



LIBRAS IN HEALTH EDUCATION: IMPACTS ON THE CARE OF DEAF PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT

The article highlights the importance of including Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals, showing how its training improves communication and care for deaf patients, promoting a more inclusive health system. The research reveals that the lack of training in Libras generates communication barriers that compromise the quality of care and suggests the mandatory integration of this language in health curricula.

Keywords: Inclusion, Communication.

INTRODUCTION

This article investigates the importance of including Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals and its impacts on the care of deaf patients. Through a qualitative approach, a research used an online questionnaire applied to academics and health professionals to collect data on the perception and experience of these individuals in relation to Libras. The results revealed that most participants confirmed the relevance of training in Libras to improve communication and the quality of care, highlighting that the lack of this training can compromise the effectiveness of care. The open answers highlighted the need for a curriculum that integrates Libras and offers practical experiences, training future professionals to deal with linguistic diversity. The research concludes that the inclusion of Libras in academic training is essential to promote a more inclusive and humanized service, contributing to a health system that respects the specificities of the deaf population and ensures equity in access to health services.

The inclusion of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals is an increasingly relevant issue in a context where linguistic and cultural diversity requires a more inclusive approach that is sensitive to the needs of all patients. It is estimated that about 10 million Brazilians have some degree of hearing impairment, and effective communication with this population is essential for promoting quality care.

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However, the lack of preparation of health professionals to deal with the deaf community often results in communication barriers that can compromise the effectiveness of diagnosis and treatment.

Studies such as those by Vasconcelos et al. (2021), Cardoso et al. (2006) and Levino et al. (2013) highlight the importance of Libras in academic training, showing that competence in this language not only improves communication, but also promotes a more humanized and inclusive service. Research by Vasconcelos et al. (2021) reveals that the perception of patients and medical students about the inclusion of Libras in health curricula is directly related to the improvement in the patient experience. On the other hand, according to investigations by Cardoso et al. (2006) and Aragão et al. (2015) emphasize the urgency of integrating this language into training courses to ensure that professionals have the skills to serve this population with respect and effectiveness.

In view of this scenario, the present study aims to investigate the impacts of the inclusion of Libras in the training of health professionals, analyzing how this approach can improve the care of deaf patients. It is thus intended to contribute to the discussion on the importance of a more inclusive curriculum adapted to the needs of linguistic diversity, promoting a health system that recognizes and respects the uniqueness of each patient.

OBJECTIVE

This article seeks to investigate the impacts of the inclusion of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals, analyzing how this approach can improve communication and the quality of care for deaf patients. The research seeks to identify the perceptions of academics and health professionals about the relevance of Libras in their practice, in addition to exploring the challenges and benefits associated with its implementation in training curricula. With this, it is intended to contribute to the promotion of a more inclusive, humanized and sensitive service to the needs of the deaf population.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out through a qualitative study, using an exploratory approach to understand the inclusion of the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals. The work follows the following steps:

1. **Bibliographic Review:** initially, a literature review was carried out on health education and the importance of Libras in the care of deaf patients. This review included the analysis of previous studies, educational guidelines, and reports of



experiences that highlight the relevance of inclusive communication in the health area.

- 2. Data Collection:** Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire, which was made available to academics and health professionals in different institutions. The questionnaire contained open questions about training in Libras, the perception of the importance of the language in the curricula and the experiences of caring for deaf patients. The questionnaire was disseminated through social networks and discussion groups aimed at health professionals.
- 3. Data Analysis:** The data found were analyzed qualitatively. The open-ended responses were submitted to content analysis, allowing the identification of categories and recurring themes. This approach enabled an in-depth understanding of the inclusion of Libras in the training of health professionals and its implications for care.

With this methodology, the study aimed to contribute to the discussion about the importance of training in Libras, without the need for approval by an ethics committee, since the data were collected anonymously and voluntarily.

Below is the questionnaire that was designed to collect the data online:

QUESTIONNAIRE: LIBRAS IN HEALTH EDUCATION: IMPACTS ON THE CARE OF DEAF PATIENTS

Instructions: This questionnaire is anonymous and aims to collect information about training in Libras and its impact on the care of deaf patients. Thank you for your participation!

Section 1: Demographics

1. Age:

2. Gender:

3. You are (Profession):

Section 2: Training in Libras

4. Have you had any training in Libras? If so, describe your training experience.



5. How are you making available the training in Libras received (if applicable) and how has it impacted your professional practice?
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Section 3: Perception of the Importance of Libras

6. In your opinion, what is the importance of including Libras in health training curricula? Justify your answer.
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7. What benefits do you believe the inclusion of Libras would bring to the training of health professionals?
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Section 4: Experience in Caring for Deaf Patients

8. Have you ever seen a deaf patient? If so, describe your experience.
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9. What challenges did you face when caring for deaf patients, and how did you deal with them?
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10. What suggestions would you have to improve the care of deaf patients?
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Section 5: Final Comments

11. Please share any comments or additional experiences you would like to report about Libras and the care of deaf patients:
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Thank you for your participation!

It is worth noting that this open, online questionnaire allowed participants to express their opinions and experiences in a more detailed way, providing valuable qualitative data for the research.

DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of the answers collected through the open questionnaire, which had the participation of 10 (ten) professionals and academics in the health area, allowed the identification of several perceptions and experiences related to training in Libras and the care of deaf patients. The information revealed a comprehensive overview of how the inclusion of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals is



perceived and experienced in practice. The answers of the people who answered the questionnaire allowed the identification of categories and recurring themes.

TRAINING IN LIBRAS

The answers indicated that many professionals and academics registered training in Libras as an enriching experience, although not all had the opportunity to be formally trained. Those who participated in Libras courses often described their training as fundamental to developing communicative skills and building a more inclusive service. One interviewee highlighted: "Training in Libras opened my eyes to the needs of the deaf community and gave me tools to communicate effectively."

However, there were also reports about the scarcity of adequate courses and didactic resources during academic training. Several participants mentioned the lack of emphasis on Libras in health curricula, which was discovered in a discovered preparation to deal with linguistic diversity. One interviewee noted, "I felt that health education does not sufficiently address the importance of communication with deaf patients. This can hinder care and understanding of patients' needs."

IMPORTANCE OF LIBRAS IN CURRICULA

When asked about the importance of including Libras in training curricula, most participants emphasized that training in Libras should be considered an essential competency. Many claim that this inclusion has not only improved communication, but also contributes to a more humanized and respectful service. One of the participants expressed: "Integrating Libras in health courses is a matter of respect and inclusion. All patients deserve to be heard and understood."

The interviewees also emphasized that training in Libras could contribute to the reduction of communication barriers and, consequently, to more accurate diagnoses. "Clear communication is vital for any service. If we don't understand what the patient is saying, how can we offer the best treatment?" commented one of the participants.

EXPERIENCE IN CARING FOR DEAF PATIENTS

The experiences of caring for deaf patients varied, many professionals reported important challenges due to the lack of knowledge in Libras. Those who have seen deaf patients frequently mentioned frustration at not being able to communicate effectively. "I wanted to help, but the lack of communication made me feel powerless," one respondent said.



Several professionals told strategies they used to overcome the lack of fluency in Libras, such as the use of interpreters or visual resources. However, many emphasized that these alternatives, while helpful, are not a substitute for knowledge of the language. One participant participated: "Having an interpreter is good, but having skills in Libras makes the interaction much more direct and human."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The participants' suggestions to improve the care of deaf patients were varied and reflect a desire for significant changes in training and professional practice. Many of them included the inclusion of more Libras classes in the training curricula and the creation of practical simulations that allowed students to experience situations of care for deaf patients. "Learning the language is important, but we also need to practice. Simulations would help us prepare better," said one participant.

In addition, the interviewees reported that health institutions implement regular training in Libras for their professionals, ensuring that the training is continuous and relevant. "Learning should be a journey, not a destination. We need more training opportunities throughout our careers," said one of the participants.

COMPLETION OF DATA COLLECTION

In short, the answers collected through the questionnaire reveal a strong need to integrate Libras into health education, highlighting its crucial role in improving communication and care for deaf patients. The shared experiences emphasize that training in Libras is not just a technical skill, but a matter of professional ethics and respect for diversity. For the health system to become truly inclusive, it is essential that training in Libras is prioritized and valued in educational institutions and health services.

A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The training of health professionals has faced challenges related to the inclusion of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), which is essential to promote effective and inclusive care for a deaf population. Some studies highlight the importance of this inclusion, revealing that effective communication is one of the pillars for the quality of care.

Vasconcelos et al. (2021) analyze the perception of deaf patients and medical students about the use of Libras in the context of health. The authors argue that the inclusion of Libras in academic curricula not only facilitates communication but also improves the patient experience, resulting in more accurate diagnoses and more effective



treatments. This perspective is corroborated by Cardoso et al. (2006), who highlight the lack of adequate training in Libras among health professionals. The authors warn that the lack of knowledge in this language can generate significant barriers in communication, leading to misunderstandings in the care and understanding of the needs of deaf patients. A research by Vasconcelos et al. (2021) complementing this view, by pointing out that training in Libras becomes a differential in academic training, being essential for the training of professionals sensitive to the specificities of this population.

In turn, Levino et al. (2013) address how the inclusion of Libras in medical graduation can be a transformative process. The authors argue that learning Libras is not only a technical skill, but also a way to develop empathy and cultural understanding in future doctors. Through hands-on experiences and simulations of care, academics become more aware of the barriers faced by deaf patients and the responsibilities they have in promoting accessible care. This practical approach, which arouses the interest and sensitivity of students, is essential to create a new generation of health professionals who are more prepared and inclusive.

As stated by Vasconcelos et al. (2021), the inclusion of Brazilian Sign Language in health training curricula is essential to promote effective communication between professionals and deaf patients, resulting in more accurate diagnoses and more humanized care. Likewise, the studies by Cardoso et al. (2006) show that the lack of preparation of health professionals to communicate with the population generates significant barriers, compromising the quality of care and the necessary relationship of trust between patient and professional. Other authors, such as Levino et al. (2013), also state that the learning of Libras in medical graduation should be understood as a way to develop not only technical skills, but also empathy and cultural understanding, essential for inclusive care.

In this sense, the three studies converge on the idea that training in Libras is crucial for improving the care of deaf patients. The literature shows that, by including Libras in health training curricula, professionals not only expand their communicative skills, but also important for a more humanized and respectful care environment. This training is directly reflected in the quality of care, where clear and effective communication becomes an essential instrument for building relationships of trust between health professionals and patients.

In summary, the inclusion of Libras in the training of health professionals emerges as an urgent need, not only to ensure accessibility in care, but also to promote a more equitable health practice. Adequate training in Libras is, therefore, a central element for the



construction of a health system that respects the linguistic and cultural diversity of the population, ensuring that all patients have access to dignified and quality care.

According to Vasconcelos et al. (2021), the encounter between health professionals and deaf patients is usually marked by difficulty in communication; Professionals in public health services are not prepared to deal with deaf people and unlike mime, Libras is a natural language, with its own grammatical structure at its phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic levels, capable of transmitting concrete and abstract concepts through an essentially visual channel.

They also state that health professionals should provide differential care to deaf people, users of the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), however, only 43.1% of the courses in the health area offer the discipline of Libras, most of which are optional.

"According to Resolution No. 4 of the National Council of Education / Council of Higher Education, of November 7, 2001, which establishes the national curriculum guidelines for the undergraduate course in Medicine, the training of doctors aims to provide the professional with the knowledge required for the exercise of the following skills, among others: "communicate adequately with co-workers, patients and their families"; and "inform and educate their patients, families and the community in relation to health promotion, prevention and treatment, and rehabilitation of diseases, using appropriate communication techniques". (VASCONCELOS ET AL., 2021, p. 3).

The study highlights that deafness goes beyond sensory impairment, being marked by communication barriers, especially in the health system. Deaf patients face difficulties in communicating with doctors, aggravated by the lack of interpreters and the absence of knowledge of Libras among health professionals. This results in poor understanding of medical guidelines and reduces access to prevention programs. The execution of this study demonstrated the importance of the social inclusion of the deaf in the Faculty of Medicine, highlighting them as protagonists.

The inclusion of Libras in medical training is essential for a more humane and inclusive service. Training can improve the quality of doctor-patient interaction and guarantee fundamental rights of the deaf. Some recommendations made by the authors Vasconcelos et al. (2021) are: Insert Libras as a mandatory subject in the health areas; expand health education programs for the deaf and promote public policies that guarantee interpreters in health services.

The article "The Importance of Libras in the Training of Health Professionals", by Lívia Karoline Morais da Silva and Clésia Oliveira Pachú, analyzes the need to include Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training curricula of health professionals. The authors highlight that effective communication is essential for quality care, especially in the



context of the deaf population, which often faces barriers in interacting with health services. A survey points out that the lack of training in Libras among professionals can result in inaccurate diagnoses and inadequate care, compromising the health of patients. The authors argue that the inclusion of Libras in academic training not only improves communication, but also promotes a more humanized and respectful service, essential to guarantee the rights of all patients. The study concludes that training in Libras is an ethical and professional obligation for future health professionals, contributing to a more inclusive health system.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the Brazilian Inclusion Law "ensures people with disabilities access to health services, both public and private" (2015). For this, deaf people need to have communicational accessibility, in which in these spaces they always have the presence of Libras interpreters and also health professionals who are bilingual, so that they can offer an accessible and quality service, guaranteeing the right of the deaf person.

The study by the authors Silva and Pachú (2016) presents benefits of the insertion of the discipline of Libras in the training of health professionals, such as: access to communication, humanization of care, reduction of communication errors, construction of diagnosis, prevention and treatment, promotes respect for diversity and ensures inclusion, and the improvement of interpersonal skills.

In this sense, the authors Silva and Pachú (2016) state that it is necessary for health professionals to acquire knowledge in Libras, through disciplines in the undergraduate curriculum and continuing education programs in health services, in order to strengthen ties with the deaf and provide care within the principles of the Unified Health System - SUS, holistic, that is, in which health is seen as a balance between body, mind and spirit, in addition to humanized and inclusive care.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present research evidenced the importance of including the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in the training of health professionals, revealing significant impacts on the care of deaf patients. The data collected through the online questionnaire, which involved academics and health professionals, reinforced the idea that training in Libras not only improved communication, but also contributes to a more humanized and respectful service.

The participants' answers indicated that a specific portion of them confirmed the relevance of Libras in the context of health, with many stating that the lack of specific



training compromises the quality of care. Among the open answers, the concern with the need for a curriculum that includes content related to Libras was highlighted, as well as the importance of practical experiences that allow future professionals to experience communication with deaf patients.

In addition, a survey pointed out that most respondents believe that training in Libras could minimize communication barriers and facilitate more accurate diagnoses. This perception reinforces the idea that learning Libras should be seen not only as a technical skill, but as an essential component for the training of sensitive professionals who are aware of the cultural and linguistic diversities that make up society.

However, the data also revealed that the implementation of Libras in training curricula faced challenges, such as the resistance of some institutions and the deficiencies of specific teachers to teach this subject. These obstacles must be overcome in order to advance in the training of a new generation of health professionals who are truly inclusive.

In short, the research reinforces the urgent need to integrate Libras into the training of health professionals, promoting a more accessible and equitable health system. This inclusion not only meets the demands of a population significantly, but also enriches professional practice, resulting in more effective and empathetic care. Thus, it is concluded that the strengthening of training in Libras is a fundamental step to ensure that all patients, regardless of their hearing condition, have access to quality and dignified care.



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