# Levels of Academic and Clinical Training of SLPs in AAC and the Quality of AAC Training Provided to Communication Partners of People with Aphasia



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Survey research was conducted to investigate the relationships between SLPs' level of academic and clinical education in AAC and the quality of AAC training provided to communication partners (CP) of people with aphasia (PWA). Lack of CP training and insufficient AAC training of SLPs have been studied as separate entities, however this dissertation study aimed at identifying the relationship between the two. CP training and family counseling have been identified as weaknesses of SLPs and areas that require further development (Sorin-Peters, 2004). Without adequate AAC training SLPs do not have the confidence or skills to provide such training to communication partners (Ratcliff, Koul and Lloyd, 2008).

# Background & Justification

### **Device Abandonment:**

- to device abandonment were lack of support, the user's attitude toward the device, and lack of training (Johnson et al., 2006).
- Approximately 70% of device abandonment may be contributed to a lack of the support person's general knowledge of and training on the device (Ballin, Balandin, Togher, & Stancliffe, 2009).

### Lack of SLP Training in AAC:

- Family training and counseling have been identified as weaknesses of SLPs and areas that require further development (Sorin-Peters, 2004).
- confidence or skills to provide training to communication partners (Ratcliff, Koul and Lloyd, 2008).

# Lack of CP Training:

- stroke survivors in the United States require daily assistance from a family caregiver (Bakas, Kroenke, Plue, Perkins, & Williams, 2006).
- device (Thiessen & Beukelman, 2013).
- toward their loved one with aphasia may be attributed to the lack of support, training, and education provided to them at the onset of their loved one's diagnoses (Zraick & Boone, 1991).

# The Research Problems

- and CP Training.
- 2. Many CPs of PWAs are provided insufficient instruction on how to assist their loved one's functional utilization of the AAC device.

# Research Questions

- 1. What is the relationship between the level of academic training of SLPs in AAC and their perceived competency in providing AAC services to PWAs?
- training of SLPs in CP training and the perceived comfort level in providing AAC training to CPs of PWAs?
- 3. What is the relationship between CP satisfaction with AAC training received and quantity of interactions between the CP and the SLP during the SGD trial?
- 4. What is the relationship between CP satisfaction with AAC training received and reported use of the SGD by the PWA?

# Methods

### Participants:

Participants were extracted from HubSpot™, the Lingraphica Contact Manager.

### **GROUP 1: SLPs**

- Inclusion Criteria:
- Certified by ASHA
- Held an active state license
- Worked within the United States

### Number of SLP participants:

- Surveys emailed: 12,479
- Responses: 968 Complete responses: 902
- Extracted (did not meet criteria): 189
- N = 779

# **Group 1 Demographics - SLPs**

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Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	<mark>749</mark>	<mark>96.2</mark>
Male	30	3.9
Age		
20-39	<mark>329</mark>	<mark>42.2</mark>
40-59	<mark>328</mark>	<mark>41.1</mark>
60 +	122	15.7
Level of Education		
M.A./M.S./M.Ed	<mark>747</mark>	<mark>95.9</mark>
Ph.D/Ed.D/SLP.D	32	4.1
Region		
Northeast	<mark>243</mark>	<mark>31.2</mark>
Midwest	<mark>154</mark>	<mark>19.8</mark>
South	<mark>233</mark>	<mark>29.9</mark>
West	149	19.1
Years licensed/certified SLP		
0-5	159	20.4
6-10	154	19.8
11-20	191	24.5
21+	<mark>275</mark>	<mark>35.3</mark>
Current Work Setting		
School	<b>207</b>	26.7
General Medical	101	13.1
Out-Patient Rehabilitation	<mark>221</mark>	<mark>28.6</mark>
Acute Rehabilitation	144	18.6
Skilled Nursing Facility	<mark>207</mark>	<mark>26.7</mark>
Home Health Services	184	23.8
Private Practice	113	14.6
Clinic in Medical Setting	52	6.7
Academic/University	61	7.9
Retired	11	1.4
Other	74	9.6

# **GROUP 2: CPs of PWAs**

### Inclusion Criteria:

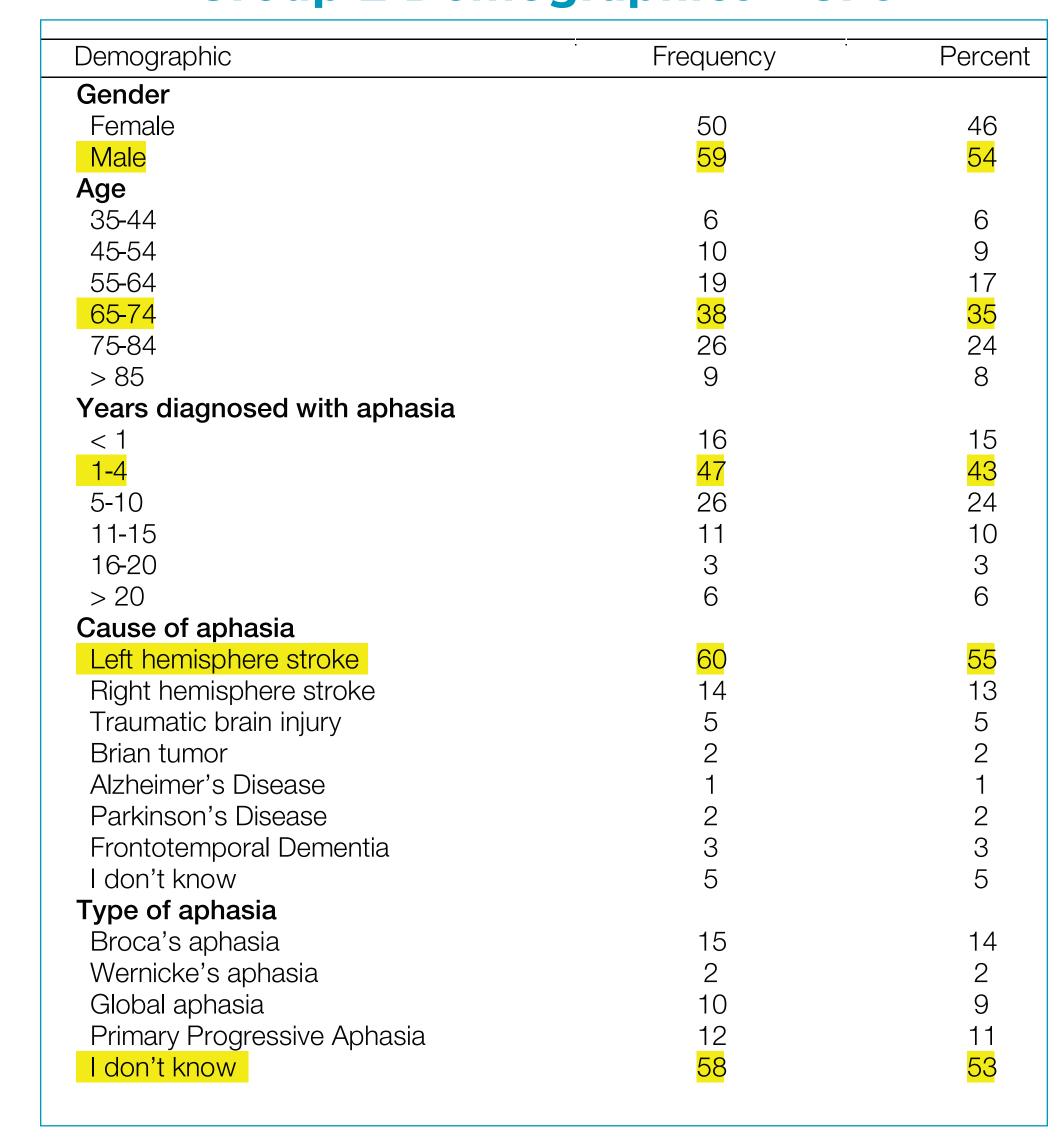
- Primary CP of a PWA
- Lived within the United States
- Participated in a Lingraphica SGD trial
- Owned a Lingraphica SGD

# Number of CP Participants:

- Surveys emailed: 11,863
- Responses: 731
- Complete responses: 174 surveys
- Extracted (did not meet criteria): 65
- N = 109



# **Group 2 Demographics - CPs**



## **Group 2 Demographics - PWAs**

Demographic	Frequency	Percer
Gender		
Female	<mark>81</mark>	<mark>74.</mark> 3
Male	28	25.7
Age		
18-44	6	5.5
45-64	<mark>39</mark>	<mark>35.</mark> 8
65-74	<mark>43</mark>	<mark>39.5</mark>
75-84	19	17.4
85+	2	1.8
Ethnicity		
Caucasian (white)	<mark>95</mark> 3	<mark>87.2</mark>
Hispanic or Latino	3	2.8
Black or African American	5	4.6
Other	2	1.8
Do not wish to disclose	4	3.7
Region		
Northeast	26	23.9
Midwest	<u>16</u>	14.7
South	<mark>52</mark>	<mark>47.7</mark>
West	15	13.8
Relationship to person with aphasia		
Spouse/Partner	<mark>72</mark> 13	66.1
Child		11.9
Parent	17	15.6
Sibling	4	3.7
Friend	1	0.9
Years known person with aphasia		
0-10	11	10.1
11-20	6	5.5
21-30	7	6.4
31-40	20	18.4
41-50	25	22.9
> 50	40	36.7

### Surveys:

Group 1 Survey: Academic and Clinical Experience of SLPs in AAC (Abaranok, 2013)

### 28 Questions:

- Demographics
- Experience working with PWAs and AAC
- Academic and clinical training in AAC and CP training
- Perceived skills and comfort level with AAC and CP training

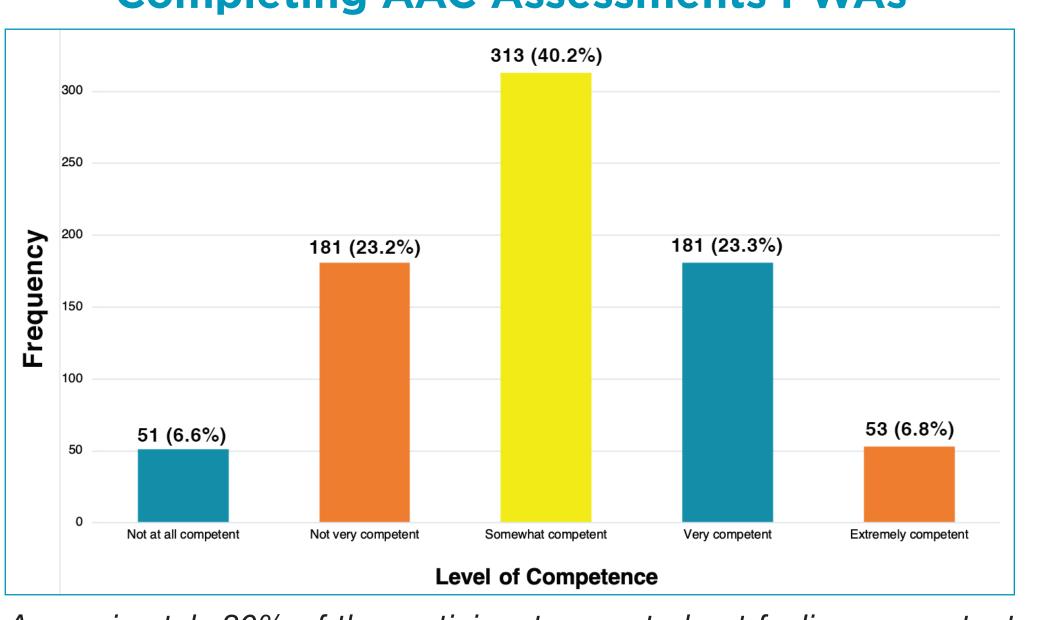
Group 2 Survey: Communication Partner Training in AAC (Blom Johansson et al., 2012)

### 31 Questions:

- Demographics
- Quality of interactions with SLPs
- Quality of AAC training received
- PWA's use of SGD after placement and level of support required

# GROUP 1:



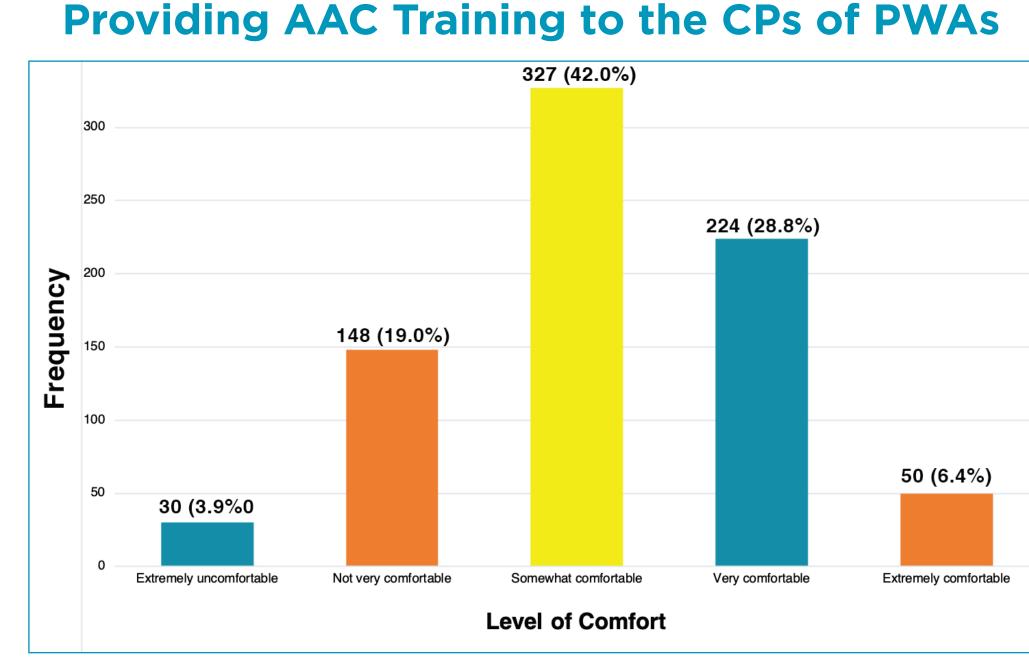


Approximately 30% of the participants reported not feeling competent to complete AAC assessments with PWAs.

# Conducted in Current Role PWAs

Assessment Frequency	N	Percen
Never	52	6.7
Rarely (few times a year)	415	52.3
Occasionally (monthly)	224	28.8
Frequently (weekly)	61	7.8
Regularly (multiple times a week)	27	3.5

Approximately 40% of respondents reported that they completed AAC assessments monthly at minimum.



providing AAC training to CPs of PWAs.

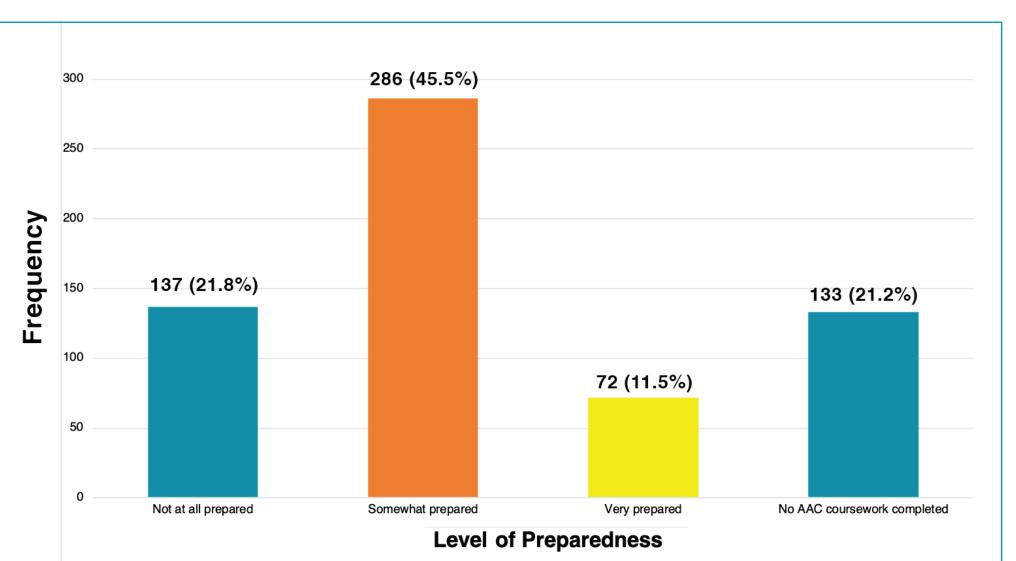
AAC Coursework	Frequency	%
AAC was a required course	278	44.3
I completed an AAC elective course	85	13.5
AAC material was covered in another course	82	13.1
An AAC course was available, but I chose not to take it	19	3.0
An AAC course was not available	144	22.9
I don't remember	20	3.2

an AAC course at the master's level

Communication Partner Training Instruction Provided	N	Percent
Yes	114	18.2
No	148	23.6
I don't remember	202	32.2
I did not complete a master's level AAC course	164	26.1

Approximately 82% of the respondents reported that they either did not or did not remember receiving instruction in training CPs in their master's program.

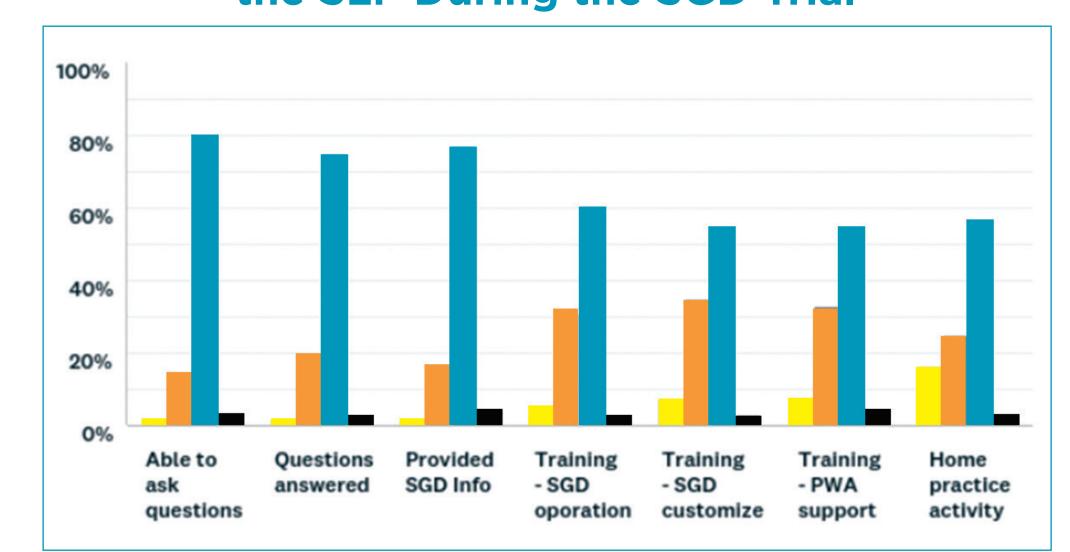
# **Services from Master's Level AAC Coursework**



Approximately 11.5% of the participants perceived their master's level AAC coursework to have fully prepared them to provide AAC services.

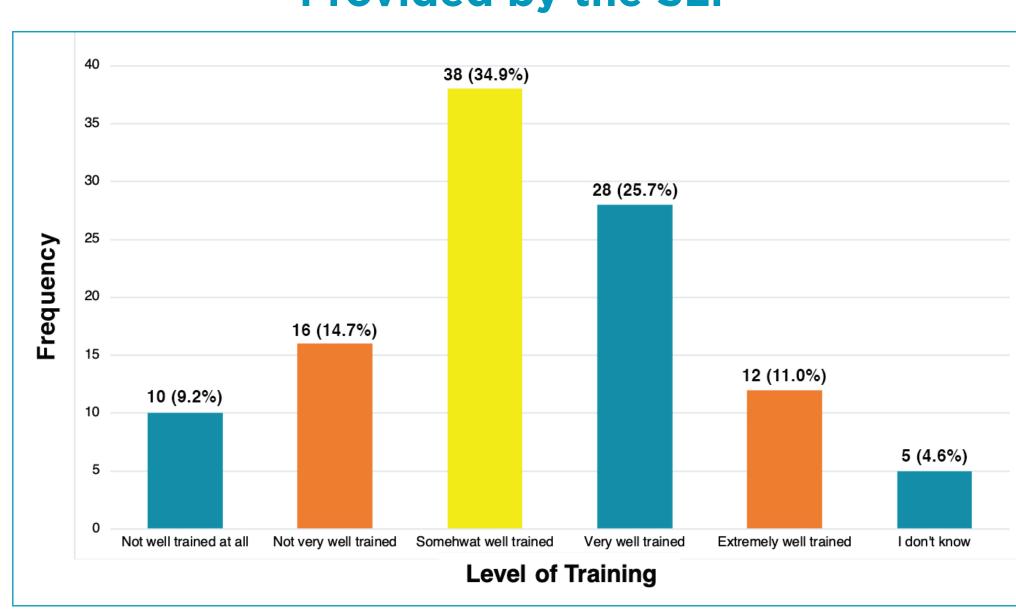
# **GROUP 2:**

### Satisfaction of the Interactions with the SLP During the SGD Trial



CPs reported being less satisfied with the training provided to them on how to operate and customize the SGD, and on how to provide support to their loved one.

### Perceived Quality of Training on SGD **Provided by the SLP**



Approximately 41% of the participants reported that they feel as though they were well-trained on SGD by the SLP.

### **Quantity of Interactions with SLP** and Quality of AAC Training Received

Contact with SLP	Not well trained	Trained	N
No contact	3	0	3
1-8 times	22	48	70
9+ times	1	30	31
Total	26	78	104

CPs who had more frequent contact with their loved one's SLP reported feeling significantly more satisfied and better trained than CPs who reported less contact with the SLP.

# **Training Provided to CP Once SGD Placed**

Amount of Training Provided	N	Percent
No training provided	27	24.8
Sometraining provided, but required more	36	33.0
Yes, training was provided and my needs were fully met	43	39.5
I don't know	3	2.8

Approximately 40% of the participants reported receiving training that fully met their needs post-device placement.

### Frequency of SGD Use by PWA

Frequency of Device Use	N	Percent
Never	17	15.6
Rarely (few times a month)	22	20.2
Sometimes (few times a week)	34	31.2
Often (daily)	25	22.9
Frequently (multiple times a day)	10	9.1

Approximately 32% of participants reported that their loved one with aphasia uses the SGDs on a daily basis, while approximately 36% reported that their loved one rarely or never uses the SGD.

# Frequency PWA Requires Support on the SGD

14	12.8
15	13.8
30	27.5
21	19.3
26	23.9
3	2.8
	30 21 26

Approximately 43% of the participants reported that their loved one with aphasia requires daily support to functionally utilize their SGD.

# Summary

- < 40% of SLPs completed a full-credit AAC course in</li> their master's program.
- < 30% of SLPs reported feeling fully competent in</li> completing AAC assessments or providing AAC training to CPs of PWAs, even though approximately 40% of them reported doing a minimum of one AAC assessment
- < 10% of the SLPs felt that their master's program</li> prepared them to provide AAC services.
- < 15% were provided with instruction on how to provide</li> AAC training to CPs.
- 36% of SLPs reported feeling fully comfortable providing AAC training to CPs of PWAs.
- 30% of the CPs felt that they were insufficiently trained on their loved one's SGD.
- met by the SLP when it came specifically to being taught how to use and customize the SGD.

50% of the CPs reported that their needs were not fully

- 40% of the CPs acknowledged that their loved ones require their support to customize, maintain, and use the SGD functionally either "frequently" or "often."
- CPs who had been in contact with their loved ones' SLPs 9+ times report significantly higher levels of satisfaction with training than CPs who had less contact with an SLP.
- CPs who reported being better trained on the SGD by the SLP, also reported that their loved ones used their device more frequently.
- Many of the CPs who reported that their loved one "never" or "rarely" used their SGD also indicated that they were not well-trained on the SGD.

# Future Research Questions 1. How does the training of CPs on AAC affect over

- successful and functional use of the PWA on the SGD? 2. What does comprehensive AAC coursework at the
- 3. What does a standardized CP training program need to include for optimal results?
- 4. What other obstacles stand in the way of SLPs providing satisfactory AAC training to CPs, and how do we overcome these?

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A full reference list will be provided upon request.

# Abstract

- Some of the factors that have most frequently led

- Without sufficient AAC training SLPs may not have the

- It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of the
- Without sufficient exposure and training, communication partners (CPs) of AAC users may negatively affect that user's communication experience when using the AAC
- Negative attitudes that CPs have been found to develop

- 1. There is a significant lack of formal SLP training in AAC

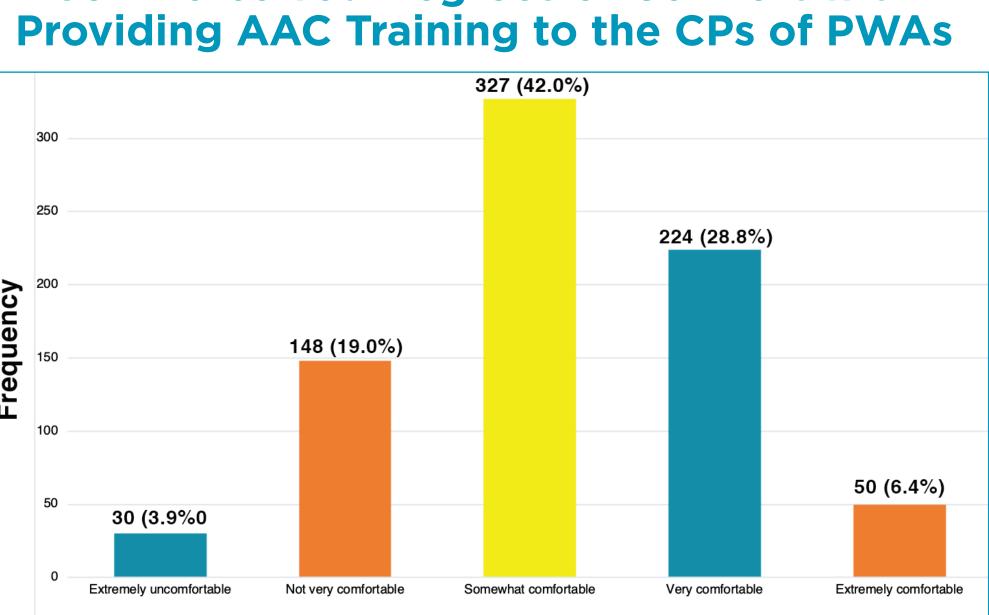
- The following questions guided this dissertation study.
- 2. What is the relationship between the level of academic

# Results

# Frequency of AAC Assessments

Conducted in Can	CIII KOIC F WA	13
Assessment Frequency	N	Percent
Never	52	6.7
Rarely (few times a year)	415	52.3
Occasionally (monthly)	224	28.8
Frequently (weekly)	61	7.8
Regularly (multiple times a week)	27	3.5

# **Self-Perceived Degrees of Comfort with**



Approximately 35% of the respondent reported feeling fully comfortable

Master's Level Coursework in AAC & CP Training		
AAC Coursework	Frequency	%
AAC was a required course	278	44.3
I completed an AAC elective course	85	13.5
AAC material was covered in another course	82	13.1
An AAC course was available, but I chose not to take it	19	3.0
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Approximately 42% of the respondents reported that they did not take

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Communication Partner Training Instruction Provided	N	Percent
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**Level of Preparedness in Providing AAC** 

