



“Prejudice, in fact, is ignorance”: accessibility actions proposal for the inclusion and permanence of employees with disabilities at a federal university in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul

“O preconceito, na verdade, é desconhecimento”: proposta de ações de acessibilidade para inclusão e permanência de servidores com deficiência em uma universidade federal no interior do Rio Grande do Sul

“El prejuicio, em realidad, es ignorancia”: propuesta de acciones de accesibilidad para la inclusión y permanencia de empleados con discapacidad en una universidad federal del interior de Rio Grande do Sul

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Abstract: Law guarantees the entry of people with disabilities into the labor market. However, just making the vacancy possible does not guarantee the full inclusion and permanence of these people in the work environment. It is necessary that organizations be prepared and have in their culture the practice of accessibility actions that contribute to this process. This study aimed to propose accessibility actions according to the panorama of inclusion and permanence of servers with disabilities in a Federal University in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul. With a qualitative approach, of an exploratory nature, it was developed with content analysis of information from questionnaires with open questions, applied to 26 servers with disabilities at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM). The results found indicate that UFSM is on the way to building an accessible University, but it still has barriers, mainly attitudinal, that can be minimized with proposed accessibility actions. In addition to understanding the panorama of inclusion and permanence of servers with disabilities in a Public University, the present study presents a proposal for accessibility actions that can provide better working conditions for people with disabilities. Also filling a gap in studies aimed at servers with disabilities and about actions that help in their real inclusion and permanence in the work environment.

Keywords: accessibility actions; inclusion; permanence.

Resumo: O ingresso das pessoas com deficiência no mercado de trabalho é assegurado por lei. No entanto, apenas possibilitar a vaga não garante a plena inclusão e permanência dessas pessoas no âmbito laboral. É necessário que as organizações estejam preparadas e tenham em sua cultura a prática de ações de acessibilidade que contribuam para esse processo. Este estudo objetivou propor ações de acessibilidade de acordo com o panorama da inclusão e permanência de servidores com deficiência em uma Universidade Federal no interior do Rio Grande do Sul. Com abordagem qualitativa, de caráter exploratório, foi desenvolvido a partir de análise de conteúdo de informações oriundas de questionários com perguntas abertas, aplicados a 26 servidores com deficiência da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM). Os resultados encontrados indicam que a UFSM está no caminho para construir uma Universidade acessível, mas ainda apresenta barreiras, principalmente atitudinais, que podem ser minimizadas com ações de acessibilidade propostas. Além de compreender o panorama da inclusão e permanência dos servidores com deficiência em uma Universidade Pública, este estudo traz uma proposta de ações de acessibilidade que podem proporcionar melhores condições de trabalho para as pessoas com deficiência. Assim, preenche uma lacuna de estudos direcionados para os servidores com deficiência e de ações que auxiliem na sua real inclusão e permanência no ambiente laboral.

Palavras-chave: ações de acessibilidade; inclusão; permanência.

Resumen: La entrada de personas con discapacidad al mercado laboral está garantizada por ley. Sin embargo, solo posibilitar la vacante no garantiza la plena inclusión y permanencia de estas personas en el ambiente de trabajo. Es necesario que las organizaciones estén preparadas y tengan en su cultura la práctica de acciones de accesibilidad que contribuyan a este proceso. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo proponer acciones de accesibilidad de acuerdo con el panorama de inclusión y permanencia de los empleados con discapacidad en una Universidad Federal del interior de Rio Grande do Sul. Con un enfoque cualitativo, de carácter exploratorio, se desarrolló con análisis de contenido de informaciones de cuestionarios con preguntas abiertas, aplicados a 26 empleados con discapacidad de la Universidad Federal de Santa María (UFSM). Los resultados encontrados indican que la UFSM está en camino de construir una Universidad accesible, pero aún presenta barreras, principalmente actitudinales, que pueden minimizarse con las acciones de accesibilidad propuestas. Además de comprender el panorama de inclusión y permanencia de los empleados con discapacidad en una Universidad Pública, este estudio presenta una propuesta de acciones de accesibilidad que puedan brindar mejores condiciones laborales para las personas con discapacidad. Suple un vacío en estudios dirigidos a empleados con discapacidad y acciones que ayuden en su real inclusión y permanencia en el entorno laboral.

Palavras chave: acciones de accesibilidad; inclusión; permanência.

1 Introduction

Accessibility is a citizen's right guaranteed by law, ensuring that people with disabilities (PWD) can benefit from resources and actions within the social domain (Lamônica et al., 2008). Individuals with some form of limitation require adaptations to carry out their daily activities related to leisure, health, education, and work. França and Pagliuca (2008) understand that disability implies a restriction of independence; thus, people with disabilities engage in movements aimed at securing access to the goods and services available to society as a means to ensure their autonomy and citizenship.

Currently, there are laws that secure job positions for workers with disabilities in the labor market, including in the public sector. Authors discussing this topic consistently assert that the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace should go beyond merely guaranteeing a job position; it requires collaborative efforts from colleagues, managers, and the workers with disabilities themselves (Toldrá, 2009; Campos, Vasconcellos, Kruglianskas, 2013; Maccali *et al.*, 2015; Pereira, Bizelli, Leite, 2017; Freitas *et al.*, 2017). This highlights the need for organizations to provide adequate conditions to accommodate and retain these workers, especially those who require an adapted environment, viewing inclusion as a process distinct from simple entry into the institution (Campos, Vasconcellos, Kruglianskas, 2013).

The Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), located in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, is a public educational institution that selects its staff through public examinations, with reserved positions for candidates with disabilities, in accordance with Law 8112 (Brazil, 1990). Its administrative structure includes specific departments dedicated to developing initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for staff in their daily activities, including actions directed toward employees with disabilities. Effective inclusion of people with disabilities (PWD) in the workforce depends on the structural, functional, organizational, and social conditions that comprise the environment into which the individual will be integrated (Maccali *et al.*, 2015).

Understanding how inclusion occurs for employees with disabilities, as well as their individual particularities throughout work activities, enables managers to better administer human resources within organizations. This study was developed with the objective of understanding the panorama of inclusion and accessibility at UFSM from the perspective of its employees with disabilities and, in doing so, proposing accessibility actions that promote, beyond mere job placement, the satisfactory inclusion and retention of these workers in the organizational environment.

1.1 Person with disability

The term "Person with Disability" is used in this study as established by the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Brazil, 2009) and the National Statute of the Person with Disability (Brazil, 2015), which defines in art. 2º:

A person with a disability is considered to be someone who has a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with one or more barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Brazil, 2015).

Understood as a biological effect, Assis (2016) points out that disability can affect any individual, either permanently or temporarily, at different stages of life. For the author, disability is characterized by organic difficulties that limit and incapacitate the individual from performing tasks related to daily living activities and/or work-related functions. Disability is defined as such from the moment that, in interaction with other individuals in society, barriers emerge that effectively prevent the full participation of people with disabilities (PWD) (Assis, 2016).

A gradual advancement is observed in how society has been addressing disability. It is noticeable that society's interpretation of disability and its relationship with people in this condition have undergone various changes throughout history (Camargo; Goulart Júnior; Leite, 2017). Today, there is a recognition that individuals with disabilities have the same rights to make free choices and enjoy the opportunities available in society as anyone else, regardless of their type of disability or the degree of impairment they may have. It is the responsibility of society to reorganize itself to ensure that every individual, irrespective of their particularities, has access to all goods and services that it offers (Bezerra; Vieira, 2012).

For individuals with disabilities, employment represents more than a basic means of livelihood; it brings a significant change in the construction of their subjectivity, involving an intrapersonal dimension that reflects in self-esteem and self-worth, shaping their identity in relation to others, whether by assuming roles or assigning roles to others (Passerino; Pereira, 2014). Fernandes, Moura, and Ribeiro (2011) note that the increased presence of people with disabilities in public spaces and on the streets is noticeable. In seeking ways to achieve autonomy, people with disabilities view employment as an essential ally in reaching this goal, striving for greater inclusion in the labor market. Noga (2012) states that today, people with disabilities demand their participation, especially in the formal workforce, as a guarantee of dignity. Despite an increase in the number of employed individuals with disabilities, a large portion of the population with disabilities remains outside formal employment. The development of an inclusive culture in society and organizations shows a scenario of limited and slow progress, as many people with disabilities in Brazil continue to be excluded from the workforce, as well as from other social spheres (Camargo; Goulart Júnior; Leite, 2017).

The inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce goes beyond merely hiring a person with a disability. It involves questioning pre-established standards that generate exclusion and adapting to eliminate them. This process is closely linked to a new organizational approach that aims to meet the needs of all its members, particularly those with disabilities (Fernandes, Moura, Ribeiro, 2011). A collective effort is necessary for full inclusion, both from the organization and from the individual with a disability, suggesting that certain considerations should be observed in interactions with these individuals. Actions such as asking before offering help, speaking directly to the person, and allowing them to make their own decisions can facilitate the inclusion process (García-Morato, 2012). Inclusion promotes the humanization of the company, where people are heard, understood, and encouraged; their capacity to act and learn is highlighted, and the management and application of each individual's competencies sustain organizational competitiveness. Thus, it is understood that positions occupied by people with disabilities should not be restricted to certain areas within the organization, as this would constitute a segregational approach, placing the individual in isolation and preventing them from constructively interacting with others, thereby hindering their professional growth (Fernandes; Moura; Ribeiro, 2011).

1.2 Inclusion and accessibility

Social inclusion can be understood as the opportunity for people with disabilities, along with other citizens, to participate effectively in the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the contexts in which they are embedded, with their rights respected, regardless of social class, race, religion, gender, etc. It is an interactive and bidirectional process, involving interventions both for the individual, to equip them, and for the social context, to make it accessible, thereby enabling everyone's participation (Camargo, Goulart Júnior, Leite, 2017). According to Cirino (2016), the concept of inclusion, whether social or otherwise, is grounded in the recognition and acceptance of diversity among individuals and society, encompassing choices and practices broadly. In this way, legal considerations are always present in discussions about inclusion, upholding the principles of equality and the guarantee of rights. It is a slow and complex process that requires transformations from both people with disabilities and the social environment in which they are integrated.

According to the inclusion paradigm, disability is not confined to the individual, nor is it solely their responsibility to pursue their development. Society also plays a role in finding ways to ensure the development and inclusion of people with disabilities, recognizing their right to access the common goods of community life (Silva; Furtado; Andrade, 2018). The social perspective on disability views inclusion as a dual movement of adaptation both of society toward the person with a disability and of the person with a disability toward society requiring that institutions adapt to serve human beings in their diversity (Almeida; Ferreira, 2018).

In the workplace, the effective inclusion of people with disabilities depends not only on professional preparation but also on the structural, functional, organizational, and social conditions that shape the environment into which the individual will be integrated, ensuring that their hiring is not solely driven by goodwill or legal obligation (Maccali, 2015). Inclusion is not merely about being physically present, sharing the same space with a person with a disability, or tolerating their presence in the workplace. Inclusion requires that the organization and its members actively support the individual with a disability to make this process successful. It involves adapting the organizational structure to accommodate individuals, taking into account their unique characteristics and competencies (Fernandes; Moura; Ribeiro, 2011).

The mere act of hiring a person with a disability does not make an organization inclusive. This action can be referred to as "integration," which, according to Sassaki (2010), involves the effort to include individuals with disabilities who have achieved a level of competence compatible with current social standards, preparing them for integration into society. For the author, inclusion involves modifying society as a prerequisite for people with disabilities to pursue their development and exercise citizenship. Policies based on integration reflect conservative paradigms from past decades, when people with disabilities were segregated, isolated, and socially marginalized. By proposing only the integration of people with disabilities, there is an implicit notion that individual rehabilitation is necessary so that, through their own merit and as close as possible to a standard of "normality," they can be integrated or reintegrated into general systems of education, health, and work. Currently, the concept of integration is being replaced by the paradigm of inclusion, which assigns greater responsibilities to society and the State, ensuring accessibility and inclusion for all, regardless of physical, sensory, or cognitive limitations (Garcia, 2014).

The concept of "accessibility" can be found in various forms in Law 13.146 (Brazil, 2015), known as the "Statute of the Person with Disability," which defines, for example:

Art. 3º For the purposes of applying this Law, the following are considered:

I - Accessibility: the possibility and condition for safe and autonomous use of spaces, furniture, urban equipment, buildings, transportation, information, and communication, including their systems and technologies, as well as other services and facilities open to the public, for public or private collective use, both in urban and rural areas, by people with disabilities or with reduced mobility.

In this sense, accessibility emerges as a right for all citizens to use spaces, respecting the universal right of freedom of movement. For individuals with disabilities, accessibility ensures the exercise of citizenship and enables greater autonomy, as stated in art. 53 of the Law 13.146 (Brasil, 2015):

Art. 53. Accessibility is a right that guarantees individuals with disabilities or reduced mobility the ability to live independently and exercise their rights to citizenship and social participation.

Accessibility is part of the concept of citizenship, in which individuals have legally protected rights that must be respected. However, these rights are often violated when people encounter architectural and social barriers. Also, in Law 13.146 (Brazil, 2015), barriers are defined as any actions or obstacles that compromise the right to accessibility and can be classified into:

- a) Urban barriers: existing in public and private roads and spaces open to the public or for collective use;
- b) Architectural barriers: present in public and private buildings;
- c) Transportation barriers: found in transportation systems and means;
- d) Communication and information barriers: any hindrance, obstacle, attitude, or behavior that makes it difficult or impossible to express or receive messages and information through communication systems and information technology;
- e) Attitudinal barriers: attitudes or behaviors that impede or hinder the social participation of individuals with disabilities on equal terms and opportunities with others;
- f) Technological barriers: those that make it difficult or impossible for individuals with disabilities to access technologies (Brasil, 2015).

The Statute of the Person with Disability also defines the concept of "universal design" as the "design of products, environments, programs, and services to be used by all people, without the need for adaptation or specific design, including assistive technology resources" (Brazil, 2015). Based on the concept of "universal design," the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (ABNT) aims to standardize technical specifications for the creation and implementation of architectural projects, making them suitable for all individuals (Assis, 2016). In this context, ABNT NBR 9050 (2015) establishes criteria and technical parameters for the design, construction, installation, and adaptation of urban and rural environments and buildings to ensure accessibility. This standard aims to provide greater autonomy, independence, and safety for as many people as possible, regardless of their characteristics, when accessing environments, buildings, furniture, urban equipment, and other elements. To be considered accessible, these elements must meet the requirements outlined in the ABNT NBR 9050 (2015).

Sasaki (2010) highlights that accessibility extends beyond physical access to include pedagogical, communicational, and other dimensions, enabling interaction among people and presenting accessibility in six dimensions: a) Architectural: elimination of physical environmental barriers in urban spaces, buildings, and public transportation; b) Communicational: ensures communication across various mediums; c) Methodological: promotes flexibility in study, work, and production methods and techniques; d) Instrumental: addresses flexibility in the use of study, work, and leisure tools

and instruments; e) Programmatic: advocates for the removal of public policies, norms, and regulations that create barriers to inclusion; f) Attitudinal: calls for the elimination of socially instituted prejudices, stigmas, and stereotypes.

The discussion about accessibility goes beyond architectural barriers. Communication is essential for everyone sharing the same space, as accessibility is not limited to the installation of elevators or the construction of access ramps in buildings; it also requires the adaptation of communication methods, reducing barriers and enabling people with disabilities to use any space according to their needs (Siluk; Paulo, 2014). People with disabilities frequently encounter attitudinal barriers in their daily lives, stemming from others' attitudes toward disability, often as a result of misinformation and prejudice, leading to discrimination, bias, and exclusion (Castro; Almeida, 2014).

Among the factors hindering the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace, the primary challenge is the low qualification level of individuals with disabilities, a consequence of historical segregation, which encounters obstacles in the various requirements imposed by companies for job positions. Next, there is the lack of accessibility in transportation, buildings, and communal spaces, which often become insurmountable barriers. Finally, there are cultural barriers, which, though undergoing transformation, still reflect a lack of awareness of the potential of people with disabilities, leading to prejudice. However, these stigmas can be broken through strategies that adapt organizations and discourage discriminatory practices, creating conditions for professionals with disabilities to be welcomed with respect and appreciation rather than merely meeting legal requirements (Hammes; Nuernberg, 2015).

Accessibility actions are specific measures that can be implemented in various contexts, including the workplace. Camargo, Goulart Júnior, and Leite (2017), following the accessibility dimensions proposed by Sassaki (2010), provide examples of actions that can help eliminate daily barriers for people with disabilities. In the communicational dimension, they propose various forms of communication, such as the option to learn Brazilian Sign Language. For the methodological dimension, they suggest diverse methods and strategies for the learning of all workers. In the instrumental dimension, providing equipment, instruments, and tools that meet diverse needs is essential to promote greater autonomy and enable the performance of assigned tasks. For the programmatic dimension, they recommend the dissemination and implementation of public policies, legislation, and norms that ensure the participation of everyone in various spheres. In the attitudinal dimension, they propose techniques to help eliminate prejudices, stereotypes, and social stigmas toward people with disabilities. In the architectural dimension, they suggest ensuring access for people with disabilities to all organizational spaces through the construction of ramps, handrails, installation of elevators, and adaptation of restrooms and other environments, in compliance with standards ABNT NBR 9050 (2015).

Thus, the traditional notion that individuals with disabilities should adapt to the labor market gives way to a more open and inclusive social approach, focused on strategies such as quotas and accessibility, which aim to equip the labor market to embrace diversity in its environment (Manhães, 2010).

2 Methodology

This study is characterized by a qualitative, exploratory approach. In qualitative research, a key advantage is the ability to conduct a detailed and precise analysis of certain cases, allowing participants greater freedom to determine what is important to them and to present these aspects in their contexts (Flick, 2013). Exploratory research serves as the first step in any scientific work, aiming to provide more information on a given topic, facilitate the delimitation of a research theme, define objectives, formulate research hypotheses, or discover a new approach for the intended work (Andrade, 2010).

The research procedures began with a request to the Office of the Vice Provost for Personnel Management (PROGEP) at UFSM for a list of the institution's employees with disabilities and their contact information, to enable communication and extend an invitation to participate in the research. According to the information provided, the institution had a total of 39 employees with disabilities, including 23 with physical disabilities, 13 with visual impairments, and 3 with hearing impairments. An effort was made to establish contact with all employees with disabilities listed by PROGEP. At the end of the data collection, the sample consisted of 26 respondents with disabilities: 1 with a hearing impairment, 11 with visual impairments, and 14 with physical disabilities, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Sample Characteristics - Employees with Disabilities

Name	Gender	Age	Disability	Specificity
S1	Male	34	Physical Disability	Monoparesis of the right lower limb
S2	Male	42	Visual Impairment	Blindness
S3	Female	56	Physical Disability	Wheelchair User
S4	Male	28	Physical Disability	Moderate Mobility
S5	Male	24	Visual Impairment	Monocular Vision
S6	Female	32	Hearing Impairment	Low Hearing
S7	Male	38	Physical Disability	Mobility Impairment
S8	Female	61	Visual Impairment	Low Vision
S9	Female	33	Physical Disability	Mobility Impairment
S10	Male	39	Physical Disability	Right Arm Disability
S11	Male	52	Physical Disability	Wheelchair User
S12	Female	39	Visual Impairment	Monocular Vision

S13	Female	50	Visual Impairment	Monocular Vision
S14	Male	39	Physical Disability	Limb Shortening
S15	Female	38	Visual Impairment	Low Vision
S16	Male	40	Visual Impairment	Monocular Vision
S17	Female	42	Visual Impairment	Blindness
S18	Female	53	Physical Disability	Mobility Impairment
S19	Male	52	Physical Disability	Wheelchair User
S20	Male	28	Visual Impairment	Low Vision
S21	Female	60	Physical Disability	Right Hand Amputation
S22	Female	39	Visual Impairment	Monocular Vision
S23	Female	38	Physical Disability	Mobility Impairment
S24	Male	29	Physical Disability	Mobility Impairment
S25	Female	50	Physical Disability	Mobility Impairment
S26	Male	35	Visual Impairment	Low Vision

Source: Own Elaboration.

An open-ended questionnaire was administered to UFSM employees with disabilities, aiming to understand their perceptions of accessibility and inclusion at the University, thereby allowing for the development of suggested accessibility actions to support the inclusion and retention of employees with disabilities at UFSM. The questions addressed their entry into the University, including any encountered barriers and necessary workplace adaptations, as well as their ongoing experience, focusing on the unique aspects of their work routines. Employees were also asked about their relationships with supervisors and colleagues, as well as the University's infrastructure, including its human and material resources and support services. Additionally, suggestions were requested for actions that could enhance accessibility at the institution.

During data collection, certain particularities emerged. Most questionnaires were handed directly to the respondents, who either filled them out on the spot while the researcher waited or retained the instrument to complete at a more convenient time and return it later. However, some adaptations were made for five participants. One visually impaired participant requested that the questionnaire be sent via email in an accessible format so that they could respond using communication aids. For four other participants two with visual impairments and two with physical disabilities the questionnaire was administered orally, similar to a semi structured interview, in which the researcher read the questions and the participants provided their responses. For these participants, a recorder was used to capture their responses more accurately, with prior consent from the interviewees.

All questionnaires were accompanied by two copies of the Informed Consent Form (ICF), one given directly to the participant and the other, duly completed, returned to the researcher. The study received approval from the UFSM Ethics and Research Committee (CEP), under opinion number 3210793.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which, according to Bardin (2011), consists of a set of methods for analyzing communications to obtain indicators, through systematic and objective procedures for describing message content, that allow for the inference of knowledge related to the conditions of production/reception of these messages. The procedure followed the stages outlined by the author: pre-analysis, material exploration, and treatment of results, inference, and interpretation, resulting in three final categories of analysis: Admission and Inclusion, Interpersonal Relationships, and Institutional Structure.

3 Results

3.1 Accessibility and Inclusion: The UFSM Overview

The current state of accessibility and inclusion at UFSM is presented below, from the perspective of the institution's employees with disabilities. Regarding the inclusion process and any barriers that may have hindered it, most participants did not encounter barriers. However, some urban, architectural, and attitudinal barriers were reported. Concerning urban barriers, participants cited internal distances on the main UFSM campus and the sidewalks they navigate. For architectural barriers, the main issues reported were related to the accessibility of buildings and restrooms, as well as one instance involving the positioning of a workstation, which made it difficult for the employee to view colleagues and follow departmental routines. Attitudinal barriers were the most frequently mentioned, with reports of prejudice from supervisors and coworkers, often implicitly expressed through behaviors such as doubt in the abilities of employees with disabilities, indifference, and reluctance to inquire about their needs, as illustrated in the excerpts below:

"I had to show my colleagues and supervisors that I could perform tasks differently but with the same responsibility and efficiency as other employees" (S17).

"When I started, I felt little support from the supervisors. The coordinators at the time I won't name names were quite indifferent. [...] Of course, no one would say it to my face or give me a dirty look, but you can feel when you're kind of 'sidelined,' left out" (S10).

"[...] any physical disability seems to be a taboo. [...] there seems to be a reluctance to ask about a disability, as if doing so would be offensive. Because of this, many prefer not to see it, not to share work or experiences" (S1).

One of the employees with disabilities reported that, upon joining UFSM in 1993, she faced challenges related to her assigned department, which required adjustments in the team to accommodate her. This situation did not sit well with her colleagues and supervisors, who used the expression, "Oh, just leave her there; after all, she's crippled." This incident caused embarrassment for the employee, who stated that it was "[...] very exhausting, at the beginning, to hear that and not know how to handle the situation" (S3).

Many of these attitudes may have contributed to delays in employees feeling fully included in their departments, as reported by S17 and S10, respectively: "The process of acceptance and awareness was slow; consequently, it took me a while to feel truly included in my department" (S17), "I felt difficulties with inclusion, with feeling part of a team; I didn't feel much acceptance, it seems" (S10). It can be observed that, although most employees experienced a positive inclusion process without major obstacles, there were still barriers that could hinder this process, with questionable attitudes originating from coworkers and supervisors.

Furthermore, the inclusion process can also be influenced by the need for workplace or equipment adaptations. In this regard, employees with disabilities discussed the adaptations or assistance required upon joining UFSM. Most interviewees did not need assistance, having full access to work activities. Among those who requested adaptations, only one employee mentioned that their request for a larger monitor screen was initially met, but upon changing departments, the adaptation was not provided. For others, UFSM consistently sought to meet their needs, as noted in the following statements:

"[...] I was immediately attended to. [...] Whenever I needed it, the institution provided me with courses both within and outside the city for my development" (S17).

"In general, I have been satisfactorily attended to from the beginning" (S9).

"[...] At first, I felt some resistance, [...] today I am very well-supported here, [...] we are being supported by the University" (S2).

"[...] For me, they arranged everything perfectly, in a short timepo" (S10).

The assistance requested by employees with disabilities covered various dimensions of accessibility, including architectural accessibility, with requests for adapted transportation, access ramps, bathroom modifications, and even relocation due to inaccessibility in certain buildings. Instrumental adjustments included computers, larger monitors, wireless mice, chairs with specific features like armrests, and a phone adapted for hearing impairment. For communicational resources, screen-reader software was installed on computers, along with document formatting compatible with these tools, allowing access for users. Additionally, the institution provided methodological resources, such as the opportunity for training courses requested by one of the employees. There were also reports of the need for attitudinal adaptation by the employees

themselves, who entered with fears of new environments and situations, including concerns about acceptance from the public they served, requiring them to develop emotional resilience over time.

Even with adaptation needs met by UFSM, some employees still encounter accessibility challenges in their daily activities on campus or in their work departments, as indicated by statements related to the factor of retention. For employees with disabilities, moving around the main UFSM campus can be problematic due to irregularities in sidewalks and ramps, often requiring assistance from others or transportation support for mobility, as illustrated in the following account:

"When I occasionally need to go to another building, I require assistance, as I don't feel safe due to the irregularities on the sidewalks" (S17).

"I have to move around, and soon enough, I end up needing to request a car" (S2).

Even when employees are autonomous in their mobility, they sometimes encounter access difficulties, as reported by S9 e S1:

"The access from the bus stop to the entrance is very poor. There's a lack of a properly located stop and suitable paving [...]" (S9).

"[...] there is also the issue of small obstacles on the floor, where I might catch my foot, like wires and cables running across the floor" (S1).

In addition to these obstacles, issues were also reported regarding access to drinking fountains, stairs, reception counters, snack bars, and cafes without accessibility, as well as small computer monitor screens and the frequent lack of accessibility in institutional documents or specific programs, such as the SIE.

Regarding the relationship between employees with disabilities and their supervisors and colleagues, most respondents indicated a positive relationship with people in their work environment. There were only two negative reports: one concerning a poor relationship with a supervisor, which was unrelated to the employee's disability, and the other involving a generally good relationship with colleagues but with some perceived disadvantages noted by the employee:

"[...] with previous supervisors, I was disadvantaged, including during vacation periods, and with the current supervisor, I was pressured to perform tasks beyond my capabilities, such as staying longer at work and entering daily logs in a program that requires speed [...]" (S8).

The remaining statements regarding relationship issues were all positive, with the following highlights:

"[...] currently, my two supervisors, the coordinator and the vice-coordinator, are wonderful, and my colleagues are all very good" (S10).

"I am highly valued by my immediate supervisor; I receive support and help with my tasks whenever I ask. I have support from my colleagues" (S13).

"The support and understanding from the team, from the very beginning, have been factors that assist in my daily routine" (S9).

"[...] I have support when I go through physical difficulties due to my disability pain, absences from work, etc" (S7).

Regarding interpersonal relationships, the vast majority of UFSM employees with disabilities reported no perception of discrimination or prejudice in the workplace. However, some employees mentioned experiencing prejudice upon joining the department, in the form of attitudes or misjudgments about their abilities, as illustrated below:

"Yes, through comments that belittled me. [...] I was judged incapable of handling certain tasks because they didn't understand my limitations" (S1).

"When people begin to interact with others who have a disability, they end up being surprised by the real limitations, previously overestimated, and the true potential, previously underestimated. [...] Prejudice, in reality, is ignorance" (S17).

Regarding UFSM's infrastructure, most employees believe that the institution's human and material resources are insufficient to meet accessibility demands. Concerning human resources, reports highlighted a lack of specialized and trained staff, absence of sign language interpreters, lack of attentiveness from responsible personnel, the need for prior assessment of departments where employees with disabilities are assigned, and the absence of a dedicated department to address the needs of people with disabilities (PWD):

"There is a lack of human resources, such as sign language interpreters. There could be a department that proactively reaches out to PWDs to address their needs" (S26).

"[...] there is still a shortage of specialized and trained staff" (S5).

"[...] the PROGEP staff needs to better investigate the locations where PWD employees will be assigned. I am mainly referring to the Medical Assessment" (S23).

Regarding material resources, respondents mentioned the absence of elevators in some buildings, adapted drinking fountains, access ramps, barriers, uneven surfaces, cleanliness issues, inadequate lighting, delays in construction and repairs to the University's physical infrastructure, and especially the lack of financial resources:

"[...] There's a lack of funding, a lack of financial resources" (S3).

"[...] we know this involves financial resources, and it doesn't always depend solely on the institution to secure these funds" (S17).

On the other hand, there were also statements expressing the belief that the institution has the resources to meet demands or that, despite material shortages, it performs well, striving to meet the needs and specificities of each case:

"No, not at all. But with the human and material resources it has, it is doing a great job" (S2).

"[...] I believe that UFSM is working daily to improve and expand to meet its needs" (S17).

"It can't be said that it is sufficient, as each case is different; what's important is that as needs arise, they are addressed" (S11).

"I believe that UFSM is adapting to each case, but resources are still lacking" (S13).

Additionally, regarding programs, centers, or support bodies within UFSM specifically for employees with disabilities, most respondents mentioned the Accessibility Center. Besides this center, the CAED, the Accessibility Commission, a Monitoring Center for new employees with disabilities, and a specific Admission Commission for PWDs were also mentioned. There were also reports about services utilized by employees, such as specialized care from Occupational Therapists and the possibility for employees with disabilities to receive lunch from the University Restaurant at their workplace, as reflected in the following statements:

"There is a monitoring center for new employees with disabilities, aimed at assisting and adapting them to the job" (S1).

"There is a specific admission commission for people with disabilities in PROGEP, in partnership with the Accessibility Center" (S2).

"[...] there is an accessibility center within the university; I don't know it personally, but I know it exists. One of the advancements was the possibility for employees to receive lunch without having to go there" (S3).

"I have been participating in the care of Occupational Therapy students for 3 months" (S9).

Finally, a space was opened for participants to suggest actions that could be adopted by UFSM to improve the quality of life for employees with disabilities. Recommendations were made across all dimensions of accessibility, particularly in the architectural dimension, advocating for improvements in the structures of buildings and pathways within the University, including ramps, elevators, paving, and the location of bus stops. In the methodological dimension, there were suggestions for conducting training and capacity-building courses for supervisors and colleagues of employees with disabilities, as well as the inclusion of sports activities. The need for ongoing sup-

port for these employees throughout their work journey was also emphasized, including psychological support, the creation of discussion forums on PWD topics, and chat groups, as illustrated in the following accounts:

"[...] there should be a specific department to address the emotional side of employees with disabilities, providing greater support, right"? (S3).

"[...] they should reach out to us periodically, interact with us, ask about the difficulties we encounter, right?! For example, every six months, check in on the activities we've carried out, to see if they are appropriate" (S8).

"[...] having a support center for people with disabilities; if it exists, I don't know, I've never heard of it" (S10).

"Accompanying TAEs with disabilities, even chat (study) groups with them" (S13).

In addition to these suggestions, the need for investments in innovation in assistive technologies was also mentioned, enabling better communication among all, as well as the provision of specific tools and materials according to the instrumental demands of people with disabilities (PWD). In the programmatic dimension, the importance of adhering to public policies was emphasized, as reflected in the statement from S2:

"[...] it is the adoption of the International Classification of Functioning (ICF), disability, and health, so that only individuals with genuine disabilities who truly require adaptations are considered, right"? (S2).

The employee suggests that, instead of using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), particularly for the admission of employees with disabilities into the institution, the ICF should be adopted, which considers people with disabilities not as "patients" but as functional individuals, establishing a fairer conception of PWD. Finally, a change in the attitudes of those who have daily interactions with PWD is proposed, suggesting awareness-raising actions that can demonstrate the importance of equal treatment and facilitate access to work tasks, as reflected in the following responses:

"Awareness-raising actions are always welcome. By eliminating attitudinal barriers, we can overcome all the others" (S17).

"Training for staff to understand the specific needs of their colleagues with disabilities, without fear of engaging in conversation or considering them incapable without knowing them" (S1).

"The best approach is to treat everyone equally, just providing equal access opportunities, as the capacity to perform the role is the same for everyone" (S11).

For the category of Admission and Inclusion, an analysis of the statements from employees with disabilities at UFSM revealed that most had a satisfactory entry into the institution, encountering few barriers that hindered the inclusion process. When

necessary, adaptations were identified, UFSM sought to address these requests, facilitating access to work activities for these employees. However, architectural, communicational, and instrumental barriers were still noted, which continue to hinder accessibility on campus. Nonetheless, the reality observed at UFSM, even in agreement with the findings of Pereira, Bizelli, and Leite (2017), where a large proportion of the surveyed PWDs expressed satisfaction with their jobs at a public university, seems to contrast with the main studies in the field. Assis (2016), in studying working conditions at a Federal University, pointed out the potential aggravation of limitations and disadvantages due to the lack of adaptations and adjustments in the work environment. What the author observed is even more alarming when he states that "in many situations, employees with disabilities are subjected to distressing working conditions" (p. 113). Camargo, Goulart Júnior, and Leite (2017) corroborate this by mentioning that inclusion should not be limited to the mere opportunity of entering the work environment; it is necessary to implement strategies that promote the full participation of PWDs in the organizational context.

In the category of Interpersonal Relationships, although the relationships with supervisors and colleagues were predominantly positive, some cases of distrust and prejudice were reported. Camargo, Goulart Júnior, and Leite (2017) emphasize the importance of working on awareness and sensitization to support employees with disabilities by everyone involved in the organizational environment, noting that organizational culture often absorbs traits from societal culture, which is still laden with prejudices related to PWDs. Pereira, Bizelli, and Leite (2017) understand that the daily life of institutions is adapting and normalizing the coexistence among different individuals. However, the authors assert that there is still much to be done to overcome prejudiced attitudes and the lack of human preparation in organizations to enable the full development of people with disabilities.

Regarding the Institution's Structure, a large portion of employees believe that sufficient human and material resources are not available to meet accessibility demands, while still recognizing the Accessibility Center as the main body focused on supporting employees with disabilities. Additionally, employees suggested actions across all dimensions of accessibility, including architectural modifications to buildings and pathways on campus, awareness-raising actions among supervisors and colleagues, qualification courses on disability-related topics, the provision of accessible tools and materials, and the need to comply with laws related to accessibility, among other points. The presence of barriers that impede or hinder access for PWDs in schools, universities, and the job market, as pointed out by Pagaiame (2016), still requires mobilization to ensure that legal principles are upheld. Assis (2016) recommends that organizations pay attention to the working conditions offered to employees with disabilities, concerning architectural, attitudinal, and managerial adaptations, as well as the provision of tools and equipment. Pereira, Bizelli, and Leite (2017) further emphasize that efficient public governance must go beyond adequate resource allocation,

providing dignified working conditions to minimize predatory competition for those who require special assistance.

3.2 Proposal for accessibility actions for the inclusion and permanence of employees with disabilities at USFM.

Based on the collected information, suggestions for accessibility actions have been developed to assist in the inclusion and retention of employees with disabilities at UFSM, which can be extended, respecting particularities, to other universities and public institutions. These suggestions were constructed considering the needs of the surveyed population, aligned with the six dimensions of accessibility proposed by Sasaki (2010). This framework, which aligns with the inclusion paradigm and human diversity, argues that accessibility is not solely conditioned by the architectural environment, as barriers exist in various contexts. An inclusive organization should gradually implement accessibility measures across the six presented contexts: architectural, communicational, instrumental, methodological, programmatic, and attitudinal. The categorization of actions aims to clarify the presentation of ideas, assigning actions to the dimensions that fit best. In practice, some actions may contribute to multiple dimensions simultaneously, rather than being restricted to a single category. The proposed accessibility actions are presented in Table 2, based on categories Sasaki (2010).

Table 2 - Proposed Accessibility Actions

Dimension	Definition (Sasaki, 2010)	Suggestions
ARCHITECTURAL	It is related to the elimination of physical barriers encountered in everyday life, in public or private spaces. It should be present in transportation, access to buildings, pathways throughout the physical space accessed, and internal areas, with considerations for lighting, ventilation, proper furniture arrangement, among others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping the current accessibility adaptation needs in the buildings and pathways throughout UFSM; - Adhering to the guidelines of NBR 9050 in new constructions and buildings; - Maintaining the internal transportation service on campus; - Allocating a portion of resources in UFSM's annual budget forecast to implement necessary accessibility adaptations.

ATTITUDINAL	To perceive people with disabilities without prejudice, stigma, stereotypes, and discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness-raising actions within the academic community; - Expanding the offering of courses, lectures, and seminars that address the themes of inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities in the workplace. - Diversifying the dissemination, location, and manner in which these courses are offered; - Informing supervisors and departments when they are to receive an employee with a disability; - Directly inviting individuals who will work with the employee with a disability to undergo training in the area of inclusion and accessibility.
COMMUNICATIONAL	Barrier free communication in the workplace entails total accessibility in interpersonal relationships, whether face-to-face, in sign language, body language, gestural communication, among others, as well as in written communication, including books, newspapers, magazines, documents, etc.,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of sign language interpreters among staff; - Encourage employee participation in programs developed at UFSM to promote communicational accessibility; - Draft documents in accessible formats; - Create accessible communication in electronic media (social networks and UFSM websites); - Establish a communication channel between PROGEP, the Accessibility Center, and interested individuals with disabilities.
INSTRUMENTAL	It is related to the elimination of barriers in tools and work utensils, such as machines, equipment, pencils, pens, computer keyboards, among others, which can be created specifically for use by people with disabilities or adapted from traditional instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide specific equipment, such as computers, software, accessible furniture, among others; - Address instrumental needs as they arise.
METHODOLOGICAL	Barriers in work methods and techniques must be overcome through training and the development of human resources, task execution, and ergonomics, utilizing new approaches that take into account individuals with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the presence of sign language interpreters at lectures and courses intended for employees with disabilities when a deaf employee is present; - Provide adapted materials, including audio descriptions, Braille, etc.; - Train professionals to work in the field of inclusion and accessibility.

PROGRAMMATIC	It is promoted when invisible barriers found in policies, laws, resolutions, service orders, and similar documents are eliminated, which may hinder or obstruct the full participation of people with disabilities in work, educational, leisure, and other areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comply with the provisions of Law 8112/90 regarding the guarantee of 20% of positions for people with disabilities and the provision for special hours; - Consider NBR 9050 for necessary adaptations and in new constructions and buildings; - Expand access to information regarding the rights of people with disabilities.
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Source: Own Elaboration.

4 Final considerations

In the development of this study, it was possible to observe, in the comments of UFSM employees with disabilities, reports encompassing all the dimensions of accessibility proposed by Sasaki (2010), highlighting the need for architectural and instrumental adaptations. However, the attitudinal barrier was the most frequently mentioned, with complaints about prejudice and a lack of trust in the abilities of PWDs from supervisors and colleagues. Hoffmann, Traverso, and Zanini (2014) indicate that discrimination against PWDs is part of a historical process that hinders their full inclusion in work tasks by underestimating their skills and capabilities. Behavioral issues and interpersonal relationships are the main reasons cited by PWDs for not remaining in organizations (Campos, Vasconcellos, Kruglianskas, 2013).

It is believed that UFSM is making progress toward building an accessible university, but much remains to be done, especially regarding attitudinal accessibility, as all other dimensions of accessibility are related to this one. The attitudes of individuals are the necessary driving force for actions aimed at removing all other barriers. Therefore, there is a need for training for everyone involved in workplace relationships with employees with disabilities, including the participation of the PWDs themselves, so they can understand their rights, develop their work capabilities, and assert themselves among their colleagues and supervisors (Brunstein; Serrano, 2008). It is understood that access to information for all parties involved in these relationships, especially in the workplace, tends to minimize these barriers, as one of the study participants mentioned: "prejudice, in fact, is ignorance" (S17).

This study focused on researching employees with disabilities who are administrative technical staff at UFSM, excluding faculty members, outsourced workers, and employees from other universities, which may limit the generalization of the results. It is believed that future studies could benefit from the application of interviews and the possibility of comparing the realities of different institutions, potentially yielding more

in-depth results. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this work will assist researchers, managers, and other interested parties in promoting actions that contribute to the inclusion and retention of people with disabilities, both in their workplaces and in society at large.

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