



Audiology - Communication Research

ISSN: 2317-6431

Academia Brasileira de Audiologia

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Audiology - Communication Research, vol. 24, e2094, 2019  
Academia Brasileira de Audiologia

DOI: 10.1590/2317-6431-2018-2094

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# Speech therapy graduates perception of situation and professional satisfaction

## Situação e satisfação profissional na percepção de egressos de Fonoaudiologia

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To analyze the association between Speech Therapy graduates inserted in the labor market with sociodemographic variables, aspects of situation and professional satisfaction. **Methods:** An observational cross-sectional study, with a non-probabilistic sample of 196 Speech Therapy graduates from a Brazilian public university working as speech therapists. The instrument used was a questionnaire distributed both online and physical. In the present study the sociodemographic issues, aspects of situation and professional satisfaction, composed the research axes. Pearson's chi-square test was used for the association analysis, being considered significant  $p \leq 0.05$ . **Results:** There was an association between those who work exclusively as a speech therapists with the variables salary range ( $p=0.003$ ), working hours ( $p=0.001$ ), economic situation after graduation ( $p=0.004$ ), continuity of the studies ( $p=0.001$ ), perception of professional ( $p=0.008$ ) and financial achievement ( $p=0.012$ ). **Conclusion:** The perceptions of Speech Therapy graduates inserted in the labor market reveal a positive evaluation of the profession. Working exclusively as a speech therapist is related to the salary range, working hours, perception of professional achievement and improvement of the economic situation after graduation. Although most of the graduates are not financially fulfilled, they advance in the continuity of the studies.

**Keywords:** Speech, Language and hearing sciences; Student; Labor market; Professional practice; Job satisfaction; Continuing education

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Analisar a associação entre egressos de Fonoaudiologia inseridos no mercado de trabalho com as variáveis sociodemográficas, aspectos da situação e da satisfação profissional. **Métodos:** Estudo observacional analítico de delineamento transversal, com amostra não probabilística de 196 egressos de Fonoaudiologia de uma universidade pública brasileira, que trabalhavam como fonoaudiólogos. O instrumento utilizado foi um questionário distribuído de forma *online* e física e, neste estudo, os eixos de investigação foram compostos por questões sociodemográficas, aspectos de situação e de satisfação profissional. Para as análises de associação foi utilizado o teste Qui-Quadrado de Pearson, sendo considerado significativo o valor de  $p \leq 0,05$ . **Resultados:** Houve associação entre quem trabalha exclusivamente como fonoaudiólogo com as variáveis faixa salarial ( $p=0,003$ ), carga horária de trabalho ( $p=0,001$ ), situação econômica após conclusão do curso ( $p=0,004$ ), continuidade dos estudos ( $p \leq 0,001$ ), percepção de realização profissional ( $p=0,008$ ) e financeira ( $p=0,012$ ). **Conclusão:** A percepção dos egressos de Fonoaudiologia inseridos no mercado de trabalho revela uma avaliação positiva da profissão. Trabalhar exclusivamente como fonoaudiólogo tem relação com a faixa salarial, carga horária de trabalho, percepção de realização profissional e melhora da situação econômica, após conclusão do curso. Embora a maioria dos egressos não esteja realizada financeiramente, eles avançam na continuidade dos estudos.

**Descritores:** Fonoaudiologia; Estudante; Mercado de trabalho; Prática profissional; Satisfação no emprego; Educação continuada

Study conducted at Programa de Pós-graduação em Ciências Fonoaudiológicas, Departamento de Fonoaudiologia, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais – UFMG – Belo Horizonte (MG), Brasil.

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**Conflict of interests:** No.

**Authors' contribution:** all authors had an effective intellectual and scientific contribution to the work. CAM, AGE, ARM e LCT contributed and participated significantly in the conception and design of the study, data collection, analysis and interpretation, writing, article review and final approval of the version to be published.

**Funding:** Bolsa de pós-graduação concedida pela Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais (FAPEMIG). Número do processo: 11714.

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**Received:** October 13, 2018; **Accepted:** June 24, 2019.

## INTRODUCTION

Among the different forms of assessment of undergraduate courses is the follow-up of graduates<sup>(1-6)</sup>. From the perception of the alumni, it is possible to map out the academic trajectory and professional situation as well as to visualize the working reality of these professionals<sup>(2,5,7-11)</sup> and their satisfaction with the profession<sup>(7,12)</sup>.

The professional situation is marked by roles and responsibilities, which the professional must be able to perform and which will serve as a regular source of subsistence. Professional satisfaction comes from the results obtained in the practice of the profession, confronted with the expectations of the individual; and it not only derives from remuneration, but also from interpersonal relationships, type of work performed, accomplishment and recognition for their work<sup>(7,12)</sup>.

In this context, the understanding of the described aspects has double importance, both for the original course and for their professional area, which will benefit from this exploration for the training of future professionals facing the reality of the labor market.

Many institutions, however, do not regularly follow up on graduates after completing the course<sup>(1,5,6)</sup>. In the field of speech pathology, research regarding undergraduate graduates is still incipient and the existing studies bring data only from Brazilian public universities<sup>(9,13)</sup>.

In one of the studies about this topic, the authors sought to understand the aspects of the professional path and continuity of the studies of Speech Therapy students. The results pointed out that the aspects that contribute to the speech therapists' financial independence are age increase, working hours over 20 hours and positive evaluation about the academic education<sup>(9)</sup>. Independence is related to the highest average salary and directly interferes with job satisfaction<sup>(9)</sup>.

In the other study<sup>(13)</sup> the authors described the profile of education and health practices of speech therapists, former students of the institution, inserted in municipal health services. The graduates were young adults, female, graduated between four and seven years before. Most of them had previous internship experiences in the health network, they were specialists, had double employment relationships and their clinical practice was centered around individual clinical-therapeutic care<sup>(13)</sup>.

Therefore it is proposed that understanding the professional path of graduates of Speech Therapy may contribute to the area as a whole. The studies will favor the construction of a graduates' follow-up policy, adding research evidence to guide new studies and map the speech therapist's job market.

Given the above, the objective of this research was to analyze the association between Speech Therapy graduates inserted in the labor market with sociodemographic variables, aspects of the situation and job satisfaction.

## METHOD

This is an observational analytical cross-sectional study with a non-probabilistic sample, cleared by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Minas Gerais. - CEP-UFGM, under opinion number 2.936.803.

Speech Language and Hearing Therapy graduates were invited to participate in the research from January to June 2017,

via e-mail, social networks, or in person, and participated in the study after online or physical signature of the Informed Consent.

The inclusion criterion was to have a Bachelor degree in Speech Language and Hearing Therapy from the study university, between 2003/2 ° (1st class of the course) and 2016/1 ° and working in the profession. The exclusion criterion was to have been transferred to another school or course, dropped out of the course, or left the institution, and to have exceeded the deadline for crediting their course and, for that reason to be a statutory left out.

The study undergraduate course had, until July 2016, 26 graduated classes and 529 alumni. The sample calculated for study feasibility was 223 egresses (5% sample error and 95% confidence level). In all, 245 questionnaires were returned from a total of 529 distributed. Eligibility criteria were applied and, in the end, 196 graduates participated in this research, among which 168 worked exclusively as speech therapists and the other 28 did not work exclusively in the profession.

The instrument used in the research was an online and physical questionnaire, developed by the researchers, based on other questionnaires used in health graduates research<sup>(7,9,14)</sup> (Chart 1).

The research axes for the analysis in this research included sociodemographic issues (age, gender, institution where high school was completed, parental education and access to student assistance); professional status issues (length of work, weekly working hours, salary range, difficulty finding first job, time to enter the labor market, improvement in socioeconomic status after graduation, continuation of studies, working exclusively as a speech therapist) and, finally, questions about professional achievement (if the graduate would choose speech therapy again; professional and financial achievement).

The dependent variable analyzed was "working exclusively as a speech therapist" and the independent variables were the other variables investigated in relation to sociodemographic data, situation and job satisfaction.

The data analysis processing was performed through the *software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS*, version 21.0. Descriptive analysis and data association were performed. For the descriptive analysis, the frequency distribution of all categorical variables was performed analyzing central tendency and dispersion measures of continuous variables. For association analyzes, Pearson's chi-square test was used, considering significant those associations with  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## RESULTS

The average age of the 196 graduates was 29.42 years, the median of 29.00 and the standard deviation 3.67.

Most of the sample subjects were female (98.0%), up to 29 years old (58.2%), descended from fathers (71.9%) and mothers (68.9%) who did not attend higher education and did not receive student assistance during graduation (66.8%). Half of the sample (50.0%) attended high school in a public school and the other half (50.0%) in a private school. Part of the sample was working between 2 years and 5 years and 11 months (34.2%), received between 3 and 7 minimum wages (45.9%), with workloads between 31 and 40 hours per week (36.2%) and their average difficulty reported was to find the first job (48.0%). Most took up to 6 months to enter the job market (75.5%), worked exclusively as a speech therapist (85.7%). Most

**Chart 1.** Questionnaire applied to Speech Language and Hearing Pathology graduates

<b>I.</b>	<b>Sociodemographic data:</b>
1.	Name: Age: Sex: ( ) Female ( ) Male
2.	E-mail:
3.	Completed high school at: ( ) Public School ( ) Private School
4.	Graduation: Year started: _____ Completion year: _____
5.	Parent's education level: Father College degree: ( ) Yes ( ) No Mother College degree: ( ) Yes ( ) No
6.	Did you receive student subsidy during graduation? ( ) Yes ( ) No Level: I ( ) II ( ) III ( ) IV ( )
<b>II.</b>	<b>undergraduate course evaluation:</b>
1.	Review the following items for your degree course:
1.1	Curriculum: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.2	Physical facilities: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.3	Libraries: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.4	Speech Therapy Outpatient Clinic ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.5	Audiology Outpatient Clinic: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.6	Classrooms: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.7	Availability of equipment: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.8	Number of students per teacher in lectures: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.9	Number of students per teacher in practical classes: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.10	Mandatory internship at school clinic: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.11	Mandatory curricular training outside the school clinic: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.12	Working time and interest of most faculty: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.13	Relationship of teachers with students: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.14	Biology Sciences Institute Basic Training: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.15	Technical training of specific speech therapy nucleus: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.16	Speech therapy ethics and politics: ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
1.17	Training in related areas (electives, further training): ( ) Very good ( ) Good ( ) Regular ( ) Poor
2.	Assess the following items for your degree course:
2.1	Initiative: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.2	Creativity: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.3	Leadership ability: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.4	Ability to make decisions: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.5	Ability to work in a team: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.6	Technical abilities: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.7	Managerial competence: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.8	Ethical attitudes: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.9	Technological production: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.10	Networking: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.11	Knowledge of the unified health system-SUS: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.12	Interest of seeking new knowledge: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.13	Pride in the profession: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.14	Love for the profession: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.15	Critical reflection of the world and society: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
2.16	Critical and ethical approach to environmental, human rights and ethno-racial issues: ( ) Nothing ( ) Little ( ) a lot
3.	Would you recommend the institution's Speech Language and Hearing course to interested people? ( ) Yes ( ) No
4.	Which aspect of the course most helped you enter the job market?
5.	What essential aspect should have been addressed in the course and wasn't? Think about entering the job market.
<b>III.</b>	<b>Academic background:</b>
1.	During graduation you performed:
1.1	Research (Volunteer): ( ) Never, a loss of time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.2	Research (Scholarship holder): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.3	Community Outreach (Volunteer): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.4	Community Outreach (Scholarship holder): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.5	Extracurricular Internship (Volunteer): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more

Chart 1. Continued...

1.6	Extracurricular Internship (Scholarship holder): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.7	Other programs like Education Through Work (PET-Health); Health (Volunteer): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.8	Other programs like Education Through Work (PET-Health); Health (Scholarship holder): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.9	Monitoring (Volunteer): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
1.10	Monitoring (Scholarship holder): ( ) Never, missed time ( ) Never, lack of interest ( ) Never, lack of projects ( ) 1 time ( ) 2 times ( ) 3 times ( ) 4 times ( ) 5 times or more
2.	After completing your training did you maintain any ties with the institution? ( ) Yes ( ) No
3.	Does the institution integrate the graduates informing and advising about cultural and scientific activities? ( ) Yes ( ) No
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Professional situation:</b>
1.	Are you working as a speech therapist? ( ) Yes ( ) No
1.1	If not, which is the reason? (If necessary check more than one option) ( ) Unemployed ( ) Low financial return ( ) Lack of identification with the profession ( ) Personal problems ( ) Better job opportunity in another area ( ) Change of state or country ( ) Small job market ( ) Lack of theoretical and scientific background ( ) Others
1.2	Do you work exclusively as a speech therapist? ( ) Yes ( ) No
2.	Have you been working in the field for a long time?
3.	What is your average salary? ( ) None ( ) 1 to 3 minimum wages ( ) 3 to 7 minimum wages ( ) More than 7 minimum wages
4.	What is your weekly workload? ( ) Less than 20 hours ( ) 21 to 30 hours ( ) 31 to 40 hours ( ) More than 40 hours ( ) I'm not working
5.	Regarding your first job, how difficult was it to find it? ( ) Easy ( ) Medium ( ) Difficult
6.	How soon did you enter the job market after graduation? ( ) Up to 6 months ( ) 7 months to 1 year ( ) 1.1 to 2 years ( ) Over 2.1 years ( ) I didn't enter the job market
7.	Do you rate your socioeconomic status better at the time of the interview than when you joined the course? ( ) Yes ( ) No
<b>V.</b>	<b>Professional Satisfaction:</b>
1.	Feel professional achievement? ( ) Yes ( ) No
2.	Do you feel fulfilled financially? ( ) Yes ( ) No
3.	If you were to choose an undergraduate degree today would you choose speech therapy again? ( ) Yes ( ) No
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Continuity of studies:</b>
1.	Performed postgraduate studies ( ) Yes ( ) No
2.	Which category have you done or are you pursuing postgraduate studies? Master's degree: ( ) In progress ( ) Finished ( ) Not done Doctorate degree: ( ) In progress ( ) Finished ( ) Not done Post doctoral: ( ) In progress ( ) Finished ( ) Not done Specialization in speech therapy areas with CRFa validation: ( ) In progress ( ) Finished ( ) Not done
3.	How many postgraduate studies have you done? Master's degree: ( ) None ( ) One ( ) Two ( ) Three ( ) Four or more Doctorate degree: ( ) None ( ) One ( ) Two ( ) Three ( ) Four or more Post doctoral: ( ) None ( ) One ( ) Two ( ) Three ( ) Four or more Specialization in speech therapy areas with CRFa validation: ( ) None ( ) One ( ) Two ( ) Three ( ) Four or more
4.	If a postgraduate study was undertaken, which was the year of start and end? (If there is more than one, name all);
5.	Did you do or are you pursuing another degree after the speech therapy course? ( ) Yes ( ) No If Yes. Which?

reported that their economic situation improved after graduation (87.8%) and did some post graduate course (73.0%). Regarding job satisfaction, most reported that they would choose speech therapy again (68.4%), they felt professionally fulfilled (70.9%), even though not financially fulfilled (73.5%). The descriptive data of the study are presented in Table 1.

There was no association between those who worked exclusively as a speech therapist and sociodemographic variables (Table 2).

Regarding the association between speech therapists who worked exclusively in the profession and the aspects of the professional situation, there was an association with the variables salary range ( $p=0.003$ ), workload ( $p=0.001$ ), economic status after graduating ( $p=0.004$ ) and continuity of studies ( $p\leq 0.001$ ). Most of the graduates working exclusively as speech therapists received between 3 and 7 minimum wages (49.4%) and had workloads between 31 and 40 hours (37.0%). Most had better economic status after graduation (90.5%) and had not completed

**Table 1.** Descriptive data of speech language and hearing pathology graduates from a public university

Variables	n	%
<b>SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE</b>		
Sex		
Male	4	2.0
Female	192	98.0
Total	196	100.0
Age in Years		
< 29	114	58.2
30 or more	82	41.8
Total	196	100.0
Where did you attend high school?		
Private school	98	50.0
Public school	98	50.0
Total	196	100.0
Father with college degree		
Yes	55	28.1
No	141	71.9
Total	196	100.0
Mother with college degree		
Yes	61	31.1
No	135	68.9
Total	196	100.0
Access to student subsidy		
Yes	65	33.2
No	131	66.8
Total	196	100.0
<b>PROFESSIONAL SITUATION</b>		
Time working as a Professional		
Up to 1 year and 11 months	39	19.9
Between 2 years and 5 years and 11 months	67	34.2
Between 6 years and 9 years and 11 months	55	28.1
More than 10 years	35	17.8
Total	196	100.0
Salary range		
Between 1 and 3 minimum wages	82	41.8
Between 3 and 7 minimum wages	90	45.9
More than 7 minimum wages	24	12.2
Total	196	100.0
Workload		
Up to 20 hours	17	8.7
Between 21 and 30 hours	50	25.5
Between 31 and 40 hours	71	36.2
More than 40 hours	58	29.6
Total	196	100.0
Difficulty finding first job		
Easy	46	23.5
Medium	94	48.0
Difficult	56	28.6
Total	196	100.0
Time inserted in the market		
Up to 6 months	148	75.5
From 7 months to 1 year	29	14.8
Between 1 and 2 years	19	9.7
Total	196	100.0
Works exclusively as a speech therapist		
Yes	168	85.7
No	28	14.3
Total	196	100.0

**Caption:** n = number of individuals



**Table 1.** Continued...

Variables	n	%
Economic situation improved after graduation		
Yes	172	87.8
No	24	12.2
Total	196	100.0
Continuity of studies (postgraduate)		
Yes	143	73.0
No	53	27.0
Total	196	100.0
PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION		
Would choose speech therapy again?		
Yes	134	68.4
No	62	31.6
Total	196	100.0
Feeling of professional achievement		
Yes	139	70.9
No	57	29.1
Total	196	100.0
Feeling of financial fulfillment		
Yes	52	26.5
No	144	73.5
Total	196	100.0

**Caption:** n = number of individuals

**Table 2.** Association between graduates who work exclusively as speech therapists with sociodemographic characteristics

Variables	Working exclusively as a speech therapist		p-Value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Sex			
Male	4 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	0.409
Female	164 (97.6)	28 (100.0)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Age in years			
Up to 29	95 (56.5)	19 (67.9)	0.261
30 or more	73 (43.5)	9 (32.1)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Where did you attend high school?			
Private school	83 (49.4)	15 (53.6)	0.683
Public school	85 (50.6)	13 (46.4)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Father with college degree			
Yes	48 (28.6)	7 (25.0)	0.697
No	120 (71.4)	21 (75.0)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Mother with college degree			
Yes	53 (31.5)	8 (28.6)	0.753
No	115 (68.5)	20 (71.4)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Access to student subsidy			
Yes	58 (34.5)	7 (25.0)	0.322
No	110 (65.5)	21 (75.0)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	

Pearson's chi-square test

**Caption:** n = number of individuals

postgraduate studies (78.0%). The other variables were not significantly associated (Table 3).

There was an association between speech therapists working exclusively in the profession and the variables perception of

professional achievement ( $p=0.008$ ) and financial ( $p=0.012$ ) achievement. Among the graduates who worked exclusively as speech therapists, most reported feeling professionally fulfilled (74.4%) even though not financially fulfilled (70.2%) (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Association between graduates who work exclusively as speech therapists with aspects of their professional situation

Variables	Works exclusively as a speech therapist		p-Value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Time working as a Professional			
Up to 1 year and 11 months	33 (19.6)	6 (21.4)	0.961
Between 2 years and 5 years and 11 months	57 (34.0)	10 (35.7)	
Between 6 years and 9 years and 11 months	47 (28.0)	8 (28.6)	
More than 10 years	31 (18.4)	4 (14.3)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Salary range			
Between 1 and 3 minimum wages	62 (36.9)	20 (71.4)	0.003*
Between 3 and 7 minimum wages	83 (49.4)	7 (25.0)	
More than 7 minimum wages	23 (13.7)	1 (3.6)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Workload			
Up to 20 hours	9 (5.3)	8 (28.6)	0.001*
Between 21 and 30 hours	44 (26.2)	6 (21.4)	
Between 31 and 40 hours	62 (37.0)	9 (32.1)	
More than 40 hours	53 (31.5)	5 (17.9)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Difficulty finding first job			
Easy	38 (22.6)	8 (28.6)	0.072
Medium	86 (51.2)	8 (28.6)	
Difficult	44 (26.2)	12 (42.8)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Time inserted in the market			
Up to 6 months	130 (77.4)	18 (64.4)	0.223
From 7 months to 1 year	24 (14.3)	5 (17.8)	
Between 1 and 2 years	14 (8.3)	5 (17.8)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Economic situation improved after graduation			
Yes	152 (90.5)	20 (71.4)	0.004*
No	16 (9.5)	8 (28.6)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Continuity of studies (postgraduate)			
Yes	131 (78.0)	12 (42.9)	≤0.001*
No	37 (22.0)	16 (57.1)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	

\*Statistically significant value. ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) - Pearson's chi-square test

Caption: n = number of individuals

**Table 4.** Association between graduates who work exclusively as speech therapists with aspects of job satisfaction

Variables	Works exclusively as a speech therapist		p-Value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Would choose speech therapy again			
Yes	117 (69.6)	17 (60.7)	0.347
No	51 (30.4)	11 (39.3)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Feel professionally fulfilled			
Yes	125 (74.4)	14 (50.0)	0.008*
No	43 (25.6)	14 (50.0)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	
Feels financially fulfilled			
Yes	50 (29.8)	2 (7.1)	0.012*
No	118 (70.2)	26 (92.9)	
Total	168 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	

\*Statistically significant value. ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) - Pearson's chi-square test

Caption: n = number of individuals



## DISCUSSION

According to the perception of the speech language and hearing therapists graduates of a Brazilian public institution, it was possible to assess a positive analysis of the speech language and hearing therapy profession, regarding the aspects of the situation and professional satisfaction, exception made for the financial achievement. The data showed that working exclusively as a speech therapist is associated with salary range, workload, improvement of the economic situation after graduation, continuity of studies and professional achievements.

In this study, the egresses were mostly female up to 29 years old. Studies have shown that speech therapy profession is mostly undertaken by female professionals<sup>(9,15-22)</sup>. One author relates this occurrence to the fact that women are more maternally oriented, transferring to the professional practice the tasks related to the care of another person<sup>(23)</sup>.

Regarding the age of the professionals, in other studies it has been observed an average age over 30 years, at the time the research was conducted<sup>(15-20,22)</sup> and only two studies with speech therapy graduates reported average age within the range of 20 to 30 years<sup>(9,13)</sup>.

The study found no association between working exclusively in the profession and the sociodemographic data. Although no association was found, it is noteworthy that most parents of the sample graduates did not attend university studies (69.9%). Authors of one study reported that many students were the first in the family to enter college<sup>(24)</sup>. From this fact, it is proposed that future investigations on the association between parental education and the educational performance/retention of children in the undergraduate courses may be of interest. Research is also suggested in relation to public school attendance, necessary for the academic path of low-income students. This was indicated in a previous study, which showed that subsidy policies favor the permanence of the student, in obtaining the diploma and is effective in inserting disadvantaged graduates into the labor market<sup>(25)</sup>. The expansion of university access promoted in recent years must be studied in detail.

Regarding salary range, most graduates stated that they receive between three and seven minimum wages and most of them reported better economic situation after graduation, a result similar to other studies conducted with professionals in the area, which showed average salaries between two and six minimum wages<sup>(15,17,19,26)</sup>. A study conducted with speech therapists enrolled in the Regional Council of Speech Therapy (CRFa) - 6th Region of Brazil, the region where the researched course is inserted, found that most professionals worked exclusively as a speech therapist and most received from two to five minimum wages<sup>(17)</sup>.

Most of the graduates of this study reported working between 31 and 40 hours per week, similar to the weekly workloads of speech therapists found in other studies, which ranged from 20 to 40 hours<sup>(15,19,22,26,27)</sup>. In a study conducted with speech language and hearing therapy graduates, the authors observed that weekly workloads over 20 hours were even longer for those who lived out exclusively of their work as speech therapists<sup>(9)</sup>.

There was also an association between working exclusively in the profession and continuing education. The continuity of studies has been pointed, in several studies, as a reality in the profession of different areas of health, including speech therapy. Most of the graduating professionals intend to perform, or have

already done some postgraduate studies, being the specialization the most commonly done as well as desired by them<sup>(12,17,22,28,29)</sup>. In one survey, only three of the 136 newly graduated speech therapists in the state of Rio de Janeiro did not intend to continue updating their training, and most wanted to do specialization (70.0%), followed by master's degree (61.0%) and doctorate (26.0%)<sup>(28)</sup>.

Regarding aspects of job satisfaction, most graduates who worked exclusively within the profession felt professional achievement, even though not financially fulfilled. In this way graduates recognize the profession as a source of satisfaction, regardless of financial satisfaction. Only one study with similar population was found, which also observed independence between job and financial satisfaction<sup>(9)</sup>. Other studies in the literature found that job satisfaction is directly linked to financial satisfaction<sup>(17,26)</sup>. A survey conducted with speech therapists found that 54.1% of professionals were dissatisfied with the profession and of these, 34.6% pointed out as a cause of dissatisfaction: low pay, 10.2%, lack of employment, 5.3%, lack of recognition and 4.0% did not justify the reason<sup>(17)</sup>. Authors discussed that compensation is one of the determining factors for professional satisfaction, as well as working conditions and staff, possibility of recognition and professional growth<sup>(17,21)</sup>.

Given the results of this study, it is suggested to conduct new research, including multi-center studies, in order to provide a broader overview of the insertion and professional path of graduates of speech language and hearing therapy courses in Brazil. Research with graduates is important for the profession and for undergraduate courses throughout the country.

As limitations observed in the development of the present study, we highlight the sample size. The non-updating of e-mails of graduates by the institution and the lack of a channel for contacting between the alumni and the university caused distancing and consequently impaired the access to them, creating obstacles to obtain a larger sample.

## CONCLUSION

Working exclusively as a speech therapist is related to the salary range, workload, perception of professional achievement and improvement of the economic situation after graduation. Although most graduates are not financially successful, they go ahead furthering their studies.

The follow-up of the speech therapists is fundamental to know the aspects of the situation and the professional satisfaction of the alumni, to evaluate the teaching provided by the institution and to understand the reality of the professional group and their job market.

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