

Reporting Behaviour of People with Disabilities in relation to the Lack of Accessibility on Government Websites: Analysis in the light of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The observance of inclusive practices in e-government has been overlooked in several countries, and surveillance and action taken by official bodies is often inefficient especially in low-and middle-income countries. This article investigated factors that influence the behaviour of people with disabilities concerning filing formal complaints about accessibility barriers of government portals in Brazil.*

Method: *Five people with disabilities and three prosecutors were interviewed. A content analysis by category, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour, was performed.*

Results: *Interviewees emphasised aspects such as government websites being accessed with low frequency; lack of a combative culture; disbelief in the effectiveness of filing a complaint; ignorance or superficial knowledge about the laws; the technical ignorance of the user; lack of awareness of the severity of communication barriers; unfamiliarity with the role of the Public Prosecutor's Office; excessive formalism; and, the influence of close people.*

Conclusion: *There is a need to promote cultural change so as to value and respect people with disabilities as equal citizens.*

Key words: *disability rights oversight, web accessibility, e-government, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Public Prosecutor's Office*

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INTRODUCTION

The access of all citizens to the information available on websites, as well as in their respective applications on mobile devices, is still a challenge for society. Even with all legal obligations and accessibility guidelines, there are persistent accessibility barriers on government websites.

In Brazil, the Internet Governance Committee (2010) found that 98% of .gov.br domain pages did not respect the accessibility standards of the Brazilian government's e-Government Accessibility Model (e-MAG). In line with this finding of the year 2010, several more recent research studies have shown that Brazilian government portals are not in line with accessibility guidelines in Brazil (Oliveira & Eler, 2015; Maia, 2015; Silva & Rue, 2015; Carvalho, Cagnin & Paiva, 2017; Oliveira & Souza, 2017). Thus, numerous people, including people with disabilities, are unable to use government portals.

The problems of lack of accessibility in Brazilian governmental portals present limitations in guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities that are provided for in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), of which Brazil is a signatory, as well as the Brazilian Inclusion Law promulgated in 2015. This is due, in part, to the lack of surveillance and denunciations from society. This is because laws are not self-executing and enforcement tools are needed (Lazar, Goldstein & Taylor, 2015).

In Brazil, the oversight role is exercised by organs such as the Public Prosecutor's Office. Thus, among the main practical areas of action of the Public Prosecutor's Office for the defence of diffuse and collective rights of persons with disabilities, the Public Prosecutor's Office acts in the inspection and implementation of the accessibility conditions foreseen mainly in the Brazilian Inclusion Law, n° 13.146 / 15 (Macêdo & Ogrizio, 2016). In view of this lack of accessibility in government portals, it is fundamental that society is made aware of the role played by this institution and of the way to denounce these illicit acts in order to provoke action by the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Therefore, this article aims to understand the factors that influence the denunciation behaviour of people with disabilities. To this end, the authors conducted research on secondary sources and held interviews. Secondary data search involved seeking for related work that deals with reporting behaviour. The authors also investigated the existence of formal complaints addressing accessibility issues in public digital services that impede or hinder access to such

services by persons with disabilities or that constitute violations of accessibility standards. Five people with disabilities and three prosecutors were interviewed. Content analysis of the gathered data was performed using categories based on aspects of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

The TPB has been used widely in the areas of Management and Information Systems, with strong influence on theories that explain the adoption and use of systems in organisations. Ajzen (1985) states that all actions are preceded by planning, whether conscious or unconscious, to guide the sequence of acts, and that actions are controlled by intentions, but not all intentions come true, some are abandoned or modified to suit circumstances. Thus, Ajzen (1985) understands that it is possible to predict the actions from the previous knowledge of the intentions in relation to certain behaviours.

According to TPB, intention is the result of three determinants, namely: attitudes concerning personal aspects, subjective norms related to social influence, and perceived behavioural control, which is the individual's need to have the support, resources and opportunity to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Ajzen (1991) observes that behaviour, for the most part, depends not only on the individual effort invested, but also on the control that the individual exerts on other internal and external factors.

Thus, from the study of this theory, three categories of analysis were established, namely: attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Subcategories were then created from the interviewees' speech analysis.

METHOD

Study Design

Research on secondary sources was conducted, and interviews were held with five people with disabilities and three prosecutors.

Procedures for Conducting Documentary Research

The authors carried out documentary research to investigate the practices of reporting and monitoring the accessibility of public e-government services by people with disabilities. The data collected is related to complaints made to the Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais in the first half of 2016. The authors also investigated processes related to web accessibility at the federal level and complaints made to the Federal Ombudsman.

Procedures for Conducting and Analysing Interviews with People with Disabilities and Prosecutors

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants. Of these, five were people with disabilities and three were prosecutors from the Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais. Among the people with disabilities, there were three visually impaired people and two people with physical disabilities. The selected interviewees included representatives from academia, the government, and primary and secondary education.

Based on the analysis of the interviewees' answers, subcategories were created, namely, access; culture; effect; knowledge of laws; technical and procedural knowledge; consciousness; knowledge of the Public Prosecutor's Office; formalism; and influence of people. Where excerpts from the interviewees' contributions are mentioned, they are attributed to the respective participant - PD for Person with Disabilities, and PP for public prosecutor – along with their respective numbers.

Table 1 provides a summary of the content analysis, with categories, subcategories and summary explanation.

Table 1: Perception of the Interviewees in relation to the Factors that Influence the Intention of the Complaint Behaviour

Categories	Subcategories	Guiding Concept
Attitudes	Access	Governmental portals are poorly accessed by people with disabilities.
	Culture	Lack of a combative culture. Instead of resorting to oversight agencies, people often prefer to resort to alternative ways to demonstrate dissatisfaction, such as social networks.
	Effect	Disbelief in the effectiveness of the complaint.
Perceived Behavioural Control	Knowledge of Laws	Lack of knowledge about laws that deal with the right of access to information and communication technologies.
	Technical and Procedural Knowledge	The user may not know how to identify that the difficulty of navigating is a problem of lack of accessibility and not having the technical knowledge to report the problem in a complaint. Thus, the issue of ignorance about where and how to report was also mentioned as a limiting factor.

	Consciousness	Lack of awareness that the communication barrier is as criminal as any other type of barrier.
	Knowledge of Public Prosecutor's office	Unawareness of the performance of the Public Prosecutor's Office.
	Formalism	Fear of the formalism to be faced for denunciation.
Subjective Norms	Influence of People	Close people generally support and encourage reporting behaviour and often take the initiative to report.

Ethical Considerations

The interview scripts and study design were submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the authors' institution and were approved with protocol CAAE 80842317.4.0000.5148.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The general aspects reported in the interviews with people with disabilities and with the prosecutors are presented first, followed by a specific report and discussion of the specific points concerning the categories of analysis derived from the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Complaints about Web Accessibility: Investigation of the National Scenario

The authors carried out a search in the official electronic journal of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais in order to find complaints about accessibility problems in public sites. The survey refers to the first half of 2016. The authors verified the existence of 1,146 complaints involving people with disabilities. Of these, 164 procedures dealt with complaints about accessibility problems, which are mostly about architectural, transportation and urbanistic barriers, respectively. No denunciations involving the issue of web accessibility were found, despite ample evidence of lack of accessibility in websites in Brazil.

To date, only three processes have been found regarding web accessibility at the federal level in Brazil. The first one refers to the action filed in 2013 by a lawyer who has visual disability. The complaint addresses Resolution 185/13 of the National Council of Justice, where the electronic judicial process system was instituted. By this resolution, it was determined that all petitions and other judicial proceedings be conducted electronically. However, the change from the physical process to

the electronic process occurred without guaranteeing the broad and unrestricted access to sites for people with disabilities (Federal Court of Justice, 2014; National Justice Council, 2013).

Also in 2013, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office filed a public civil action against the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in order to compel the University to "adapt the facilities of all its buildings to the rules of architectural accessibility, urban planning, communication and information". Among the problems of accessibility found in the University, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office pointed out the lack of accessibility in the virtual learning environment Moodle system. The University was required to adapt to the guidelines provided in the federal accessibility standards e-MAG (Federal Regional Court, 2018).

Regarding the portals of private institutions, in 2014 the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in São Paulo proposed a civil public action seeking to prohibit government advertising on sites that were not accessible. The civil inquiry was established by virtue of representation submitted by the National Foundation for Education and Integration of the Deaf, reporting that the largest information centres in the country, such as Record, UOL, Estadão, Terra, Globo, Folha, SBT, IG, Band and Yahoo, are not accessible to people with hearing impairment (Federal Public Ministry, 2018).

Nevertheless, in May 2018, the authors of this paper sent a freedom of information request to the Federal Ombudsman's Office requesting information on the existence of formal complaints addressing accessibility problems in public digital services. The agency verified the existence of 2 complaints compatible with the request. The complaints were about a problem with CAPTCHA that does not have audio but is needed to ensure that people with visual impairment have proper access to information. However, both complaints were sent by members of an outreach project called "Digital Accessibility", in which the authors are involved.

Interviews with People with Disabilities: General Aspects

Some general aspects of the interviews with people with disabilities are discussed here. The first item refers to what respondents understand as an "accessible society". From the interviewees' testimonies, it is possible to understand that an accessible society would be one in which people with disabilities live on equal terms with other people, having full freedom to come and go without any barriers.

Respondents were questioned about their participation in institutions that support people with disabilities, in order to understand how these people are active in monitoring and making effective demands of their rights. Only two participants (PD-04 and PD-05) responded that they actively participate in these institutions, while the others stated that they have participated but are currently not involved.

Regarding their actions in denouncing violations of their rights, being of any nature, two interviewees stated that they do not usually denounce although they recognise the need to be more active in this regard, while three said they have a habit of reporting. All the interviewed people with disabilities affirmed that they have already faced several problems of accessibility in society, of which attitudinal, architectural and urbanistic barriers stood out.

Interviews with Public Prosecutors: General Aspects

All the prosecutors stated that neither did they have any type of training nor had they attended a training course on web accessibility. The interviewees showed limited knowledge about the subject and criticised the lack of training in this area, which ends up hampering the institution's performance.

The most common types of complaints mentioned by the prosecutors were: difficulty in accessing education and the public health system, and architectural barriers. This assertion is in line with the research carried out in the official electronic journal of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais, from which it was verified that most manifestations about accessibility problems deal with architectural barriers.

With regard to accessibility in government portals, one public prosecutor (PP-03) noted the importance of providing, as a point of departure, the opportunity of self-correction to the public agency itself. Thus, this prosecutor (PP-03) suggested that the person with disability should directly seek a solution to the problem through a complaint to the manager or head of the department, or to the Ombudsman. If the person with disability does not obtain the solution to the problem, he/she should seek the public prosecution service which, as a prosecutor of the Law, will verify the omission in relation to the direct complaint which induces the correction through this external inspection. Nevertheless, this prosecutor (PP-03) observes the importance of the Public Prosecutor's Office to be open to self-criticism regarding compliance with the accessibility standards,

before demanding it from other public bodies. This is because the accessibility of public institutions cannot be demanded while the Public Prosecutor's Office does not guarantee full accessibility of its own services.

Another prosecutor (PP-02) has suggested that people with disabilities communicate accessibility problems in government portals to both the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Councils of People with Disabilities, in the sense that they also fulfil their advocacy role and are deliberative to compel the public entity to promote full accessibility of public governmental websites.

Factors that influence Reporting Behaviour

Attitudes

The construct "attitude", in relation to behaviour, refers to the positive or negative assessment performed by the individual on a given behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). From this category, the authors created three subcategories based on the analysis of the interviewees' answers: access, culture and effect, which are explained below. The categories represent the main subthemes that emerged from the observation of the interviews.

Access

Respondents mentioned that the intention of performing the reporting behaviour is related to the fact that government portals are not frequently accessed by people with disabilities. Thus, it is unusual for people with disabilities to deal with accessibility issues at these sites. Respondents noted that when people with disabilities encounter these problems, they prefer to resort to the help of others instead of formally demanding the assurance of their rights.

The authors did not find data or research confirming the claim that government portals are poorly accessed by people with disabilities specifically. However, a possible explanation for this phenomenon may be related to the lack of accessibility of Brazilian electronic government sites for everyone, so that people with disabilities can avoid accessing them. Another possible explanation relates to the fact that information and services on government sites are not part of people's daily lives and are accessed only when necessary.

Carter and Bélanger (2004) note that ease of use is related to how much an innovation is viewed by the adopter as relatively difficult to use and to understand,

this being a factor that may influence the adoption of e-government. Thus, the fact that government sites are not accessible to people with disabilities can be seen by the potential adopter as an aspect that hinders the use of ICT and is therefore a factor that influences the issue of access to governmental sites.

Culture

Respondents also mentioned the lack of a combative culture as a factor influencing the intention of performing the reporting behaviour. According to the interviewees, people do not seek official means to request the fulfilment of their rights. Instead, they prefer to look for alternative ways, such as social networks, to demonstrate dissatisfaction.

A public prosecutor (PP-02) explained that the culture of defending the rights of people with disabilities is relatively recent, so that the basic rights of people with disabilities, such as education and health for example, are not yet guaranteed. Thus, promoting access to the media and information may not be perceived as a priority. People with disabilities still face significant challenges in accessing basic rights. In the interviews, all people with disabilities reported several accessibility problems, mainly of an architectural, urban and attitudinal nature.

Also, according to another prosecutor (PP-03), there is a change in society's attitude towards the complaint, in which people in general, and not only people with disabilities, use social networks to express dissatisfaction. However, the prosecutor observed that this instrument is not usually intended to report the fact in a purposeful way to solve the problem. He was of the opinion that this is a cultural problem, in which people make complaints as an outburst, rather than directing them towards solving the problem.

Effect

Among the people with disabilities who were interviewed, four showed that they did not believe in the effectiveness of making the complaint, whereas just one respondent (PD-01) believed that denunciation was the best route even though the response was not idealised and affirmed that they had positive responses.

Most respondents (people with disabilities) expressed disbelief that the complaint promotes changes or improvements to the reported problem. Respondents were of the view that denunciation is only effective when it acquires publicity or when

it is performed by a large group of people. Another aspect that emerged was disbelief in the state's punitive and oversight power.

Some interviewees stated that they did not believe in the effectiveness of making a complaint in view of negative experiences in the past. A visually impaired person (PD-04) reported that he was walking on the street and hit his eye on a trashcan which resulted in a stroke around the eye. He reported that the incident occurred because the dump was not placed at the right height and did not meet the standards established by legislation. The same person mentioned a situation in which a car remained parked on the pedestrian lane for five days, making it impossible to cross the lane. The interviewee reported that despite successive complaints to the competent institution, no action was taken.

Regarding government portals, three people said that they had already encountered barriers in these sites and that they sent an e-mail to the site's own organ explaining the problem and requesting correction. This contact was made by e-mail and none of the appeals were answered.

One of the interviewed persons with disabilities (PD-05) mentioned that it is necessary to make a lot of change in the policy to believe in the effectiveness of the complaint. In relation to the interviewee (PD-01) who believed in the effectiveness of complaint, it is important to mention that this person works in the Public Prosecutor's Office, which possibly influenced his/her response.

The effect of the complaint was pointed out in other studies as an element of influence on people's reporting behaviour. Baldrige and Veiga (2001) stated that if individuals have the perception that adequate reaction is unlikely, there is a high probability that they will not place the request, since they feel discouraged by the resistance of their employers to make the request. In line with results obtained by Baldrige and Veiga (2001), an assumption in the present study is that people with disabilities fail to report because they believe that improvements or changes in relation to the reported problem are unlikely. In addition, earlier negative experiences in relation to the public administration, in which there was no government action to solve the reported problem, can be a factor that negatively influences the denunciation. Therefore, Baldrige and Veiga (2001) assume that if people with disabilities believe that the complaint will not evoke a satisfactory result, the probability of filing a complaint decreases significantly, corroborating the results obtained in the present research.

Subjective Norms

The subjective norms are related to the perceived social pressure whether to perform a certain behaviour or not (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (2002) further notes that subjective norms are composed of injunctive and descriptive norms. The injunctions refer to the perceptions of the reference groups regarding the approval or disapproval of the behaviour and the value that the individual attributes to these perceptions, encompassing normative beliefs and the motivation to perform the behaviour. The descriptive norms are related to the perception that the reference groups themselves are involved in the target behaviour and the motivation in executing it. From this category the authors created a subcategory, namely, influence of the people.

Influence of Other People

In this subcategory of analysis, the authors addressed answers to questions about the support of close people, such as family and friends, regarding the denunciation in order to guarantee their rights. Most respondents stated that close friends and family generally support and encourage reporting behaviour, with one individual (PD-03) reporting that friends and family often take the initiative to report. Only one respondent (PD-04) stated that the family does not speak out. This respondent (PD-04) added that he/she believes there are still families who repress people with disabilities, out of fear, protection or even shame. Another aspect mentioned in the interviews concerns the fear of making a complaint, in view of the fear of being indisposed or inconvenienced.

The influence of close people is embedded in subjective norms. In general, when the people relevant to the individual believe that he or she must perform a certain behaviour, the person will perceive the social pressure to execute it (Ajzen, 1985). Manning (2009) has noted that social pressure inevitably affects people's behaviour. Feng and Wu (2005) found that nurses who believed that others wanted them to report suspected child abuse were more likely to report abuse.

Baldrige and Veiga (2001) found that the perceived social obligation is greater when the individual believes that people think he or she should defend his or her rights. This can be explained in view of the fact that the requirement for reasonable accommodation is seen as a continuation of activism in the defence of the rights of people with disabilities, which have been hard won. Likewise, the denunciation of accessibility problems in government sites can be seen by people

with disabilities as a way to help future requests and follow the achievement of the rights of people with disabilities.

Perceived Behavioural Control

Behaviour, for the most part, depends not only on the individual effort invested but also on the control that the individual exerts on other internal and external factors (Ajzen,1991). Control beliefs are related to the presence or absence of resources and opportunities required to perform a given behaviour. From this category, the authors created five subcategories: knowledge of laws, technical and procedural knowledge, conscience, knowledge about the Public Prosecutor's Office, and formalism.

Knowledge of Laws

In this subcategory of analysis, the authors listed issues related to knowledge of laws that discuss the right of access of people with disabilities to information and communication technologies. All respondents (people with disabilities) claimed that they know their rights. However, throughout the interviews, the authors realised that the interviewees had limited knowledge about the laws that deal with this issue. One of the interviewees (PD-03) pointed out that he knows the laws that are closest to his reality, that is, that directly affect his life, such as the quota law for people with disabilities in public contests for civil servant positions.

Among the aspects that influence human behaviour, Ajzen (1985) mentions the information that the individual possesses on the subject as an internal factor. In this case, the interviewees showed little knowledge about legislation that determines that government sites should be accessible, or about the existence of accessibility guidelines.

Technical and Procedural Knowledge

The technical knowledge refers to the ability of the person to know how to identify that the difficulty of navigating is an accessibility problem, as well as the ability to describe the problem in a complaint. Thus, the procedural question is related to the lack of knowledge about where and how to report. This was also mentioned in the interviews as a limiting factor.

The issue of technical and legal misconduct may be related to the lack of disclosure and awareness regarding web accessibility issues. The prosecutor (PP-

03) mentioned the importance of proposing a discussion of this topic, in order to bring this problem to the knowledge of society. This also demonstrates the need for greater disclosure about the role of control institutions and how the population can gain access to those services.

Consciousness

The lack of awareness of people with disabilities that the problems of accessibility to information and communication technologies are as serious as any other problem of accessibility was also a factor mentioned in the interviews. The authors observed that people with disabilities tend to be bothered about architectural, attitudinal, transport and urbanistic barriers, but do not perceive or bother with the problems of accessibility to the media. This information refers to the data collected in the official electronic diary of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais, which showed absence of any complaint involving the issue of web accessibility. The question of consciousness is also related to the cultural aspect.

Another aspect addressed in the interviews concerns the need for collective awareness in order to publicly state that problems exist. A visually impaired respondent (PD-04) stated that before he became blind, he did not know the problems that a person with disability faces daily. The person who does not have a disability and does not live with someone with a disability has no direct and frequent contact with the problems of people with disabilities. Faced with this, it is extremely important to promote collective awareness.

Knowledge about the Public Prosecutor's Office

The prosecutors believed that the lack of knowledge of the people in relation to the duties of the Public Prosecutor's Office may be a factor limiting the denunciations. People are unaware of where, how and to whom they should report such problems. This field is still new and unknown to them. Two prosecutors (PP-02 and PP-03) stated that the lack of knowledge regarding this aspect of the Public Prosecutor's Office is related to the lack of publicity to guide the population in this regard.

Formalism

This item is related to the shyness in denunciation due to the formalism that exists in the public sector. There is a perception that denunciation involves a time-

consuming, labour-intensive process without expectation of success. Thus, the fear of bureaucracy and slowness discourages people from formally denouncing problems of accessibility. In addition, one prosecutor (PP-03) observed that the physical structure of the premises, which requires formal dress for access to the Public Prosecutor's Office or the court- room, sometimes inhibits people's participation.

This issue of formalism as an element that influences the intention to denounce was also found in the work of Natan, Hanukayev and Fares(2011) which stated that nurses were more likely to verbally report the aggression suffered because it was easier and it took less time than written reports. These, in turn, require the specific form search and the need to explain the problem clearly and appropriately, which demands time and effort. One possible explanation is that people with disabilities believe that procedures in the Public Administration are time-consuming and ineffective. In this way, people end up opting for other faster solutions, such as third-party help or complaints on social networks, for example.

CONCLUSION

This article is relevant in that it seeks to present society with the problem of lack of accessibility in government websites and the lack of surveillance, which is harmful for people with disabilities. It proposes that people with disabilities should be more active in order to enjoy their rights of accessibility to government sites. As shown, there is preliminary evidence that people with disabilities do not report problems with web accessibility on governmental websites. In this sense, this article sought to understand the factors that influence the denunciation behaviour of people with disabilities and to assist in the promotion of policies that change this scenario.

The research found that the main causes for people with disabilities not denouncing accessibility problems in government portals are: people with disabilities scarcely access government portals, so it is uncommon to deal with accessibility issues at these sites, or when/if they encounter these problems, they prefer to take the help of others (close people, like family and friends) as it is faster and less laborious; lack of combative culture, in which people prefer not to express dissatisfaction in official bodies; disbelief that the complaint promotes changes or improvements in the reported problem; opinions and attitudes of the people close to them; lack of knowledge about legislation that dictates that government sites should be

accessible; lack of knowledge that the difficulty of navigating is an accessibility problem or a lack of technical knowledge to report the problem in a complaint; lack of awareness that problems of accessibility to information and communication technologies are as serious as any other accessibility problem; lack of knowledge of the people in relation to the attributions of the Public Prosecution Service; and the perception that denunciation involves a time-consuming, labour-intensive and unsuccessful process.

Given the above-mentioned, there is a need for change in this scenario, by encouraging the population with disabilities to be more active in denouncing the problems of accessibility in government portals. For this, it is necessary to propose the discussion of this theme and bring this problem to the knowledge of society. Society should also be made aware of the role played by Ombudsmen and the role of the Public Prosecutor's Office in defending the rights of persons with disabilities. However, it is fundamental to restore the confidence of society in the effectiveness of the performance of public administration. It is also relevant to give training courses on the issue of web accessibility to the prosecutors, the members of the Municipal Councils of People with Disabilities as well as to public servants, especially those who work in the Ombudsman's offices.

The authors of the current article suggest that future research - both quantitative and qualitative studies - focusing on the denunciation behaviour of people with disabilities are needed. It is worth mentioning that the authors are already researching this subject further by distributing questionnaires to people with disabilities, to understand the interaction between the factors from the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Results from this research will hopefully confirm and complement the results of this article.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prof. André Pimenta Freire and Monique Scalco Soares Siqueira would like to thank the Scientific and Technological Development Council (CNPq) and Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), grant #315721/2021-9 for his research fellowship.

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