

International Journal of Health Science

ISSN 2764-0159

vol. 5, n. 34, 2025

... ARTICLE 12

Acceptance date: 23/12/2025

DEVELOPMENT OF A SEX EDUCATION BOOKLET IN SIGN LANGUAGE: AN INCLUSIVE RESOURCE FOR THE DEAF

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Abstract: Sex education is a fundamental right, but it is still largely inaccessible to the deaf community due to the scarcity of appropriate materials in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) and the lack of trained professionals. This barrier compromises autonomy, privacy, and understanding of essential information about sexual health, increasing risks related to sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancy, and sexual violence. Given this reality, this project aims to develop an accessible sex education booklet in Libras, based on the identification of the communication and cultural needs of the deaf population. The methodology involves literature review, interviews, focus groups, multimodal development of the material (videos, texts, and illustrations), validation with experts, and pilot tests with deaf people. The proposal is based on national education and health guidelines, such as the National Curriculum Parameters (MEC, 1997), and on studies that highlight gaps in access to information, such as Bisol (2008) and Kennedy & Buchholz (1995). It is hoped that the booklet will contribute to reducing information inequalities, promoting inclusion, autonomy, and strengthening the sexual health of the deaf community. The project also seeks to raise awareness among health and education professionals about the importance of communication accessibility, reinforcing the rights provided for in the Brazilian Inclusion Law.

Keywords: Sex Education; Accessibility; Sign Language.

INTRODUCTION

Sex education is a fundamental right of all individuals, playing a key role in promoting health, well-being, and self-determi-

nation. However, there is a major limitation known as accessibility for deaf people, as many face a significant barrier in accessing health care and important topics related to sexuality due to the lack of trained professionals and adequate materials in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO): Sexuality is an energy that motivates us to find love, contact, tenderness, and intimacy; it is integrated into the way we feel, move, touch, and are touched; it is being sensual and at the same time being sexual. Sexuality influences thoughts, feelings, actions, and interactions and, therefore, also influences our physical and mental health. Based on this, the research develops a booklet on the topic of sex education in Libras. How can we have more effective visual resources to educate deaf people about sexuality? We need to address this context so that the problem of this gap can be efficiently resolved in the delivery of knowledge and the promotion of social inclusion, ensuring sex education for the deaf.

JUSTIFICATION

Hearing impairment can limit access to critical information, especially in sensitive areas such as sex education. Often, there is a lack of knowledge at home, or schools do not have qualified professionals to develop such topics. It is clear that the lack of information about sexuality causes embarrassment when addressed in social circles, as the lack of adequate resources can lead to misinformation and increased risks to the sexual health of deaf people. Thus, the development of a booklet in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) is a pressing need to en-

sure that this audience has equal and quality access to sex education.

During nursing internships in basic health units, hospitals, schools, and home visits, I identified the urgent need for the inclusion of people with disabilities, especially deaf people. Deafness often results in a loss of complete understanding of medical explanations, either due to interpretation failures or a lack of adequate knowledge on the part of family members.

I report a personal experience with my deaf sister-in-law, the daughter of hearing parents who did not learn sign language as a means of communication. This lack of adequate communication negatively impacted her receipt of sexual information and guidance. Currently, my sister-in-law has a son who needs treatment for suspected autism, but she faces the difficulty of finding professionals who are able to communicate with her, clarify information, answer questions, among other things.

There was a specific episode that highlighted the need for inclusion of deaf people in healthcare. During a gynecological appointment, while accompanying my sister-in-law, I was acting as an interpreter who would be there to answer questions and provide guidance. However, the professional asked me to leave the room due to COVID-19 restrictions. A few seconds after I left, I was called back because the professional had not been informed of the patient's deafness and did not know how to communicate with her. This incident raises a crucial question: where is inclusion and accessibility in healthcare? How can a patient be assisted without feeling embarrassed during a Pap smear, for example? Where is the independence of these people, considering the lack of trained professionals to assist them?

It is with these concerns in mind that I believe the creation of a booklet on sexuality can contribute to education by providing the most important information in a way that is accessible to all.

OBJECTIVES

General Objective:

To develop a sex education booklet in Brazilian Sign Language, adapted to the communication and cultural needs of the deaf community.

Specific Objectives:

- Review the literature on sex education for the deaf and existing materials in Libras.
- Conduct interviews and focus groups with deaf people to identify their needs and preferences.
- Develop the content of the booklet based on educational and public health guidelines.
- Validate the booklet with experts and the deaf community.
- Distribute the booklet in schools and institutions that serve deaf people.

METHODOLOGY

For the development of the “Sexual Orientation Booklet for Deaf People” project, the methodology adopted will follow a target audience-centered approach, aiming to create accessible and effective educational material. The first step will be to identify the specific needs of deaf people in the context

of sex education. This will be done through a literature review, which will allow us to map the main challenges faced by this group. In addition, interviews and focus groups will be conducted with deaf people in order to understand their experiences and expectations. Collaboration with experts in sex education and accessibility will be essential to ensure that the material is appropriate and relevant.

The development of the booklet will begin with the creation of content, which will be based on the needs identified in the initial phase. The material will be prepared in a clear and inclusive manner, using language that is easily understood by the target audience. One step will be the translation of concepts into Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), in partnership with interpreters, to ensure that the message is conveyed accurately and accessibly. The booklet will be multimodal, combining videos in Libras, written texts, and illustrations to maximize accessibility.

After the material has been prepared, the booklet will undergo pilot testing with deaf people and be reviewed by experts to gather feedback and make any necessary adjustments. It will then be made available in different formats, both digital (PDF, videos) and printed. Distribution will be carried out through online platforms, apps, and in partnership with institutions that serve the deaf community. In addition, workshops will be organized for families, educators, and health professionals, with the aim of training them in the use of the material and highlighting the importance of accessible sex education.

Finally, the impact of the booklet will be evaluated through questionnaires and interviews before and after its use, to measure the understanding and effectiveness of the

material. The data collected will be analyzed to verify the impact of the project on awareness and knowledge about sexual orientation among deaf people. The results of this evaluation will be used to make continuous improvements to the material, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexuality is an essential dimension of the human experience, influenced by biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. For the deaf community in Brazil, understanding and experiencing sexuality faces specific challenges arising from communication barriers and lack of access to adequate information. This literature review examines the main studies and discussions on the sexuality of deaf people in Brazil, highlighting barriers, educational practices, and public policies.

Communication and Information

Deaf people often face difficulties in accessing information about sexuality due to the predominance of materials and resources in inaccessible formats. Studies show that many deaf people depend on translators or interpreters of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) to understand content, which can compromise the privacy and quality of the information received. In addition, the lack of guidance and access to basic information such as condom use, sexually transmitted diseases, how to avoid getting them, what signs and symptoms to look for, and necessary prophylaxis all of which is relevant and important for these individuals. Unfortunately, the absence of trained professionals and family members who use Libras to communicate creates a flaw in the

health and education system that aggravates this situation.

The study by Bisol (2008) showed that there is a significant difference in knowledge about HIV/AIDS between deaf and hearing adolescents, with hearing adolescents having more information about these diseases. This reveals a significant gap in health education for deaf adolescents. Other studies, such as those by Kennedy and Buchhoiz (1995), also addressed HIV/AIDS in deaf people, highlighting the importance of education and prevention as ways to reduce the spread of AIDS, since this disease has no cure.

The omission of information about sexuality can make deaf people vulnerable to risky behaviors, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy, in addition to increasing the risk of violence, sexual abuse, and prejudice due to sexual orientation (Sousa & Moleiro, 2015; Sousa & Pagliuca, 2001). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to develop effective strategies to convey information about sexuality in a way that is accessible, , and understandable to the deaf community, ensuring that they have access to the same level of information as the hearing population.

Sex Education for the Deaf

Sex education is an essential component for the healthy development of sexuality. However, the literature reveals a significant lack of inclusive educational programs that meet the specific needs of the deaf. Most schools and educational institutions do not have teaching materials adapted to American Sign Language, and educators are often unprepared to address sexuality issues with the deaf community. This results in a limited and often mistaken understanding

of sexual issues, sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention, and reproductive rights.

Given this scenario, what is the role of schools and families in addressing this issue? Both cannot neglect to provide consistent guidance appropriate to the age group of the child/adolescent. The adoption of the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) in 1997, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), brought visibility to the discourse on health and sexuality education within schools. The PCNs establish guidelines for cross-cutting themes, such as sexual orientation and disease prevention, to be addressed in an integrated manner within the school curriculum, ensuring that all students, including those with hearing impairments, have access to information essential to their development and well-being.

In Brazil, this is the first time that the topic of sexual orientation or sex education has been officially included in the national school curriculum. According to this document, cross-cutting themes address fundamental and urgent issues in social life—ethics, health, the environment, sexual orientation, and cultural diversity. They should be addressed throughout all stages of schooling in two ways: within the curriculum, through cross-cutting content in different areas of the curriculum, and as extra-curricular activities, whenever issues related to the theme arise

(ALTMANN, 2003, p.283).

Public Policies and Sexual Rights

Brazilian law recognizes the rights of people with disabilities, including the deaf, to education and health care. However, the implementation of public policies that guarantee full access to information about sexuality is still in its infancy. Documents such as the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI) establish guidelines for promoting inclusion, but practice shows that there is still a long way to go before these rights are effectively guaranteed. The lack of specific policies for the sexual education of deaf people is a significant obstacle to the full realization of their sexual and reproductive rights.

Assistive Technologies and Digital Resources

In recent years, the development of assistive technologies and digital resources in Libras has shown potential for improving deaf people's access to information about sexuality. Apps, educational videos, and online platforms adapted to Libras have been developed with the aim of providing accessible, high-quality content. The literature highlights the importance of these tools as complements to traditional teaching methods, allowing for more autonomous learning that respects the privacy of deaf individuals.

The literature review shows that deaf sexuality in Brazil is a field that demands attention and action from both society and public policy. Communication and information barriers, insufficient inclusive educational programs, and inadequate implementation of public policies are challenges that must be addressed to ensure that deaf people have full access to information and education about sexuality. The use of assis-

tive technologies and the training of professionals in Libras are important steps in this direction. The promotion of healthy and informed sexuality for the deaf community is fundamental to the full exercise of their rights and to improving their quality of life.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This booklet was developed to provide an inclusive educational resource that promotes the health and well-being of the deaf community. With accessible material in Libras, it is hoped that it will contribute to reducing educational inequalities and strengthening the autonomy of deaf people with regard to their sexual health, where they have knowledge and learn about various diseases and protections and are supported when they need it, knowing the real symptoms and the necessary precautions when needed.

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