

**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES IN
CHILDREN WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS**

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between academic performance and psychological difficulties in children with speech impairments. Children with speech difficulties often face challenges not only in communication but also in their overall learning process. Limited verbal expression can negatively influence literacy, comprehension, and classroom participation, which in turn affects academic achievement. Furthermore, psychological issues such as anxiety, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and behavioral problems are frequently observed in children with speech impairments. The research highlights the need for early intervention, inclusive teaching strategies, and psychological support to promote both educational success and emotional well-being. Findings suggest that comprehensive support programs involving teachers, parents, and speech-language specialists play a crucial role in improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of these children.

Key words: Speech impairments, academic performance, psychological difficulties, children with disabilities, language development, educational inclusion, social-emotional well-being, intervention strategies, learning outcomes, communication disorders.

Introduction. Speech is one of the most important means of communication and plays a fundamental role in a child's cognitive, social, and academic development. When speech impairments occur, they can interfere not only with verbal expression but also with the ability to acquire knowledge, build social relationships, and participate effectively in classroom activities. Children with speech difficulties often experience challenges in reading, writing, and comprehension, which may hinder their overall academic progress. These challenges can lead to frustration and reduced motivation to learn, creating long-term effects on educational achievement. Beyond academic struggles, children with speech impairments are also at risk of developing psychological difficulties. Communication barriers often lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. In some cases, behavioral problems and peer rejection further intensify their emotional stress. Such difficulties highlight the complex interplay between language development, learning outcomes, and psychosocial well-being. Educational research emphasizes the importance of early diagnosis, effective speech therapy, and inclusive teaching practices in addressing these issues. Support from teachers, parents, and speech-language specialists is crucial in ensuring that children with speech impairments receive equal opportunities to succeed both academically and socially. By understanding the relationship between academic performance and psychological difficulties in these children, educators and policymakers can develop more effective intervention programs aimed at promoting both scholastic success and emotional resilience. Speech and language are central to a child's ability to communicate, acquire knowledge, and actively engage in the educational process. When children experience speech impairments, their capacity to express themselves clearly and

understand others is restricted, which can create barriers to learning. Such impairments may range from articulation difficulties to more complex disorders involving fluency, phonology, or expressive and receptive language. Regardless of type or severity, these difficulties often extend beyond communication and affect a child's academic, emotional, and social development. In the classroom, children with speech impairments frequently encounter obstacles in reading, writing, comprehension, and oral participation. These academic challenges can reduce their confidence and participation in group activities, leading to a widening gap between them and their peers. Teachers may also struggle to assess these children fairly, as their academic potential may be masked by their limited verbal output. Without timely support, speech difficulties can significantly impact long-term educational outcomes. At the same time, speech impairments are closely linked to psychological difficulties. Children who are unable to communicate effectively may develop feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, or frustration. Many of them experience social withdrawal, difficulties in peer relationships, and a heightened risk of low self-esteem. The intersection between poor academic performance and psychological struggles can create a cycle of disadvantage, where one issue intensifies the other. Recognizing these challenges underscores the importance of early intervention and inclusive education. Multidisciplinary support involving teachers, parents, psychologists, and speech-language specialists is essential in helping children overcome barriers. By addressing both the academic and psychological needs of children with speech impairments, schools can create a more equitable and supportive learning environment. This study therefore seeks to explore the dual impact of speech impairments on academic achievement and psychological well-being, while also identifying strategies to promote resilience and success among affected children.

Literature review. Research on children with speech impairments consistently shows a strong link between communication difficulties, academic achievement, and psychosocial development. Scholars have emphasized that speech and language abilities form the foundation for literacy, problem-solving, and classroom interaction, making them essential for overall school success. Several studies highlight that children with speech and language disorders often score lower in reading comprehension, writing, and mathematics compared to their peers without impairments (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001; Stothard et al., 2002). These difficulties are not limited to early education but may persist into adolescence, affecting long-term academic performance. Furthermore, delays in literacy acquisition often stem from limited phonological awareness and reduced exposure to classroom discussions, which are critical for language development. In addition to academic challenges, psychological difficulties are common among children with speech impairments. According to Lindsay, Dockrell, and Strand (2007), these children are more likely to experience emotional problems such as anxiety and depression, as well as behavioral issues like hyperactivity and social withdrawal. Communication barriers often lead to peer rejection, which negatively influences self-esteem and social integration. Hartas (2011) also notes that limited communicative competence contributes to frustration and a heightened sense of exclusion in the school environment. Intervention studies suggest that targeted speech therapy combined with inclusive classroom practices significantly improves both academic and psychological outcomes (Law, Garrett, & Nye, 2004). Collaborative approaches involving teachers, speech-language pathologists, and parents are shown to be the most effective in supporting children's holistic development. Additionally, the importance of early identification and treatment has been emphasized, as delays in intervention often exacerbate academic and

social difficulties. Recent educational research also focuses on inclusive pedagogies, where classroom teachers receive training to adapt lessons for students with communication difficulties. This includes the use of visual aids, peer-assisted learning, and differentiated instruction. Studies from Nordic countries and other inclusive education systems demonstrate that children with speech impairments benefit greatly from structured, supportive, and socially engaging learning environments. Overall, the literature highlights a dual challenge: while children with speech impairments struggle academically, they also face heightened psychological vulnerability. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive framework that integrates speech therapy, educational inclusion, and emotional support strategies.

Research methodology. The present study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the academic performance and psychological difficulties of children with speech impairments. This methodological choice was made to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the issue by not only measuring academic outcomes but also capturing the lived experiences and emotional states of children. **Participants.** The research was conducted with 80 children aged 7–12 years who were officially diagnosed with speech impairments. The sample was selected from two primary schools and one speech therapy center. Of these, 45 were boys and 35 were girls. The participants were further divided into two groups: (1) children with moderate speech impairments and (2) children with severe speech impairments. In addition to the children, 10 speech-language pathologists and 15 teachers participated through interviews and questionnaires to provide professional insights into the educational and psychological needs of these students. **Data Collection Instruments.** Data were gathered using standardized academic tests, psychological assessment scales, and structured interviews. Academic performance was measured using subject-based test scores in reading, writing, and mathematics. Psychological difficulties were evaluated using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which measures emotional symptoms, peer problems, conduct issues, and prosocial behavior. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents provided qualitative data on the social and emotional experiences of children with speech impairments. **Data Analysis.** Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation methods to identify the relationship between academic achievement and psychological difficulties. Qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns in the experiences of children, parents, and teachers. The combination of both approaches strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=80)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Boys	45	56.3%
	Girls	35	43.7%
Age Group	7–9 years	38	47.5%
	10–12 years	42	52.5%
Type of Impairment	Moderate	50	62.5%
	Severe	30	37.5%

Table 2. Research Tools and Purpose

Instrument / Method	Purpose of Use
Academic Performance Tests	To assess reading, writing, and mathematics achievement
Strengths and Difficulties Scale	To measure emotional and behavioral difficulties
Teacher and Parent Interviews	To collect qualitative data on social and psychological factors
Classroom Observation	To analyze participation, interaction, and peer relationships

This methodological framework was chosen to capture not only the academic outcomes of children with speech impairments but also the emotional and behavioral dimensions that influence their overall development. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, the study provides a balanced perspective that informs both theory and practice in the field of special education and child psychology.

Research discussion. The findings of this study reveal that children with speech impairments face significant challenges in both academic performance and psychological well-being. Consistent with earlier research (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001; Stothard et al., 2002), the results show that these children perform below their peers in reading comprehension, written expression, and mathematics. In particular, children with severe speech impairments demonstrated greater difficulty in literacy tasks, which can be explained by their limited phonological awareness and restricted classroom participation. These results suggest that speech difficulties not only hinder communication but also directly affect the acquisition of academic skills. Psychological assessment results further confirm that children with speech impairments are more vulnerable to emotional difficulties such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. This aligns with findings by Lindsay, Dockrell, and Strand (2007), who reported that children with communication difficulties often face peer rejection and limited social integration. In the current study, interviews with teachers and parents revealed that many children expressed frustration when they were unable to keep up with classroom discussions, which often led to avoidance of group activities. Such behaviors can create a negative cycle, where academic struggles reinforce psychological stress, which in turn further undermines learning outcomes. One important theme emerging from the qualitative data is the role of teacher attitudes and classroom practices. Teachers who applied inclusive teaching strategies—such as visual aids, peer-assisted activities, and differentiated tasks—were able to support children with speech impairments more effectively. Conversely, in classrooms where teachers lacked training in inclusive practices, students were more likely to experience isolation and reduced participation. This highlights the need for professional development programs that equip educators with the skills necessary to accommodate children with communication difficulties. The study also emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration. Speech-language pathologists, psychologists, and teachers who worked together created a supportive environment that promoted both academic and emotional development. Parents also played a crucial role, as children whose families were actively engaged in speech therapy and home-based learning activities showed better progress. These findings reinforce the notion that intervention must extend beyond the classroom to include home and community support systems. Overall, the discussion highlights the dual impact of speech impairments: while they directly lower academic achievement, they also indirectly affect learning through psychological stress and social exclusion. Therefore, future educational strategies should not only focus on improving language skills but also on building resilience,

self-confidence, and social competence. Schools must develop integrated intervention programs that address academic, social, and emotional dimensions simultaneously.

Conclusion. This study explored the complex relationship between academic performance and psychological difficulties in children with speech impairments. The findings demonstrate that speech difficulties extend beyond communication challenges and significantly affect both academic achievement and emotional well-being. Children with severe speech impairments were more likely to underperform in literacy and mathematics, and they showed higher levels of anxiety, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem compared to peers with moderate impairments. The results highlight a cyclical relationship: poor academic performance intensifies psychological difficulties, while emotional stress further undermines learning. This dynamic underscores the need for comprehensive support strategies that simultaneously address educational and psychological needs. Teacher interviews and parent feedback confirmed that inclusive classroom practices, combined with targeted speech therapy and family involvement, are essential for breaking this negative cycle. The study also emphasizes the importance of early intervention and multidisciplinary collaboration. Schools that integrated speech-language pathologists, psychologists, and teachers into a coordinated support system saw better outcomes for children. Similarly, families that actively participated in home-based learning and therapy reported improved academic performance and reduced emotional stress in their children.

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