Levels of Academic and Clinical Training of SLPs in AAC and the Quality of AAC Training: Provided to Communication Partners of People with Aphasia

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Abstract
Survey research was conducted to investigate the relationship between SLP level of academic and clinical education in AAC and the quality of AAC training provided to communication partners (CPs) of people with aphasia (PWAs). Lack of CP training and insufficient AAC training of SLPs have been studied as separate entities; however, this dissertation study aimed at identifying the relationship between the two. CP training and family counseling have been identified as weaknesses of SLPs and areas that require further development (Bakas et al., 2004). Without adequate AAC training, SLPs do not have the confidence or skills to provide such training to communication partners (Platt, Koul, and Lloyd, 2005).

Background & Justification
Device Abandonment:
- Some of the factors that most frequently lead to device abandonment were lack of support, the lack of training the CPs have received, and the time required for ongoing assistance (Bakas et al., 2006; Abaranok, 2013).
- Approximately 32% of participants reported that their loved one with aphasia rarely or never uses the SGD.
- Approximately 43% of participants reported that their loved one rarely or never uses the SGD.
- Approximately 82% of the respondents reported that they either did not or did not receive AAC coursework to have fully prepared them to provide AAC services.

Device Abandonment:
- The number of CPs who reported that their needs were not fully met by the SGD varied between 27% and 50% (depending on the device). 36% of SLPs reported feeling fully comfortable providing AAC training to CPs of PWAs, even though approximately 40% of SLPs reported feeling significantly less comfortable providing training to CPs who lack face-to-face instruction (Blom Johansson et al., 2012).
- Approximately 30% of the CPs felt that they were insufficiently trained on their loved one's SGD.
- 50% of the CPs reported that their needs were not fully met by the SGD when it came specifically to training the CP on how to use and customize the SGD.

The Research Problems
1. There is a significant lack of formal SLP training in AAC and CP training.
2. Many CPs of PWAs are provided insufficient instruction on how to assist their loved one's functional utilization of the AAC device.
3. What is the relationship between the level of academic and clinical training of SLPs in AAC and their perceived competency in providing AAC services to PWAs?
4. What is the relationship between the level of academic and clinical training of SLPs in AAC and the perceived comfort level of CPs with AAC training?
5. What is the relationship between CP satisfaction with AAC training received and quantity of interactions between the CP and the SLP during the SGD trial?

Research Questions
1. What is the relationship between the level of academic and clinical training of SLPs in AAC and the perceived competency in providing AAC services to PWAs?
2. What is the relationship between the level of academic and clinical training of SLPs in AAC and the perceived comfort level of CPs with AAC training?
3. What is the relationship between CP satisfaction with AAC training received and quantity of interactions between the CP and the SLP during the SGD trial?
4. What is the relationship between CP satisfaction with AAC training received and report of use of the SGD by the PWA?

Methods
Participants:
- Participants were extracted from HubSpot™, the online platform.
- Participants: SLPs, CPs, and PWA families.
- Survey research was conducted to investigate the relationship between the level of academic and clinical training of SLPs in AAC and the quality of AAC training provided to CPs of people with aphasia.

Results
1. Approximately 70% of the CPs reported that their needs were not fully met by the SGD.
2. Approximately 30% of the CPs felt that they were insufficiently trained on their loved one's SGD.
3. 50% of the CPs reported that their needs were not fully met by the SGD when it came specifically to training the CP on how to use and customize the SGD.
4. Approximately 40% of the CPs who lacked face-to-face instruction on how to use the SGD also reported that their loved ones were less comfortable with the device.

Survey research was conducted to investigate the relationship between the level of academic and clinical training of SLPs in AAC and the quality of AAC training provided to CPs of people with aphasia.

4. What is the relationship between CP satisfaction with AAC training received and report of use of the SGD by the PWA?

Future Research Questions
1. How does the training of CPs on AAC affect overall functional use of the SGD by the PWA?
2. Does comprehensive AAC coursework at the master's level increase CP satisfaction with AAC training?
3. What does a standardized CP training program need to include for optimal results?
4. What other obstacles stand in the way of SLPs providing satisfactory AAC training to CPs, and how do we overcome them?

References