

CHANGES IN LIVED EXPERIENCE IN PERSONS WITH APHASIA SUBSEQUENT TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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I. Background



People with aphasia (PWA)

They encounter difficulties in the **production and comprehension of speech** that arise from brain damage, e.g. stroke¹



COVID-19 in Hong Kong

Since the COVID-19 outbreak in January 2020 in Hong Kong,² preventive measures have been stringent,³ including a **mask mandate**²



Speech therapy under COVID-19

- **Mask-wearing disrupts** the delivery of in-person speech therapy sessions
- **Teletherapy and telepractice**, i.e. online speech therapy and practice, were introduced, despite being poorly established before COVID-19⁴

II. Methodology



Interviewees

Group	Number	Recruitment method
PWA	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance from staff at the Hong Kong Stroke Association• Interviewees are members of the organization
Non-aphasic stroke patients	2	
Caregivers	2	
Speech therapists (STs)	4	Recruited under the referral of Dr. Kong



Data collection and analysis

- **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted mainly in **Cantonese**
- Participants were asked about their **lived experience** before and during COVID-19, their **experience** and **perceptions** of in-person **speech therapy, teletherapy** and **telepractice**
- All interviews were **audio recorded** to **reduce recall bias**⁵
- **Themes** and **subthemes** were summarized using **content analysis** in an **inductive** approach

III. Findings

Theme I. Sociopsychological impacts of COVID-19 on PWA

- **Disruption to social life:** decline in socialization⁶; digital social contact
- Impacts of COVID-19 on **psychological well-being**⁶: fear and pressure; not much due to personality

Theme II. Impacts of COVID-19 on speech therapy

- **Disruption to face-to-face** speech therapy sessions: mask-wearing; cancellation of sessions and closure of related centres
- **Sudden transition to teletherapy** and telepractice: usage of Zoom, PWA and STs gradually adjusting
- Impacts on **home practice**: remained similar to that before COVID-19

Theme III. Perception towards teletherapy and telepractice

- Teletherapy and telepractice as **alternatives**: preference over face-to-face sessions; could be advantageous in various situations
- **Constraints and limitations** of teletherapy and telepractice: technical issues, limited assistance from STs, importance of communication between STs and caregivers

Future work

The findings will be disseminated to the public by leaflets and videos



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Any **suggestions, feedback or thoughts** would be highly appreciated
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(Image: Ahmad Safarudin, Vecteezy)

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