

STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF BRAILLE LITERACY IN THE FIELD OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS



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Undergraduate
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Abstract

The Speech-Language Pathology Scope of Practice states that Speech-Language Pathologists are required to provide services that facilitate a child's literacy development as well as communication development because of the established link between reading and writing ability and a child's communication abilities (ASHA, 2007). Literacy among children who are blind or visually impaired lags behind the literacy of their sighted peers consequently negatively influencing their communication skills. The purpose of the study is to investigate speech-language pathology students' knowledge of braille literacy and how it applies to communication disorders.

Background

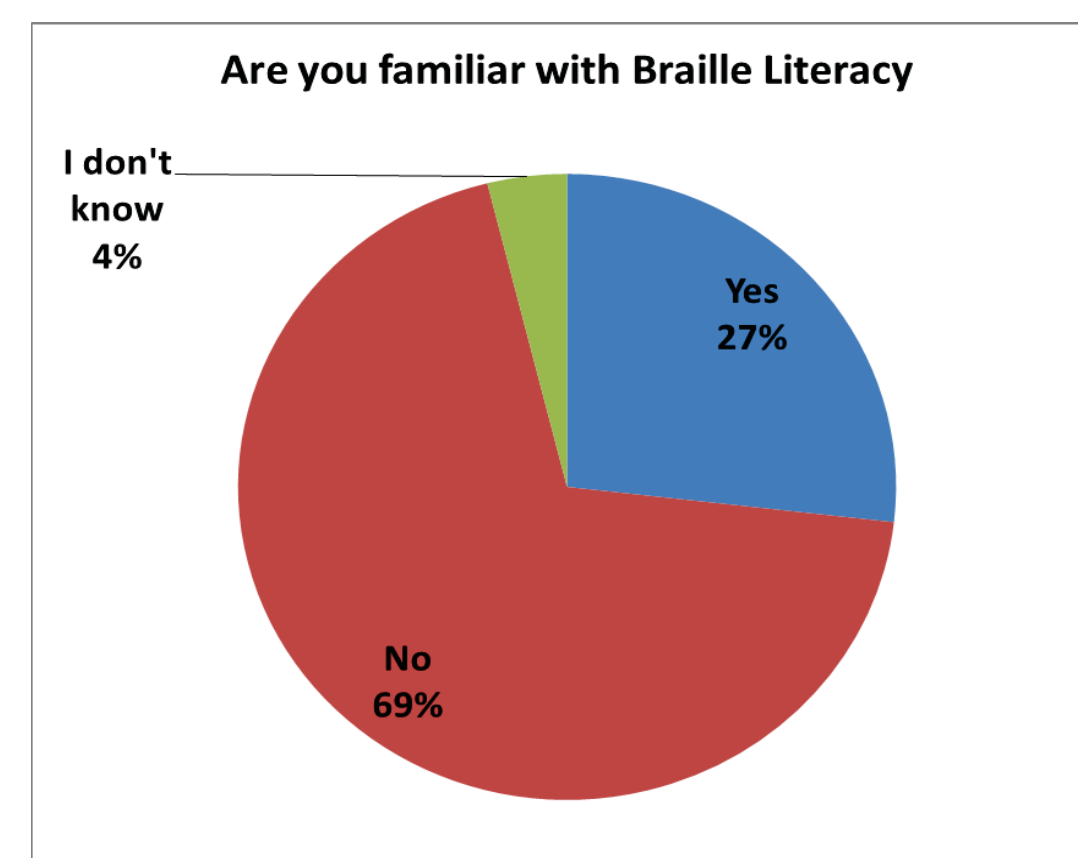
A 2005 report revealed that 36% of all school-aged student classified as legally blind were characterized as non-readers (APH, 2005). Therefore, knowledge of Braille literacy is important for speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who provide services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired (BVI). Services should include communication components such as using words or symbols, dramatic play, and utilizing tactile experience books (Durando, 2008). The communication components listed above are essential in facilitating the development of phonological awareness of BVI students (Parker & Poground, 2009); thereby, fostering literacy skills necessary for reading, writing, and spelling skills (ASHA, 2007). Few to no studies related to Braille literacy have been found in a search on the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's website. Therefore, infusing Braille literacy into communication sciences and disorders (CSD) curriculum is paramount.

Method

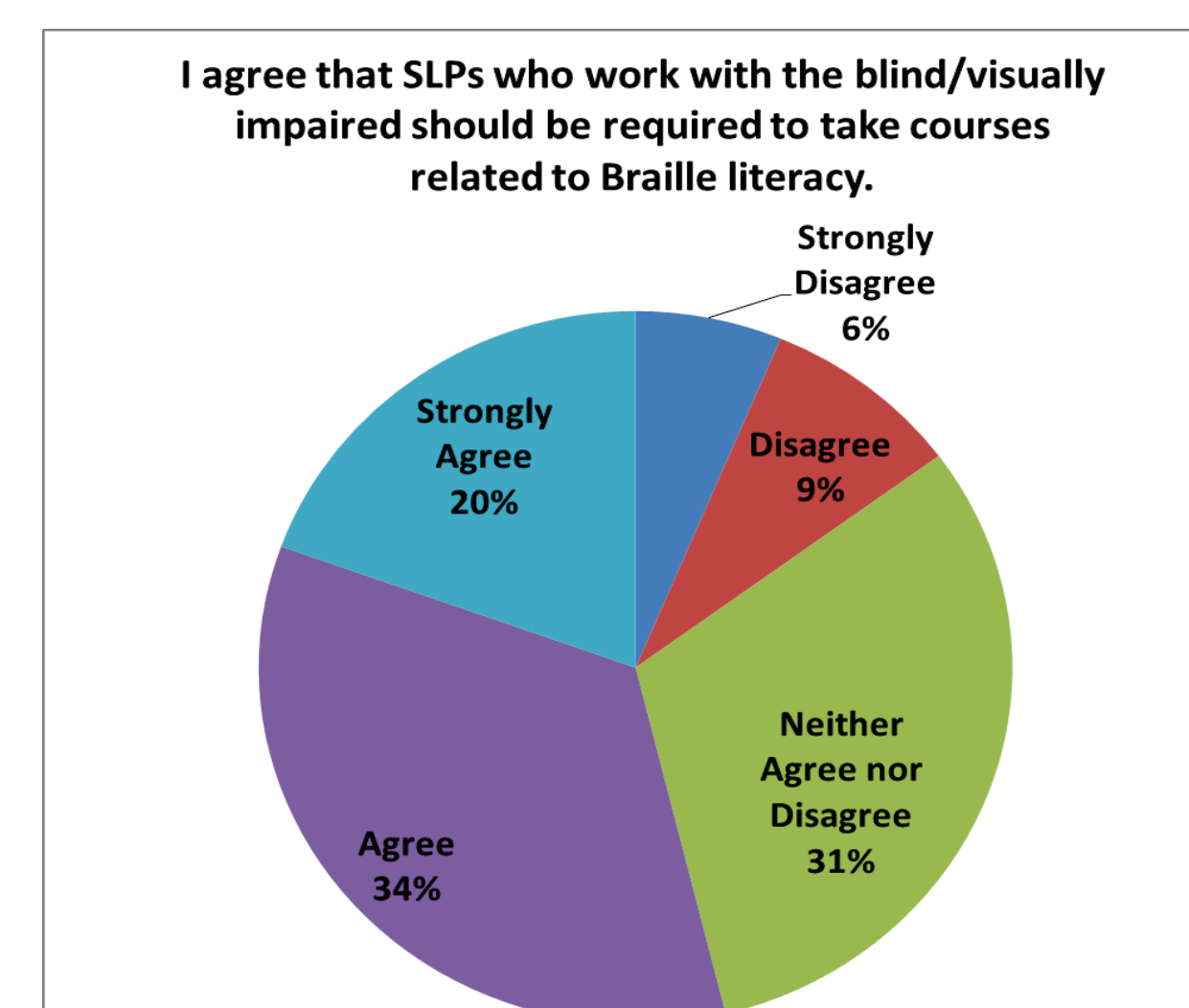
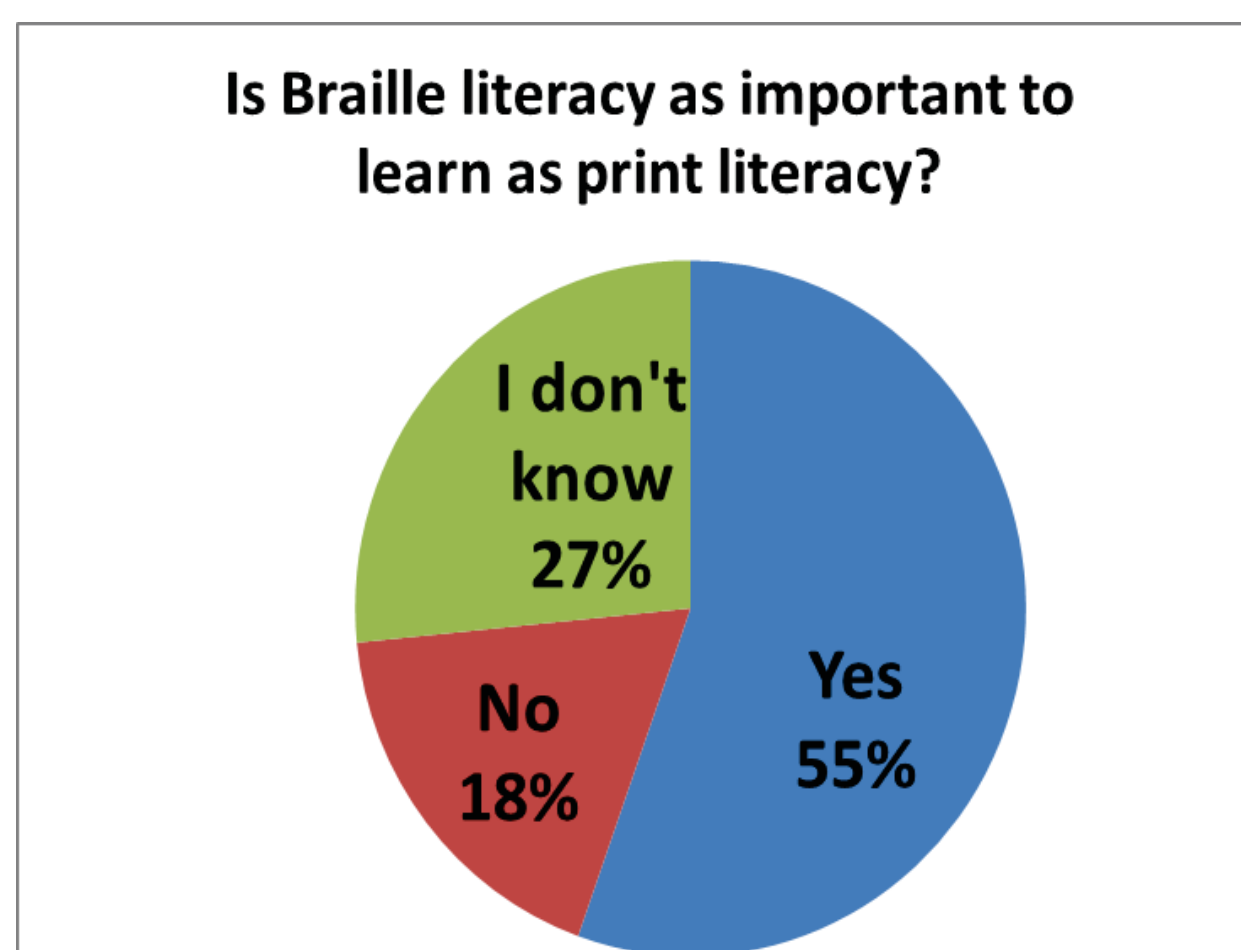
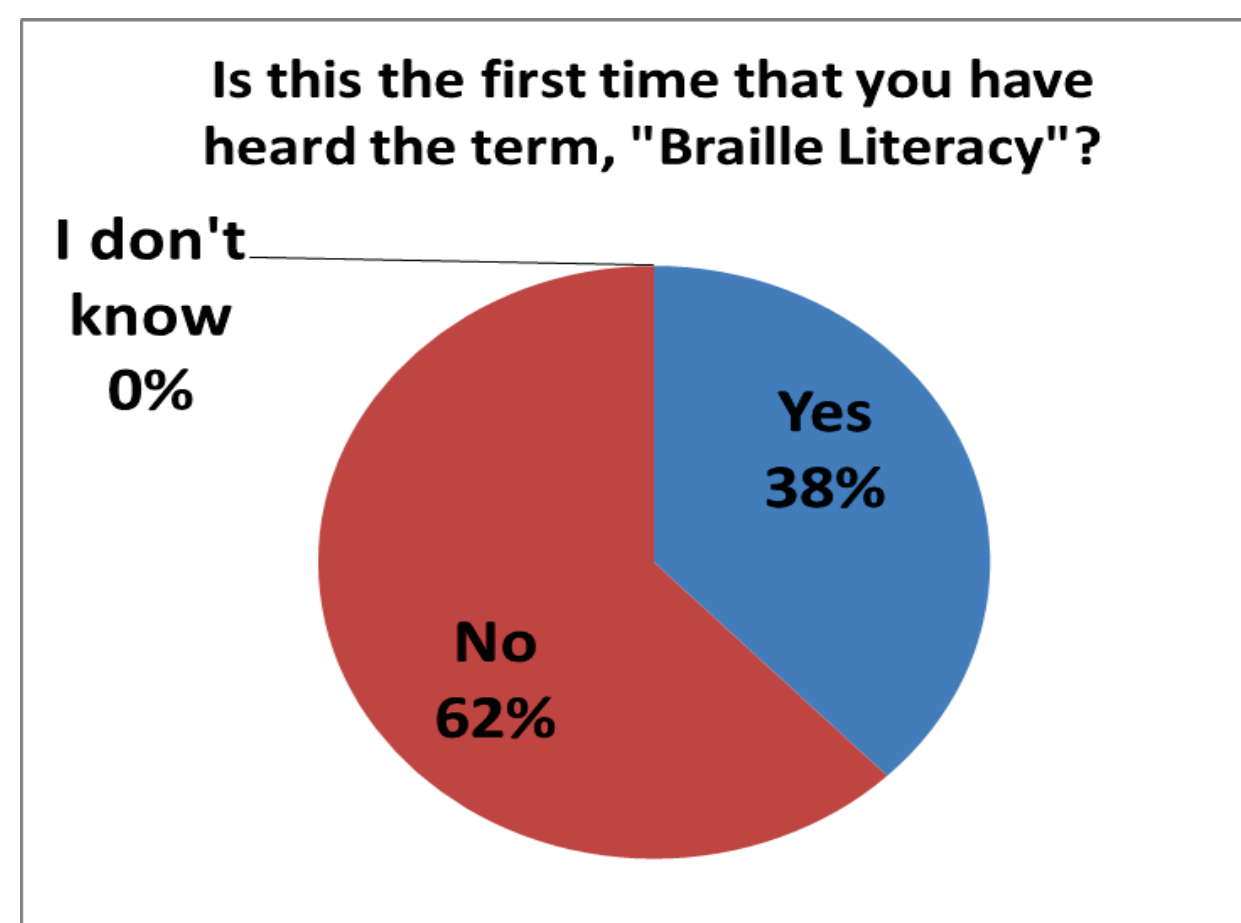
- Participants were recruited from the Junior, Senior and Graduate classes in the Communication Sciences and Disorders department at Valdosta State University.
- The researcher introduced the proposed research to the classes and asked for voluntary and anonymous participation from the students. There was no compensation or penalty for participation.
- Participants completed an anonymous survey available online through Qualtrics. The researcher used the survey to collect demographics and student responses.
- Results from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

A total of 128 students participated in this study. Of the 128, participants 3 (2%) were male and 125 (98%) were female. The results of the study indicated that a majority (69%) of CSD students are not familiar with Braille literacy. Additionally, some had not heard of the term, "Braille literacy" before taking the survey. The results that follow highlight CSD students familiarity with Braille literacy.



Results (continued)



Conclusion

In conclusion, the study revealed that CSD students are not knowledgeable of Braille literacy. However, a majority of CSD students agreed and strongly agreed that SLPs should be required to take courses related to Braille literacy if they work with individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Implications

Coursework related to Braille literacy should be included in CSD classes.

Because CSD students felt that Braille literacy is as important as print literacy, they should be taught how to adapt materials to accommodate those with visual impairments and those requiring Braille.

References

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- Durando, J. (2008). A survey on literacy instruction for students with multiple disabilities. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 102, 40-45.

Faculty Mentors

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