

INTRODUCTION

- There is a lack of research on augmentative and alternative communication in low- and middle-income (LAMI) countries. Without research, people in LAMI countries with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are left without effective services.
- Currently, there are high levels of disparities in speech intervention for individuals with IDD in LAMI countries.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do you see as the most pressing disparities limiting communication outcomes for individuals with IDD who require AAC in LAMI countries?
- What do you see as the largest barriers precluding LAMI countries from addressing those disparities?
- What do you see as the most promising intervention innovations or approaches to improving AAC intervention for individuals with DD in LAMI countries?
- What role(s), if any, can those outside of LAMI play in increasing outcomes for people who require AAC within LAMI countries?
- What do you see as the most promising future research directions for increasing the knowledge required for improving outcomes for those who require AAC in LAMI countries?

METHOD

- 5 experts in the field of speech pathology who had published on the topic of AAC in LAMI countries participated in this study.
- A semi-structured qualitative interview of 5 open-ended questions referring to best practices in intervention within LAMI countries and expert opinions about the needs and priorities.
- Questions were created based upon the current research on AAC in LAMI countries. Each question targeted a gap in the research where expert opinions would only further the research on AAC in LAMI countries.
- Interviews took place over the phone or via email based on expert preference.
- Expert interviews were transcribed and evaluated for major and minor patterns within and between interviews.

RESULTS

- Patterns within all expert responses showed an overall need for training of more speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in LAMI countries focused on AAC intervention.
- There were clear patterns among all expert responses showing a desire and need for increased government advocacy within LAMI countries related to communication intervention services and programs for individuals with IDD.
- 100% (5/5) of experts showed a desire for more research in AAC intervention in LAMI countries, especially surrounding implementation and training of AAC services with communication partners and SLPs.
- 60% (3/5) of experts explained a need for sustainable, cost-effective AAC devices relative to the country. One expert shared it may be helpful to create AAC devices using local materials that can be replicated easily within these countries. In other words, there is a need for low-tech AAC devices that can be easily built and taught within a LAMI country.

CONCLUSIONS

- There was a clear theme surrounding both the disparity of the amount of SLPs within LAMI countries, as well as the overall awareness of AAC use in LAMI countries.
- More formal research needs to be completed within LAMI countries regarding AAC implementation strategies for these countries in order to see greater success in the field.
- Government advocacy in necessary to be able to build sustainable systems for communication intervention in LAMI countries.

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