SOCIAL SKILLS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: OVERVIEW OF BRAZILIAN RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Research about the social skills field has been growing in recent decades and, in parallel, studies that seek to systematize what has been produced. This study aimed to characterize, through a literature review, empirical studies carried out by Brazilian authors published in journals that directly investigate the social skills of people with disabilities. A search was carried out in the SciELO, PEPSIC, LILACS, Index Psi, BDENF and Periodicals CAPES databases with the descriptors social skills and social competence, without restriction regarding the period of publication. It was found 43 articles were characterized in terms of bibliographic and methodological aspects. The results indicate a high volume of research with a descriptive design, a higher frequency of participants with intellectual disabilities, a predominance of inventories as a means of evaluation and a scarcity of instrumental research on validation or development of measures. This review may contribute with information to support further research on social skills with people with disabilities.

Keywords: social skills; special education; literature review

Habilidades Sociales y personas con discapacidad: panorama de las investigaciones brasileñas

RESUMEN

Investigaciones sobre el campo de las habilidades sociales siguen creciendo en las últimas décadas y, en paralelo, estudios que buscan sistematizar lo que vienen siendo producido. En este estudio se tuvo como objetivo caracterizar, por intermedio de una revisión de la literatura, estudios empíricos realizados por autores brasileños publicados en periódicos que investigan directamente las habilidades sociales de personas con discapacidad. Se realizó una búsqueda en las bases de datos SciELO, PEPSIC, LILACS, Index Psi, BDENF y Periódicos CAPES con los descriptores *habilidades y competencia sociales*, sin restricción al período de publicación. Se caracterizaron 43 artículos cuanto al aspectos bibliográficos y metodológicos. Los resultados indican alto volumen de investigaciones con delineamento descriptivo, mayor frecuencia de participantes con discapacidad intelectual, predominio de inventarios como forma de evaluación y escasez de investigaciones instrumentales sobre validación o desarrollo de medidas. Esta revisión podrá contribuir con informaciones para ayudar nuevas investigaciones sobre habilidades sociales junto a personas con discapacidad.

Palabras clave: habilidades sociales; educación especial; revisión de literatura

Habilidades sociais e pessoas com deficiência: panorama das pesquisas brasileiras

RESUMO

Pesquisas sobre o campo das habilidades sociais vêm crescendo nas últimas décadas e, em paralelo, estudos que buscam sistematizar o que vem sendo produzido. Este estudo teve como objetivo caracterizar, por meio de uma revisão da literatura, estudos empíricos realizados por autores brasileiros publicados em periódicos que investigam diretamente as habilidades sociais de pessoas com deficiência. Foi realizada uma busca nas bases de dados SciELO, PEPSIC, LILACS, Index Psi, BDENF e Periódicos CAPES com os descritores *habilidades sociais* e *competência social*, sem restrição quanto ao período de publicação. Foram caracterizados 43 artigos quanto a aspectos bibliográficos e metodológicos. Os resultados indicam alto volume de pesquisas com delineamento descritivo, maior frequência de participantes com deficiência intelectual, predomínio de inventários como forma de avaliação e escassez de pesquisas

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instrumentais sobre validação ou desenvolvimento de medidas. Essa revisão poderá contribuir com informações para auxiliar novas pesquisas sobre habilidades sociais junto a pessoas com deficiência.

Palavras-chave: habilidades sociais; educação especial; revisão de literatura

INTRODUCTION

The term "social skills" comprehends two related meanings: one of them is the designation given to the theoretical-practical field, which comprehends the production of knowledge generated in the area, while the other relates to its understanding as a concept (A. Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017). The concept of social skills is directly linked – and can be considered a part of it, to another construct, known as social competence (Gresham, 1981). In general terms, social skills are different from social competence because social skills refer to specific social behaviors that are considered culturally desirable and important, presented by one individual to obtain success in social tasks, whereas social competence is related to the assessment of these behaviors in interpersonal tasks and their results (A. Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017; Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001).

Born in England in the 1960s and reaching great popularity around the world after the 1970s, the field of social skills arrives in Brazil, though timidly, at the time and gets more projection in studies published in the 1990s, propelled by seminal publications by the researchers A. Del Prette and Z. A. P. Del Prette (Bolsoni-Silva et al., 2006; Comodo & Dias, 2017). The Brazilian production on social skills has been catalogued and assessed by researchers such as Bolsoni-Silva et al. (2006), who assessed and discussed the production on the field of social skills published in national journals. Contemporaneous to this study, the research by Murta (2005) conducts a review on the literature, this time with a specific focus on the national production in Social Skills Training (THS). Since then, other similar research works have been developed with a highlight on works such as the one by Fumo, Manolio, Bello, and Hayashi (2009), who realized a bibliometric analysis of the scientific production on social skills in a series of books on Behavior and Cognitive Psychology, the one by Freitas (2013), with a systematic review of experimental studies in THS published in journals and the research by Colepicolo (2015), realizing the bibliometric survey in the field of social skills based on publications extracted from the data base of the CAPES Journal Portal.

The specific contour of this literature review are the studies on social skills and people with disabilities. A recent article by Azevedo and Costa (2018) investigated in the scientific production related to social skills and the special education target public, having as their sources theses and dissertations indexed in the CAPES databank. Motivated by the scarcity of studies on the theme and the methodological limitations found in previous studies,

the authors collected 29 works and described them according to the following criteria: institutions and origin programs, time distribution, themes, target-population method, results, and theoretical implications. The authors observed that, despite the recent progress, the amount of research works on these themes is still small. The work by Azevedo and Costa (2018) fills in a blank by synthesizing the Brazilian production on social skills and people with disabilities. However, it is still limited regarding consultation sources, which are restricted to theses and dissertations.

The studies of the social skills for people with intellectual disabilities, sensorial disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), high skills and physical disabilities have been conducted in our country, especially after 2005 (Quiterio, Nunes, & Gerk, 2020), particularly at regular schools. Due to the relevance of carrying out research on social skills to identify vulnerable populations and guide interventions and public policies, this work aimed at characterizing, by means of a literature review, empirical studies realized by Brazilian authors published in journals that directly investigate the social skills of people with disabilities.

METHOD

Aiming at comprehending the panorama of empirical studies on social skills and people with disabilities in Brazil, researchers realized a literature review in the theme from materials published in scientific journals and without restrictions regarding publication dates. The survey was made in six national electronic data bases (SciELO, PEPSIC, LILACS, Index Psi, BDENF and CAPES Journals), plus additional research works in Interpersonal Relations and Social Skills Group (RIHS-UFSCar) group, coordinated by the pioneering authors in the publications about social skills in Brazil, Z. A. P. Del Prette and A. Del Prette, and in the database of the Special Education Journal, or "*Revista Educação Especial*", because it is a very relevant journal for the area of Special Education and has articles of interest that were not returned in the searches in the chosen indexes. The research was realized in the second three-month period of 2020, using the keywords "social skills" and "social competence", between quotation marks and the combinations of the terms by the OR logical operator. The choice to include the social competence term as a complement for social skills happens because there are still conflicts regarding the definition of terms and that fact that some authors use them to designate the same concept (A. Del Prette & Del Prette, 2018). The search in the Revista Educação Especial journal used the same descriptors chosen in the research in the indexes and

in the RIHS-UFSCar portal. Researchers tracked down the published articles by this group and that followed the inclusion criteria. It is possible to emphasize that, although the study involves different types of disability, these descriptors were not inserted in the documental search because the authors considered that they would be able to reach a larger number of publications by not delimitating descriptors.

The delimitated inclusion criteria were: (a) empirical studies, (b) studies are realized in the Brazilian context, (c) studies indexed in scientific journals, (d) studies that focused on the assessment of social skills in people with disabilities. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria were: (a) articles without a full access to complete text, (b) articles in which there is no record of the used assessment method, (c) studies that assess social skills in people with disabilities as a smaller part of a larger assessment set. The triage of the articles returned by the research was realized by two independent judges. They conducted a blind assessment of the articles according to the established inclusion criteria. The disagreements between the judges regarding the inclusion or non-inclusion of certain research works were solved by the decision of a third judge.

Procedures for data gathering and treatment

The research from electronic databases and from other sources returned 3383 results. Out of these results, after the exclusion of the duplicated ones and an analysis of the title and abstract according to the inclusion criteria, 52 articles were identified as potentially relevant, while 48 came from 6 national electronic basis, two were added by means of direct search in the database of the *Revista Educação Especial* and one was obtained from the *RIHS-UFSCar* Portal. Four articles were excluded because they did not present full text in online searches, four other articles were excluded because they did not assess the construct of social skills and one article was excluded because it did not present that used assessment method or the results. Thus, 43 articles who were selected as eligible for descriptive analysis.

Treatment of the data followed the model used by Bolsoni-Silva et al. (2006) and Freitas (2013), dividing the analysis into two major categories composed by subcategories. Thus, the results bring a bibliographical analysis, followed by a methodological analysis. The first one dealt with descriptive aspects of research works regarding: (i) authors, (ii) keywords, (iii) publication journals, and (iv) publication. The methodological analysis involved a description of: (i) characteristics of the participants, (ii) outlining, (iii) size of the sample, (iv) objectives, (v) assessment methods. The complete list with the included studies, the worksheet for the characterization of the articles (investigated this abilities, objectives, outlining, age group, size of the sample, assessment methods, instruments, examiners, and demographic region), as well as the code for

reproduction of the analyses and the description of Figure 1 are available at https://osf.io/yb37w/.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are presented by means of two categories, one of them refers the bibliographical characteristics and the other one refers to the methodological characteristics of the articles.

Bibliographical analysis

90 authors were identified for the 43 articles. The ones with the greatest number of participations in authorship of the publications were Z. A. P. Del Prette (n = 15), A. Del Prette (n = 10), L. C. Freitas (n = 6) and M. L. P. França-Freitas (n = 3). In addition, it was also possible to verify that the number of authors by article ranged from 2 to 7, with an average of 3.1 by publication.

The keyword that was found most frequently was "social skills", used in 30 articles, followed by "special education", used in eight research works. In addition to "Down syndrome", present in five articles, are the keywords were used with frequency that was less than or equal to 4 and, in 23.1% of the times, related to the studied type of disability. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that for three articles without available abstract in Portuguese, researchers searched for information by means of corresponding keywords and the Psychology Terminology database of the BVS-Psi for translating the English words into the local language. Concerning keywords without correspondence in the referred database, authors chose to replace the original term for a free translation.

The articles were published in 26 distinct journals with a highlight on publications in journals in the psychology area (51,2%) and education (25,6%). Regarding time distribution, the publication period comprehends 18 years, with the first publication in 2002[1] and the most recent in 2020. Considering thin interval, it is possible to verify a publication average of 2.4 articles per year, and the greatest amount of research works (79%) was published after 2010. Figure 1 presents the time distribution of the articles by biennial, as well as distribution regarding the investigated type of disability. Analyzing the time distribution of the articles, it is possible to verify an expressive increase in the number of empirical studies in the late 2000s.

This tendency accompanies the significant growth in the publication of Brazilian articles on social skills after 2004, according to Z. A. P. Del Prette and Del Prette (2019), indicating that the expansion of research works on this theoretical field also comprehended an investigation with people with disabilities. In addition, it is possible to observe a greater concentration of publications between the years 2010 and 2014, which

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[1] The oldest article found was published in 1996, though it was not included in the present research because it was not fully available by means of digital research.

Figure 1 - *Number of Articles found by year of Publication and the Investigated Disability*
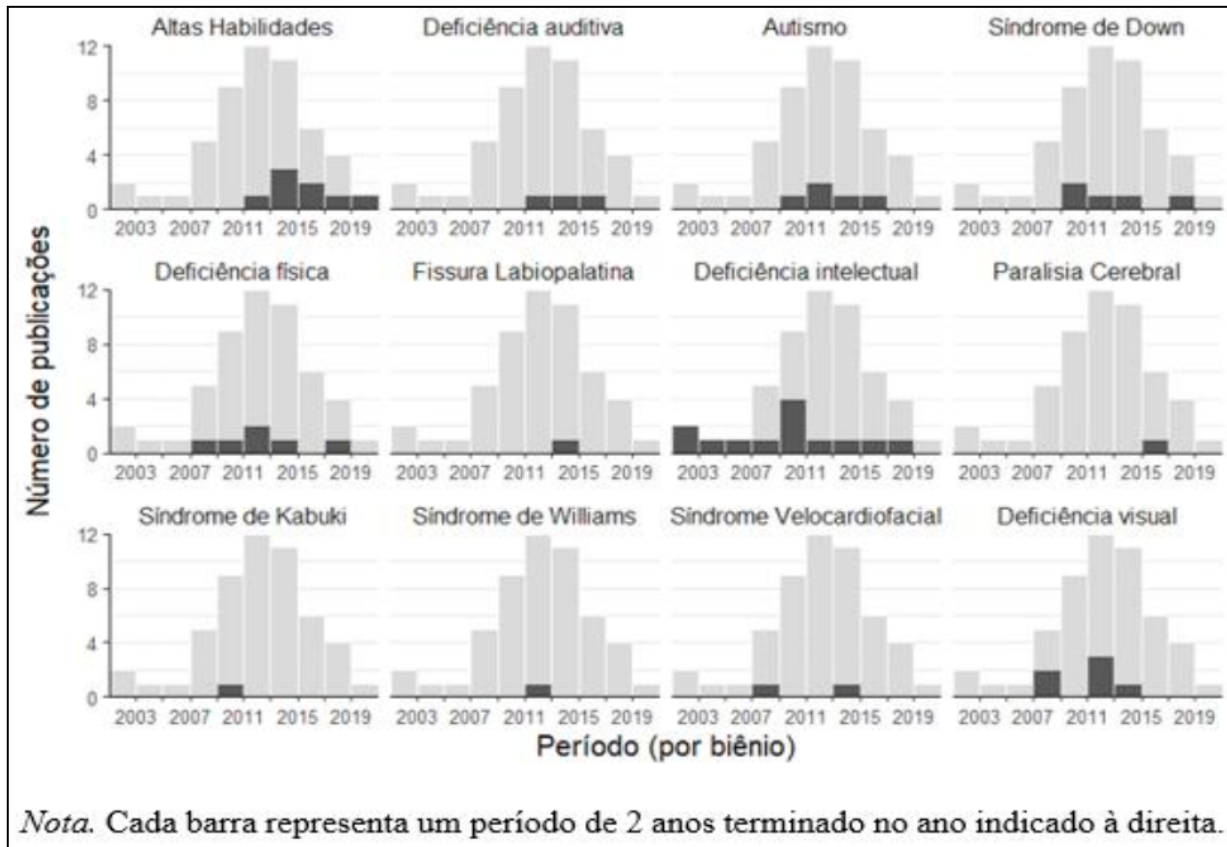
Text in the box: Número de publicações: number of publications; Altas habilidades: high skills; Deficiência auditiva: hearing disability; Autismo: autism; Síndrome de down: Down Syndrome; Deficiência fisica: Physical disability; Fissura labiopalatina: cleft palate; Deficiência intelectual: intellectual disability; Paralisia cerebral: cerebral palsy; Síndrome de kabuki: kabuki syndrome; Síndrome de williams: williams syndrome; Síndrome velocardiofacial: velocardiofacial syndrome; Deficiência visual: visual disability; Período (por bienio): period (by biennial); Nota: cada barra representa um periodo de 2 anos terminado no ano indicado a direita.

Note: each bar represents a period of 2 years finished in the year in the right.

is like the information presented by Azevedo and Costa (2018), whose research indicated that the years 2011 and 2012 contained the greatest number of thesis and dissertation defenses on social skills and the special education target public.

METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Characteristics of the participants

By analyzing the characteristics of the population investigated in the 43 articles, it was possible to verify that 12 categories of condition/disability of individuals in the special education target public were assessed: intellectual disability (n = 13), high skills/giftedness (n = 8), physical disability (n = 6), visual disability (n = 6), TEA (n = 5), Down syndrome (n = 5), deficiência auditiva (n = 3), DiGeorge syndrome (n = 2), cleft palate (n = 1), cerebral palsy (n = 1), Kabuki syndrome (n = 1) and Williams syndrome (n = 1). Most of the articles (n = 40) investigating a sample from a single category, true articles dealt with five types of disability –among others that were not relevant in this research work –and one

study investigated a group with two distinct disabilities.

It's possible to verify the predominance of research works approaching intellectual disability, which becomes even bigger if we consider the study is within this category with people with disabilities that are passive of cognitive deficit such as Down syndrome and Kabuki syndrome (Adam, Hudgins, & Hannibal, 1993; Organização Mundial da Saúde, 2017). Regarding deficits in cognitive and adaptive skills, the presence of intellectual disability tends to be associated with low repertoire of social skills and higher levels of behavior problems, which can also be in accordance with the seriousness and etiology of the disability (Sigafoos, Lancioni, Singh, & O'Reilly, 2017), which might justify the greater number of produced articles about this population. On the other hand, it is possible to observe a reduced number of studies involving ASD, which is a neurodevelopment disability, characterized by differences in social communication and social interaction (American Psychiatric Association, 2014), in addition to the fact that it could not be found in studies with experimental outline with this population.

Therefore. Since there is a reasonable number of research works being developed with the population with intellectual disability, the low number of studies approaching other disabilities demonstrates blanks that still must be filled in.

Regarding the age group of the participants, it was possible to verify a greater proportion of children (*n* = 22), followed by adults (*n* = 6), adults and adolescents (*n* = 6), children and adolescents (*n* = 5), adolescents (*n* = 1), children, adolescents, and adults (*n* = 2), and our research work with athletes in which the age group was not specified. The elevated number of research works with children and/or adolescents in comparison with research works conducted with adults follows a trend that is also found and the research work by Azevedo and Costa (2018). It is also possible to understand that the prevalence of studies with children and adolescents justifies itself by the importance of the promotion of social skills in educational contexts, in e remedial as well as in protective way, because they contribute to the students' better academic and social adaptation (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants were also categorized by region of origin. Results show that 35 out of the 43-research works used participants from the southeastern region, 3 participants came from the South, and the two had samples from the South and southeast, to or from the northeast and one from the Midwest. The concentration of studies in the southeastern region of the country follows a trend that is demonstrated in other recent literature reviews on social skills (Azevedo & Costa, 2018; Freitas, 2013; Vieira-Santos, Del Prette, & Del Prette, 2018). This information reflects the risky scenario of centralization of academic production in the southeast of the country, which is a consequence of the inequality of distributional resources for scientific research (Costa, Amorim, Pessanha, & Yamamoto, 2012), which results in studies with less cultural diversity of researchers as well as of research populations.

Outline

The classification of articles regarding the outline of the research was based on the system proposed by Montero and León (2007). The authors divide the quantitative empirical studies into: descriptive studies based on observation, descriptive studies of populations based on surveys, experimental studies, quasi experimental studies, *ex post facto* (correlational) studies, experimental studies of a single case and instrumental studies; and qualitative empirical studies on: ethnography, case studies and action research. When it was not directly specified by the original study authors, the research outline was classified according to the guidelines by Montero and León (2007).

Thus, it was possible to verify the prevalence of descriptive studies in comparison with other types of research, while 15 studies had cross-sectional descriptive outline, and six studies were descriptive and observational. In addition, three studies were descriptive and used direct survey observation as well as two other descriptive research works that also had instrumental character by presenting the elaboration process of the instruments. The other outlines that were found were: co-relational, used in five occasions, case study, instrumental, quasi experimental, single subject of multiple surveys, with three occurrences each.

Considering the category of descriptive studies in a comprehensive way, it is possible to verify that this method was adopted in 60.5% of the studies. Although descriptive outlines are useful to explain a phenomenon within a certain context and they can provide information that is relevant for the development of new studies, the obtained data for this type of method do not provide answers for hypothesis tests on causal relations or on the relationships between variables (Anastas, 1999). According to what was observed in this review, Methods for research works that focus on these matters such as the quasi experimental; the experimental with the single subject, and the correlation ones are still a minority in the field of studies approached here and they still lack more frequent action in order to, for example, assess the effectiveness of THS interventions, differences between populations, and the relationship between this construct and other variables.

Another point to highlight on the used outlines is the low amount of research works for validation of the instruments, while three refers to studies of validation of a single instrument, the inventory of social skills, behavior problems, and academic competence for children (SSRS-BR), for children with intellectual disabilities and others with experimental character on the development of new instruments. People with disabilities have particularities regarding their physical, cognitive, or sensorial condition that are not common like the characteristics found in the general population. Consequently, assessment measures that were developed for the population with the typical development are probably not capable of serving their purpose adequately, that is, results may not be accurate, while normalization studies for the assessed population are still absent (Barros, 2019). This matter includes significant differences in the development phases of social behavior or instrument limitations for measuring relevant social behaviors, such as nonverbal social skills, in addition to the possibility of low sensibility for the instruments to detect, for example, changes after an intervention (Walton & Ingersoll, 2013). In this sense, it is possible that the scores by the used instruments in a population with disability do not represent the same construct in the original context where they were developed in case there is no evidence for the validation of this population or a specific context with the limitation for comparison with other research works and the

development of hypotheses (Flake, Pek, & Hehman, 2017).

Barros (2019) highlight other important points such as the difficulties caused by the traditional format of the self-report instruments, such as the presence of visual stimuli, the need for pencil and paper, often unsuitable for people with visual disabilities or physical disabilities. The author also argues about the loss of autonomy of the assessed individual when they depend on that researcher to read and answer the questions and, also, of people that have learned how to read and write using the Brazilian language of signs (Libras), and about the different ways of comprehending the semantics of the items. Consequently, to obtain a greater precision in the assessments, it is necessary to invest in the development of specific measures and/or in the validation and normalization of the instruments used with populations with atypical development, especially when it significantly differs from the one to which the instrument was developed.

Size of the sample

The number of participants used in the research works presented an elevated variation (M = 54,8, DP = 81,7), which might be explained by the diversity of outlines used and their objectives. However, some characteristics can be highlighted. The smaller number of participants was found in two articles that used the case study as outlined, one of them was an intervention with a child with Down syndrome and the other one was an assessment where the child with kabuki syndrome. The study with the largest sample size had 394 participants and had the objective to characterize the repertoire of social skills of 269 children with giftedness and to compare the similarities and differences with a group of 125 children without giftedness. Considering the extremes in the distribution of sample size used in the research works, among the ones that were situated in the third quarter (N > 72), there was a predominance of cross-sectional descriptive studies (n = 5) and instrumental studies (n = 3) and, on the other hand, it was possible to observe a prevalence of observational descriptive research works (n = 3) and case studies (n = 3) among the articles with sample size below the first quarter (N < 9).

Objectives

Concerning other objectives, it was possible to observe a greater frequency of studies directed at the assessment of social skills (37,2%). Secondly, they are the research works in which the proposal was to compare social skills between groups and the ones that described an intervention, each one representing 20.9% of the total amount. Less frequently, there are correlation studies of the social skills with other variables (9,3%), validation of the instruments (7,0%) and development of new

instruments for assessment of people with disabilities (4,7%).

Among the research works that aimed at comparing the repertoire of social skills between groups, 66.7% did it with a group without disabilities, and the remaining 33.3% investigated social skills I'm all different levels of expression of the disability in the investigative population. The studies of instrument validation verify the validity of the construct, of criterion and of the convergent validity of the SSRS-BR among children with intellectual disability and indicated the variability of the application of this inventory with such population. The articles that described the development of new instruments had the objective to adapt measures and resources to assess the subjects of the research while attending to their special needs, in this case, people with Down syndrome in one research and people with cerebral palsy in another research. Such discoveries evidenced a preoccupation with the construction, adaptation, and the validation of instruments for people with disabilities (Barros, 2019).

Assessment methods

The objective of this session is to investigate the assessment methods used in the empirical studies. Thus, three articles targeting the validation of an instrument were not inserted in this analysis, and in the end the 40 studies were assessed.

The inventories have been the most popular measure. They were used in 31 research works and were the only assessment method that were present in 80.6% of the cases. There were also articles that assess the participants by means of video footage (n = 9), direct observation (n = 5), questionnaires (n = 5), interviews (n = 4) and a scale (n = 1). There is an average of 1,38 (DP = 0,77) different assessment methods per article, the minimum was one article used by 31 research works and the maximum was four different ways of assessment employed in one study, in addition to four articles that used two methods and four others that used three ways of assessment.

Regarding the informants, the research works used an average number of 1.5 examiners, the minimum was one and the maximum was four per article. It is possible to highlight the fact that two research works did not specify who the informants were and therefore are not included in this analysis. The employment of 1 examiner showed that it was the most applied procedure, with a frequency of 71% among the articles, followed by the ones that used two examiners, making up 13.2% of the research works, three examiners in 10.5%, and four examiners in 5.3%.

Besides the number of informants, it was also possible to verify what they were and at which frequency they appear, based on the age group of the sample. In the research works realized with the children and/

or adolescents, the most frequent informants were teachers (32,4%), followed by self-report (27%), legal guardians (24,3%), researchers (13,5%) and judges (2,7%). In the studies with adults and adolescents and only with adults, there was a predominance of self-report (52,6%), followed by researchers (21%), legal guardians (10,5%), coworkers (5,3%), peers (5,3%) and teachers (5,3%). The total frequency of the informants was counted without distinguishing the research works that used more than one. That is, the same article was susceptible to being counted into more than one category. Another pertinent observation is that one research with children adolescents and adults was included and the children or adolescent's category because it was more representative for the sample.

Just like the results found in Reyna and Brussino (2011), the research works with assessment on the social skills with children used external examiners such as parents and teachers with more frequency. In addition, there is also a similarity in the option for inventories and scales under other assessment methods and the predominance of research works with a single informant. No matter the age group, there are still a small number of articles that use multimodal assessment (what different procedures, different instruments, or different informants), which is advisable and recommended, because the assessment becomes less limited by the context specificity and by individual aspects (A. Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017; Reyna & Brussino, 2011).

Specifically analyzing the articles that used inventories as assessment method, we can see that the most used instrument was the SSRS-BR (n = 16) – they system for assessment of social skills and behavior problems targeting children from 6 to 13 years of age –, the age group studied more frequently among the articles that make up the corpus of this review. The inventory of social skills (IHS), that is specific for the adult population, appears in second place of frequency (n = 8), according to the *Child Behavior Checklist* (CBCL), used in four articles and the multimedia inventory of social skills for children (IMHSC), in three – the two last ones targeting the children in public. Besides these, there is also the *Progress Assessment Chart* (PAC), applied for the assessment of social competence and two research works with people with intellectual disability, the inventory for assessment of social skills of students my teachers (PACS-P and PAHSP), elaborated for a research with students with intellectual disability, and the inventory of social skills for deaf people (IHSPNO), another adaptation of the IMHSC what students were the cerebral palsy without articulated speech, which was also applied in another research work.

CONCLUSION

By means of this literature review it was possible to gather information regarding the characteristics of empirical research works on social skills of people with disabilities produced in Brazil. Researchers identified 43 articles published between 2002 and 2020 that investigated, a total amount of 12 types of disability, while the most frequent participants in the research works were individuals with intellectual disability. Most of the studies used a descriptive outline and because of those researchers discussed the importance of exploring other research outlines. And the assessment methods, that was a prevalence of the use of inventories and an average of 1.5 examiners per research. Concerning the instruments, the article highlighted the possible limitations of the measures traditionally used, at the risk of not being able to accomplish their function adequately in case they do not present evidence of validity. Among the used inventories, the SSRS-BR was the predominant choice for assessment of children and the IHS what's the most popular in works with the adult population. Only two research works dealt with the development of measures adapted to the necessities of the assessed population. Besides that, it was also possible to verify that the assessment by self-report prevailed in research works with adults, whereas were the children and adolescents, features or the most frequent informants.

Researchers tried to describe in a comprehensive way the most important characteristics of the studies that were found, without exhausting the possibilities for analysis. The comparison of the results between the selected studies, weather of assessment, correlation, or intervention, is a task that faces diverse limitations. Due to the fact that 12 categories of disability were investigated, researchers understand that it is little informative to reduce so many particularities into one category the nominated people with disabilities and analyze the results as a whole. Even individually considering each investigated this ability, within each research work there are differences of age among participants, diversity of objectives, inequality, and the levels of cognitive and social profile in the groups, in addition to inconstancy among the used assessment methods and instruments. Another limitation in this research work was the restriction to articles that were complete and found in digital bases, so some potentially relevant articles were excluded.

the results of the trained here demonstrate that the empirical research works on social skills with people with disabilities and Brazil has accompanied the gradual growth of studies in this theoretical field. While this growth is exciting, researchers wish to highlight the fact that it is necessary to have caution in the interpretation of the results obtained because of the scarcity of validated and the normalized measures for different disabilities. We expect that this study might be able to contribute to an advancement in the field not only because it presents what has been produced but also because it suggests themes for future research works, such as the application of multi modal assessment on research works; more

investment on productions on training on social skills for people with disabilities; research works with people with ASD and other underrepresented disabilities; and the development of new measures and validation and normalization of the ones that are already used, because the systematization of research works with certain populations can be harmed by the lack of instruments that are suitable for each area.

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