevated discrimination therefore association between stuttering and discrimination may be inflated. Furthermore, the study did not assess the impact of

Theme	No. of Articles	References	Research Gap
			different types of workplace discrimination (like harassment and exclusion) on job satisfaction (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). Future studies need to better understand life histories and experiences of PWS (Ellis & Hartlep, 2017). Research gap in disability research, specifically in the way that employers handle their disabled employees (Seitz & Choo, 2021). The research gap addressed in this article is the lack of understanding of the factors that affect PWS (Logan & O'Connor, 2011). While previous research has examined the experiences of PWS in work settings, there has been little research on the specific factors that influence perceptions of which occupations are most suitable for PWS and PWNS (Logan & O'Connor, 2011). A comprehensive understanding of disclosure of stuttering is required There is limited research on the effects of self-disclosure (Mancinelli, 2018). There is the limited knowledge and awareness of stuttering among laypeople in Japan and in many other countries worldwide (Limura, et al., 2018).

Theme	No. of Articles	References	Research Gap
Opportunities afforded to PWS compared to PWNS	4	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019) (Seitz & Choo, 2021) (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012)	Challenges with recruitment processes were not addressed (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019). The study identifies a research gap in disability research, specifically in the way that employers handle their disabled employees (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Research is required to determine whether PWS are satisfied with their employment despite being in lower-status jobs (McAllister, Collier, & Shepstone, 2012).
Stuttering as a disability	9	(Bricker-Katz, Lincoln, & Cumming, 2013) (Plexico, Hamilton, Hawkins, & Erath, 2019) (Seitz & Choo, 2021) (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022) (Boyle, 2018) (Bailey, Harris, & Simpson, 2014) (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)	The study identifies a research gap in disability research, specifically in the way that employers handle their disabled employees (Seitz & Choo, 2021). Studies examining the lived experiences of those who stutter have lacked a disability studies perspective (Isaacs & Swartz, 2022). There are no specific recommendations on how the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) framework can be applied in clinical or research settings (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)

Table 5: Summary of research gaps

4. Interview Guide

INTERVIEW OBJECTIVE: To examine the perceived influence of **stuttering** on career advancement given the discrimination people who stutter encounter after disclosure in South Africa

Section 1: Participant Background

1. **Title:_____**
   Name/s:_____ **Surname:** _____
2. Race: (*mark with X)* African ____ Coloured ____ Asian ____ White ____
3. Gender: (*mark with X)* Male ____ Female ____
4. *Age: (insert number)* **_____**
5. Job Title : _____
6. Level/Grade in the organization: _____
7. Department : _____
8. Length of service in the organisation: _____ (years and months)

Section 2: Qualitative Method – Interview Guide

Stuttering, Career Advancement and Job preference	1. How long have you been aware of your stuttering? Have you received any formal diagnosis or therapy for your stuttering? 2. In your experience, how has stuttering influenced your career advancement? Have you faced any challenges or barriers due to your stuttering? 3. Do you tend to prefer job roles that involve limited public speaking due to your stuttering?
Disclosure and Workplace Discrimination	4. Have you ever disclosed your stuttering to colleagues or superiors at your workplace? If yes, how did they respond, and did it affect your professional growth? 5. Have you ever encountered any discriminatory or prejudiced behaviours in the workplace following the

	disclosure of your stuttering? If yes, could you please provide some examples? 6. How do you perceive the attitudes of others towards stuttering in the workplace? Are there any misconceptions or stereotypes that you have encountered?
Perception of Stuttering as a Disability	7. Do you consider stuttering a disability in the South African corporate context? Please share your views and thoughts on this matter. 8. Within your organization, have you observed any specific instances or policies that reflect the perception of stuttering as a disability or non-disability? If yes, could you provide some examples?
Workplace Support	9. From your perspective, how would you describe the level of accommodations and support provided for individuals who stutter in your workplace? 10. Are there any specific measures or initiatives that your organization has taken to support employees who stutter? If so, could you please describe them?
Recommendations	11. Based on your experiences, what improvements or changes do you believe could enhance the career advancement opportunities for individuals who stutter? 12. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the impact of stuttering on career advancement?