

Deaf Women and Their Right to Linguistic Development



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Overview

The present is a qualitative, descriptive study with diachronic characteristics. The main research question was: Are there equal opportunities for the linguistic development of Deaf women? From this guiding question, the authors identified critical areas for research. In a prior study conducted in 2022, the authors investigated the conditions of Deaf women in Mexico (Durán et al., 2022). Deaf Mexican women face multiple layers of discrimination, both for their gender and their disability, which makes them particularly vulnerable. Although there is a broader context of violence against women, Deaf women often suffer in silence. Deaf women generally do not develop language skills to the same extent due to limited opportunities, leading to linguistic deprivation. The lack of linguistic development contributes to what can be termed a "linguistic loss." The earlier provision highlights the need for more in-depth intersectional studies, as it becomes complex to document the violence Deaf women face in more private spaces, such as their homes, due to institutional neglect in addressing the living conditions of Deaf women in Mexico.

Keywords: Deaf women; Linguistic development; Education; sign language; oral communication skills

Description of the Mexican context for language development among Deaf women

In Mexico, there are significant structural deficiencies in access to essential public services, including education and healthcare [1]. For Deaf women in Mexico, accessing equal opportunities compared to hearing women is a significant challenge (Moreno, 2017). Within the Communities of Persons with Disabilities, Deaf women are among the most vulnerable, as they are often excluded from essential services. This exclusion is compounded when Deaf women are not provided with the educational support necessary to develop proficiency in sign language (Duran et al., 2022).

Description of inequalities in access to language for Deaf women

Mexico's broader socio-economic context exacerbates the challenges Deaf women face. Approximately 36.3% of the Mexican population lives in poverty [2]. Within this population, 49.5% of people with disabilities are either impoverished or vulnerable [3]. In comparison, 43.5% of people without disabilities face poverty or vulnerability [2]. Moreover, people with disabilities experience

more significant social deficits compared to those without disabilities-28.1% of the disabled population is vulnerable due to barriers in accessing essential services, while the figure for people without disabilities is 23.4%. Furthermore, 30.2% of people with disabilities suffer from at least three social deficiencies, with educational and health limitations being prominent [2]. Given these disparities, it is necessary to reevaluate and update education policies to promote equity for Deaf women and their families.

This research found that many abuses against Deaf women were a direct result of linguistic deprivation and inadequate regulation of their linguistic rights (Duran et al., 2022). Another significant issue observed is the vulnerability of Deaf women in relationships. From the author's phenomenological experience, Deaf women often have Deaf partners who are immigrants working in street commerce. These men tend to move from state to state selling their products and sometimes abandon their Deaf partners in different locations, often when the women are pregnant.

Intersectional and feminist approach to the study of violence against Deaf women

Deaf women, adolescents, and girls represent a minority historically rendered invisible in public policy, particularly regarding their fundamental rights to education, linguistic development, and a life free from violence [4]. In a previous study (see Durán et al., 2022), 41% of Deaf women reported being victims of abuse by their partners, while 50% indicated they had experienced violence in governmental institutions. Additionally, 73.9% of Deaf women suffered abuse in schools, and 39% had been victims of sexual violence.

The results of this research suggest that the majority of abuses committed against Deaf women stem from linguistic deprivation and the failure to regulate their linguistic rights adequately [5]. Most Deaf women do not learn Mexican Sign Language in school but acquire it within the Deaf community (Duran et al., 2022). Gender-based violence against Deaf women is a multifaceted issue that warrants intervention from multiple perspectives. Given the limited scientific literature on the violence experienced by Deaf women in Mexico and the scarcity of statistical data, the referred study of Duran and colleagues in 2022 employed online and presentational interviews through opportunistic and chain sampling as a primary data collection tool.

Interconnections between Education and Healthcare

Education and healthcare are interconnected factors, especially for Deaf communities [6]. In developing countries like Mexico, educational opportunities for Deaf people lag behind those in more developed nations. Previous research has highlighted the various obstacles Deaf individuals face in accessing mainstream education in Mexico (Moreno et al., 2022; Moreno et al., [1];

Moreno et al., 2017). Education should be a guaranteed right for Deaf women in Mexico, not a source of disparity. Although hearing treatments for Deaf women can facilitate development, they are not the sole solution. Given the economic inequalities in Mexico, Deaf children should receive comprehensive support to learn sign language, oral communication skills, and literacy. There are three distinct methodologies for teaching Deaf children, each requiring a commitment from specialists and families to support the child's learning [7]. In the case of Deaf girls and women, the challenge is even more significant due to the complexities of intersectionality.

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