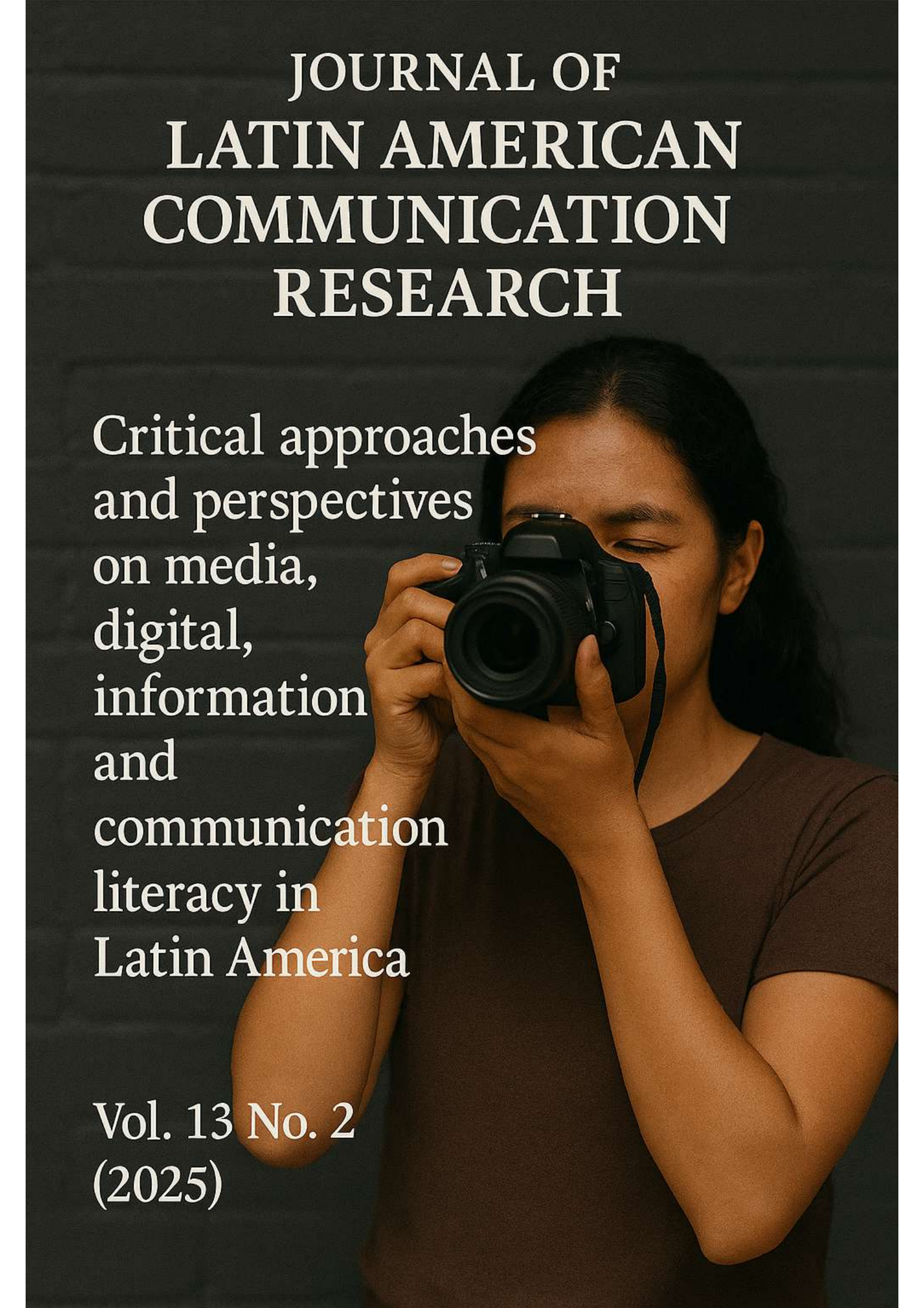
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Critical approaches and perspectives on media, digital, information and communication literacy in Latin America

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Media and Information Literacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Introduction and Reflections

Alfabetización Mediática e Informacional en América Latina y el Caribe: Introducción y Reflexiones

Alfabetização midiática e informacional na América Latina e no Caribe: Introdução e Reflexões

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Abstract: This monograph is part of a special issue co-organized by the Latin American Journal of Communication - Chasqui and the Journal of Latin American Communication Research, dedicated to Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is the result of a strategic alliance between CIESPAL, ALAIC, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Representation of the Global Alliance for MIL promoted by UNESCO, Las Otras Voces - Communication for Democracy, and UNIMINUTO. Their common goal is to identify, highlight, and articulate initiatives from Latin America in a context of accelerated

transformations in a region marked by inequality. The issue brings together research conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Paraguay, Cuba, and other countries to showcase the diversity of experiences and approaches on the topic. MIL is addressed as a multidimensional field that combines critical media education, technological appropriation, disinformation prevention, citizenship empowerment, and public policy development. The text offers a cross-sectional reading of the articles, placing them in dialogue with international literature and highlighting their contributions in areas such as democracy, health, youth, and pedagogical innovation. Based on these experiences, it recognizes both the progress and the challenges the region faces in consolidating a robust, articulated, and sustainable MIL ecosystem. The special issue thus aims to make a significant contribution to Ibero-American academic cooperation and to the design of educational and social strategies that respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

Keywords:
Media and information literacy, critical citizenship, public policies, disinformation, Latin America, education, digital technologies

Resumen: Este monográfico es parte de un número especial organizado conjuntamente por la Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación - Chasqui y el Journal of Latin American Communication Research, dedicado a la Alfabetización Mediática e Informacional (AMI) en América Latina y el Caribe, como resultado de la alianza estratégica entre CIESPAL, ALAIC, la Representación Regional de América Latina y el Caribe de la Alianza Global para la AMI impulsada por UNESCO, Las Otras Voces - Comunicación para la democracia y UNIMINUTO cuyo fin común consiste en identificar, visibilizar y articular iniciativas de nuestra América en un entorno de aceleradas transformaciones en una región marcada por la desigualdad. El número reúne investigaciones desarrolladas en Argentina, Brasil, México, Paraguay, Cuba y otros países, con el fin de mostrar la diversidad de experiencias y enfoques sobre el tema. Se aborda la AMI como un campo multidimensional que combina educación crítica en medios, apropiación tecnológica, prevención de la desinformación, fortalecimiento de la ciudadanía y desarrollo de políticas públicas. El texto ofrece una lectura transversal de los artículos, situándolos en diálogo con la literatura internacional y destacando sus contribuciones en ámbitos como la democracia, la salud, la juventud y la innovación pedagógica. A partir de estas experiencias, se reconocen tanto

los avances como los desafíos que enfrenta la región para consolidar un ecosistema de AMI robusto, articulado y sostenible. El número especial se propone, así, como un aporte significativo para la cooperación académica iberoamericana y para el diseño de estrategias educativas y sociales que respondan a los retos del siglo XXI.

Palabras clave:
Alfabetización mediática e informacional, ciudadanía crítica, políticas públicas, desinformación, América Latina, educación, tecnologías digitales

Resumo: Esta monografia faz parte de um número especial coorganizado pela Revista Latino-Americana de Comunicação - Chasqui e pela Revista Latino- Americana de Pesquisa em Comunicação, dedicado à Alfabetização Midiática e Informacional (AMI) na América Latina e no Caribe. Este número é resultado de uma aliança estratégica entre o CIESPAL, a ALAIC, a Representação Regional Latino-Americana e Caribenha da Aliança Global para a AMI promovida pela UNESCO, Las Otras Voces - Comunicação para a Democracia e a UNIMINUTO. O objetivo comum é identificar, destacar e articular iniciativas da América Latina em um contexto de transformações aceleradas em uma região marcada pela desigualdade. O número reúne pesquisas realizadas na Argentina, Brasil, México, Paraguai, Cuba e outros países para evidenciar a diversidade de experiências e abordagens sobre o tema. A AMI é abordada como um campo multidimensional que combina educação midiática crítica, apropriação tecnológica, prevenção da desinformação, empoderamento da cidadania e desenvolvimento de políticas públicas. O texto oferece uma leitura transversal dos artigos, colocando-os em diálogo com a literatura internacional e destacando suas contribuições em áreas como democracia, saúde, juventude e inovação pedagógica. Com base nessas experiências, reconhece tanto os avanços quanto os desafios que a região enfrenta na consolidação de um ecossistema de AMI robusto, articulado e sustentável. Este número especial, portanto, pretende contribuir significativamente para a cooperação acadêmica ibero-americana e para a formulação de estratégias educacionais e sociais que respondam aos desafios do século XXI.

Palavras-chave:
Alfabetização midiática e informacional, cidadania crítica, políticas públicas, desinformação, América Latina, educação, tecnologias digitais

1. Introduction

This introductory chapter presents the special issue, jointly produced by the Latin American Journal of Communication Chasqui and the Journal of Latin American Communication Research, dedicated to Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Latin America and the Caribbean. This issue is the result of joint work between CIESPAL, ALAIC, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Representation of the Global Alliance for MIL promoted by UNESCO, Las Otras Voces - Communication for Democracy, and UNIMINUTO. The common goal is to identify, highlight, and articulate initiatives from Latin America in a context of accelerated transformation in a region marked by inequality. This collective work brings together recent research that analyzes, from different perspectives and methodologies, how MIL is implemented, studied, and projected in the region. The main objective of this text is to offer a cross-sectional reading that connects the findings of the articles, placing them in dialogue with international literature and highlighting their specific contributions to building critical citizenship, strengthening democracy, and combating disinformation.

2. MIL, Competencies, Analysis, and Experiences

MIL has been recognized by UNESCO (2013, 2024) as an essential set of competencies for the 21st century. Beyond the acquisition of technical skills, it is conceived as a multidimensional approach that involves media education, technological appropriation, critical thinking, and strengthening learning communities (Durán, 2016; UNESCO, 2024). Along these lines, Silvia Bacher (2025) highlights MIL as a cross-cutting response to the challenges of the information society, with the capacity to empower people as active citizens. Similarly, Paulino, Lopes, and Fontenele (2024) propose MIL as a harm reduction strategy, especially for vulnerable audiences exposed to misinformation.

These perspectives frame the reading of the special issue, showing how each article contributes to expanding the field based on experiences located in different Latin American countries. In the case of Argentina, Chachagua and Ortega conducted a study on digital literacy

using artificial intelligence in secondary schools in the province of Salta. The authors show how the introduction of AI tools in education creates tensions between pedagogical innovation and the need to educate critical learners.

On the one hand, AI appears as a resource to stimulate new forms of learning, but at the same time, it poses ethical dilemmas and risks associated with algorithmic opacity. The study provides empirical evidence on how teachers and students perceive and address these challenges, contributing to a global debate on the place of AI in critical education. This article is fundamental because it directly links the MIL debate with the contemporary technological agenda, showing that access to new tools must be accompanied by training processes that allow us to understand their logic and limitations.

In the first article of this issue, García Montero proposes the notion of Organizational Media Competence as a way of thinking about the collective in media literacy. The article, based on practices developed in Brazil and Uruguay, starts from the premise that organizations, both educational and social, also need to develop critical competencies regarding media and digital environments. Rather than conceiving MIL solely as an individual process, the study emphasizes the institutional and collective dimension, showing how organizational practices can enable or restrict individuals' critical attitudes. This perspective is especially pertinent in a regional context where universities, NGOs, and social groups play a decisive role in the circulation of information. García Montero's contribution opens a path to rethinking MIL beyond the classroom, situating it within the context of organizational cultures.

In the following article, from Mexico, Rodríguez Aguirre and Maldonado investigate how MIL contributes to strengthening the public sphere, using university students as a reference. The article reveals that, although young people have extensive exposure to digital platforms, limitations persist in their ability to critically evaluate information. The authors point out that MIL is a key tool for consolidating a deliberative public sphere, but that it requires sustained pedagogical work. The study is significant because it connects MIL with theories of deliberative democracy and demonstrates its relevance in contexts where trust in the media is declining.

From Brazil, Gomes and Aneas address political polarization and its effects on adolescents' deliberative capacities. The work examines how polarized discourses and confrontational dynamics on social media affect young people's willingness to participate in democratic debates. The findings highlight the need to strengthen MIL as a tool to confront

polarization and promote a more plural and respectful public debate. This article highlights that MIL is not limited to the acquisition of technical skills but directly impacts the quality of democratic deliberation.

In another contribution to this issue, Schaefer, Machado, and Denis analyze the media use patterns of young university students in Encarnación, Paraguay. The study shows how academic trajectories influence modes of technological appropriation and the development of critical skills. The authors highlight the heterogeneity of youth practices, which demonstrates the importance of designing contextualized MIL strategies. The article's contribution lies in highlighting a little-explored reality in the region, providing data on a university population outside of large urban centers.

From Cuba, Lamadrid, Fernández, and Benavides evaluate the Conecta Consciente program, aimed at university students. The article links digital literacy with emotional health, showing how MIL can contribute to well-being and the prevention of psychosocial risks. The authors argue that MIL is not only a cognitive resource but also a protective factor in terms of mental health, which expands the boundaries of the field and opens up new possibilities for linking media education and public health policies. Also from Cuba, in collaboration with Spain, Rodríguez Cruz, Medina González y Almansa Martínez analyzes media literacy as a key tool for combating disinformation in the context of digital transformation and the intensive use of social media and artificial intelligence. Based on a documentary analysis, the study identifies the main risks of disinformation and the social groups most vulnerable to its effects. The results underscore the need to strengthen citizens' critical, informational, and media literacy skills through comprehensive media literacy programs. Finally, the study concludes that the integration of public policies, education, legal frameworks, and digital culture is essential to protect democracy, freedom of expression, and the right to truthful information.

Martinelli, Parente, and Filizola document the construction of the Brazilian Media Education Strategy. This is a pioneering example of participatory public policy, involving multiple social actors in the design of a national MIL agenda. The article demonstrates that the institutionalization of MIL requires both political will and mechanisms for social participation. The Brazilian case offers valuable lessons for other countries in the region, demonstrating that it is possible to connect academia, civil society, and the public sector around media literacy.

An algorithmic analysis of manipulated media narratives surrounding Paulo Freire is the subject of this article by Busón Buesa, García, and Chaves. The study unravels how certain discourses seek to delegitimize the figure of the educator, and how MIL can be used as a tool for critical deconstruction in the face of manipulation. The article provides an innovative methodological perspective, using algorithmic techniques to analyze narratives, and contributes to the debate on misinformation and its impact on the public sphere. Finally, Estrada Ruiz explores how film can trigger reflective processes in young people. The article shows that film is a pedagogical resource with great potential to stimulate critical thinking and media literacy. Analyzing experiences with young people reveals that film not only entertains but also sparks meaningful discussions about citizenship, culture, and social participation.

3. Conclusions

Taken together, the texts gathered in this special issue offer a broad and diverse overview of MIL in Latin America and the Caribbean. The research agrees on the need to articulate MIL with educational systems, public policies, and community initiatives. Furthermore, the contributions show that MIL is not a homogeneous field, but rather responds to specific social, political, and cultural contexts.

This introductory chapter concludes that MIL has established itself as a growing field in the region, with the capacity to impact civic education, emotional health, harm reduction in the face of misinformation, and the building of more resilient democracies. By bringing together this research, the special issue by Chasqui and JLACR constitutes a significant contribution to Ibero-American academic cooperation and to the consolidation of a robust MIL ecosystem. Demonstrating that a commitment to a collective construction of critical thinking is possible if, from different organizations and sectors, we unite behind a common goal—in this case, to think critically about AMI and its impact on the region, viewed from the perspective of categories and parameters specific to Latin America.

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Rethinking digital literacy with AI: experiences and meanings in secondary education. Salta-Argentina

Pensar la alfabetización digital con IA: experiencias y sentidos en el nivel secundario. Salta-Argentina

Pensar a alfabetização digital com IA: experiências e sentidos no ensino secundário. Salta-Argentina

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Abstract: This article presents initial findings from the CIUNSa Research Project No. 2897/0 Type A, titled "A study on AI and the integration of digital technologies in secondary and higher education in the city of Salta: public policies, inequalities, and challenges (2024-2027)." Within this framework, we analyze experiences and perceptions related to AI among secondary school students in Salta during 2025, aiming to reflect on Media and Information Literacy from pedagogical, ethical, and political dimensions. Drawing from a critical perspective on technology (Feenberg, 2005), we propose a mixed-method approach based on surveys, problematizing the role of digital technologies in the classroom and the pending role of state policies.

Keywords:
Artificial intelligence, technologies, uses, education, Salta

Resumen: Este artículo presenta avances iniciales del proyecto de investigación CIUNSa Nº 2897/0 Tipo A, titulado "Un estudio sobre la IA y la integración de las tecnologías digitales en el nivel educativo medio y superior de la ciudad de Salta: políticas públicas, desigualdades y desafíos (2024-2027)". En este marco, analizamos experiencias y sentidos en torno a la IA en estudiantes de nivel secundario de Salta durante 2025, con el objetivo de reflexionar sobre la Alfabetización Mediática e Informacional desde dimensiones pedagógicas, éticas y políticas.

Desde una perspectiva crítica de la tecnología (Feenberg, 2005), proponemos un abordaje mixto a partir de encuestas, problematizando el rol de las tecnologías digitales en el aula y las políticas estatales aún pendientes.

Palabras clave:
Inteligencia artificial, tecnologías, usos, educación, Salta

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta os avanços iniciais do projeto de pesquisa CIUNSa Nº 2897/0 Tipo A, intitulado "Um estudo sobre a IA e a integração das tecnologias digitais no nível educacional médio e superior na cidade de Salta: políticas públicas, desigualdades e desafios (2024-2027)". Nesse contexto, analisamos experiências e sentidos em torno da IA entre estudantes do ensino médio de Salta durante o ano de 2025, com o objetivo de refletir sobre a Alfabetização Midiática e Informacional a partir de dimensões pedagógicas, éticas e políticas. A partir de uma perspectiva crítica da tecnologia (Feenberg, 2005), propomos uma abordagem mista baseada em questionários, problematizando o papel das tecnologias digitais na sala de aula e as políticas estatais ainda pendentes.

Palavras-chave:
Inteligência artificial, tecnologias, usos, educação, Salta

1. Introduction and Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computational systems capable of interacting with the environment through functions traditionally considered inherent to human intelligence, such as speech recognition, visual perception, and autonomous decision-making (Luckin et al., 2016). Since its origins in the 1950s, AI has undergone sustained evolution, with exponential growth beginning in the 2000s, driven by access to large volumes of data and advances in machine learning algorithms (Mijwil, 2015). Currently, its applications span multiple fields, including education, where its potential to transform pedagogical practices, promote personalized teaching approaches, and redefine the links between knowledge, technology, and subjectivity is being explored.

In this sense, AI poses several challenges for the social sciences due to its multifaceted nature and profound implications for various aspects of human life. According to Costa et al. (2023), AI is not simply a technology, but rather a meta-technology — a general-purpose technology that operates and regulates other technologies (Floridi, 2011). This implies that AI is embedded in the complex sociotechnical systems that shape our society, influencing the economy, politics, and culture in a pervasive way.

The emergence of AI in education has generated significant transformations in teaching and learning practices. From data analysis to facial recognition, AI has become a cross-cutting tool that redefines modes of pedagogical interaction (BID, 2022). In this context, the CIUNSa research project No. 2897/0 Type A, entitled "A study on AI and the integration of digital technologies in secondary and higher education in the city of Salta: public policies, inequalities, and challenges (2024-2027)," aims to investigate how secondary and higher education teachers and students in Salta integrate these technologies, and what public policies support or limit these processes.

In this article, we specifically address the preliminary results obtained from surveys conducted among students at two public educational institutions in Salta City. These surveys constitute a first empirical approach that enables us to identify perceptions, uses, and challenges associated with the use of digital tools and AI in specific educational contexts, providing key input for the critical analysis of public policies on this topic.

The rise of AI in education poses urgent challenges for the development of public educational policies, particularly in contexts marked by structural inequalities, such as those found in the city of Salta. In this context, it is essential to investigate how high school students appropriate—or fail to do so—these technologies, under what conditions they do so, and what tensions emerge between the promises of innovation and institutional realities. This work follows this line, seeking to provide empirical evidence that allows us to rethink public policies from a critical perspective.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the team we have been working with has a sustained track record in these topics, through successive projects funded by CIUNSA and CONICET, as well as undergraduate and graduate theses that have addressed the relationship between technology, education, and inequalities in the province of Salta. In particular, the team has conducted research on public policies implemented during the pandemic and in its aftermath,

highlighting national and provincial programs focused on digital inclusion, educational reconnection, and teacher training. Likewise, studies have been conducted on virtualization experiences at the National University of Salta, educational radio stations, youth and digital citizenship, education in contexts of confinement and rural areas, and access to ICTs from a gender perspective. This background establishes a solid precedent and enables us to situate the present study within a line of critical continuity committed to the democratization of knowledge and educational transformation at the regional level.

Some questions that emerge from this problematization are: What should be the role of the State in integrating AI in education? Should it consolidate itself as an agent of development of "advanced" digital tools to reach all students as a public good that guarantees their right to education? Moreover, in this sense, what role is the private sector playing? Regarding specific uses, we ask: How can AI be integrated into the educational system? What do teachers and students think about this possible integration? What challenges and tensions? What communication and educational challenges, tensions, or possibilities do they raise within the education system?

This article begins with a general outline of the theoretical framework that supports the research. Next, we discuss the integration of artificial intelligence into student practices, along with a critical reflection on current public policies in Salta. In the following section, we provide an exploratory and general overview of the initial findings obtained from the surveys. Finally, we present the conclusions and offer some reflections on digital literacy.

2. Theoretical Framework

The relevance of this study is both theoretical and contextual. First, we propose approaching the integration of digital technologies in education from a communication and education perspective. We understand that these are not neutral or merely instrumental phenomena, but rather as social practices influenced by power relations, cultural meanings, and political disputes. From a contextual perspective, the study is situated in the city of Salta, which enables a situated interrogation of the dynamics of technological appropriation, the material and institutional conditions that enable or restrict them, and the actual scope of public policies in contexts marked by structural inequalities.

2.1 Technology as a Social Practice

The theoretical mapping begins from a critical perspective, that is, from the understanding that technologies are not neutral or one-dimensional objects. Following Feenberg (1991, 2005), we understand that technological practices are configured in the framework of social and historical relationships that subjects weave with artifacts. Along these lines, Zukerfeld (2014) argues that digital technologies are products of material and symbolic processes that mobilize knowledge objectified in devices, platforms, and content, as well as norms, values, languages, and intersubjective representations. Raymond Williams (1992) reinforces this view by considering that all technology is a social creation, influenced by the production conditions of its context of emergence. The notion of appropriation, as defined by Thompson (1998), refers to the process by which social groups interpret and give meaning to cultural artifacts. Winocur (2007) deepens this idea by pointing out that technological appropriation occurs from a specific habitus, in dialogue with previous experiences and specific symbolic capital. In this sense, understanding the appropriations of technologies involves analyzing the needs, expectations, abilities, and anxieties that individuals project onto them (Chachagua, 2019), as well as the meanings they construct around their use. This perspective is key to making more precise diagnoses of the real possibilities for development and digital inclusion (Winocur, 2007).

2.2 Communication/Education as a Transdisciplinary Approach and Media and Information Literacy

When discussing Communication/Education, we adopt a perspective that does not seek to unify the two disciplines, but instead recognizes the power of a transdisciplinary approach constituted through the critical exchange of theoretical and methodological frameworks (Da Porta, 2004). As Huergo (1999) point out, the use of the slash in Communication/Education implies a commitment to recovering processes of connection, expression, and liberation, recognizing the historical, sociocultural, and political contexts in which problems and theoretical productions emerge. This perspective enables us to analyze the production of subjectivities (education) and meanings (communication) as inseparable dimensions of social practices, while also serving as tools for critical intervention in the field of public policy (Morabes y Martínez, 2019).

Along these lines, we must ask ourselves: what place does the teaching of digital technologies occupy in educational settings? What public policies are implemented to enable their genuine integration? In this regard, we adopt a position on Media Information Literacy (MIL) as a set of essential skills for promoting critical thinking in a constantly evolving digital context (UNESCO, 2023). In this way, we adhere to other early perspectives on the issue of media in the school environment, such as Buckingham's (2006), who pioneered the introduction of terms like Media Education. This author invited us to question the merely instrumental use of technology, considering students' knowledge and cultural consumption. Furthermore, he promoted a participatory and critical stance among teachers regarding its use. The inclusion of technologies in the classroom has been the subject of multiple discussions, from a focus on "technologies for education" in recent decades to a positioning around articulating experiences linked to the media and the school environment, based on the recognition of the difference between the two and an appreciation of their possible integrations" (Nakache, 2000, p. 9). Even with great efforts, we believe that instrumental perspectives on the binomial (trinity) of communication, technologies, and school continue to exist (Huergo, 2007). It is necessary to understand the importance of MIL from perspectives that make the educational/communicative role of digital technologies more complex, in line with the educational, cultural, and political issues they entail.

Therefore, we consider digital literacy as a universal citizen right, intertwined with instrumental, ethical, and social dimensions, driven by a quest for the democratization of knowledge. In the words of Landau et al. (2007):

> It encompasses an instrumental dimension, linked to the mastery of tools and information in digital media, an ethical dimension related to access to and the public and private uses of information, and a social dimension focused on the most immediate contextual needs and the democratization of access to and the production of information. (p. 9)

In Argentina, since approximately 1990, a series of public policies have been implemented to integrate technologies into the classroom. However, it was not until 2010, with the creation of the Conectar Igualdad Program, based on the 1:1 model (one computer per student), that access to digital literacy for teachers and students was conceived from a universal perspective. Some programs were subsequently promoted, but with less impact (Chachagua, 2021). We currently find ourselves in a context of setbacks in addressing MIL, mainly due to the promotion of state initiatives (Ortega Portal y Chachagua, 2024).

2.3 AI in Education: Promises, Tensions, and Challenges

Now, the challenge is to consider how to propose policies for incorporating artificial intelligence technologies into educational settings. We know that AI presents itself as a new node of tension and opportunity. Defined as "computational systems designed to interact with the world using capabilities that we normally think of as human" (Luckin et al., 2016), AI has advanced significantly thanks to the development of machine learning and the massive availability of data (Pedró et al., 2019). Its impact on education is increasingly visible, from the use of data analytics and adaptive platforms to facial recognition systems and the automation of pedagogical processes (Jara & Ochoa, 2020). However, this progress is not without controversy. As Tuomi (2018) warns, it is necessary to critically debate the pace and depth of this transformation, as well as its ethical, pedagogical, and political implications.

Learning personalization is one of the most highlighted opportunities (Li & Wong, 2023; UNESCO, 2019; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). It involves adapting content, pace, and strategies to each student's prior knowledge, interests, and goals (Bulger, 2016). Serrano and Moreno García (2024) caution that this promise must be critically examined, avoiding recycled discourses that fail to transform actual practices. "It is about respecting the fundamental principles of teaching and learning, enabling the majority of students to follow their own learning path, considering their prior knowledge, preferences, motivations, or goals" (Serrano & Moreno García, 2024, p. 4).

Adaptive learning, driven by algorithms and data analysis, enables content and difficulty to be adjusted in real-time according to student performance. Wang et al. (2023) define it as “a method that continuously modifies content, difficulty, and resources based on student interactions and progress, supposedly ensuring personalized learning that fosters individual effectiveness and development” (Wang et al., 2023, cited in Serrano and Moreno García, 2024, p. 4). This approach offers advantages such as attention to diversity, immediate feedback, and early detection of difficulties, but also poses challenges in terms of infrastructure, teacher training, and equity.

2.4 Ethics of AI in Education

The ethics of AI in education is a key dimension. The use of this technology requires legal frameworks that guarantee its fair, inclusive, trustworthy, and transparent use. According to

UNESCO (2023), the link between AI and education is manifested in three key dimensions: learning with AI (through its use in classrooms), learning about AI (understanding its technologies and foundations), and preparing for AI (developing critical citizenship aware of its impacts). In this sense, ethics should not be an afterthought, but rather the foundation upon which educational policies and systems are built.

This topic is receiving increasing attention from researchers worldwide (Boddington, 2017; Coeckelbergh, 2021; Floridi, 2022), as well as from international organizations, academic institutions, and technology corporations. Currently, much of the effort is focused on developing ethical codes that enable the identification and operationalization of the values and principles that should guide the responsible development and use of AI. In recent years, multiple initiatives have emerged in various countries, with proposals aimed at establishing regulatory frameworks, recommendations, and ethical standards. However, this abundance of codes has been highlighted as a potential obstacle, as it can lead to confusion and fragmentation in the interpretation of ethical principles (Danaher & Sætra, 2022; Floridi & Cowls, 2021). Despite this, many of these documents share fundamental principles—such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and privacy, among others—albeit with emphases and nuances that respond to diverse cultural, social, and political contexts. This partial convergence suggests the possibility of moving toward global ethical frameworks that, without losing local sensitivity, promote AI governance centered on human rights and the common good (Alonso Rodríguez, 2024).

2.5 Inequalities and Digital Citizenship

This work recognizes that we are facing distinct and diverse inequalities when discussing the integration of digital technologies in the educational field. Therefore, we approach inequalities linked to the use of technologies from a relational and multidimensional perspective (Reygadas, 2004). We understand that this is not only related to access, but also to the impact of other diverse inequalities (ethnic, class, status, gender, disconnection, among others) that affect the exercise of the right to education. Thinking about digital inequalities as the confluence of multiple asymmetries is possible if we understand that MIL is influenced by diverse actors: "governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, large technology companies, including social networks, search engines, and video platforms" (Bacher, 2024, p. 15).

At the same time, and based on the premise that artificial intelligence is not a neutral computational tool, it is essential to consider the different elements involved in its analysis. AI should be understood as "systems integrated into social, political, cultural, and economic worlds shaped by humans, institutions, and imperatives that determine what they do and how they do it" (Crawford, 2022, p. 13, cited in Bacher, 2024).

Like Bacher (2024), we understand that "AMI is presented as an essential tool for promoting human rights and strengthening citizen participation in a diverse region" (p. 11). In this regard, it facilitates the promotion of human rights. It democratizes access to information and knowledge production to the extent that individuals and groups can actively participate to advocate for change in their communities. This perspective is related to the approaches that various international experts have been putting forward regarding the concept of media and information literacy, no longer solely as a set of technical skills, but also including a cognitive and socio-emotional dimension and the ability to solve problems in the digital environment (Martínez-Bravo et al., 2020, as cited in Ilomäki et al., 2023). Some authors prefer to refer to Critical Digital Literacies (CDL) (Ilomäki et al., 2023), as they allow us to understand the set of digital competencies that include both individual and collaborative aspects of learning.

The CDL framework promotes knowledge of the principles of digital technology and the ability to act as producers and creators of content, not only for the school environment, but also through the meaningful use of digital services and tools in everyday life and at work. As Ilomäki et al. (2023) point out:

> Critical digital literacies entail a range of complex skills, competencies and dispositions which include: understanding the principles of digital technology and being able to act as producers and makers; using the digital services and tools in a meaningful way in one's daily life and for studying and work; working with digital technology in a creative way, alone and in collaboration with others, including online collaboration; understanding the use and implications of digital data, such as for learning, e-commerce or offering services; under-standing the role of digitality in various issues in society and culture, such as democracy, in-fluencing or activism; understanding the principles and ethics of online communication and collaboration; knowing how to participate online and understanding an individual's responsibilities for everyone's well-being, and understanding issues relating to digital presence and identity, knowing how to protect oneself and taking responsibility not to participate in harmful or even illegal online activities. (p. 17)

The CDA perspective also explores the importance of understanding the ethical principles of online communication and collaboration, as well as the management of identity and digital security.

Accordingly, it becomes more than pertinent to position ourselves in terms of digital citizenship as a fundamental dimension of MIL.[1] In the context of school education. Ilomäki et al. (2023) analyzed policy documents related to critical digital literacies from 2016 to 2020 in international organizations such as the European Commission, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the European Union. The study examines how digital citizenship is a central dimension of these documents, which prioritize the future. In addition to addressing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for responsible and critical participation in the digital society—including legal, ethical, consumer, and equity aspects—the documents place particular emphasis on a critical understanding of the relationships between power and social constructions in the digital environment.

Cobo (2019) had previously proposed that digital citizenship allows the educational community to review the dynamics of teaching and learning with technology, considering adequate performance in multiple digital environments in terms of participation, respect, exchange, collaboration, and coexistence with others. Likewise, he shares previously presented guidelines, as noted by Ilomäki et al. (2023), focusing particularly on respectful online behavior and participation in digital civic practices (Jones and Mitchell, 2015, cited in Cobo, 2019).

To this end, Cobo (2019) proposes a content-container-context model, from which he proposes informed and critical digital citizen participation. The interaction between what is learned (content), how it is learned (container), and where/how it is learned (context) contributes to the subject's ability to construct new socially relevant knowledge.

3. Methodology

As previously mentioned, this work is grounded in a critical perspective on technology (Feenberg, 2005), which views the integration of digital technologies as deeply situated social, cultural, and political practices. Far from a technocentric perspective, we aim to problematize the inequalities, tensions, and possibilities that arise from the use of AI in educational settings.

The methodological approach adopted is a mixed-methods approach, understood as a research strategy that allows for the articulation of diverse forms of data construction (Creamer, 2017) through the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods (Forni & De Grande,

[1] Note that we primarily use the term Media and Information Literacy (MIL), although we also refer to Digital Literacy (DL) and Critical Digital Literacies (CDL), in order to encompass and account for the multiple conceptualizations, updates and debates existing on the subject in question.

2020). This responds to the need to capture the complexity of technological appropriation processes in education, particularly in the context of AI applications, by combining the breadth of quantitative data with the interpretive depth of qualitative approaches.

Within this framework, we conducted surveys as the first step in this research. We hope to conduct semi-structured interviews in a second phase to explore the results in more depth. While surveys are a technique inherent to quantitative research, we decided to interpret their results from a qualitative-interpretative perspective (Thompson, 1991; Sautu et al., 2005). Thus, we employed a collective case study design (Stake, 1998), which involves comparing multiple institutional cases, not for statistical generalization purposes, but rather to gain a deep understanding of the particularities and variations of the phenomena studied. This strategy allows us to identify both regularities and significant differences between institutions.

The surveys designed and implemented for this study aim to reveal the meanings, uses, and conditions of access to digital technologies and artificial intelligence in education from the perspective of students at public institutions in the city of Salta.

Two hundred twenty surveys were conducted, addressing three main dimensions: access to devices and the internet, the meanings constructed around AI, and the specific uses of these tools in the learning process. We asked students if they had heard of AI, how they perceived it in schools, what tools they used, how often, and for what activities. We also asked them about the difficulties they faced and their suggestions for better integrating these technologies in their institutions.

3.1 Validation and Analysis Procedures

To ensure the validity of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted at an institution not included in the main study. The purpose was to adjust the wording of the questions, verify the relevance of the dimensions, and ensure student understanding. The surveys were reviewed by members of the research team on several occasions and administered with teacher support to facilitate informed participation.

Data analysis was conducted at two levels:

- Quantitative: Descriptive statistical tools (frequencies, percentages, simple cross-referencing) were used to identify general patterns in the access, use, and

perception of AI. These data enable a comparative overview across institutions and the identification of significant gaps.

- Qualitative: Open-ended responses were coded thematically through content analysis, following inductive criteria. Emerging categories linked to the meanings attributed to AI, user experiences, and proposals for improvement were identified. This analysis was conducted with the support of specialized software (Atlas. Ti), which made it possible to systematize the discourses and visualize relationships between categories.

Triangulation between the two approaches allowed for a comparison of results and enriched interpretation, taking into account both the material conditions and the symbolic and pedagogical dimensions that mediate the incorporation of AI into the Salta education system.

3.2 Institutional Context

The work was carried out in two educational institutions:

- Secondary School No. 5024 Sargento Cabral: Located in Villa Mitre, it offers three class shifts (morning, afternoon, and evening).
- Secondary School No. 5169: Located in Barrio Siglo XXI, in the southwest area of Salta, it offers classes in the afternoon.

We collaborated with two public secondary schools in Salta, situated in neighborhoods affected by socio-structural issues. One of them is located in the southeast area of the city, where the highest population density is concentrated. The other institution is located in Villa Mitre, a neighborhood that, while not officially registered as a vulnerable area, borders other neighborhoods with high levels of precariousness, home to more than a thousand vulnerable families. These areas share characteristics such as irregular land tenure, a lack of basic services, and living conditions marked by social exclusion.

At both educational institutions, we have been working on various research/extension projects, as well as undergraduate and graduate theses, for several years. Furthermore, due to their geographical location and the multiplicity of stakeholders involved, with different backgrounds, ages, and socioeconomic situations.

4. Results

The results are organized around three dimensions: internet access, and the meanings and uses that school-aged youth in Salta are developing in relation to artificial intelligence.

The majority of students who participated in the survey were between 16 and 18 years old, indicating they were in their final years of secondary school. Almost all reported having access to the internet and some technological device, and only a small group—less than 8%—reported not having such access. At the same time, many stated that the devices they use are their own, and about a third reported having received computers through state programs such as Conectar Igualdad or Juana Manso.[2] This opens the door to reflecting on the real scope and continuity of these public policies.

Regarding students' understanding of AI, nearly 90% reported having heard of the topic, indicating a significant presence in their daily lives. When we asked them how they think AI is manifested in the educational field, the most frequent responses pointed to virtual assistants, chatbots, or applications that correct texts. However, a significant lack of knowledge also emerges because they do not know or are not sure exactly where AI fits into educational practices.

We were also interested in knowing how they feel about using these tools. Here, the responses were more diverse: half of the respondents were enthusiastic about their use, while 11% expressed concern, 12% said they were indifferent, and 26% said they had no opinion on the matter. This range of emotions reflects the complexity of the link between technology and subjectivity in the classroom.

Regarding the usefulness of AI in education, 85% consider it practical or very useful, while 15% perceive it as somewhat or not applicable at all. However, looking to the future, opinions are divided: 55% believe AI can bring about significant changes in education, while 45% do not. Of those who do believe there can be changes, they were asked how they imagine those changes. Five axes are proposed: changes in the way we study, impact on learning and

[2] Juana Manso was a Federal Plan implemented during 2020, in the context of the pandemic. This plan sought to establish a coordinated framework that would integrate the implementation of a federal digital platform, the provision of devices at the secondary level, the promotion of free software, data protection, the development of the national industry, and the production of quality open educational resources. However, it failed to consolidate or prosper.

thinking, transformations in the teaching role and educational materials, ambiguous or contradictory assessments, and transformative potential beyond the classroom.

A large portion of students indicate that the use of AI makes searching for and understanding content more flexible, as its potential makes information more accessible, saves time, and speeds up the completion of practical tasks. However, some warn that this ease of use can lead to becoming accustomed to less effort and developing more passive or dependent habits.

One of the students says, "I see it as them preferring to use that rather than read." Here, we observe a concern about the superficiality of learning processes, where the immediate access that AI allows may displace the effort required to read and construct meaning. Along these lines, another student comments, "It will generate a change in students, because many use artificial intelligence and when it comes to presenting or defending a project, they do not know how to express themselves or do not know the topic they are talking about, etc." In this case, the concern about the loss of autonomy and understanding of educational content is also reinforced. This perspective somehow suggests that "technology dependence" could weaken communication and argumentative skills.

On the other hand, a student says that educational change will come about "(...) when teachers are no longer needed." This statement responds to a more deterministic or dystopian view of digital technologies: "They will replace us." From another perspective, a student points out that "it is easier because it helps us understand things we do not know." Here, we observe a positive perception of AI as a tool to support the understanding of educational content. Finally, another student indicates that AI can "...improve education, work, and change society." This quote also projects a hopeful and transformative perspective of AI in education.

Most of the students surveyed indicate that they are already incorporating AI tools into their academic lives: 69% report using them occasionally, while 18% say they do so frequently. This indicates that the use of AI has become a common practice among students. When asked what they use it for, the most frequent responses were: searching for information, improving or correcting texts, and generating summaries. Regarding the most frequently mentioned applications, ChatGPT, Copilot, and Gemini stand out, which have become key tools for supporting study, writing, and organizing ideas. We also asked them about the difficulties they encounter when using AI in the educational field. The main barrier cited by students was that

their schools do not allow its use or that their teachers disagree with it. Some also point out that they are unsure how to use it effectively or that they distrust the reliability of the information.

In this regard, when we asked about how to improve the use of AI in schools, the majority of students suggested that its use should be permitted with a clear educational focus. One student stated, "Teachers should let us use it to understand topics." This highlights the need to establish conditions and limits to avoid excessive or thoughtless use of AI. "It should be used responsibly and not as a cheat," another student stated, referring to the importance of promoting clear "rules." Others value the use of AI, especially in complex subjects: "It could explain topics in better words so we understand them." Finally, several students propose integrating AI into pedagogy, meaning that they can use it critically and leverage it for group work, thematic research, or content creation.

5. Discussion

In presenting the theoretical framework for this work, we emphasize the importance of adopting a Critical Digital Literacy approach that acknowledges students' existing knowledge and takes into account the structural characteristics of educational systems. Regarding this, the data reveals a gap between what students think about AI and what they understand as a traditional educational practice. We then take as a starting point the question: How is AI integrated into the practices of students and teachers?

One of the most recurring questions that often arises when considering the inclusion of technology in the classroom is how teachers will utilize it, beyond simply addressing the interests of their students. In the case of AI, what we observed is that those with the most knowledge about it tend to be students; in the research we conducted, more than 80% indicated that it is a significant part of their daily lives. This problematization is also reflected in the voices of young people, who state that they use AI tools as a guide to solve specific tasks without teacher intervention. However, they express some fear of being discovered when doing so.

Regarding what we share, some authors have expressed that technophobic views still exist among teachers regarding the use of specific digital technologies (Cabero Almenara, 2016). Alternatively, in a context of uncertainty regarding how to use AI, it is not at all minor to return to the famous metaphor of apocalyptic or integrated, coined by Eco (2011). The truth is that,

beyond teachers' positions, it is necessary to consider the spaces that are enabled for their training and development in relation to emerging technologies.

In Argentina, in the post-pandemic context, we find ourselves facing a situation of hollowing out of public policy, particularly with Conectar Igualdad. Godoy (2019) suggests that from 2015 to 2019, the program underwent several changes. It was renamed the National Comprehensive Digital Education Plan (PLANIED) and then Learn Connected, with a strong focus on robotics. Furthermore, the focus shifted from the secondary level to preschool and primary education. This also strongly impacted the training of teachers at this level regarding the inclusion of technologies in the classroom. During the pandemic, teachers experienced the experience of connecting with ICTs through self-taught learning, as state initiatives failed to meet current demands (Ortega Portal, 2020).

At the same time, there are other interesting issues to discuss based on the findings. If we follow what UNESCO (2023) suggests about the link between AI and education, we should consider AI from three dimensions: 1. How learning is achieved with AI (through its use in the classroom); 2. How to learn about AI (understanding its technologies and foundations); and 3. How to prepare for AI (developing critical citizenship and awareness of its impacts). From what students share, we see that they have not yet recorded experiences using AI in the classroom, nor do they reflect critically on its use. If they are learning about the second dimension, they are approaching it from a somewhat ambiguous perspective.

About half believe that AI can bring about significant changes in education, and a similar proportion indicated that they are enthusiastic about its use. At the same time, 26% said they have no opinion on the matter. At the same time, they identify AI only as virtual assistants, chatbots, or text-correcting apps, revealing a lack of knowledge about other forms and fields in which it manifests itself. Here, we could revisit another discussion regarding the false illusion of believing that younger generations are technologically proficient, as we once coined the term "digital natives." Otherwise, we must consider how students learn about digital technologies in school. Therefore, there is a need to consider how MIL experiences can be enabled in the classroom to strengthen digital skills.

We prefer to think about connecting students with AI from a proactive perspective, such as digital citizenship. In this sense, we agree with Cobo (2016, 2019) that reflecting on "digital competence" necessitates a set of cross-cutting aspects. Today, a broader and more diverse range

of skills is required to navigate digital environments. These include aspects such as digital identity management, digital citizenship, understanding the rules of life in virtual environments, assuming responsibilities and rights, privacy management, regulating online time, and the ability to negotiate knowledge in virtual spaces, among others.

Fifteen years after the launch of the Conectar Igualdad Program in Salta, we can report significant progress and ongoing challenges. When this policy was introduced, access to personal devices, such as netbooks, was minimal among the working class. However, years after the implementation of this public policy, that number has increased, according to data from the National Survey on Access and Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ENTIC)[3] conducted by INDEC (National Institute of Statistics and Census). We can say that this public policy, at the time, managed to reduce the access gap, but not completely close it. This panorama invites us to reflect on the importance of continuity and the real impact of public policies. While achieving full "digital equality" in material terms (access) is challenging due to the rapid pace of technological advancement, we observed a more widespread and diverse ecosystem. For example, when we conducted fieldwork in the selected schools, it was surprising to see many students with their own netbooks, most of which were from Conectar Igualdad or Juana Manso, state programs, although not recognized as such by the students. What is a state program? What does it mean to have benefited from a state program? These were some of the questions that emerged during the surveys. This suggests some misinformation about the arrival and delivery of these devices. Furthermore, students noted that, although computers are present in the classroom, their use is often more closely tied to personal entertainment than to the specific tasks proposed by their teachers. Herein lies the persistent challenge, which we already mentioned in the golden years of Conectar Igualdad: simply distributing technological devices is not enough; it is necessary to ensure their pedagogical appropriation (Chachagua, 2019). Public policies must move toward a deeper integration of digital technologies, accompanied by training and the critical and responsible use of these technologies. Discussing digital inclusion implies not only access to devices but also the development of skills from an ethical and transformative perspective.

[3] https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/entic_10_15.pdf

6. Conclusions

This article aims to explore digital literacy in relation to AI, drawing on the experiences and perceptions of secondary school students in the city of Salta, Argentina, in 2025, based on initial findings from ongoing research. Based on previous problematizations and as a result of participating in a research project by the Research Council of the National University of Salta and other institutions, such as CONICET, we noted that other structural asymmetries, including educational, socioeconomic, and political ones, conditioned the inclusion of technologies in the city's secondary schools. Therefore, considering the incorporation of AI into educational practices also implies recognizing that its genuine inclusion is influenced by preexisting inequalities, which condition both access and the real possibilities of its pedagogical use.

What the study reveals is that digital literacy regarding AI in some cities in northern Argentina, such as Salta, presents significant outstanding gaps. As Bacher (2024) argues, it is essential to promote multi-stakeholder initiatives to identify, foster coordination, and make visible actions related to media literacy in the region. In the case of Argentina, digital inclusion policies in schools appear discontinuous, diffuse, and uncertain.

Regarding digital skills, the Salta students surveyed mostly use AI, although they are unaware of its potential. In other words, widespread use remains for basic functions such as searching for information or generating summaries. In some ways, we can say that they are missing out on the magnitude of possibilities offered by these tools.

One of the relevant characteristics of critical digital literacies is understanding the principles of digital technology and the ability to act as producers and creators of content. We can affirm, therefore, that students in the city of Salta present approximations regarding knowledge of AI, but not a critical problematization of it.

At the same time, it appears that we are regressing or finding ourselves in the initial stages of digital citizenship, as evidenced by the fear manifested in the experiences of using artificial intelligence in the classroom. In the words of Cobo (2019), the first strategies for promoting digital citizenship skills focused on the risks and security issues associated with internet use.

Among their main fears or resistances is the prohibition by teachers and educational institutions on using it due to concerns about plagiarism or unreliable information. This leads young people to use it in a "hidden" manner, impeding its pedagogical integration and limiting

opportunities for critical and supported learning. This is no coincidence; whenever a "new" technology enters the classroom, it usually sparks resistance. This has happened with educational television, computer labs, the Conectar Igualdad netbooks, cell phones, and now with AI. These situations reflect deep tensions between traditional teaching models and "new" ways of accessing knowledge. Rather than prohibiting it, the current challenge is to develop pedagogical frameworks that enable its ethical, creative, and situated use from our research project, we believe that integrating AI into education does not mean replacing the role of teachers, but rather enriching it, supporting young people in the development of critical digital skills that allow them to inhabit the present and build the future with autonomy and responsibility.

Although there are some state proposals[4] Regarding the integration of AI at the secondary level, we believe that biases persist in the way these technologies are approached from cultural, social, economic, gender, and other perspectives. This contributes to the widening of inequalities and limits the capacity to consider the role of technologies critically.

In contrast, we maintain that it is essential to consider approaches such as those proposed by critical digital literacy, which mainstream teaching practices and align with a situated approach that addresses contexts, in pursuit of developing more just and democratic societies in Latin America (Bacher, 2024). Furthermore, they should promote digital citizenship, starting with the production and creation of content, emphasizing the meaningful use of digital services and tools in everyday life and at work, and a critical understanding of power relations and social constructions in the digital environment (Ilomäki et al., 2023).

Finally, we support AMI as a fundamental human and citizen right, but we believe that its development cannot be conceived in contexts of precariousness or a shrinking state. Ensuring access and critical training requires sustained, comprehensive public policies.

[4] The Argentine Program for Educational Innovation with Artificial Intelligence (Paideia) is a national initiative that is expected to begin implementation this year. Its main objectives include teaching computational thinking and the development and application of AI (https://www.argentina.gob.ar/capital-humano/educacion/paideia/inteligencia-artificial-paideia). However, it does not yet specify lines of action or approaches for teaching by and between teachers and students.

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Organizational Media Competence: Thinking the Collective to Enable a Critical Attitude

Competencia Mediática Organizacional: pensar lo colectivo para habilitar la actitud crítica

Competência Midiática Organizacional: pensar o coletivo para possibilitar uma atitude crítica

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Abstract: This essay presents Organizational Media Competence (CMO) as an innovative and Latin American theoretical-methodological proposal that seeks to overcome individualistic and instrumental approaches to media literacy. From a holistic, ecosophical and complex perspective, it is argued that media competencies are built collectively within educational organizations understood as communicative ecosystems. The CMO protocol and its application in a Brazilian university are described, with the aim of revealing the structural tensions and training potentialities. Finally, the contributions of this perspective for Latin America, and in particular for Uruguay, are updated, highlighting its value as a critical tool for diagnosis, training, and institutional transformation.

Keywords:
Media literacy, media education, communicative ecosystems, critical attitude

Resumen: En este ensayo se presenta la Competencia Mediática Organizacional (CMO) como una propuesta teórico-metodológica innovadora y latinoamericana que busca superar los enfoques individualistas e instrumentales de la alfabetización mediática. Desde una mirada holística, ecosófica y compleja, se sostiene que las competencias mediáticas se construyen colectivamente dentro de organizaciones educativas entendidas como ecosistemas comunicativos. Se describe el protocolo CMO y su aplicación en una universidad brasileña, con el objetivo de revelar las tensiones estructurales y potencialidades formativas. Finalmente, se actualizan los aportes de esta perspectiva para América Latina, y en particular para Uruguay,

destacando su valor como herramienta crítica para el diagnóstico, la formación y la transformación institucional.

Palabras clave:
Alfabetización mediática, educación mediática, ecosistemas comunicativos, actitud crítica

Resumo: Este ensaio apresenta a Competência Midiática Organizacional (OCM) como uma proposta teórico-metodológica inovadora e latino-americana que busca superar abordagens individualistas e instrumentais da alfabetização midiática. A partir de uma perspectiva holística, ecosófica e complexa, argumenta-se que as competências midiáticas são construídas coletivamente dentro de organizações educacionais entendidas como ecossistemas comunicativos. Descreve-se o protocolo CMO e sua aplicação em uma universidade brasileira, com o objetivo de revelar as tensões estruturais e as potencialidades formativas. Por fim, as contribuições dessa perspectiva para a América Latina e, em particular, para o Uruguai, são atualizadas, destacando seu valor como ferramenta crítica para diagnóstico, treinamento e transformação institucional.

Palavras-chave:
Alfabetização midiática, educação midiática, ecossistemas comunicativos, atitude crítica

1. Introduction

In recent decades, Latin America has witnessed numerous efforts to promote media, digital, informational, and communication literacy, fostering critical, autonomous, and democratic citizenship. Notable initiatives to this end are those carried out in the region by the Latin American and Caribbean Chapter of UNESCO's Global Partnership on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and the persistent work of researchers belonging to the Euro-American Interuniversity Network for Research on Media Competencies (Red Alfamed), who are actively promoting policies, research, and practices that strengthen the development of media competencies in Latin American citizens.

However, many of the studies, programs, and assessment models proposed for media competency, including those by international organizations, have tended to focus on the

individual as the unit of analysis, learning, and transformation. This perspective, although relevant, is anchored in a predominantly instrumental and rationalist approach, where the notion of "critical thinking" is presented as the primary training horizon. An example of this can be seen in the UNESCO publication (2023): Thinking Critically, Clicking Wisely: Media and Information Literate Citizenship (Grizzle et al., 2023). What often remains in the background is the structuring influence of the institutional environments in which this thinking is formed, developed, or blocked.

As Martín-Barbero (2004; 2011) and Soares (2000; 2011) argue, organizations are not neutral environments for the transmission of information, but relatively open and dialogic communicative ecosystems where power relations are configured, meanings are contested, and citizenship practices are shaped. Recognizing organizations as symbolic spaces implies assuming that their communicative logics not only reflect their institutional culture, but also produce, reproduce, or transform it.

This essay proposes Organizational Media Competence (OMC) as a theoretical and methodological framework that allows us to shift the focus from the individual to educational organizations, understood, as Soares (2009) points out, as formative communication environments, where communicative practices are central to the development of critical citizenship. OMC is presented as a perspective that establishes an intrinsic relationship between the development of individuals' media competence and the organizational conditions that enable or restrict it, integrating Ibero-American approaches and proposing a relational, holistic, and transformative perspective.

Thus understood, OMC establishes a procedure for interpreting the subject-organization relationship in a given spatiotemporal context. The data obtained provide input for a subsequent strategic stage of intervention, based on educational communication actions that seek to empower organizational subjects to act critically and autonomously in media communication processes that shape organizational and social reality.

From this perspective, OML conceives the organization as a "place-not-place" (Augé, 1994), which delimits space and time for the development of media competencies and, at the same time, acts as an agent of change in media society. Within its autopoietic limits (Maturana & Varela, 1990), the organization is understood as a territory where it is possible to develop the

media competence of organizational subjects and, reflexively (Giddens, 1991), of society as a whole.

Inspired by a holistic, ecosophical, and complex vision, OML is based on the premise that media competence arises from a relational production between the subject and the organization. Media literacy should not only involve teaching critical thinking, but also transforming the organizational conditions that enable critical thinking and collective action.

The proposed methodology is based on the intersection of two dimensions: on the one hand, organizational entities (documents, policies, structures, institutional culture); on the other, organizational subjects (teachers, students, technical and administrative staff). This relational reading enables a deeper examination of how official discourses intersect—or not—with actual practices, and how processes of symbolic production and media citizenship are manifested (or inhibited) in institutional everyday life.

The objective of this essay is to present this proposal in dialogue with contemporary debates on media literacy in the Global South, to demonstrate its concrete application in a Brazilian public university, and to discuss its emancipatory potential as a critical tool for diagnosis, training, and intervention in other institutional realities in Latin America, with a special emphasis on Uruguay. Through this approach, we aim to offer a paradigmatic and situated perspective that complements and challenges traditional frameworks of media literacy, fostering a critical citizenship grounded in the collective, relational, and transformative.

2. Beyond Critical Thinking: Toward a Critical Attitude

Historically, media literacy has been linked to the development of critical thinking as an analytical, rational, and reflective capacity. This approach has been widely promoted by organizations such as UNESCO and academic networks, including Alfamed, which recognize it as an essential dimension for citizenship education in media-driven environments. However, various studies, including those by Ferrés and Montero (2024), have questioned the sufficiency of this model when approached from a neuroscience perspective.

Authors such as Damásio (1996), LeDoux (1999), Ratey (2003), and Evans (2002) have shown that human decisions are not driven solely by reason, but by the interaction between emotional and rational processes. Thought without emotion does not mobilize action, and understanding without affection is unlikely to translate into commitment.

Based on this critique, a conceptual shift is proposed: moving from critical thinking to a critical attitude. This does not deny the importance of thought, but insists that knowing is not enough; it is necessary to want, feel, and act. It is an ethical, emotional, and intellectual disposition that encourages one to take a position regarding media messages and structures, not only to interpret them, but also to intervene in them.

Media literacy, from this perspective, should not focus solely on individual cognitive skills, but rather on collective empowerment processes that recognize institutional influences, connections, and silences as part of both the problem and the solution.

The studies analyzed by Ferrés and Montero (2024) highlight this tension: individuals may be aware of the risks associated with the media, identify manipulative discourses, or recognize the impact of social media on their lives, yet they continue to engage in media practices that they rationally consider harmful, without adopting a critical attitude. From a OML perspective, it is argued that organizational mediation can provoke a shift from rational to attitudinal. If the organization is concerned with creating spaces and conditions that develop a critical attitude in its constituents, this shared knowledge can translate into individual and social transformation.

In this sense, a critical attitude is not an isolated personal competency, but rather a relational practice that is learned, developed, and sustained within a community. This attitude is not formed in a vacuum, but in institutional contexts that enable or inhibit it. The OML proposes conceiving critical thinking as a relational and organizational practice that transcends the individual and offers a framework for analyzing not only what people think, but also how the environment is configured to enable, or limit, them to think and act critically.

3. A Paradigmatic Perspective: The Holistic, the Ecosophical, and the Complex

Organizational Media Literacy (OML) is based on a paradigmatic vision that challenges the fragmented approaches prevalent in many media literacy policies. Instead of assuming a linear and cumulative logic of knowledge, OMC relies on three interrelated paradigms: holism, ecosophy, and complexity. This articulation enables us to understand educational organizations as symbolic ecosystems where subjectivities, communicative practices, and structural conditions are configured, allowing for the development of media citizenship.

3.1 The Holistic: Part and Whole in Continuous Dialogue

The holistic paradigm, initially proposed by Smuts (1926) and subsequently adopted in the UNESCO Venice Declaration of 1986, posits that the whole is not the simple sum of its parts, but rather the totality of its components that interact and participate in an integrative dynamic. This view has been revived in Latin American thought (Crema, 2015) and aligns with epistemologies from the South that reject the Cartesian dissociation between parts and the whole. Within the framework of OML, holism allows us to understand that media competence does not develop exclusively in individuals but instead emerges from their interaction with the organizational environment. Organizational structures, discourse, policies, and technologies determine not only what its members can do, but also what they can imagine, desire, and express. The organization is, therefore, a constitutive part of the formative process.

This perspective integrates subject and organization in a part-whole dynamic, in which both dimensions mutually shape each other. This approach allows us to understand media competence as a process that emerges from the interaction between actors and structures within the organizational ecosystem.

3.2 Ecosophy: Communication as Relational Ethics

Inspired by the "deep ecology" of Naess (1989)—an environmental activist and professor at the University of Oslo—and further developed by Bugallo (2011; 2023), ecosophy introduces an ethical and political interpretation of interdependence. It is not only about recognizing that everyone is connected, but also about assuming responsibility for those connections. It proposes a relational ethic that recognizes the interdependence between humans, technologies, knowledge, and environments. From this perspective, media competence cannot be reduced to technical skills; instead, it involves sustainable and conscious practices in relation to both the symbolic and material mediums. In the field of communication, this entails recognizing that the way an organization communicates expresses its worldview: whether it listens or silences, whether it enables or excludes, whether it cares or discards. As Soares (2011) suggests, institutions also educate through their silences, their communicative architecture, and their approach to managing relationships between social subjects.

Applied to media literacy, ecosophy enables us to reframe the relationship between subjects, technologies, and culture in terms of a logic of care and interdependence. The

educational organization ceases to be a neutral container and is conceived as a space of enunciation, where media citizenship, social justice, and marginalization are symbolically produced.

3.3 Complexity: Thinking in a network, acting in context

Complexity thinking, developed by Morin (2011), offers a key epistemological tool for addressing organizational processes. Complexity does not mean chaos, but rather the recognition that social phenomena are intertwined, contradictory, and nonlinear. In this framework, it is not about seeking single truths, but rather about mapping tensions, paradoxes, and relationships. This paradigm encompasses uncertainty, ambiguity, and change as integral components of any training and communication process.

From this perspective, OML proposes a perspective that integrates the subjective and the structural, the emotional and the institutional, the spoken and the silenced. The accompanying OML methodological protocol is constructed as a situated reading strategy, which articulates both quantitative and qualitative data to understand how organizational conditions influence the development or blockage of media literacy within the organizational complex.

These three paradigms articulate the OML proposal as a comprehensive approach that transcends reductionisms and fosters a deep and situated understanding of media literacy in real-world institutional contexts.

4. From the Individual to the Organizational: A Relational Perspective

One of the central contributions of Organizational Media Literacy (OMC) is its invitation to transcend the focus exclusively on the individual as an isolated agent of the literacy process. Instead of solely assessing personal knowledge, understanding, and expression, this approach proposes analyzing the organizational conditions that enable, mediate, or restrict the development of critical media citizenship.

This perspective is part of a sociological tradition that understands organizations not only as functional structures but also as symbolic, cultural, and political systems (Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1983; Navarro, 2001). From this perspective, the educational organization is a space where meanings are produced and circulated, communicative hierarchies are established, and forms of

symbolic power are exercised. Subjects' media competencies, therefore, cannot be understood or developed outside of this context.

Berger and Luckmann's (2008) theory of the social construction of reality is especially relevant to understanding this link. According to these authors, everyday reality is shaped through processes of objectification and subjectification, through which institutions organize, naturalize, and reproduce social meanings. The OML adopts this logic to argue that media literacy cannot be limited to what a subject knows, understands, or expresses, but must also consider the organizational structures that shape what that subject can know, express, understand, and transform.

From the field of organizational communication, authors such as Baldissera (2008) warn that organizations are not neutral spaces of transmission, but rather territories where organizational meanings are produced and contested. From this perspective, evaluating organizational media competence involves analyzing how organizational policies, structures, narratives, discourses, and practices shape the ecosystem in which subjects produce—or perceive their critical media competence as limited.

This approach enables us to identify areas of structural incoherence, such as organizations that promote discourse on participation but maintain closed channels of communication, or those that invest in technologies without creating real conditions for their critical appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this sense, the OML shifts the focus from technique to context, from the individual to the collective.

From the proposed relational perspective, organizational subjects (teachers, students, technicians) are both producers and products of the institution's communicative dynamics. What they say, do, or think cannot be separated from the environments in which they coexist (Wolton, 2006). Therefore, media literacy also requires transforming organizations, enabling listening processes, generating coherence between discourse and practice, and building institutional policies that recognize communication as a transformative cultural practice, oriented toward the development of critical citizenship in the face of the challenges of the 21st-century media context (Montero et al., 2024).

This shift from the individual to the organizational level does not deny the importance of individuals acquiring media competence. What it proposes is to recognize that such acquisition is insufficient if the symbolic, material, and relational structures that condition the development of

media competence through the communication process are not also addressed. Ultimately, critical media literacy cannot be an individual effort in a communication environment that discourages criticism, silences participation, or normalizes verticality.

5. Methodological Innovation: The OML Protocol

Organizational Media Literacy (OML) is not limited to a theoretical proposal; it translates into a concrete methodological tool that enables the diagnosis, understanding, and transformation of the institutional conditions influencing the development of critical media competences. This articulation is innovative in the fields of media literacy, education, and competence because it broadens the traditional subject-centered approach, incorporating the structural, symbolic, and political dimensions of the organizational context. The OML protocol proposes a relational, situated, and dialogic analysis strategy that articulates the structural with the symbolic, the organizational with the personal. This protocol was conceived within the framework of a doctoral thesis (Montero, 2019), supported by a systematic literature review (Montero et al., 2017), and empirically applied in university organizations. Its interdisciplinary design combines elements of educational communication, organizational sociology, pedagogy, critical psychology, and the epistemology of complexity.

The methodological proposal is structured around three major analytical dimensions:

a) Organizational subjects:

This includes teachers, students, and technical and administrative staff, conceived as active actors who not only learn or teach, but also produce meaning, reproduce communication models, and configure cultural practices within the organization. Their media competencies are assessed through a structured survey, adapted from the Ibero-American models of Ferrés and Piscitelli (2012) and Pérez and Delgado (2012), which includes 10 dimensions grouped into three levels: (1) Knowledge: access to and search for information, language, technology, production processes, media policy; (2) Comprehension: ideology and values, reception; and (3) Expression: creation, communication, citizen participation. This reading allows us to observe both individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as collective patterns, group contradictions, and intersectoral gaps that are not always visible from an evaluation of separate groups.

b) Organizational Entities

This includes the analysis of institutional documents, curriculum plans, research and outreach projects, communication policies, and technology management structures. Through a document review and thematic content analysis, the OML protocol aims to identify the presence, absence, contradictions, or transversalities related to the dimensions of media literacy. Four organizational entities are considered for exploration and analysis: management, teaching, research, and outreach.

This analysis is not limited to a policy audit, but seeks to interpret institutional discourses as cultural texts, understanding that institutional silences also convey meaning. The evaluation of these entities allows us to observe whether media literacy is present as a transversal policy, as a fragmented practice, or as a disjointed discourse.

c) Relational Cross-Referencing

The originality of the OML protocol lies in its relational reading model, which cross-references data from both dimensions: subjects and organizational entities. This relational reading allows us to identify coherences or contradictions between the performance of subjects and institutional actions; Detect critical gaps, such as a sound technological infrastructure accompanied by low critical development, or isolated individual initiatives in the absence of a systemic vision; and identify conditions that enable or hinder the development of media literacy in real-life contexts.

Thus, this methodological approach does not merely seek to classify individual media literacy levels, but rather to provide a nuanced understanding of how institutional processes influence the development—or inhibition—of media citizenship.

From this perspective, the protocol not only seeks to diagnose but also to propose inputs for educational and communication transformation, supporting institutional planning processes, ongoing training, and organizational improvement from a critical and contextualized perspective.

6. Application of the OML Protocol at a Brazilian Public University

The OML protocol was implemented at a Brazilian public university (Montero et al., 2022), which has an outstanding academic track record, a strong commitment to public education, research excellence, and a recognized policy of inclusion and democratization of

knowledge. With a university community comprising 40,000 people, including faculty, students, and technical and administrative staff, this institution provided a fertile context for evaluating how institutional conditions shape the development of organizational media competence. It was an ideal setting to test the proposal, as it combined advanced technological resources, academic excellence, and a discursive openness to educational innovation.

Quantitative and qualitative instruments were applied to the three groups of organizational subjects—faculty, technical and administrative staff, and students—revealing intermediate levels of media competence. Although each group demonstrated specific strengths, such as greater conceptual mastery among teachers and creative skills among students, none achieved a level considered sufficient on a sustained basis, reflecting a lack of institutional coordination to sustain these developments. Collectively, all three groups demonstrated potential in accessing information and creating content, but also shared weaknesses in critical understanding of the media and technology-mediated citizen participation.

The quantitative results indicated that the most developed dimensions were access and content creation, while the most critical areas were ideological understanding, civic participation, and critical reception of media messages. In particular, teachers demonstrated greater knowledge of media production processes but faced obstacles in incorporating this knowledge into their teaching practices. Technical and administrative staff expressed difficulties in the expressive dimension, particularly in relation to institutional public communication. Students, for their part, demonstrated high competence in creating digital content, but showed little reflection on its circulation and political implications.

In parallel, a significant sample of institutional documents, academic projects, and management structures was analyzed, revealing a lack of comprehensive media literacy policies. Despite having an advanced technological infrastructure and specific innovative experiences, these remained isolated, lacking a cross-cutting strategy or systemic vision. The organizational research body revealed little academic output related to the topic, and university outreach showed multiple communication initiatives lacking institutional coordination. The documentary analysis also revealed a weak presence of media literacy in curricula and the lack of an institutional policy for teacher training in media education and communication.

Regarding management, it was evident that, although formal organizational structures and institutional communication channels exist, these are not always aligned with the principles of a

democratic media communication culture. Decision-making tends to be concentrated in hierarchical groups, and institutional policies lack coordination with communication strategies that promote critical media participation.

In the teaching area, the analysis of curricula and curricular practices revealed that media literacy is not integrated transversally into pedagogical proposals. The teaching of critical media skills is limited to specific subjects and is not consistently integrated as a global competency. Furthermore, a gap persists between the technical use of media and critical reflection on their social and cultural implications.

In the research area, a low presence of studies linked to organizational media literacy was observed. Although there are lines of research in the fields of communication or education, these rarely interact with each other, reflecting an epistemological fragmentation that limits transdisciplinary approaches. The lack of institutional incentives to investigate the communicative dimension of educational organizations reinforces this gap.

In the extension area, numerous initiatives with educational communication potential were identified, but without institutional planning that articulates these efforts under a shared vision. Projects often depend on the individual commitment of teachers or specific teams, without structural support to guarantee their continuity or collective impact. The communication dimension of outreach appears weakened by the absence of policies that integrate media, participation, and territory as strategic axes.

The relational analysis between subjects and organizational entities was crucial in revealing deep-seated tensions.

Structural inconsistencies were observed, such as a curricular policy that values critical citizenship, but which was not reflected in the institution's communication culture. Conservative practices also emerged that hindered active student participation, especially in decisions related to media and organizational communication.

This experience empirically validated the potential of the OML protocol as a comprehensive diagnostic tool. It demonstrated that media competencies cannot be fully developed without favorable structural conditions, nor without an organizational culture that promotes participation, dialogue, and coherence between discourse and practice.

In summary, the study allowed: (a) to identify gaps between institutional discourse and actual practices; (b) make visible symbolic and cultural barriers to the exercise of critical

thinking; (c) map existing potential that could be articulated in integrated communication policies; and (d) generate concrete input for the design of training strategies with a relational and ecosystemic approach.

The experience showed that, even in contexts with resources and institutional will, organizational media competence does not develop spontaneously. On the contrary, it requires a conscious, structured, and participatory approach that articulates policies, training, and institutional culture around an ecosystemic vision of media communication.

7. Contributions of the Organizational Media Competence Framework for Uruguay and Latin America

The proposal for Organizational Media Competence, developed in the Latin American context, not only establishes itself as a valid tool for interpreting the dynamics of media communication in Brazilian educational institutions but also offers a framework adaptable to other contexts in the Global South, such as Uruguay. In Uruguay, where established digital inclusion policies exist—such as Plan Ceibal—challenges persist regarding the critical appropriation of media and teacher training in media education and competence. The Organizational Media Competence Framework can play a strategic role in enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Its application would allow:

- To participatively diagnose the gaps between institutional discourse and actual mediated communication practices.
- To strengthen teacher training with an ecosystemic approach and a critical attitude as a cross-cutting theme.
- To design institutional media communication policies that integrate teaching, management, outreach, and research from a relational perspective.

Furthermore, OML engages with deeply rooted conceptual and pedagogical frameworks in Latin America (Koffermann et al., 2022), such as educommunication, Paulo Freire's critical and dialogical pedagogy, or educational and popular communication, the legacy of Mario Kaplún. This theoretical convergence reinforces its regional applicability and its potential as a catalyst for transformative organizational processes.

Thus, OML is projected as a concrete contribution to current debates on media literacy, providing a comprehensive approach that responds to the structural, symbolic, and political challenges facing educational institutions in Latin America, including critical teacher training and the design of cross-cutting communication policies. By articulating critical pedagogies, educommunication, and epistemologies from the South, OML reinforces a collective, situated, and transformative media literacy.

8. An Invitation from the South

The OML invites us to view organizations as territories of communication and civic education, where the exercise of collective critical citizenship is either built or limited.

This vision reinforces the essay's initial argument about the need to overcome the individualistic perspective and adopt a relational approach that considers organizational dynamics as central determinants of media competency development in Latin America. The challenge is not only to teach media education and communication, but to practice it in a critical, coherent, and transformative way.

As a Latin American methodological proposal, the OML is positioned as a concrete tool for rethinking communication practices in educational organizations, highlighting structural tensions and activating transformation processes from an ecosystemic perspective. It is an invitation to build situated knowledge, open to dialogue with other epistemologies from the South.

The application of the OML protocol at a Brazilian university (Montero, 2019) demonstrated this approach's ability to identify structural tensions, inconsistencies between discourse and practice, and invisible potential. At the same time, it demonstrated that media literacy cannot be fully developed if the organizational conditions that enable it are not addressed.

From Uruguay, this approach is projected as a contribution that can enrich public media literacy policies, strengthen critical teacher training processes, and pave the way for considering organizational communication not as a technical procedure, but as a political practice that shapes citizenship. In this sense, Organizational Media Literacy is not just a protocol; it is an ethical, political, and pedagogical commitment to organizations that communicate with media literacy,

that listen to their members, and that are capable of transforming themselves in order to transform.

In times of information saturation, generative artificial intelligence, discursive polarization, and institutional fragility, the OML proposes rethinking our organizations as communicative territories, where we also learn—or not—to be critical citizens in a media-driven society that is here.

The OML is not presented as a closed model, but rather as a tool open to dialogue with other theoretical and pedagogical frameworks from the South. It aligns with the tradition of educommunication (Soares, 2000), Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (2013), Martín-Barbero's (2002) notion of "territories of knowledge," and the defense of dialogic culture as a form of resistance (Kaplún, 1998).

Thus, the OML connects with historical struggles for critical, educational, and liberating communication, updating these approaches within the framework of contemporary digital cultures and media ecosystems.

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Media Literacy for Strengthening the Public Sphere. Case: Students at Universities in Mexico

Alfabetización mediática para el fortalecimiento de la esfera pública. Caso: Estudiantes en México

Alfabetização midiográfica para o fortalecimento da esfera pública. Caso: Estudantes Universitários no México

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Abstract: The public sphere, understood as a symbolic social space where citizens deliberate on matters of common interest, is essential to articulate the relationship between civil society and the state. Its construction requires guaranteeing rights such as freedom of expression and access to information, which are crucial for ensuring the quality of public debate. With the rise of digital media, citizens not only consume content but also produce and disseminate it; however, this does not necessarily mean they have critical skills in the face of disinformation. This article presents the results of a quantitative study with university students in Mexico City, which reveals a preference for consulting information through digital media and highlights the need to promote digital media literacy as a strategy to strengthen the public sphere.

Keywords:
Critical Citizenship, Digital Media, Disinformation, Citizen Participation, Democratic Public Sphere, University Students

Resumen: La esfera pública, espacio simbólico social donde los ciudadanos deliberan sobre asuntos de interés común, es esencial para articular la relación entre sociedad civil y Estado. Su construcción requiere garantizar derechos como la libertad de expresión y acceso a la

información pues ello será crucial para la calidad del debate. Con los medios de comunicación digitales, los ciudadanos no solo consumen contenidos, sino también los producen y difunden, pero ello no significa que tengan habilidades críticas ante la desinformación. Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio cuantitativo con universitarios en la Ciudad de México que revela la preferencia de consultar información en medios digitales y destaca la necesidad de promover la alfabetización mediática digital para fortalecer una esfera pública.

Palabras clave:
Ciudadanía crítica, medios digitales, desinformación, participación ciudadana, esfera pública democrática, estudiantes universitarios

Resumo: A esfera pública, entendida como um espaço social simbólico no qual os cidadãos deliberam sobre questões de interesse comum, é essencial para articular a relação entre a sociedade civil e o Estado. Sua construção depende da garantia de direitos como a liberdade de expressão e o acesso à informação, elementos cruciais para a qualidade do debate público. Com as mídias digitais, os cidadãos não apenas consomem conteúdos, mas também os produzem e disseminam; contudo, isso não implica necessariamente que possuam capacidade crítica frente à desinformação. Este artigo apresenta os resultados de um estudo quantitativo com estudantes universitários na Cidade do México, que revela uma preferência pela consulta de informações em mídias digitais e destaca a necessidade de promover a alfabetização midiática digital como estratégia para fortalecer a esfera pública.

Palavras-chave:
Cidadania crítica, mídias digitais, desinformação, participação cidadã, esfera pública democrática, estudantes universitários

1. Introduction

Jürgen Habermas (1962/1982ab), in his book The History and Critique of Public Opinion, points out that during the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly in London and Paris, coffee houses were centers where the aristocracy and parts of the bourgeoisie met to discuss political, literary, and social issues. This increased the number of coffee houses, and they became key

places where public discussion took place. For this discussion, their main source of information was the press (newspapers and magazines) and also through personal letters, as we recall that radio and television appeared towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

For Habermas, the task of a public sphere is to enable all citizens to participate in critical public debate. However, from contemporary perspectives such as Fraser's (1992/1999), they view this public sphere with biases as predominantly male, bourgeois, and exclusionary spaces, thus proposing multiple subaltern public spaces. In this regard, Keane (1997) agrees that "Today, the ideal of a unified public sphere [made up of] a complex mosaic of public spheres of varying sizes, which overlap and interconnect, has become obsolete" (p. 57).

This allows us to identify that the times (and other elements such as technology, cultural practices, the political system, among others) are influencing the way people participate in public spaces of discussion.

Therefore, we agree with Lindón (2024), that while studying debate and opinion is related to public space, it must be studied and linked to the social: "Integrating the complex relationship between subjects and space is a way of penetrating a dimension of the social that has been largely rendered invisible by spatial approaches" (p. 1086).

Comparing that 17th and 18th century society with today's digital society, we observe that the forms of socialization and discussion of public—and private—issues are changing. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism think tank, in its Digital News Report-2024 (Reuters, 2024), notes that traditional mass media (press, radio, television) are currently facing declining public credibility, the spread of false information, instability in their economic models, and competition among themselves, but also with respect to digital communication options.

However, for citizen participation to occur in shaping the debate on issues of public interest, as Fuchs (2017) indicates, freedom of expression and freedom of association are required, issues that are "limited by unequal access conditions (money, education, age, etc.) and by the dominance of visibility and attention by large economic and political organizations" (p. 78). In addition, citizens must have information, whether through their own experience, through participation in public forums, as well as access to information in traditional or digital media. In the global context and considering the variations across countries, it is noted that, although some people continue to prefer news from major newspapers like the New York Times or renowned magazines like The Guardian, there is an upward trend toward news on digital platforms. A

Reuters study (2024) indicates that the most consulted digital platforms are YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram, and Threads. These platforms coexist alongside "traditional" mass media (press, radio, television), and even show trends toward digitalization by offering their content in digital versions, encouraging new forms of participation now in digital cyberspace. This is, the virtualization of public spaces for debate, whether on local or international topics.

Digital social networks amplify a problem: the viral distribution of fake news, which can generate public opinion based on misinformation. Gómez and Núñez (2021) indicate:

> News consumers of all ages struggle to interpret information and distinguish between what is real and what is false. In today's world of fake news, content consumers run the risk of making decisions and communicating flawed information based on false information. (p. 23)

Access to media, whether digital or traditional, does not guarantee that the information is accurate, and even if it were, it does not automatically contribute to building a strong public sphere that generates critical positions.

Therefore, this article addresses the importance of promoting media education—also known as media and information literacy—as a citizen's right. This approach strengthens democratic participation by providing people with tools to analyze and interpret information, including producing messages that favor the inclusion of diverse voices in public debate, combating misinformation and recognizing the interests behind the production of fake news. Understanding and developing critical skills to appropriate these digital environments will strengthen citizen deliberation and contribute to strengthening the public sphere by promoting a debate based on informed judgments.

Furthermore, without critical skills, citizens can fall into reproducing dominant, fallacious discourses that seek to influence citizen action without realizing it. Therefore, media and digital literacy is important, as it can strengthen democracy among citizens, promote social inclusion, and strengthen a critical citizenry that allows them to express their real interests and problems.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Citizen Rights and Participation

Lefebvre (1968/1978) conceives the right to the city as a fundamental right of citizens to actively participate in the life of the city: "The right to the city cannot be conceived as a simple

right to visit or return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a right to urban life, transformed and renewed" (p. 138).

Researchers González and Covarrubias (2007) echo Lefebvre to complement his position regarding the right of citizens, which entails "actively participating in the life of the city, accessing its resources, and influencing decision-making that affects its environment" (p. 3).

Harvey (2008) adds to this vision that "the right to the city is much more than the individual freedom to access urban resources: it is the right to change ourselves by changing the city" (p. 23). Which leads us to the question: how can we change it when we observe that these trends of change are in the hands of large private and government interests? Now, if citizens have rights to the city, they have the right to participate in its proposals and solutions, requests to the State, and therefore, demand their participation in the public sphere.

Fraser (1992/1999), when speaking of the arenas of public discourse, echoes Habermas when he indicates that in modern societies, "political participation takes place through dialogue. It is the space in which citizens reflect on and examine their common affairs and is therefore an institutionalized arena" (p. 141). He also indicates that even in this space, one can be critical of the State, since for Habermas, there is a clear separation between State and society. He then considers the public sphere to be "a group of individuals gathered to discuss issues of public concern or common interest" (p. 142).

However, for Fraser, Habermas idealizes the public sphere and fails to examine other public spheres that rival the dominant ones (bourgeois or state). Therefore, she points out that participation in these spaces is not democratic, as there are differences in participation that marginalize the participation of minority and subaltern groups. The author indicates that these minority groups will demand their rights to participation, even if they seek to be excluded from the public sphere (as is the case with women and their street protests against gender discrimination, or immigrant struggles, or demonstrations demanding public safety).

Thus, while Habermas conceives of political participation based on rational dialogue, Fraser (2008) incorporates the existence of conflicts as a constitutive part of such participation. In this way, citizen action is seen as a broader and more diverse phenomenon that can take multiple forms. Communication will be the element that articulates this dialogue, and as Gumucio-Dagron (2018) indicates, it not only refers to the exchange of information, but is also a sharing of knowledge. This is why it is called the right to communication, which "encompasses a

set of other rights such as access to information, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, and freedom of dissemination" (p. 209).

In our country, these rights (right to freedom of expression, right to information, and right to freedom of dissemination of opinions and ideas) are reflected particularly in arts. Articles 6 and 7 of the Mexican Constitution emphasize that "the freedom to disseminate opinions, information, and ideas through any means is inviolable" (Article 7). In turn, Article 6 states that "the expression of ideas shall not be subject to any judicial or administrative inquiry." The same article also refers to the right to information, stating that there are norms and laws that ensure society's right to be adequately informed in a plural and free manner. The Constitution also guarantees the right of access to Information and Communication Technologies, as well as to broadcasting and telecommunications services, including broadband and the internet (Const., 1917/2020, Articles 6 and 7).

A clear example of the significance of the right to information, the importance of its veracity, and the impact it can have on both public opinion and citizen actions, can be seen during the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Mexico, where protests were reported in various communities. Resistance, in some cases even violent, to prevent the entry of healthcare personnel, motivated by mistrust and misinformation. At the same time, conspiracy theories proliferated, such as the one claiming that Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, had spread the Covid-19 virus because he planned to implant tiny microchips through vaccines to track the population. This theory circulated not only in Mexico but throughout the world, a product of digital social networks that were themselves integrated with a lack of critical analysis, based on prejudices and ignorance, and supported by cultural factors and religious beliefs.

2.2 Media and New Modes of Citizen Participation

Currently, living in a city, and especially a megalopolis like Mexico City, entails various multicultural conflicts and disputes over public space, services, and media channels, among others. Consequently, there are multiple scenarios and studies that refer to the media and the city (Winocur, 2008; Aguilar, 1996Nel; García Canclini, 1995, among others) that examine the transformations that the media provoke in the public and private spheres.

García Canclini (1995) goes beyond citizen participation, far from merely participating in debates or testimonies, and states:

> These electronic media, which brought the masses into the public sphere, shifted citizen agency toward consumer practices. New ways of obtaining information, understanding the communities to which one belongs, and conceiving and exercising rights were established. Disillusioned with state, partisan, and union bureaucracies, the public turns to radio and television to achieve what civic institutions fail to provide: services, justice, reparations, or simple attention. (p. 23)

Califano (2015) indicates that, in modern societies, deliberation does not necessarily occur "face-to-face" (p. 68), as debate is currently mediated by mass media. The media not only collect and disseminate information, but also interpret it, giving certain perspectives on that reality. Citizens, for their part, can access different points of view to form their judgments and participate in public life.

In recent decades, it could be thought that young people, especially those who are on digital social networks, have become apathetic toward civic participation. According to Torres and Ortiz (2019), this phenomenon has been called a crisis of modern democracy, but this study also indicates that high levels of youth involvement in civic affairs have been recorded through these platforms. The authors note that "participation has transformed; that is, we are witnessing new modes of participation, in which new media linked to technology play a relevant role" (p. 52).

Thus, the concept of digital citizenship emerges:

> It can be understood generically as the capacity of political subjects to participate in the globally connected society to exercise and defend their rights and freedoms. (Bustamante, 2010, cited in Torres and Ortiz, 2019, p. 55)

Cáceres et al. (2015) consider that digital technologies can favor citizen empowerment, but this is not automatic, every citizen can collaborate in proposals to improve urban services, public policies, request accountability, that is, have an active participation but for this, it is necessary to have adequate information for decision-making and actions: "it is important that subjects become active digital citizens, but minimum involvement in substantive actions must be guaranteed so that this participation obtains verifiable results at the individual and social level" (p. 655), therefore, participating in any digital network is not synonymous with citizen participation. Fuchs (2021) indicates that the digital public sphere is emerging, referring to “a dimension of the public sphere where published knowledge takes on digital formats and informs critical public debate [but] not all digital knowledge and not all digital communication is part of the public sphere” (p. 28). The author argues that, unlike public media, commercial media respond to obvious economic and ideological interests, and consequently, they do not promote the formation of critical positions and tend to offer dizzying and superficial content.

In this regard, the media also have their responsibility. Luis Ramiro Beltrán (1998) indicates that "their mission is to raise awareness and unleash the patriotic energy of all citizens to rescue the country from backwardness" (p. 8). From the perspective of Media and Information Literacy, this approach can be associated with an advanced level of skills, as it involves the responsible production of content and proposals for action to influence the development of critical and participatory citizens. However, a deeper analysis of this topic requires considering the political and economic interests of media owners, government influence, mechanisms of power and censorship, as well as other structural factors that exceed the scope of this article. Why is the study of digital participation worrying? According to We Are Social (2025), the agency specializing in social media, internet use, and technology, in its report, The Global State of Digital in February, and in accordance with the National Units, there are approximately 8.2 billion human beings living on our planet today. Of these, approximately 5.56 billion people use the internet (approximately 68%), while the rest remain without access to the internet, which demonstrates the marked digital divide between users and non-users.

According to this study, the greatest motivation for connecting to the internet in early 2025 is to "find information" (approximately 62.8%), and almost exactly the same percentage, users indicate that they connect to the internet to stay in touch with friends and family (We Are Social, 2025). Evidently, each country and region respond to different causes for technological penetration. In Mexico, the 2024 National Survey on the Availability and Use of Information Technology in Households (ENDUTIH), conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2024), found that 83.1% of the population used the internet, a very high figure. However, the report also indicates that 86.9% of urban areas use the internet, while in rural areas it is 68.5%. Its main uses include sending and receiving messages, using social media, entertainment, searching for information, and educational support (each with a percentage greater than 80%).

The observed panorama shows the high penetration of digital technologies, a matter that will of course affect the forms of citizen participation, which, as we mentioned previously, are very different from those analyzed by Habermas in the 17th century. From other perspectives, such as Fraser's, we could speak of the excluded as those who lack access to these technologies, forms of communication, and information. However, this isn't the only problem, because just

because people have a smartphone with an internet connection and multiple programs doesn't mean they know how to use it and that citizens automatically have digital literacy.

2.3 Digital Literacy

Decades ago, it was essential, and still is, for people to know how to read and write, an aspect assessed through literacy. Today, this concept has been expanded, and we speak of digital literacy, understood as "the set of sociocognitive skills through which one can select, process, analyze, and report on the process of transforming information into knowledge" (Gros and Contreras, 2006, p. 109). However, just because a person uses digital technologies does not mean they have the aforementioned skills, and we are not talking about sending greetings to friends or family; the focus is on the context of citizenship and social participation.

For Gros and Contreras (2006), citizens are required to have the following digital competencies:

1. To be informed citizens and able to play an active role in a democratic society.
2. Inquiry and communication skills.
3. Development of skills for participation and responsible action. (pp. 113-116)

Continuing with the aforementioned trend, there is also what is known as Media and Information Literacy (MIL), which refers to digital literacy, but specifically to the use and evaluation of information from different media outlets, including digital ones. In this regard, how many times have we been exposed to information that appears online and, without checking its authenticity, we share it with our acquaintances or discuss it at work, school, and family. Later, we realize it was fake news. On other occasions, we may feel outraged by certain information received on a network (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), which we consider insulting to citizens, and we fail to consider that it may be a lie or exaggeration by opposing political groups. Or vice versa, we feel satisfaction with the actions of a party that may even be accompanied by images, photographs, or videos of supposed political achievements, when they may have been from another period, country, or created with artificial intelligence, without considering that it may be a political strategy to generate followers.

This doesn't only occur on social media; it also occurs in newspapers, magazines, and radio and television programs. Furthermore, by participating in the comments on a post, one might think that one is contributing to the debate. However, bots now exist, automated computer

programs that simulate human behavior to perform specific tasks, including interaction on social media, which can be used to manipulate public opinion. This manipulation is neither new nor unique to modern societies. Hannah Arendt (1993) indicates that, since the time of the Greeks, discourse has been "understood more as a means of persuasion" (p. 40).

Given this, the development of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) becomes essential. Ferrés and Piscitelli (2012) consider that "media education should be the responsibility of all citizens" (p. 77).

2.4 Media and Information Literacy

An alternative to prevent media misinformation would be the creation of standards to regulate information and guide better ethical practices in the field of communication. The problem is that this task is complex due to the need to safeguard the right to freedom of expression, especially when it involves ideological, political, or even economic positions. It is considered ideal to provide training (even from the early school years) that allows citizens (or future citizens) to develop digital skills.

This literacy and the implications of not doing it, is part of the concerns of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1982), in Grunwald, Germany, where the Grunwald Declaration was issued, a document that raises the importance of media literacy, since it recognizes the role that the media have in the formation of critical citizens in modern democracies and in educating citizens to exercise their responsibilities and invites them to integrate them into their educational systems. This was the founding document of MILs, but there are updates such as the Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning (UNESCO et al., 2005), Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (UNESCO, 2014), and the work on the UNESCO (2021) Competency Framework on Media and Information Literacy, which includes the Global Standards on Curriculum Guidelines for Media and Information Literacy. This document establishes a set of skills that enable people to access, understand, evaluate, and use media information and content critically, ethically, and effectively.

The UNESCO document considers that following these recommendations would generate active citizenship and foster participation in the public sphere, as it promotes informed decisions and responsible content production. This MIL document contains four key dimensions: access to information, critical evaluation, content creation, and civic participation. For its part, the

European Union has developed the Digital Competence Framework for Citizenship, known as DigComp, with the purpose of establishing indicators on the digital skills necessary for today's digital society. In its DigComp 2.2 report (European Union, 2022), 21 skills are considered, grouped into five areas: 1. Searching for and managing information and data, 2. Communication and collaboration, 3. Creating digital content, 4. Security (digital data and privacy), and 5. Problem-solving. Each skill identifies eight levels of proficiency, ranging from basic (levels 1 and 2), intermediate (3 and 4), advanced (5 and 6), to highly specialized (7 and 8).

Another similar study is that of Deutsche Welle (DW), specifically the DW Akademie, in its document Media Development: Media and Information Literacy. A Practical Guide for Trainers (Braesel & Karg, 2018) indicates that MIL is developed in five steps in the following order: 1. Access, 2. Analyze, 3. Create, 4. Reflect, and 5. Act.

This demonstrates that MIL is not a dichotomous state (you either have it or you don't), but rather a continuum of progression that encompasses different degrees of ownership.

We agree with Pérez Rodríguez (2007) when he states:

> Communication education is becoming increasingly necessary, starting with the discovery of the values the media convey, learning how to receive messages more actively, and unveiling the "social construction" they create, far from the cliché of the "open window to the world" that transpires as reality. This concern is endorsed in manifestos and declarations that are signed from time to time. All of them reiterate the constant need for action for literacy. (124)

Consequently, in today's society, it is impossible to analyze the formation of public opinion without considering the media, and even more so, digital media, hence the importance of their convergence.

We complement this vision with a reflection by Rabotnikof (2008) that links the issue of public space and the media:

> Public space (understood as the public sphere) seems to be detached from its adherence to the State or civil society, to be thought of, in more general terms, as a space of global communication. A space where national and global media, public opinion, social and political actors, and the State (in a broad sense) converge. (p. 44)

For people to participate in a better, more informed, and more critical way in the public sphere, they must be digitally literate, and the most appropriate thing in this regard would be to have a State policy in accordance with this real need.

3. Methodology

In order to identify a situation where subjects would seek information to comment on, data were collected from a descriptive study on COVID-19 and the media conducted by the authors between 2021 and 2022.

As Bacher (2024) states: “During the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation campaigns and hate speech increased exponentially. This trend has continued, leading some to claim that we are facing a ‘disinformation pandemic,’ a matter of concern primarily among young people” (p. 77). Hence the choice of this topic and population.

The methodology used was quantitative, based on a case study at a Mexican public university, the Autonomous University of Mexico City, with students pursuing a bachelor's degree in Communication and Culture who, due to their degree, were required to consult the media. The total student population of this program in both shifts (morning and afternoon) was 2,460 students (ANUIES, 2021), between the ages of 18 and 49, both men and women, who could be full-time students or combine work and study. To calculate the sample size, William Cochran's (1977) formula was used with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 9, yielding a total of 114 questions to be administered. The study was conducted among university students because it is expected that these students have acquired basic reading, writing, and digital technology skills, and have constant access to digital environments and social media where information about health and the COVID-19 pandemic circulates. This allows for the avoidance of other factors that could affect the comparison, such as race, age, educational levels, ethnic or rural groups, among others, that could generate differences between different population groups regarding the use of media and digital technologies to obtain information about COVID-19.

As university students, the population is 18 years of age or older; therefore, according to the Mexican Constitution, they are considered citizens. This also means that the information they access could be shared with family, peers, and communities, and could influence their decision-making regarding health, vaccination, and preventive measures. Furthermore, this population requires a level of autonomy in their search for information, making them an ideal group for assessing digital skills. According to the documents consulted from UNESCO, DigComp, and the DW Akademie, the study was based on identifying the competency of Information Searching

and Management. No other competencies were assessed, as this primarily required identifying whether participants possessed the aforementioned competency.

Subject selection was based on selective, non-probability sampling, taking the sample when study subjects were available, at a specific time. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire with closed questions for quantitative coding.

This instrument was used to investigate the media (traditional and digital) used to obtain information about COVID-19. The data was systematized using Excel, allowing for organization, visualization by creating graphs and tables, and cross-referencing results, which allowed for analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Although the sample size indicated 114 questionnaires, 117 students were administered the questionnaire. The sample was composed of 54% men and 47% women.

Among the main ages, it was found that 35.9% were between 25 and 29 years old, 35% between 20 and 24 years old, and 14.5% between 30 and 34 years old. The remaining age ranges were less than 13%, with only one student between 40 and 44 years old and another between 45 and 49 years old.

Regarding the frequency with which students search for news about the Covid-19 pandemic, the following was found:

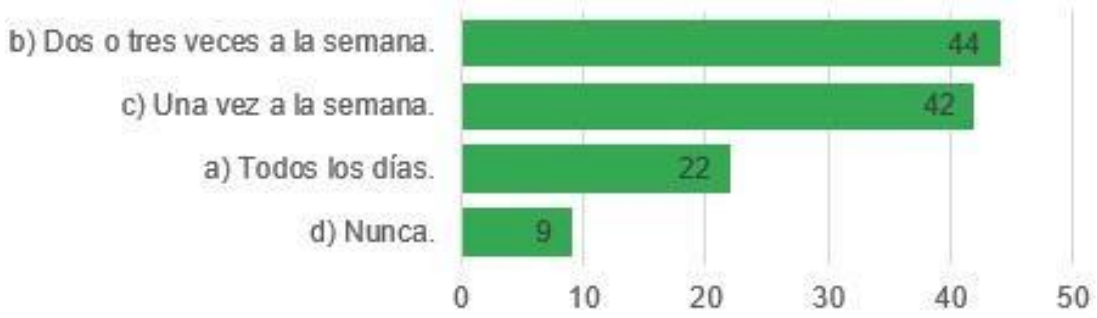


Figure 1. Frequency with which students search for news about the Covid-19 pandemic. (Source: Own elaboration)

Figure 1 shows that 37.6% of students search for news about the COVID-19 pandemic two or three times a week, followed by 35.9% who do so once a week. It is noteworthy that 7.7% of them indicate that they never search for news about it.

Figure 2 shows the main media outlets through which students obtained news about COVID-19.

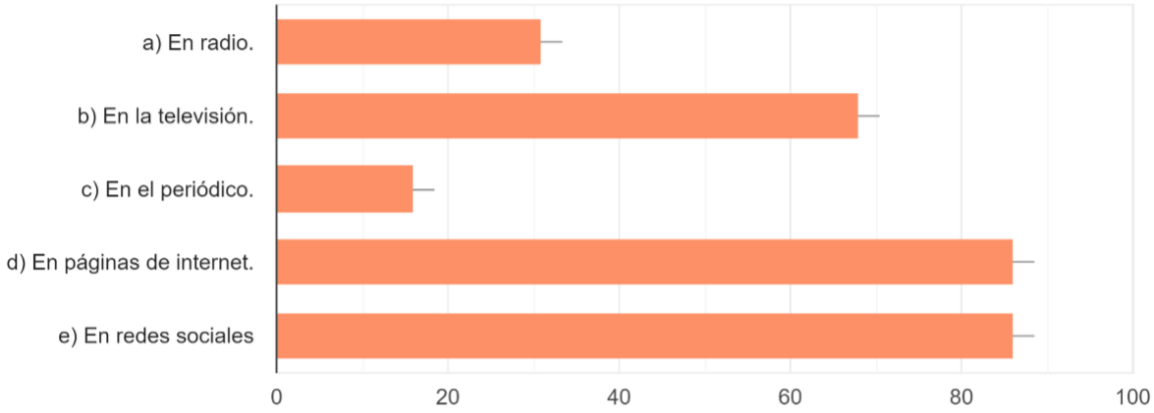


Figure 2. Media through which students obtain news about the COVID-19 pandemic (in frequency). (Source: Own elaboration)

Figure 2 clearly shows that students prefer news they can find on social media and websites, followed by television, then radio, and finally newspapers.

Figure 3 shows where they find news, highlighting that they primarily do so from home.

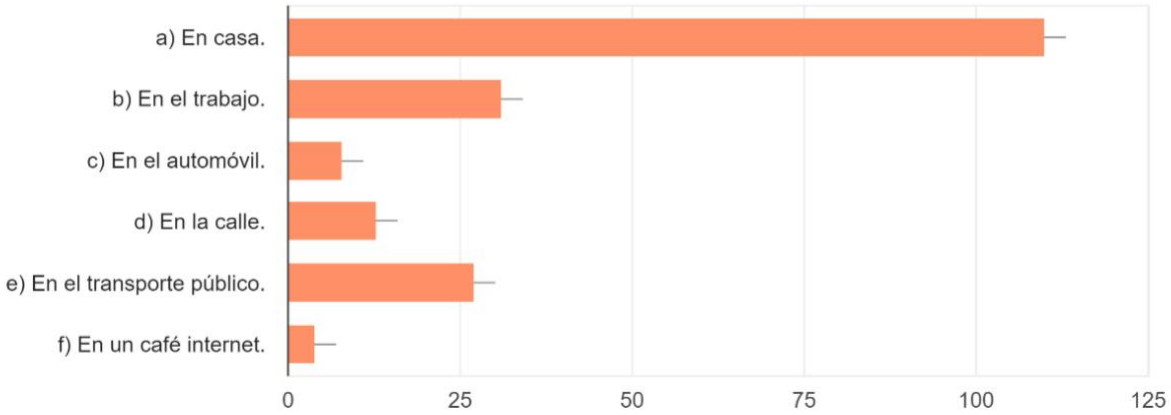


Figure 3. Where students look for news about the COVID-19 pandemic (in frequency). (Source: Own elaboration)

In another question, it was observed that 36% of students prefer to search for news about the COVID-19 pandemic during the day. They do so in the evening (8 p.m. to midnight), with less than 25% searching in the morning, and the remaining percentage distributed throughout the day.

Figure 4 shows that the selected topic, COVID-19, did increase the number of people searching for news about it.

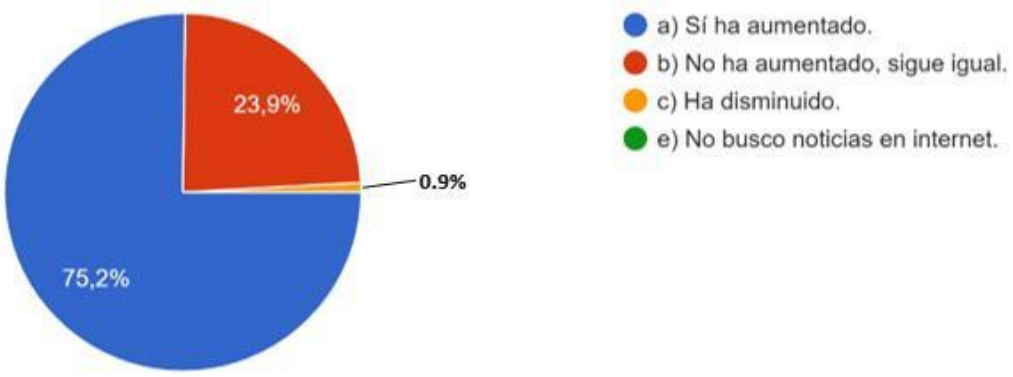


Figure 4. Increase in internet news searches due to the COVID-19 pandemic (percentage). (Source: Own elaboration)

Figure 5 shows that the preferred social network for information was Facebook, followed by Twitter and YouTube. This question allowed for more than one option, resulting in a total of 221 responses.

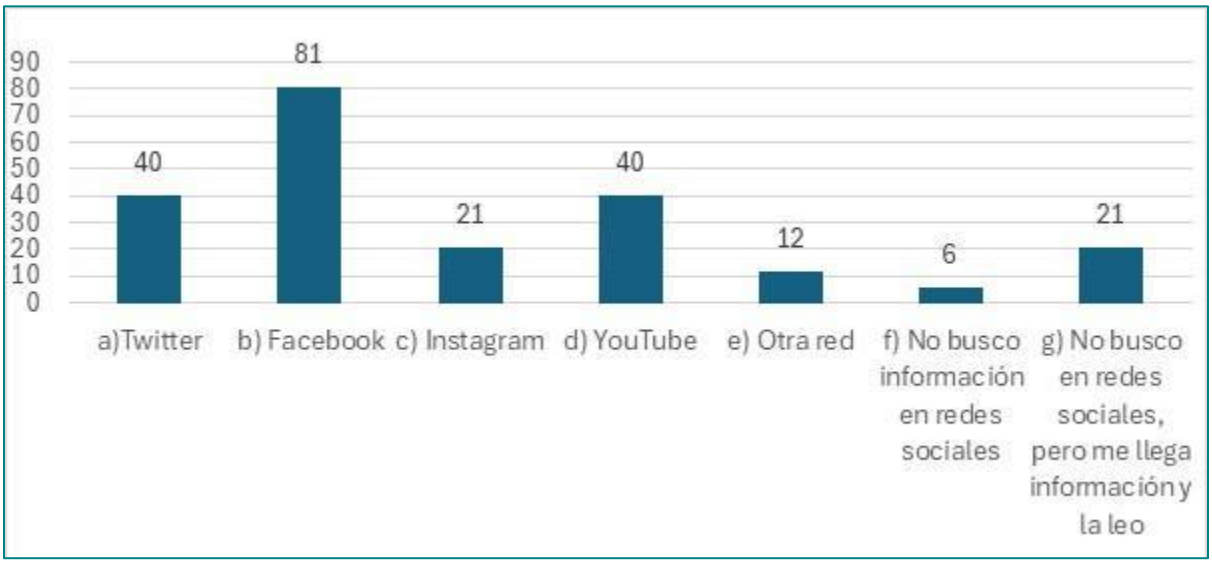


Figure 5. Preferred social networks for information/news about the pandemic (in frequency). (Source: Own elaboration)

An interesting question is shown in Figure 6, which shows whether or not students verify the information they receive through social media:

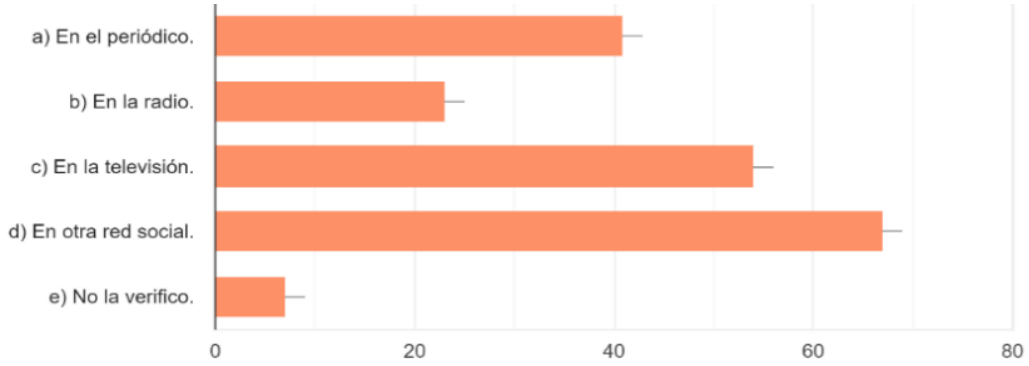


Figure 6. Where students verify the information they receive through social media (in frequency). (Source: Own elaboration)

In Figure 6, we see that although a minority of participants stated they did not verify information, it is significant that the main form of verification mentioned was checking it with another social media platform, followed by television.

However, when asked why students primarily search for information on social media, the responses can be seen in Figure 7.

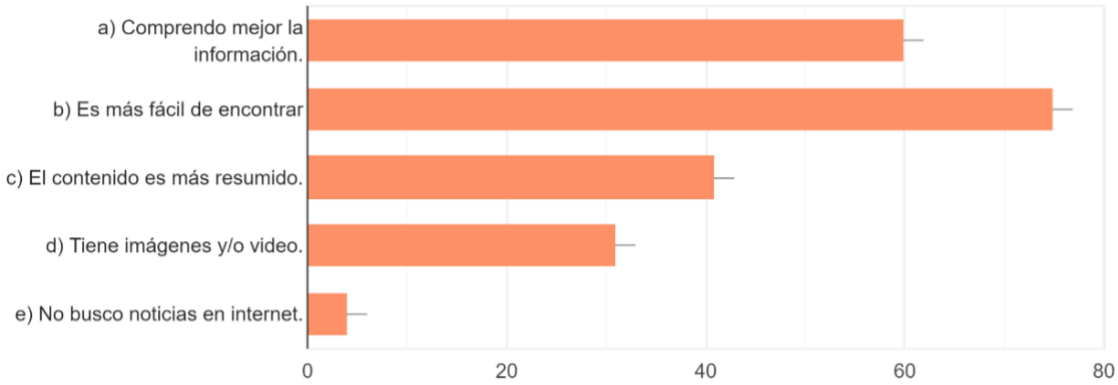


Figure 7. Why students search for news about the COVID-19 pandemic on the internet (frequency). (Source: Own elaboration)

In Figure 7, participants indicate that they find it easier to find information on the internet because they understand it better, it is summarized, and it includes images or videos.

Although the original study is broader (Rodríguez, 2021), we conclude this section with the main reasons why students primarily search for news on their mobile phones, which they indicate they prefer for information over other digital media (see Figure 8).

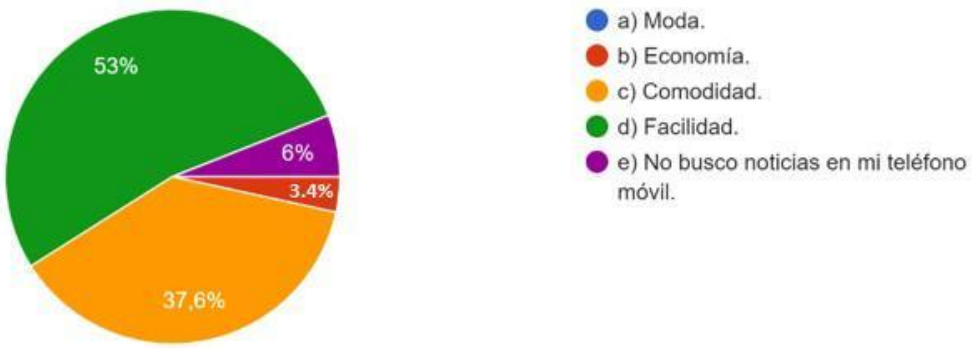


Figure 8. Main reasons why students search for news about the COVID-19 pandemic on their mobile phones (percentage). (Source: Own elaboration)

Looking at Figure 8, participants' preferred responses indicate that they find accessing information on their mobile phones easy and convenient.

It is noteworthy that age, gender, and occupation do not show significant differences in the analyzed results, except that the mobile phone is the most commonly used digital device for obtaining information about the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that the younger the students, the greater the use of this device compared to other ways of obtaining information about COVID-19. Furthermore, when comparing variables, it was found that Communication and Culture students at UACM who are both studying and working are the ones who most frequently search for news in the media, including the internet, to stay informed about the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this research show that the tendency to consult news has diversified, between traditional and digital media, decreasing in traditional media, while online media consumption has increased, thanks to the emergence of devices such as cell phones, which allow students to easily access media. Students prefer the internet and social media for their information.

The results reveal a worrying fact: although the majority of students say they verify the news they receive about the COVID-19 pandemic, they do so primarily through other social media and television, which demonstrates a lack of solid skills and digital media literacy. It was also found that participants share information they consider relevant regarding COVID-19 with their family or friends. However, if this information is not rigorously verified, they themselves can become agents of disinformation. At the same time, they noted that, rather than discussing content in person, they tend to digitally forward information they consider important, which confirms the prevalence of the digital public sphere as a new form of interaction.

5. Conclusions

The case analyzed, although it focused on a high-priority issue such as COVID-19, where the available information directly guided decision-making, highlighted the need to develop Media Information Literacy (MIL) skills. This challenge is relevant in today's digital society, characterized by the proliferation of technologies that facilitate access to information, but where content verification was observed to be limited to consulting other social media platforms.

In this analyzed context, misinformation circulating in media outlets (whether digital or not) has a direct impact on people, especially when they lack the skills to detect it. This situation can lead to erroneous decisions. As observed, young people prefer to obtain information through social media, primarily through their smartphones, but they do not verify or question the interests that may be behind such information, whether political, economic, ideological, or simply entertainment, that may be behind the circulation and management of such content.

The MIL approach is not so recent, but it remains relevant and necessary, as its implementation in our country has not yet been finalized. The truth is that the actions carried out in Mexico and in our city should be accompanied by public policies, as it is the duty of the Mexican State to guarantee access to information and technology, but with adequate training that allows citizens to responsibly use information with critical capacity to identify trends.

Once citizens are involved in Media and Information Literacy and exercise their civic rights, they will then be able to participate responsibly and critically in the public sphere.

The results show that the level of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) competencies in the study population is low. However, this is not a homogeneous group, but rather a distribution on a continuum of progression that reflects different degrees of mastery of these competencies. This finding indicates that contact with social media and digital technologies, although frequent in the study group, does not in itself guarantee the development of a critical stance supported by information analysis, as proposed by the AMI, which is essential for participating in the public sphere in an informed and responsible manner. Consequently, it is recommended that future research delve deeper into the study of more advanced competencies in both young people and other population groups, with the aim of identifying appropriation processes at later stages and the factors that influence them.

This study concludes that, although participants exercised their right to information and accessed content through traditional or digital means, this does not guarantee that they possess

Media and Information Literacy skills. University students are frequent users of the internet and social media, indicating that they have access to infrastructure and basic digital skills to access information. However, MIL goes beyond the mere availability of technology, as it requires the critical analysis skills necessary to participate in debate in public spaces.

These skills are not innately developed, nor do they develop automatically even with access to information, the right to communication, or digital inclusion. Their development involves developing transversal skills in citizens, taking into account the social and cultural context in which they live. Hence, it is important to adhere to international guidelines, such as those of UNESCO and the European Union, as well as regional and national needs. Thus, it is essential to implement actions aimed at preventing digital illiteracy in spaces for public deliberation, as informed and critical participation is a fundamental condition for the debate of ideas. Only in this way is it possible to aspire to decisions that respond to the common interest and prevent a small group of people from concentrating decision-making power on matters that affect the majority.

In summary, this study shows that Media and Information Literacy is an essential component for strengthening the public sphere, by providing university students with critical skills to analyze, evaluate, use, and even generate information in various spaces for citizen participation, both digital and traditional. This is especially relevant in a hybrid environment, where the digital realm reaches levels of use and complexity that increase daily.

It is not enough to guarantee access to information or technological infrastructure; the development of transversal and contextualized skills is essential to train citizens capable of contributing in an informed and responsible manner to strengthening the public sphere and to collective decision-making.

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Polarization and Projection in Politics: Notes on the Deliberative Capacities of Adolescents

Polarização e Projeção na Política: Apontamentos Sobre as Capacidades Deliberativas dos Adolescentes

Polarización y proyección en política: notas sobre las capacidades deliberativas de los adolescentes

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Abstract: This article analyzes the perceptions of high-school students in Sergipe regarding online political discussions, aiming to understand their readiness and limitations for deliberation in digital environments. A content analysis of 47 interviews revealed that adolescents navigate the unique social dynamics of social-media platforms in their deliberations, balancing a desire for open dialogue with challenges posed by aggressive interactions and generational conflicts. Their experiences highlight the need for supportive environments to foster constructive political discussions and underscore the role of civic education in this process.

Keywords:
Political deliberation, social media, adolescents, online participation

Resumo: Este artigo analisa as percepções de estudantes do ensino médio em Sergipe sobre discussões políticas *online*, com o objetivo de compreender suas disposições e limitações para a deliberação no ambiente digital. Foi feita análise de conteúdo de 47 entrevistas, explorando como os adolescentes lidam com dinâmicas sociais próprias das plataformas de mídias sociais em suas deliberações, equilibrando o desejo de um diálogo aberto com os desafios impostos por interações agressivas e conflitos geracionais. Suas experiências ressaltam a importância de

ambientes de apoio para promover discussões políticas construtivas e o papel da educação cidadã neste processo.

Palavras-chave:
Deliberação política, mídias sociais, adolescentes, participação online

Resumen: Este artículo analiza las percepciones de estudiantes de educación secundaria en Sergipe sobre las discusiones políticas en línea, con el objetivo de comprender sus disposiciones y limitaciones para la deliberación en el entorno digital. El análisis de contenido de 47 entrevistas revela que los adolescentes gestionan las dinámicas sociales propias de las plataformas de redes sociales en sus deliberaciones, equilibrando el deseo de un diálogo abierto con los desafíos que suponen las interacciones agresivas y los conflictos generacionales. Sus experiencias subrayan la importancia de contar con entornos de apoyo que promuevan discusiones políticas constructivas y el papel de la educación ciudadana en este proceso.

Palabras clave:
Deliberación política, redes sociales, adolescentes, participación en línea

1. Introduction

The political participation of adolescents in digital environments has become an increasingly significant phenomenon, particularly with the expansion of online platforms as spaces for discussion and mobilization. Data from the TIC Domicílios 2024 survey indicate that the 16-24 age group has the most significant online presence in Brazil, reaching 98% of this segment. On the other hand, a 2021 study by the Institute for Intelligence in Strategic Research and Consulting (IPEC Inteligência, 2021) revealed that 83% of young Brazilians consider political discussions on social media to be aggressive and marked by intolerance. Due to fear of being canceled, 59% of this group avoids participating in online political debates. The coexistence of these findings suggests that, although young people and adolescents are widely present in digital environments, they do not perceive them as conducive spaces for debating political issues. Although there is a perception that political debate can be marked by violence, social media plays a central role in constructing a sphere of political dialogue (Gomes, 2018).

Social media has established itself as a significant contemporary platform for discussing socially relevant issues, thereby configuring itself as a new public sphere (Habermas, 2023), despite its contradictions. Although these platforms can be seen as spaces for superficial participation and conducive to anti-democratic, polarized, or uncivilized demonstrations (Papacharissi, 2004), it is also possible to recognize their potential as arenas for expanded and qualified debate, especially for adolescents in the process of developing citizenship.

In this context, it is essential to understand how competencies for exercising citizenship develop among adolescents, including the ability to participate in debate, whether in person or online. Although normatively oriented toward consensus and the pursuit of the common good, it is known that experiences of deliberation can generate heated, even aggressive, discussions.

This article aims to investigate the conditions under which these adolescents engage in online political discussions, seeking to understand the elements that motivate or inhibit their participation. The research assumes that the dynamics of digital interactions, combined with the characteristics of contemporary youth, constitute a complex scenario that deserves academic and practical attention.

We used categorical content analysis to interpret the collected data, allowing us to identify patterns and singularities in the forms of adolescents' political participation. The corpus includes interviews with adolescents from public schools in Sergipe. We present an excerpt from a larger study that adopts an exploratory approach, combining methods such as short-term ethnography, focus groups, and online debate experiments.

We hope that the discussions presented contribute not only to understanding the factors that influence this engagement but also to proposing educational initiatives that improve political discussions in formal and informal learning contexts—both digital environments and the school environment—strengthening citizenship development in adolescence.

2. Deliberative Capabilities of Adolescents in Online Environments

Since this work investigates adolescents' perceptions and forms of participation in online political debates to suggest educational strategies, we seek conceptual tools across three theoretical axes: deliberative democracy, youth and digital media, and media literacy.

The central issues of deliberative theories concern the forms and possibilities of public debate in complex societies and their potential for strengthening democracy. Drawing on

Habermas, Chambers (2003) defines deliberation as "debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable and well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by other participants" (p. 309).

The conception of deliberative democracy adopted here considers, on the one hand, the ideals of equality and rationality as part of a normative model of public debate and, on the other, its agonistic dimension (Mouffe, 2006), presupposing conflict and passion as legitimate components of the democratic process. It must be considered that the public sphere, as described by Habermas more than six decades ago, was already contaminated by the commercial logic of the mass media. The spaces of platformized debate tend to form “semi-public spheres”, characterized by the “rejection of dissonant voices and the assimilative inclusion of consonant voices in their own horizon of supposed ‘knowledge’” (Habermas, 2023, p. 76).

Research on youth and deliberation advocates for incorporating conflict and emotion into political education. Lo (2017) proposes a model based on agonistic deliberation, which guides conflict toward productive forms of negotiation and political action. Keegan (2021) suggests a "critical affective literacy" to encompass other competencies necessary for public debate, beyond the traditional criteria of equality, civility, and reasonableness. A study of young Americans revealed that participants desire calm and civilized discourse but admit to being bored by dispassionate discussions (Peacock & Leavitt, 2016), highlighting the need to consider the affective and contentious dimensions of these experiences.

Values such as equal participation, reciprocity, better argument, and the common good must be incorporated. This requires excluding private interests from the process and some level of material equality and deliberative capacities—developed throughout life, in formal education, and in the world of life. For Maia et al. (2024), deliberative capabilities refer to the motivation and ability to express views based on considered reasoning and reciprocal engagement, done inclusively and respectfully. Although debate mediated by digital devices has its own particularities, the development of these capabilities is crucial in both contexts.

In this research, the deliberationist perspective connects with studies on adolescence and youth in two key aspects. First, we need to consider that adolescents are influenced by the need for belonging and social acceptance, especially on social media (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). This need can conflict with the principles of deliberation, which require openness to diverse perspectives and a willingness to reconsider opinions. When adolescents fear exclusion or

rejection, they may avoid participating in controversial debates or adopt conformist positions to align with the group, thereby limiting the plurality of voices necessary for practical deliberation. Second, Nesi and Prinstein (2015) demonstrate how social media fosters social comparison and validation-seeking, which can lead to self-censorship and hesitation in expressing dissenting opinions. This behavior is particularly problematic for deliberation, as it relies on a diversity of perspectives and a willingness to challenge established ideas.

Adolescence is a crucial phase for the development of cognitive and socio-emotional skills fundamental to deliberation, such as critical-rational debate, reciprocity, and reflexivity (Graham & Witschge, 2003). However, as Uhls et al. (2014) point out, the digital environment can either facilitate or hinder this development, depending on how it is used. From this perspective, it is essential to integrate deliberative education into the school curriculum, providing adolescents with opportunities to practice debating in structured and mediated environments. This can include simulations of deliberative forums, where they learn to listen, argue, and negotiate collective solutions. Furthermore, it is essential to develop emotional resilience, enabling them to deal with disagreement and criticism constructively.

In line with media literacy researchers such as Livingstone (2009), we recognize that more research is needed to understand how adolescents develop strategies to navigate an increasingly unsafe, violent, and polarized digital environment. We reject the notion that they are "digital natives" with highly developed skills to address these challenges. Livingstone and Third (2017) argue, with substantial empirical support, that their skills generally do not go beyond the technical dimension and that there are significant gaps in critical skills for online use. Scolari (2018) has already pointed out that, although they demonstrate technical and creative skills, the same is not true for ethical online skills. In a study of Portuguese youth, Matos et al. (2023) found no relationship between developed digital skills and levels of online political participation. Although these authors do not directly address deliberation, competencies related to ethical stance and critical thinking in digital interactions are essential for engaging in a respectful and productive debate. In this sense, the work developed by researchers such as Baptista et al. (2018), Magalhães and Cal (2019), and Maia et al. (2024) articulates deliberation and education, proposing models of educational practices for developing deliberative competencies in Brazilian schools. Our research seeks to contribute to this debate by focusing on aspects of these experiences in digital environments.

Thus, we believe that understanding the perceptions, feelings, and behaviors of adolescents from Sergipe regarding online political debate can contribute to shaping the landscape already outlined in previous studies, as well as aid in the formulation of strategies for the formation of "democratic mindsets," as advocated by Paulo Freire (1973). In line with Dewey (1979, p. 94), we advocate for a democratic education, understood as the ideal of "expanding the individual's abilities in a progressive development oriented towards social ends."

Although this research is anchored in studies on deliberation and youth, it is also important to consider theoretical approaches that discuss the skills necessary for critical action in digital environments. Authors such as Pérez Tornero and Varis (2010) and Hobbs (2011) emphasize that education for digital citizenship necessitates the development of technical, critical, and participatory skills within an information ecosystem characterized by abundance, misinformation, and disputes over meaning. We recognize that digital platforms create conditions that facilitate youth deliberation. Affordances—visibility and public validation, persistence/replicability, and algorithmic curation—reorder incentives for exposure, belonging, and confrontation (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), while "affective publics" help explain the weight of bonds and emotions in the circulation of arguments (Papacharissi, 2015). This context interprets the dialogue between deliberation, youth, and media/information literacy.

3. Methodology

We collected data through 47 in-depth interviews with public high school students in six municipalities in Sergipe, from March to May 2024, covering diverse socioeconomic and cultural realities. The in-person, semi-structured interviews were integrated with a broader exploratory study, including short-term ethnography, focus groups, and online debate experiments. The materials related to self-reported perceptions and behaviors were subjected to categorical content analysis (Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021), guided by a codebook derived from the literature on deliberative quality (Maia, 2023) and exploratory analysis. The procedure included coding, category construction, and pattern interpretation, linking participants' voices to the research objectives (Costa & Amado, 2018).

Categories	Codes	
Perceptions about aggression	Reasons	Situations
Topics they like/	Animals	Children's and Adolescent Rights Mental Health Gender Democracy Economy Religion Party Politics Gun Carrying LGBT Issues Rape Pedophilia Drug Legalization Death Penalty
Topics they do not like	Abortion	Instagram Discord TikTok Online In Person
Where they debate/	Education	With teachers With third parties
Where they do not debate	Quota System	Conflicts Political Action Indignation Exercising Citizenship Fighting for Rights
Who they debate with/	Social Inequality	Negative feelings
Who they do not debate with	Nationalism	Presents arguments Respectful dialogue Does not change one's mind Gets excited Avoids disagreement

Table 1. Categorization created for content analysis. (Source: Empirical research)

The process involved coding the data, constructing analytical categories, and interpreting the patterns found, always seeking to connect the participants' voices with the research objectives

(Costa & Amado, 2018). This methodological approach enabled an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing adolescents' political participation in digital environments, while also providing support for proposing educational actions aimed at enhancing these discussions.

4. Results

The analysis of the interviews revealed patterns that help us understand the conditions under which adolescents participate in political debates. In the following sections, we discuss who they usually debate with and the reasons for avoiding certain groups (4.1), the role of affection and emotions in conflicts (4.2), the generational tensions that hinder dialogue with adults (4.3), attitudes toward changing opinions (4.4), and the reasons for maintaining firm convictions even in deliberative contexts (4.5). These results highlight both limits and potential for developing deliberative capacities in digital and in-person environments. It is worth noting that, although the results are organized into analytical categories, these dimensions do not operate in isolation from one another. There are interrelationships between affects, ideological positions, generational relationships, and interaction contexts, which configure complex digital ecologies (Fuller, 2005). Technical and social factors, such as recommendation algorithms, platform visibility regimes, and norms of membership in online groups, shape these ecologies. These interrelationships compose digital ecologies in which visibility regimes and public evaluation increase the reputational costs of dissent, and algorithmic curation tends to reduce perceived informational diversity (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

4.1 With whom they debate

Deliberation presupposes the exchange of ideas between individuals with diverse perspectives; however, adolescents tend to engage in political discussions primarily with close acquaintances, especially schoolmates and friends. Respondents typically discuss politics with family members, friends, classmates, and occasionally with strangers online (Figure 1). Debates often take place in person at home, at school, at family gatherings, and online, primarily on WhatsApp.

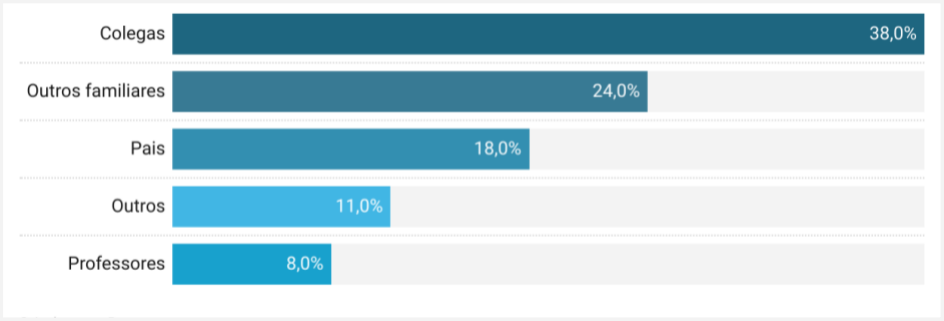


Figure 1. Who teens debate with (percentage of mentions). (Source: Field research)

We found a preference for in-person debates—54% more frequent than online ones—associated with the search for safe environments to express opinions. Adolescents tend to discuss politics with peers, indicating comfort with shared perspectives, and show resistance when they perceive a lack of understanding of the topic or fear of aggressive opposition. This limits the plurality of voices and reinforces preexisting views (Graham & Witschge, 2003; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). For example, one interviewee stated:

> With my friends, because they already know I do not know how to express myself very well... Online, I can look up a word I have forgotten. I feel more comfortable. (Interviewee #1, Nossa Senhora das Dores, May 2024)

On social media, interactions between peers are prevalent, particularly in WhatsApp groups and on platforms like Twitter/X, and Instagram. This, combined with aggression and poor moderation, leads to polarized and unconstructive debates. This highlights the importance of family social circles in promoting open dialogue. Furthermore, we observed some resistance to debate among adolescents due to their limited knowledge of the subject. A student from Aracaju reported having difficulty debating with a peer with a more political background, but stated that he shares his opinions with friends, classmates, teachers, and family, seeking intimacy and freedom.

While, on the one hand, this lack of knowledge can be seen as a legitimate concern, on the other hand, it is clear that some adolescents avoid discussing specific topics out of fear of being challenged or even aggressively rejected. We can infer that such reports demonstrate an inability to deliberate in specific environments or social groups due to factors such as fear of exposure and insecurity about political issues. However, they may also demonstrate a fear of not fitting in with their peer network.

Studies on social media and identity, such as those by Valkenburg and Peter (2011), highlight how adolescents shape their opinions and behaviors to conform to the expectations of

their peer groups. The fear of not belonging to a peer network can lead to self-censorship and hesitation to participate in debates.

School emerges as a crucial space for deliberation, particularly in teacher-organized debates or school projects. In these contexts, adolescents demonstrate a greater willingness to listen to and consider different points of view, aligning themselves with the principles of deliberation. Students often discuss politics with both peers and teachers. Moreover, although some have faced challenges to their positions, they remain engaged in conversations, especially during classes on subjects that raise political issues.[1]

While some teenagers debate with family members, there is an apparent difficulty in engaging in dialogue with older people, especially when faced with ideological differences. Most, however, are wary of discussing politics, especially in family situations, due to fear of conflict and disagreement. Some avoid discussions due to extreme family positions, while others prefer to talk with friends, where there is more openness to different opinions. Other teenagers feel their family does not hear them and prefer not to participate in political debates to avoid arguments. They seek to understand different points of view but are not always successful due to others' lack of openness to dialogue.

On social media, teenagers tend to interact with people who share similar opinions, especially in WhatsApp groups or on platforms like Twitter/X, and Instagram. However, the anonymity and lack of moderation on these platforms often result in polarized and unconstructive debates, distancing themselves from deliberative ideals. Political polarization is reported by the research subjects as a factor that hinders or even prevents dialogue:

> I am afraid to discuss politics with my family because my father is a Bolsonaro supporter, and the rest of my family, including his brothers, are supporters of the Workers' Party. Therefore, I prefer to avoid discussing it because my father and mother are also supporters of the Workers' Party. I mean, I am neither a supporter of the Workers' Party nor a supporter of Bolsonaro, so I prefer to avoid it at home. I never talk about it. (Interviewee #4, Estância, May 2024)

4.2 Affects

Deliberation requires mutual respect, but conflicts are part of the process (Mouffe, 2006). Negative feelings predominated when adolescents debated politics (Figure 2). Reports indicate a preference for in-person contexts to avoid online aggression; the feeling of anonymity facilitates

[1] In Aracaju, the discipline of Sociology was mentioned as being conducive to debates in the area.

disinhibition and hostility, increasing insecurity in those targeted (Kowalski et al., 2014). To preserve relationships, many avoid discussions with inflexible interlocutors, even though this reduces the diversity of perspectives.

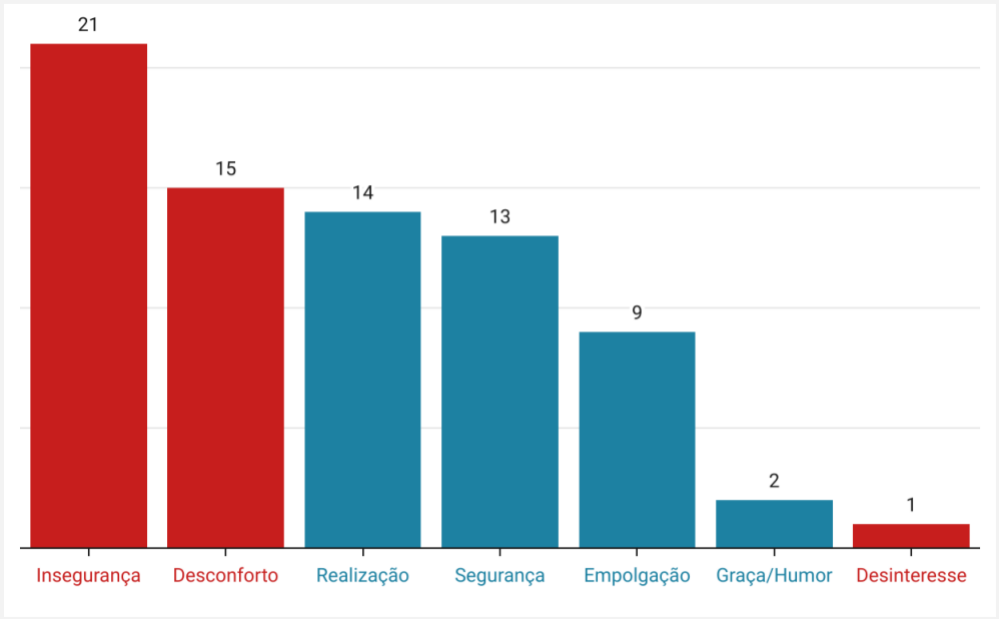


Figure 2. How teenagers feel about debating (total mentions). Negative feelings are marked in red, while positive feelings are marked in blue. (Source: Field research)

Aggressive behavior can arise when there is a lack of reciprocity in debate—that is, when there is no real exchange of arguments, only the imposition of opinions. Graham and Witschge (2003) indicate that the deliberation process depends on a willingness to listen and reflect, and that without this, communication can become confrontational and unproductive.

Some believe it is better to debate in person to avoid aggression, while others see the internet as a "lawless land" for expressing opinions without consequences. This suggests that face-to-face interactions are perceived as more respectful and conducive to constructive dialogue, which may be associated with the sense of anonymity that social media fosters (Kowalski et al., 2014), potentially ensuring safety for the aggressor and insecurity for the victim, who are often adolescents.

The sense of anonymity is directly linked to the phenomenon of cyberbullying and verbal aggression in digital media. Studies show that adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to these behaviors, as the digital environment can encourage the expression of hostility without fear of direct retaliation (Kowalski et al., 2014). In our research, we heard

interviewees report a preference for face-to-face discussions to avoid online aggression, which reflects this dynamic.

Many interviewees mentioned the importance of maintaining a courteous and respectful tone during discussions, even when faced with disagreements. This approach is essential for deliberation, as it enables the consideration of diverse perspectives. To preserve the quality of the dialogue—and also relationships—some adolescents prefer to avoid discussions with people who display aggressive behavior or who are unwilling to listen to opposing opinions.

> Many people are very extreme on both sides, so if we were to talk, what would that person do to us? So, sometimes it is better to avoid it, walk away, and say nothing. (Interviewee #2, Lagarto, May 2024)

This strategy, while understandable, can limit the diversity of perspectives in debates and encourage self-censorship. Analyzing the circulation of discourse on Twitter/X, Papacharissi (2015) proposes that political debate in a digital environment is organized much more around belonging to groups—called "affective publics"—than around the exchange of public reasons. This phenomenon may be driving adolescents away from online public debate, and what could be a space for deliberation becomes something to be avoided (Aneas et al., 2024).

Finally, according to some interviewees, presenting well-founded arguments supported by reliable sources and solid evidence appeared to play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of deliberation on social media. This is because when they observed political influencers anchoring their opinions in facts and data, adolescents realized that this practice not only strengthens the credibility of their positions but also contributes to raising the level of debate, favoring a dialogue less prone to excessive emotional reactions.

4.3 Generational Conflicts

Deliberation presupposes the inclusion of diverse voices; however, adolescents face challenges when attempting to engage in dialogue with older individuals, especially family members. These generational conflicts limit the deliberative potential of interactions. Analysis of the accounts indicates that when families are open to differing opinions, adolescents find this environment a valuable opportunity to exercise their deliberative skills:

> I think when you agree, you become a pawn, so I really like to say, "Dad, I do not agree with a lot of what you say," and then he asks, "Why don't you agree?" And then we debate, and usually it is at lunch; they are like personal conversations. (Interviewee 2, Aracaju, April 2024)

The literature on political socialization often highlights the role of parents as primary agents in shaping adolescents' political opinions. According to this perspective, parents are fundamental role models, transmitting values, beliefs, and political behaviors that shape adolescents' views on politics. Easton and Dennis (1980) emphasized that parents were the leading influencers of adolescents' political attitudes. This view assumed that adolescents internalized their family members' opinions through processes of imitation, dialogue, and exposure to political discussions in the home.

Putnam (2000) argues, however, that social and technological changes have reduced the family's influence on political socialization, especially with the advent of social media. This does not mean that parents have entirely lost their role, but rather that their influence is being shared with other social actors.[2] Moreover, in some cases, it is disregarded.

Many interviewees mention that they avoid discussing politics with older family members, especially when there are ideological differences. The aggressiveness and inflexibility of some adults discourage adolescents' participation, creating barriers to deliberation. This reflects a generational divide that complicates open discussions about political beliefs. In this regard, they mention that their parents tend to be aggressive or inflexible in their opinions, which discourages dialogue. Instead of promoting the exchange of ideas, these interactions often result in conflict and frustration. As a result, the fear of being judged or ridiculed for their opinions leads them to avoid political discussions in family settings. A lack of empathy can lead to generational conflict. If adolescents perceive that their elders are not interested in listening, this creates a barrier to deliberation, making intergenerational dialogue more difficult. Furthermore, Graham and Witschge (2003) suggest that deliberative practice requires time and patience, elements that can be compromised when there are disparities in experiences and values between generations.

Thus, the perception of the family environment as a space for the intergenerational transmission of political values, where parents played a central role in shaping their children's political identities, appears to be being reconfigured. Adolescents' reports indicate significant difficulties in discussing politics—especially with their parents —when ideological differences are present.

[2] Like the influencers they mentioned, who have the ability to schedule political discussions and present biases with which they associate themselves.

4.4 Changes of Opinion

One of the pillars of deliberation is the willingness to reconsider one's own opinions in light of dialogue with others. However, adolescents demonstrate an ambivalent attitude toward changing their opinions. In more constructive debates, especially with peers or in school settings, adolescents are willing to change their minds when presented with compelling arguments (Figure 3). This openness is crucial for deliberation, as it enables the incorporation of new perspectives and facilitates discussions that evolve toward thoughtful solutions.

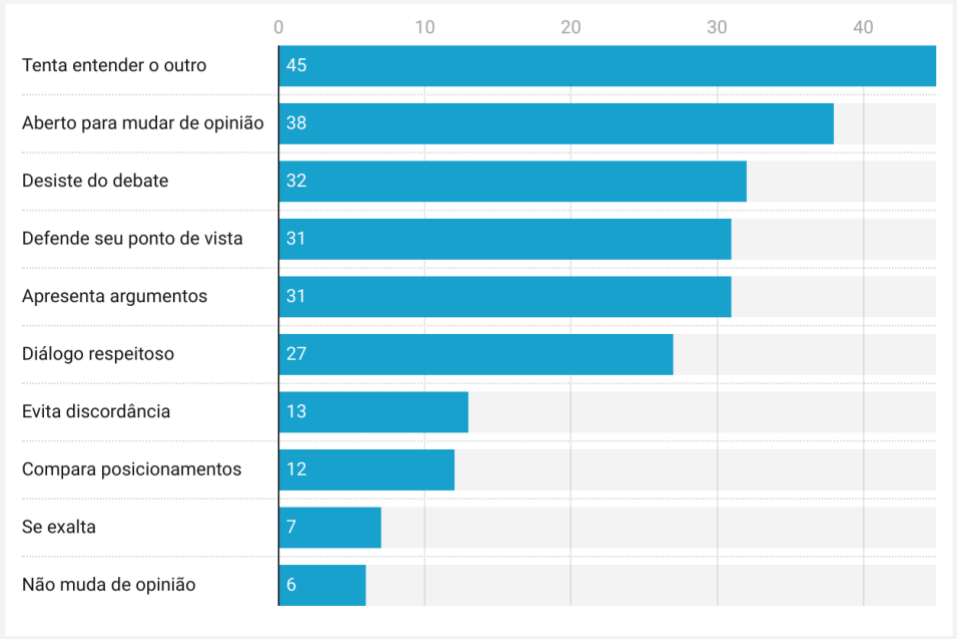


Figure 3. How Teens Debate (Total Mentions). (Source: Field research)

A recurring theme is the perception that others are resistant to changing their opinions. One interviewee commented:

> I try to speak calmly and listen to what the person is saying, but often they are close-minded and do not want to see it. I try to demonstrate why the opinion is incorrect, and I attempt to understand why they hold that opinion. (Interviewee 2, Poço Verde, June 2024)

Difficulty changing perspectives is often recognized, and it is frequently attributed to others—a projection effect. The fear of not belonging to a group can make some adolescents silent or conformist (Barros Filho, 1995). Weak socio-emotional skills intensify this fear (Uhls et al., 2014), restricting full participation and the adoption of positions consistent with their own convictions.

The fear of not belonging also restricts adolescents' ability to fully participate in deliberations, leading them to adopt positions that do not always reflect their true convictions. In

contrast, when engaging in online debates or interacting with older individuals, adolescents tend to be more resistant to changing their minds. They often attribute this inflexibility to others, especially on social media, where impunity can encourage more rigid stances.

This aspect directly relates to the notion of reflexivity discussed by Graham and Witschge (2003). According to the authors, deliberation is not only about expressing opinions, but also about reconsidering them in light of rational arguments. The inability to change one's mind reveals a flaw in deliberative practice, as it suggests that participants are unwilling to examine their own beliefs critically.

Furthermore, according to the adolescents' reports, what they understand as "political fanaticism" leads to a lack of respect for the opinions of others, creating an environment where defending a candidate is seen as mandatory. As a consequence, it generates divisions and makes it challenging to weigh different lines of thought.

4.5 Maintaining Convictions

An oscillation between openness to change and maintaining firm convictions is observed. Difficulties arise when discussions spiral out of control due to "closed mindedness" and lack of knowledge (Figure 4). Exposure to echo chambers reinforces polarized views, making it challenging to engage with diverse ideas (Habermas, 2023). In online contexts, greater anonymity and the potential for aggression make adolescents more defensive.

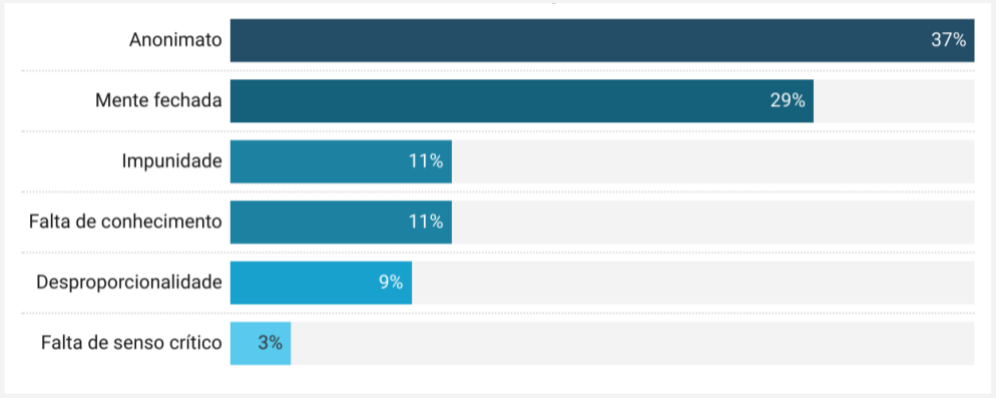


Figure 4. Reasons most mentioned by adolescents that hinder deliberation. (Source: Field research)

The perception of "immaturity" in deliberation, especially in the online environment, represents a challenge among adolescents. This immaturity can be attributed to factors such as ongoing cognitive and emotional development, which limit the ability to engage in complex

debates and consider divergent perspectives. Furthermore, echo chambers, created by algorithms that prioritize content aligned with pre-existing beliefs, reinforce polarized views and hinder exposure to diverse ideas (Habermas, 2023). These factors combine to create an environment conducive to immature behaviors, such as personal attacks, impatient behavior, and resistance to changing opinions.

While some adolescents are open to changing their opinions, this willingness depends on the context. For example, one stated:

> I really enjoy discussing politics... but it depends on the person I am discussing it with. (Interviewee 3, Poço Verde, May 2024)

This suggests that their openness to change is influenced by the dynamics of the conversation and the individuals involved. In debates on controversial topics, such as abortion or gun ownership, adolescents tend to be more resistant to changing their minds. They often mention that they prefer to avoid these topics or that they feel uncomfortable discussing them, which limits the deliberative potential of these discussions.

The willingness to change one's mind also appears to be influenced by the environment in which the debate takes place. In online environments, where anonymity is greater and the potential for aggression is higher, adolescents tend to be more defensive and less open to reconsidering their positions.

Furthermore, we question whether the resistance to changing one's mind lies within adolescents or in the individuals with whom they interact. This is because often, the inability of others to change their minds is actually related to their own inability to change. In this regard, studies attribute the concept of psychological projection: a defense mechanism in which individuals attribute to others characteristics, feelings, or behaviors that they themselves possess but do not recognize or are unwilling to admit (Baumeister et al., 1998). In the context of this research, adolescents may be projecting their own resistance to changing their minds onto others, accusing them of being "closed-minded."

5. Conclusions

The results show that, although they support the normative principles of deliberation (equality, reciprocity, rationality, and freedom), adolescents identify obstacles inherent to digital platforms—anonymity, impunity, and the lack of spaces for understanding—and prefer to debate in person with peers of the same age, especially in school settings. In these co-present

interactions, they adopt conflict management strategies, such as respectful dialogue and well-founded arguments. However, even in controlled debates (in person or in WhatsApp groups), discussions deviate from deliberative ideals, highlighting limitations in emotional regulation and argumentative competence.

The online environment intensifies aggression and a lack of empathy (Anderson et al., 2018). The fear of public judgment, combined with the desire for acceptance, generates self-censorship, alignment with dominant opinions, and avoidance of controversial topics. This dynamic is reinforced by the constant social comparison that social media fosters (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013) and the assessment of personal worth through likes and comments (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). Consequently, many adolescents avoid expressing genuine convictions, compromising the diversity of perspectives that sustain democratic deliberation.

A "projection effect" was also observed at three levels: (1) declaring oneself open to dialogue while attributing inflexibility to others; (2) recognizing toxicity as someone else's problem, without taking responsibility for potential escalations; and (3) attributing generational conflicts to adults, ignoring one's own communicative rigidity. This defense mechanism contributes to the fragmentation of debate and hinders the self-criticism necessary for deliberative improvement.

To develop deliberative capacities, it is imperative to create environments—both in-person and online—that combine socio-emotional support, qualified mediation, and encouragement of active listening. Schools stand out as a privileged space for structured debate exercises, allowing adolescents to practice perspective shifting, affect regulation, and evidence-based argumentation. At the same time, public policies and greater platform accountability are essential to curb the effects of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2020) and reduce incentives for polarized interactions.

We did not map technical platform variables or systematically code them. However, based on the literature, public metrics, persistence of statements, and algorithmic logic likely influence youth's dispositions toward deliberation. Future research could integrate digital ecology indicators with qualitative protocols and combine media and information literacy—such as source analysis, attention governance, and affect regulation—to test whether these skills moderate the effects of group belonging and reputational pressure.

We conclude that critical media literacy is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for strengthening youth deliberative practices. Future interventions should integrate training in emotional regulation, argumentation techniques, and analysis of algorithmic influence on the visibility of dissenting voices. Subsequent research can test these proposals in various sociotechnical contexts, assessing whether they foster more inclusive, reflective, and resilient forms of political participation in the face of the pressures of conformity and exclusion that are typical of social media.

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Types and Frequencies of Use of Mass Media and Social Media among University Students in Encarnación

Tipos y frecuencias de uso de los medios de comunicación y redes sociales en población joven universitaria de Encarnación

Tipos e Frequências de Utilização dos Meios de Comunicação e das Redes Sociais na População Jovem Universitária de Encarnación

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Abstract: This study analyzed the types and frequencies of professional media and social media use among university students in Encarnación, Paraguay. Data were collected with a standardized questionnaire from the Alfamed Network. Results showed significant differences in the types of media accessed depending on students' area of residence, but no differences in general purposes of use. Year of study proved relevant: early-year students favored social media for entertainment, while advanced students engaged more with professional media for information and communication. Over time, purposes shifted from leisure to news and informational content, suggesting that academic trajectory influences media appropriation and highlighting the need to integrate media literacy into higher education.

Keywords:
Media and Information Literacy, Professional Media, Social Media, University Students, Paraguay

Resumen: El objetivo de investigación fue caracterizar tipos y frecuencias de uso de los medios de comunicación y redes sociales en población joven universitaria de Encarnación. Tras la aplicación de un cuestionario creado por la Red Alfamed, se detectaron diferencias significativas entre los medios de comunicación usados según zona de residencia. No hay diferencias significativas en cuanto a los tipos de usos. Hay diferencias significativas según año de carrera y en los primeros años usan más plataformas de entretenimiento frente a plataformas de comunicación en los últimos años. También hay diferencias en cuanto a los tipos de usos, con usos asociados al entretenimiento en los primeros años y usos asociados a la búsqueda de información y noticias en los últimos años.

Palabras clave:
Alfabetización Mediática e Informacional, medios de comunicación, redes sociales, jóvenes universitarios, Paraguay

Resumo: O objetivo da investigação foi caraterizar os tipos e a frequência de utilização dos meios de comunicação e das redes sociais na população jovem universitária de Encarnación. Após a aplicação de um questionário criado pela Rede Alfamed, foram detectadas diferenças significativas entre os meios de comunicação utilizados de acordo com a área de residência. Não existem diferenças significativas em termos de tipos de utilização. Existem diferenças significativas de acordo com o ano de estudo e nos primeiros anos utilizam mais plataformas de entretenimento em comparação com as plataformas de comunicação nos últimos anos. Existem também diferenças em termos de tipos de utilização, com utilizações associadas ao entretenimento nos primeiros anos e utilizações associadas à pesquisa de informação e notícias nos últimos anos.

Palavras-chave:
Alfabetização Mediática e Informacional, media, redes sociais, jovens universitários, Paraguai

1. Introduction

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is a vital skill for the 21st century, enabling individuals to access, evaluate, use, and share information and media content critically and

ethically (UNESCO, 2021a). In the global context of information overload and the digitalization of social relations, MIL is a crucial tool for fostering active citizenship and democratic participation.

The international community agrees that MIL is a strategic pillar for governance. Countries with regulatory frameworks for artificial intelligence literacy exhibit higher levels of citizen participation in monitoring and holding automated systems accountable (CAIDP, 2025). Hence, it is noted that the absence of media literacy deepens information gaps, exposing low-skill groups to greater misinformation and institutional distrust (Mansell et al., 2025).

At the techno-pedagogical level, León-López et al. (2024) note that algorithmic personalization exacerbates biases and ideological bubbles, which necessitate critical skills to comprehend recommendation logic and assess the commercial intent of platforms. However, despite arguments in favor of developing algorithmic marketing (AM), Paraguay still lacks national policies on AM.

Within this framework, the objective of this research was to characterize the types and frequencies of media and social media use among young university students in Encarnación.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 MIL and the Comprehensive Development of People Today

MIL, as an emerging field in academia and science, responds to the centrality of media, social networks, and digital environments in everyday life, where interactions, learning, and leisure are configured through digital interfaces (Aguaded and Borges, 2025; Pérez Tornero & Varis, 2020; Hernández-Serrano et al., 2021).

However, even though we talk about an "information society," this scenario reveals tensions, as the accelerated circulation of data does not guarantee veracity, and the overabundance favors superficiality. Instead of fostering critical access to knowledge, the digital environment encourages fragmented consumption, conditioned by opaque algorithms that limit informational autonomy (Aguaded and Borges, 2025; Le Voci, 2024). UNESCO (2021a) maintains that informed access must be guaranteed as a fundamental and indispensable right for democratic life. Therefore, it is not just about accessing data, but also about developing the skills necessary to assess its reliability, interpret it critically, and act responsibly with it (Bacher, 2024a; Pérez Tornero & Varis, 2020). Along these lines, MIL integrates three axes: media

(critical media analysis and identity management), informational (rigorous data search and use), and digital (secure technology management and data protection) (UNESCO, 2021a). These components act as a mechanism. Far from being neutral, algorithms filter and direct attention for commercial purposes, reinforcing biases and weakening critical thinking (Le Voci, 2024; Pérez Tornero & Varis, 2020; León-López et al., 2024). Therefore, MIL must go beyond fact-checking and include an understanding of how platforms work, data collection and segmentation, and the purposes that guide the circulation of content. Media education involves uncovering the invisible architectures that shape the digital experience and restrict informational autonomy if one is unaware of them (UNESCO, 2019; Pérez Tornero & Varis, 2020). Updated media literacy must incorporate a critical perspective on artificial intelligence and its impact on the circulation of knowledge and decision-making, combining technical skills with critical thinking and ethical responsibility (Le Voci, 2024; Aguaded & Borges, 2025).

When citizens are unaware of how digital information systems operate, they not only limit their access to knowledge but also their ability to participate in democracy. Disinformation, emotional manipulation, and algorithmic personalization erode social trust and hinder consensus on basic facts (Hobbs, 2020).

Therefore, critical media training serves as a tool for democratic defense, enabling us to resist manipulation, construct alternative discourses, and demand transparency in communication processes (Cabero-Almenara & Martínez-García, 2023; UNESCO, 2021b).

2.2 The State of MIL in South America

In South America, public policies on MIL remain a pending task, with a lack of regulatory frameworks leading to disparate responses. According to the 2023 Mapping, only 63% of Ibero-American countries have a policy, and only 27% in the region have specific frameworks, which limits the definition of goals and coordination. The mapped actions focus on young people aged 18 to 34, particularly university students, and prioritize media and information literacy, critical thinking, digital citizenship, empowerment, and strategies for disinformation detection (UNESCO, 2024; Bacher, 2024b).

However, a deep understanding of the MIL approach is not yet fully consolidated, highlighting specific structural challenges. Among these, the limited participation of public institutions as key actors and the low presence of proposals in rural or peripheral areas stand out

(Rojas, 2024). Furthermore, most of the identified initiatives are developed in school settings but lack long-term continuity or sustainability, which impacts citizens' preparation to face the challenges of an increasingly complex media environment (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2023; Rojas-Estrada et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

In this sense, ALFAMED has played a key role in the development of MIL. The network focuses on coordinating research on media communication in digital contexts, promoting comparative diagnoses and contextualized educational proposals (Pérez Tornero y Varis, 2020). The Alfamed Teacher Training Curriculum (Aguaded et al., 2021a; 2021b) serves as a benchmark for designing evidence-based public policies in MIL. In Uruguay, MIL has been explicitly incorporated into the integrated basic education curriculum, and its learning objectives are present from early childhood through secondary education. However, curricular inclusion follows a technical-instrumental approach and has not yet been consolidated as a critical and civic tool (Rojas-Estrada & Sánchez-Vilela, 2024). In Brazil, a national initiative was launched with teacher training programs aimed at strengthening critical thinking. However, its scope continues to depend on political will and state funding (Secretaria de Comunicação Social & Governo Federal do Brasil, 2023). However, these actions are still marked by their non-universal reach, and their implementation largely depends on political will and state funding.

Despite the aforementioned actions, the region continues to demonstrate a lack of political will to translate this accumulated knowledge into sustainable public policies (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2023).

2.3 Youth and MIL

MIL has become an essential skill for young people to exercise their rights in an informed manner in an increasingly complex digital ecosystem. However, the lag in higher education efforts highlights gaps in preparation for identifying false information, comparing sources, and understanding how the media works (Bacher, 2024a; Halpern, 2024).

In Latin America, 72% of young people turn to visual platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for information (Bacher, 2024a). Regarding access to political information, the most used platforms by young people between 18 and 34 years of age are YouTube (29%), TikTok (25%), Instagram (24%), Facebook (23%), and X/Twitter (16%),

reflecting a clear preference for visual and interactive digital environments for informing and participating in public affairs (CIRCLE, 2025).

The aforementioned social platforms play distinct roles in the circulation of information, serving as environments for learning, entertainment, political participation, and opinion formation.

YouTube has established itself as the leading repository of long-form video, where tutorials, visual journalism, and political analysis from institutional and independent sources converge, becoming a tool for informal learning and in-depth thematic exploration (Dean, 2025; Renés-Arellano et al., 2020). TikTok, initially oriented towards viral entertainment, has transformed into an incidental and increasingly frequent means of accessing news: the proportion of adults who report getting their news there increased from 3% in 2020 to 17% in 2024, while among those under 30 it reached 39% (Zazo & Martínez-Fresneda, 2024; Yang & Amirul, 2024). Instagram, for its part, serves as a hybrid space that bridges lifestyles and political commitments, fostering identity and belonging among young people (Marquina & Hernani, 2023; León-Alberca et al., 2025).

Facebook continues to play a role in the circulation of news and political content, especially among adults, as a network of communities and shared news with a strong political and emotional charge (Kraus et al., 2022; Press-Reynolds, 2021). X maintains its position as a public forum for debate, with young adults predominating in political conversations during information crises and citizen mobilizations (Barbieri et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2020). Finally, WhatsApp has become a central platform for private and community communication, in addition to being used for information gathering through groups (Barrera & Denis, 2022; Holly et al., 2024; Umeh et al., 2025).

Digital dynamics go beyond passive consumption: verification practices, content creation, and network participation strengthen youth civic engagement. At the same time, platforms mediate political access with distinct ideological biases: young Democrats prefer TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, while Republicans lean toward traditional media (CIRCLE, 2025; Harvard Public Opinion Project, 2023; Skurka et al., 2023; Comisión Europea, 2024). This segmentation, influenced by personalized algorithms and ideological affinity environments (Le Voci, 2024), reinforces the need for media literacy that not only empowers people to verify information but also fosters critical awareness of the construction and circulation of political

discourses in the digital environment, considering the determining role of algorithms (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

2.4 MIL and Education: From the Region to the Case of Paraguay

Education plays a crucial role in training citizens who are capable of critical thinking. Therefore, educational institutions must focus on developing skills to confront disinformation and digital manipulation (UNESCO, 2021b; Aguaded & Borges, 2025; Bacher, 2024a; León-López et al., 2024). However, recent reports warn that MIL is not yet systematically integrated into teaching processes, due to gaps in teacher training and a technocentric approach that prioritizes the provision of devices and connectivity over pedagogical and social aspects (UNESCO, 2024; CAIDP, 2025; Canese et al., 2021; Bacher, 2024a).

In Paraguay, the lack of in-depth research reflects the fact that the topic is not consolidated in the curriculum or public policies (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2023; 2024). This is compounded by the low digital skills of teachers and gaps in initial teacher training (Álvarez-Herrero et al., 2023; 2025). Furthermore, the intensive use of social media by young people, with 98% of secondary school students using it and 60% for more than five hours a day, is negatively associated with study time outside of school (Machado et al., 2025).

3. Methodology

The methodology of this research was quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, and field-based (Avendaño, 2020). A survey was conducted of 1,060 university students (men and women) between the ages of 20 and 29, who attend the two most attended private universities in Encarnación (Itapúa, Paraguay). It is worth noting that the majority of universities in Paraguay are privately owned. The sampling method used was a purposive non-probability method.

As a data collection instrument, a questionnaire designed by the Alfamed Network was used, based on the conceptual proposal of Pérez-Rodríguez and Delgado-Ponce (2012), as well as provisions from the Comisión Europea (2007), Ferrés (2007), and Celot and Pérez-Tornero (2009). The proposal, as defined by UNESCO (2011) in its MIL curriculum for teachers was also considered. The questionnaire is structured into three areas: a) knowledge; b) comprehension; c) expression. These areas are explored using 42 items with a response scale consisting of four levels, ranging from 1 to 4, where 1 represents the lowest score and four the highest score.

Before administering the questionnaire, the research team reviewed it to identify possible linguistic and content differences, with the aim of adjusting it to the local level. A pilot test was then conducted, meeting the sample inclusion criteria.

The statistical analysis was performed using JASP software (version 0.18.3), complemented by specific procedures in R (version 4.3.1) to control for Type I errors associated with multiple comparisons. The focus was on studying the association between the frequency of use and the perceived usefulness of different media and social networks, in relation to four independent variables: university degree, year of enrollment, type of secondary school, and district of residence.

Tests of independence were applied using Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2), verifying that at least 80% of the cells in each contingency table had expected frequencies equal to or greater than 5. In cases where this assumption was met, the χ^2 values, degrees of freedom (df), and significance levels (p) were reported, and the magnitude of the association was estimated using Cramer's V coefficient (V).

When the associations were statistically significant, adjusted standardized residuals were analyzed to identify the pairs of categories responsible for the most significant deviations from expected independence. To avoid inflated interpretations due to the number of comparisons, tools in R aimed at detecting false positives were used through p-value adjustments and complementary exploratory analyses.

4. Results and Discussion

Of the total districts analyzed, 38.7% (n = 12) were urban areas, while 61.3% (n = 19) were considered rural districts. The sample consisted of students from various university programs, allowing for the capture of a diverse range of educational backgrounds.

Independence tests (χ^2) were applied, with the magnitude of association measured by Cramer's V (<0.20 = low, 0.20–0.40 = moderate, >0.40 = high). To avoid false positives, Bonferroni ($\alpha = 0.002$) and FDR (pFDR < 0.05) corrections were applied. In addition, standardized residuals were analyzed (±2 as the significance threshold).

4.1 Distribution of District of Residence and Media Frequency

After FDR correction, five media outlets showed significant associations: radio, news portals, Twitter/X, online TV, and digital newspapers (V = 0.157–0.183). In rural areas, radio remained prevalent, while in urban areas, Instagram, TikTok, and, in some cases, Telegram took precedence.

These results confirm that territory influences the media habits of youth. In rural areas, the prevalence of radio is linked to connectivity limitations and traditional communication patterns (UNESCO, 2024). In contrast, in urban environments, the preference for digital platforms responds to visual and algorithmic dynamics that prioritize emotional and viral content (Le Voci, 2024; Hernández-Serrano et al., 2021). Thus, the differences between urban and rural areas reflect not only inequalities in technological access but also gaps in information literacy, which condition communicative autonomy and youth citizen participation (Rojas, 2024; Aguaded & Borges, 2025; Bacher, 2024a; Turpo-Gebera et al., 2025).

4.2 Distribution of University Degree by Media Frequency

The chi-square analysis revealed significant associations ($p < .001$) between university degree and the use of Facebook, TikTok, multimedia platforms, television, WhatsApp, and Instagram, with Cramer's V values ranging from 0.15 to 0.18, indicating low but relevant associations in sociocultural contexts (García Ferrando, 1997). No significant differences were found in radio, YouTube, Spotify, online TV, and digital newspapers.

The standardized residuals showed disciplinary particularities. Psychopedagogy showed a greater use of Instagram, while Veterinary Science demonstrated diversified consumption across Instagram, TikTok, and digital newspapers. In contrast, Graphic Design registered a lower presence on Instagram and Facebook, likely due to a preference for specialized platforms such as Behance or Pinterest. Elementary School Education, on the other hand, was associated with intensive use of television and Facebook and low use of TikTok.

These results confirm that a university degree acts as a differentiating factor in media consumption patterns. The predominance of visual environments in Psychopedagogy and Veterinary Medicine contrasts with more traditional practices in Elementary School Education, reinforcing the need to integrate media literacy into university education (Cabero-Almenara & Martínez-García, 2023; Aguaded & Borges, 2025).

The high consumption of television and Facebook in Elementary School Education and the low use of TikTok reflect the influence of family and school environments, underscoring the need to train future teachers in critical media literacy from the university level (Cabero-Almenara & Martínez-García, 2023). These findings challenge the notion of generational homogeneity and reveal differences associated with technological socialization, disciplinary culture, and navigation strategies. Thus, MIL cannot be limited to access or technical skills but must be embraced as a critical competence for analyzing media and recognizing biases (Bacher, 2024a; Le Voci, 2024). These differences require cross-curricular training proposals that integrate critical, ethical, and creative skills, as the digital ecosystem is neither neutral nor equitable. In this sense, UNESCO (2021b) emphasizes that MIL is a crucial condition for citizenship and must be structurally integrated into higher education.

4.3 Distribution of Year of Study by Media Frequency

The contingency analysis between year of study and the different media outlets showed that only three presented significant associations: Spotify ($\chi^2 = 28.473$; $p = 0.019$), multimedia platforms ($\chi^2 = 29.167$; $p = 0.015$), and digital newspapers ($\chi^2 = 33.064$; $p = 0.005$), with Cramer's V values between 0.095 and 0.102, indicating a weak association (García Ferrando, 1997). After the Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment, the p-values remained below 0.05, confirming the validity of the findings.

The standardized residuals indicated that Spotify and multimedia platforms exhibited higher-than-expected frequencies in the first year, while these frequencies decreased significantly in subsequent years. In contrast, the use of digital newspapers intensified in the fourth and fifth years, while it was markedly lower in the first year.

These results suggest that academic progress is associated with a progressive transformation in university students' media practices. In the early years, the use of recreational platforms, such as Spotify, and multimedia platforms associated with entertainment, relaxation, and initial socialization predominates. This pattern addresses the need for emotional support and adaptation to the academic context, but is often disconnected from critical literacy processes (Maxmudova et al., 2025).

As students progress, a transition to information media such as digital newspapers is observed, linked to greater academic demands for contextual analysis and critical

comprehension. As Halpern (2024) points out, critical agency in the digital environment is gradually built through meaningful educational experiences. However, exposure to content does not guarantee reflective processes; therefore, institutions must offer interpretive frameworks that enable a critical reading of the media (Bacher, 2024a; León-López et al., 2024).

This shift from entertainment to information constitutes a pedagogical opportunity. The early years are crucial in guiding digital consumption toward more critical and autonomous outcomes. Incorporating media literacy into the curriculum not only improves digital competence but also strengthens citizenship training and the capacity for deliberation in information-saturated environments (Rojas-Estrada & Sánchez-Vilela, 2024).

4.4 Distribution of the type of school where high school was completed, and frequency of media use

Of the 25 cross-references performed, only multimedia platforms showed a significant association with the type of educational institution ($\chi^2 = 20.286$; $p = 0.002$; Cramer's $V = 0.098$), which remained after FDR correction. The standardized residuals indicated more intensive use among students from private schools ($z = +2.42$ in the "Always" category). In contrast, low frequency predominated in the public sector ($z = -3.06$ in the "Always" category and +2.76 in the "Never" category). A pattern of lower use was also observed in the subsidized private sector. No significant associations were found in the other media, nor in the utility attributed to them.

The results reveal gaps in infrastructure and digital skills depending on the type of management, with the public sector being at a disadvantage (Álvarez-Herrero et al., 2025). The higher frequency of use of multimedia platforms in the private sector appears to be associated with favorable economic conditions and early digital socialization at home.

Although an association was found between school type and frequency of use ($\chi^2 = 20.286$; $p = 0.002$; $V = 0.098$), no differences were observed in the attributed utility, suggesting that unequal access does not imply differentiated purposes. This suggests that intensive use does not guarantee critical practices, with a predominance of functional consumption linked to entertainment and communication (Bacher, 2024a; León-López et al., 2024), reinforced by algorithmic logics that replicate consumption patterns (Zazo & Martínez-Fresneda, 2024; CIRCLE, 2025).

4.5 District of Residence Distribution and Media Usefulness

Independence analyses showed significant associations between city of residence and the type of use of radio, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok. Cramer's V coefficient indicated low to moderate associations, with greater strength for TikTok (V = .308) and Telegram (V = .295). In rural districts, positive residuals were recorded for radio, confirming its validity as an accessible and culturally rooted medium, in contrast to negative ones in urban areas, where Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok predominated.

These patterns reflect territorial differences in youth media habits. In rural areas, the persistence of radio is due to low connectivity, limited infrastructure, and the absence of sustained MIL policies (UNESCO, 2024; Rojas, 2024), reproducing gaps already noted in the education system (Canese et al., 2021). On the contrary, in urban contexts, high connectivity and youth density favor intensive use of visual and interactive platforms that combine consumption, self-expression, and sociability (León-Alberca et al., 2025; Bacher, 2024a).

In semi-urban areas, a dual pattern is observed, with functional uses linked to information and recreational practices characteristic of the expanding digital culture, evidencing a sociotechnological transition (Turpo-Gebera et al., 2025). Thus, the supposed digital homogeneity of youth is fragmented when analyzed territorially: without contextualized training interventions, access does not guarantee critical skills or equitable participation (Halpern, 2024).

4.6 Degree Distribution and Media Usefulness

The contingency analysis between university degree and media usefulness showed significant associations in fifteen of the twenty-five cross-references evaluated, all consistent after FDR correction ($p \leq .05$). Among the media with the greatest significance are YouTube ($\chi^2 = 38.768$; $p = .001$; $V = .163$), WhatsApp ($\chi^2 = 39.248$; $p = .003$; $V = .145$), Discord ($\chi^2 = 33.300$; $p = .001$; $V = .143$), Facebook ($\chi^2 = 36.654$; $p = .001$; $V = .142$), TikTok ($\chi^2 = 29.966$; $p = .001$; $V = .133$) and multimedia platforms ($\chi^2 = 24.364$; $p = .001$; $V = .122$). Associations were also observed with web portals ($\chi^2 = 30.028$; $p = .001$; $V = .118$), written press ($\chi^2 = 32.702$; $p = .001$; $V = .115$), digital newspapers ($\chi^2 = 15.515$; $p = .001$; $V = .112$), Telegram ($\chi^2 = 18,900$; $p = .001$; $V = .111$), Snapchat ($\chi^2 = 18,900$; $p = .001$; $V = .111$), Twitter ($\chi^2 = 16,452$; $p = .001$; $V = .108$), Pinterest ($\chi^2 = 20.308$; $p = .007$; $V = .098$) and Instagram ($\chi^2 = 19.546$; $p = .043$; $V =$

.094). Cramer's V values (0.094–0.163) indicate weak to moderate associations, expected due to the categorical nature of the study (García Ferrando, 1997).

The analysis of standardized residuals allowed us to identify discipline-medium combinations: on YouTube, Psychopedagogy stood out for "Learning new things"; on TikTok, Early Childhood Education and Social Communication were associated with "Entertainment," in contrast to Law; on Pinterest, Graphic Design stood out for "Finding inspiration"; on Instagram, Fashion Design was linked to "Sharing own content," while Electronic Engineering had negative values; on Facebook, Social Work was associated with "Community events"; on Telegram, Psychopedagogy was related to "Coordinating academic activities." On Snapchat, Pharmacy stood out for "Rapid Communication"; in press and portals, Political Science and Law were linked to "Reading the News"; and in Radio, technology majors were associated with "Listening to Music."

The observed differences show that media practices are not only a function of age or access, but also of disciplinary cultures and training frameworks (Turpo-Gebera et al., 2025). Degrees in education, social intervention, and political science tend to appropriate media for informational and organizational purposes, while those linked to design or communication use them for aesthetic expression and professional visibility (León-Alberca et al., 2025). The functional use of messaging in academic contexts reinforces the idea of "extended organizational environments" (Holly et al., 2024), and the appropriation of news media in social sciences responds to the need to interpret current events and question narratives (Halpern, 2024).

These results demonstrate that the relationship between degree programs and media utility extends beyond technical patterns to encompass imaginaries, values, and educational objectives. As Bacher (2024a) and other authors note, young people are not a homogeneous group; their media practices are shaped at the intersection of academic, social, and symbolic aspects.

4.7 Distribution of year of study by media utility

The contingency analysis between year of study and use of WhatsApp and Telegram revealed significant associations, with moderate intensities (WhatsApp: $\chi^2 = 811.612$; df = 630; $p < .001$; V = .392; Telegram: $\chi^2 = 444.221$; df = 390; p = .030; V = .290) (García Ferrando, 1997).

This suggests that an academic trajectory influences how both platforms are utilized in communication, information, and socialization settings.

The standardized residuals showed distinct patterns. On WhatsApp, “Talking with friends” was overrepresented in the fifth year (+86.67 %) and decreased in the sixth year (–12.65%). In the first year, “Sharing photos” (+41.61 %) and “Searching for information” (+35.22 %) stood out. On Telegram, “Searching for information” was most common in the first year (+49.40) and decreased in the second (–43.55), while “Sharing photos” intensified in the fifth and sixth years (+28.16; +31.99). On both platforms, “Talking with friends” had negative values in the sixth year (–13.92), suggesting a shift toward more academic uses.

Overall, the results reveal an evolutionary pattern: in the first years, social integration and information searching predominate; in the middle years (third and fourth), collaborative and instrumental use consolidates, focusing on organizing tasks and sharing materials; while in the later years, social purposes decrease and academic and professional purposes, linked to internships, theses, and advanced commitments, are strengthened.

This progression aligns with the findings of Holly et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of messaging in emotional adaptation and community building during the early stages, as well as Bacher (2024a), who views these platforms as improvised resources for academic self-regulation. The transition towards a more instrumental and critical use in the middle years confirms what Halpern (2024) proposed regarding the development of digital agency, while the use of Telegram in advanced stages for the circulation of specific content reflects what Turpo-Gebera et al. (2025) pointed out regarding the adaptation of media practices to new training and professional demands. Finally, the reduction in the use of WhatsApp to “talk to friends” in sixth grade can be interpreted as a result of already consolidated ties and greater academic demands, which coincides with León-López et al. (2024), who observe a shift in the logic of youth interaction towards more focused dynamics.

4.8 Frequency distribution of media outlets with media utility

The tests of independence (χ^2) revealed significant associations between frequency and attributed utility in 14 of the 25 media outlets analyzed ($p < .001$), all of which remained consistent after adjusting for multiple comparisons. Cramer's V coefficient values ranged from 0.312 to 0.408, indicating low to moderate but relevant associations (García Ferrando, 1997).

The highest intensities corresponded to TikTok (V = 0.408), Twitter/X (V = 0.398), radio (V = 0.379), and Telegram (V = 0.379), suggesting that the most dynamic and audiovisual platforms concentrate greater variability in uses, while traditional media present more stable patterns.

Regarding specific uses, WhatsApp was primarily linked to interpersonal communication, while Telegram, X, Discord, Pinterest, Snapchat, web portals, newspapers, and blogs were associated with informational functions. Spotify and radio maintained their centrality in audio accompaniment, and TikTok stood out for video consumption and celebrity following, confirming its appropriation oriented toward ephemeral entertainment and algorithmic logic (Zazo & Martínez-Fresneda, 2024). In contrast, print media and blogs showed more stable and critical use, associated with cultural capital and previous habits (Turpo-Gebera et al., 2025).

The analysis of standardized residues reinforced these trends: informational functions were overrepresented in newspapers, websites, and blogs, while visual entertainment predominated in TikTok and Snapchat. Radio and Spotify confirmed persistent ambient use, which is less linked to youth hyperactivity (Bacher, 2024b). WhatsApp, Telegram, and Discord demonstrated a "functional versatility" (Halpern, 2024), serving multiple purposes, including social, expressive, and academic uses. Furthermore, platforms such as Pinterest and Snapchat revealed a strong identity and creative component, in line with what León-Alberca et al. (2025) pointed out.

These results show that the utility attributed to each medium does not depend solely on access frequency, but rather reflects processes of digital socialization, differentiated media literacy, and identity construction. This appropriation, as Bacher (2024a) points out, arises from the tension between the technical possibilities of each medium, the contextual conditions, and the meanings that users themselves assign to them.

5. Conclusions

This research enabled us to characterize in detail the uses and frequencies of media among young university students in Encarnación, revealing that these patterns are not homogeneous but are influenced by prior cultural capital and the conditions of technological socialization in homes and communities. These initial differences influence not only the intensity of access, but also the way students build their media repertoires and, consequently, their possibilities for social and academic participation.

Furthermore, it was found that university programs have a significant impact on media use. In areas related to design, for example, visual platforms like Pinterest acquire formative and professional inspirational value. In fields such as psychopedagogy or social work, the organizational and community function of messaging prevails. This finding opens a pedagogical horizon for strategic media curricularization. Consciously integrating those platforms that students already consider significant can enhance the motivation, relevance, and impact of university teaching.

Furthermore, the results show that media use is not limited to excessive consumption. Many young people turn to networks and platforms for relaxation, emotional support, or recreation, which should be interpreted as an opportunity to promote digital well-being strategies. Recognizing and legitimizing these uses involves teaching how to manage leisure time, fostering a balance between entertainment and learning, and building a healthy relationship with media environments.

The findings reveal that MIL in Paraguay must move toward a comprehensive model that considers cultural capital, disciplinary specificity, and the emotional dimension of media practices. An educational policy that articulates these factors can contribute not only to reducing urban-rural gaps but also to developing participatory and democratic citizens capable of harnessing the potential of the media both in the classroom and in everyday life. In this sense, the university is confirmed as a privileged space for transforming the diversity of media uses into critical, creative, and responsible skills, fundamental for an informed and sustainable democracy.

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Digital Literacy in the Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the "Conecta Consciente" Program Among Cuban University Students

Alfabetización digital en la evaluación de efectividad del programa “Conecta Consciente” en estudiantes universitarios cubanos

Alfabetização Digital na Avaliação da Eficácia do Programa “Conecta Consciente” entre Estudantes Universitários Cubanos

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Abstract: This research evaluated the effectiveness of the 'Conecta Consciente' psychosocial intervention programme in enhancing the emotional digital literacy of university students. A mixed-methods research paradigm with a concurrent nested quasi-experimental design and pre-posttest was adopted. The sample consisted of 15 students from the 'Marta Abreu' University of Las Villas. Data collection included the following: a social media addiction questionnaire; a questionnaire to assess mental health protective factors; group interviews; and a user satisfaction survey. The 'Conecta Consciente' psychosocial intervention programme comprised five sessions based on the Health Belief Model. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of the programme implemented.

Keywords:
Digital Literacy, Assessment, University Students

Resumen: El objetivo de la presente investigación fue evaluar la efectividad del programa de intervención psicosocial «Conecta Consciente» para potenciar la alfabetización digital

emocional de los estudiantes universitarios. Se adoptó un enfoque de investigación mixto con un diseño cuasi experimental anidado concurrente con pretest y postest. La muestra estuvo formada por 15 estudiantes de la Universidad «Marta Abreu» de Las Villas. Para la recogida de datos se utilizaron un cuestionario de adicción a las redes sociales, un cuestionario para evaluar los factores protectores de la salud mental, entrevistas grupales y una encuesta de satisfacción de los usuarios. El programa de intervención psicosocial «Conecta Consciente» constó de cinco sesiones basadas en el modelo de creencias de salud. Los resultados obtenidos demostraron la efectividad del programa implementado.

Palabras clave:
Alfabetización digital, evaluación, estudiantes universitarios

Resumo: O presente estudo teve como objetivo avaliar a eficácia do programa de intervenção psicossocial "Conecta Consciente" no desenvolvimento da literacia emocional digital em estudantes universitários. Foi adotado um paradigma de investigação misto, com um delineamento quase experimental concorrente aninhado e pré-pós-teste. A amostra foi composta por 15 estudantes da Universidade "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas. A recolha de dados incluiu um questionário sobre dependência das redes sociais, um questionário para avaliar os fatores de proteção da saúde mental, entrevistas em grupo e um inquérito de satisfação do utilizador. O programa de intervenção psicossocial "Conecta Consciente" foi estruturado em cinco sessões, com base no Modelo de Crenças em Saúde. Os resultados demonstraram a eficácia do programa implementado.

Palavras-chave:
Literacia digital, avaliação, estudantes universitários

1. Introduction

Today, new technologies are an essential tool in people's lives. The impact of these digital tools provides excellent benefits and represents a radical change in the social functioning of humanity. For this reason, digital literacy has become a fundamental skill for the professional training of students, especially those pursuing higher education (Gamboa & Santos, 2025).

The health emergency experienced in early 2019 had disastrous consequences for all levels of society, forcing all countries to implement contingency plans to stop the spread of the virus. Many teachers and students were compelled to utilize digital devices and adapt to disruptive or emerging pedagogies, which contributed to the rapid advancement in technology use (Quispe & Vislao, 2022).

The emergence of the internet in the educational field has given rise to a new paradigm in teaching and learning. Their implementation in educational centers, utilizing various technological tools, has been slow, but in most cases, it has been effective. If used correctly, they not only increase knowledge but also develop a series of fundamental digital skills for citizens of the knowledge society (Pettersson, 2018).

University students constitute one of the most vulnerable groups, considering the developmental characteristics of this stage and the constant use of social media required at this level of education, along with the need to provide quick responses, obtain immediate rewards, interact, and manage multiple windows on digital platforms (Fernández et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to promote actions in this age group that foster the development of technological skills, along with mental health protection factors that contribute to the development of skills related to digital literacy. This problem has highlighted the need to evaluate the effectiveness of psychosocial intervention programs to enhance the emotional digital literacy of university students. Despite being a necessary topic today, research implementing actions is scarce. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the "Conecta Consciente" program, which promotes emotional digital literacy among students at the Marta Abreu Central University of Las Villas.

2. Theoretical Framework

Digital literacy is understood as the ability to utilize digital technology, communication tools, or networks to locate, evaluate, use, and create information effectively. It also refers to the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of resources presented via a computer, or a person's ability to perform tasks efficiently in a digital environment. It includes the ability to read and interpret media, reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and evaluate and apply new knowledge acquired in digital environments (UNESCO, 2024).

Regarding the concept of digital literacy in education, Lamoth et al. (2020) and other authors agree that this phenomenon can be understood as a set of educational actions that empower students and teachers to use digital tools critically, effectively, and efficiently, and that enable the curricular development of students and teachers through new teaching strategies and methodologies.

By situating the topic in an international context, the study's approach aligns with that of Castro et al. (2023), who note that countries such as Finland, Singapore, and Canada have implemented innovative educational policies that integrate the development of digital literacy and research skills into their curricula. This has allowed students not only to access information efficiently but also to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources.

On the contrary, in regions with limited access to technology, digital gaps have emerged that hinder the development of these skills, underscoring the need for inclusive policies to ensure equitable and quality education (Gamboa & Santos, 2025).

In the Cuban context, digital transformation is essential for government management based on science and innovation. In this sense, the analysis of the proposals for the Third Improvement of the National Education System (SNE) highlights the importance of using technology at every educational level. An example of this is the development of projects such as the Institutional Educational Project (PEI), which conducts a detailed diagnosis and characterization of each element of the educational institution, including the available technological infrastructure. In the Group Educational Project (PEG), teachers must be aware of the technological variety available in the classroom and for each student, allowing them to choose which digital educational resources to use in each educational process (Santana Garriga et al., 2024).

In the study conducted by Santana Garriga et al. (2024), it was found that, although teachers at university institutions in Havana understand the importance of using digital technology in the teaching-learning process and are motivated to improve themselves in this regard, they consider digital literacy proposals to be insufficient and, in many cases, cannot access the content of the different training modalities.

One of the objectives of media and digital literacy is to leverage the benefits that the internet offers to citizens, understanding the reasons behind its use. In this way, it is possible to minimize the risks associated with incorrect use, paying special attention to the youngest

children and to schools and families as mediators in the use of these digital media (García-Ruiz & Pérez Escoda, 2021).

According to Quispe and Vislao (2022), emotional digital literacy refers to the ability to manage and regulate one's own and others' emotions in the context of digital technology use. This involves developing emotional skills that allow people to interact in a healthy and balanced manner in digital environments, managing both positive and negative emotions that may arise during their participation in online activities. This literacy helps people manage their emotions healthily and make balanced and positive use of digital technologies.

Interventions to develop socioemotional skills in Spanish adolescents have been successful in reducing psychosomatic symptoms and increasing happiness (Sarrionandia & Garaigordobil, 2017). Additionally, these interventions have improved interpersonal skills, mood, and socioemotional skills, with a large effect size in the latter two cases. Data from various studies indicate a medium to negative correlation between social media and internet addiction and life skills, indicating that the less developed socioemotional skills are, the greater the risk of suffering from such addiction (Córdova & Retamoso, 2018).

For intervention programs to meet their proposed objectives, it is essential to develop them based on a theoretical model. The health belief model is one of the most widely used theories in health promotion and disease prevention. This approach effectively encourages preventive and self-care behaviors, as increasing knowledge about the disease enhances perceptions of susceptibility, severity, and benefits, as well as self-efficacy, thereby modifying people's behavior to benefit their health (Centeno & Ghin, 2022).

Evaluation, in a broad sense, involves making a critical judgment about a given situation. This technique aims to generate useful information to enhance various aspects, specifically those related to intervention programs. It involves analyzing actions or activities focused on achieving specific objectives and is a moment of reflection that allows for improving the process under development. Evaluation involves systematically considering several factors that are presented as evaluation principles or criteria. Among them, effectiveness stands out, defined as the measure of achieving the objective and the results of an activity in a target population within a given time period, without considering the costs incurred to achieve them (Grau et al., 2024).

In a study conducted by Echemendía (2022) to characterize the relationship between patterns of digital social media use and protective factors for mental health in students at the

Marta Abreu de Las Villas Central University, it was found that 98.1% of students use digital social media every day. Meanwhile, in the diagnosis carried out by Lamadrid (2023) to design a psychoeducational intervention proposal that would promote the responsible use of social media among students at the Marta Abreu de Las Villas University, it was found that the sample is characterized by frequent and daily use of digital social media, low rates of protective factors, and high levels of risk factors for social media addiction.

In the field of mental health, protective factors refer to the personal, social, institutional, and environmental resources that promote development and increase resilience, or the ability to overcome various setbacks that people face, and even to learn from their experiences (Vázquez, 2021).

3. Methodology

To conduct the research, a nested or embedded concurrent dominant design (CDD) was employed, which enables the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data predominate and guide the project, while the qualitative data are nested within them. The data obtained are combined during the analysis phase.

The sample, consisting of 15 students from the Marta Abreu Central University of Las Villas, was selected using non-probability and purposive sampling. The mean age was 19.73 years (R = 18-23, SD ± 1.00). Regarding gender, 8 (53.3%) were female and 7 (46.7%) were male.

The sample was selected considering that the research objective revolves around the predictive evaluation of the effectiveness of the "Conecta Consciente" program. Also known as a diagnostic or initial assessment, it is necessary at the beginning of any process or project, as it will serve as a reference to assess its completion and verify whether the results have been satisfactory (Grau et al., 2024), which will allow for future implementation in other contexts and samples. In this sense, Hernández-Sampieri et al. (2023) explains that, in mixed research whose objective is to generate new knowledge or explore novel perspectives on phenomena of interest, samples are used that are guided by one or more purposes. The selected students participated in the research conducted by Echemendía (2022), which highlighted the high scores obtained on the Digital Social Media Addiction Questionnaire.

The participants agree with the research conducted by Lamadrid (2023), which aimed to design a psychosocial intervention program that promotes the appropriate use of social media. It is worth noting that the diagnostic process was updated during implementation.

The following criteria were considered when selecting the sample:

Inclusion criteria:

- Be a student at the Universidad Central "Marta Abreu de Las Villas".
- Have participated in the Lamadrid research project (2023).
- Be willing to participate in the research (informed consent).

Exclusion criteria:

- Students who did not attend the institution during the February-March period.
- Presence of motor impairments that limit the completion of the battery of tests.
- Be under psychopharmacological medication at the time of the battery of tests.

Exit criteria:

- Incomplete work sessions.
- Request to withdraw from the study for various reasons.
- Dropping out of university studies during the course of the research.

3.1 Variables and Instruments

The program's effectiveness was evaluated by comparing the results of the pretest and posttest. The Social Media Addiction Questionnaire and the Mental Health Protective Factors Questionnaire were administered, along with the User Satisfaction Survey, enabling an analysis of the program's impact on participants. Additionally, these instruments were used to assess variables related to social media use and mental health protective factors, in conjunction with the group interview.

The Social Media Addiction Questionnaire is based on a 5-point scoring system (ranging from 0 to 4), which takes into account frequency, ranging from "never" to "always." According to González Alcántara et al. (2021), this questionnaire consists of 24 items, each scored from 0 to 4, comprising 23 direct questions and one reverse question. The entire instrument has a reliability of 95%. Furthermore, the dimensions have Cronbach's alpha values of 0.91, 0.89, and 0.92, respectively, providing adequate internal consistency. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was

0.95. This instrument was designed with three dimensions: social media obsession (characterized by constantly thinking about and worrying about not being able to access or stay connected to social media), lack of personal control over social media use (which refers to concern about the lack of control when using social media, resulting in failing to perform or neglecting certain activities), and the dimension of excessive social media use (which explores the perception of spending too much time connected to social media) (González Alcántara et al., 2021).

Questionnaire to assess protective factors for mental health: This allows for the assessment of a group of factors that, depending on their presence and level of development, can play a protective or risk role in the mental health of university students. It consists of 38 items answered on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'never' or 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'always' or 'strongly agree'. This instrument has demonstrated adequate levels of reliability for the Cuban population in previous studies ($\alpha = 0.93$). It consists of two dimensions. The first consists of items that explore the presence of protective factors, including resilience, optimism, the evaluation and decision-making process, self-esteem, and social skills. The second dimension groups items that denote low development of these protective factors and that can be considered risk factors. This dimension highlights items that explore poor development of social skills, low self-esteem, pessimism, the presence of academic stress, parental withdrawal upon entering university, and the perception of limited recreational opportunities (Fernández-Castillo et al., 2017).

A group interview is an interactive process in which a group of participants is asked to discuss a specific topic to gain insight into their perceptions. Among its advantages is that it allows several participants to be evaluated simultaneously, saving time and resources in the research process. It also provides a more accurate assessment of participants' interactive capacity, enabling instruments to be tailored to their individual characteristics. Furthermore, it provides a more complete view of participants' perceptions of the topic addressed and can help reduce biases and misconceptions about it by providing different points of view (Amezcua, 2002).

The study was conducted under the auspices of the national project PN223LH006-022: Critical Mind 2.0: Towards Digital Citizenship. Consent was obtained from the institution and each participant. The statistical analysis program SPSS version 25 was used, and descriptive and frequency analyses were performed on the variables measured by the questionnaires administered, as well as the User Satisfaction Questionnaire. The nonparametric Wilcoxon

related samples test was used, and the effect size was calculated using Cohen's d test, where d = (M1 - M2) / SD; if d > 0.80, the effect is considered significant. For the qualitative component, content analysis was used.

4. Results

4.1 Logical methodological design of the psychosocial intervention program.

Figure 1 shows the working logic behind the intervention program and its different sessions.

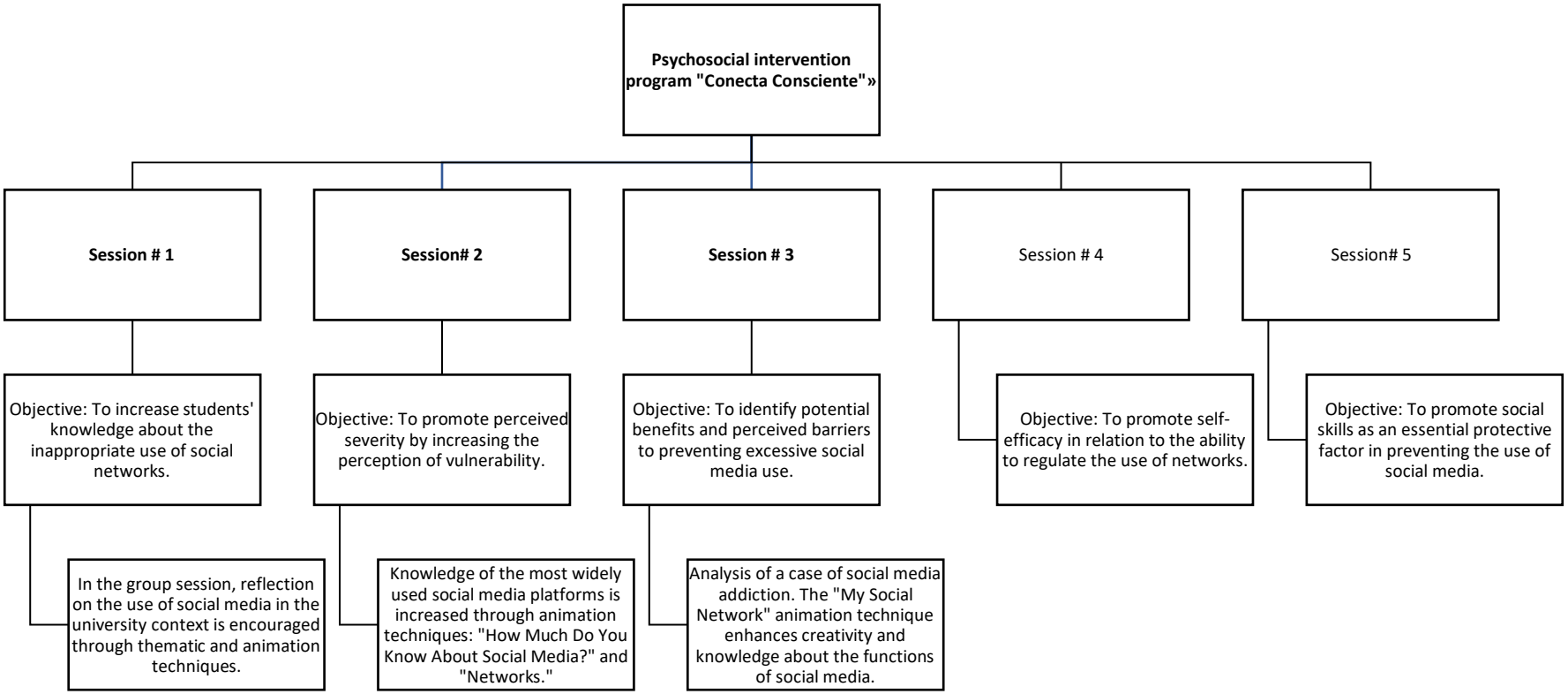


Figura 1. Diseño lógico metodológico del programa de intervención psicosocial. (Fuente: Elaboración propia)

4.2 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Implemented Program

4.2.1 Analysis of Items from the Social Media Addiction Questionnaire in the Pre- and Post-Test

Comparing the responses from the pre- and post-tests, positive changes were observed in the latter compared to the former in all evaluated dimensions, indicating the effectiveness of the implemented proposal.

The extent of social media obsession was reduced in item 3, "The time I used to spend online does not satisfy me, I need more," as 93% of the group now stated they never need more time. In comparison, previously, only 66% were satisfied with the time they spent online. Regarding item 6, "I get moody when I cannot connect," the number of participants who were not affected by this has increased by 73%; previously, only 60% were able to remain calm when they lacked access to social media.

Regarding the lack of personal control dimension, a decrease is also observed, as confirmed by item 4, "As soon as I wake up, I go online." This behavior has decreased: now 20% never do so, compared to only 6% who were previously able to avoid doing so. None do so consistently or frequently, compared to 13% who did so all the time and 20% who did so quite often.

Analysis of item 11, "I think about what might be happening online," reveals that the group has increased their personal control, as 93% no longer worry about what might happen online, compared to only 53% who did not think about it before. Item 14 confirms that 80% of the group can successfully manage their social media use; previously, only 60% of the group was able to control themselves. 60% of the group confirm that they do not neglect their studies and homework to spend their time on social media, compared to 53% who did so previously.

Regarding the dimension of excessive social media use, a decrease was observed in item 1, where 60% of the group felt little need to stay connected. In comparison, only 26% felt no need to be constantly connected. Fifty-two percent of the group never felt relaxed when using social media. According to item 16, "I spend much time online," before the intervention, 73% of the group spent much time on social media, while only 26% spent time on other activities. The intervention resulted in 53% of the group spending all their time on other activities, while 47% spent little time on social media. The number of participants who were constantly checking their notifications has been reduced; now, 53% of the group never checks them, compared to 60%

previously. Analysis of descriptive statistics, the Wilcoxon test results, and the effect size of the Social Media Addiction Questionnaire

Table 1 shows significant differences in the comparison of the means for each of the questionnaire dimensions, which experienced a positive decrease. Since all three Sig. Values were < 0.5, there is no homogeneity of variance. The effect sizes for all three dimensions were greater than 0.8, indicating a significant effect.

Dimensions	M(Pre)	M(Post)	Sig.	D(Pre)	D(Post)	T.E
Obsession with social media	19.87	16.73	0.028	4.291	2.154	1.45
Lack of personal control	12.4	8.13	0.002	2.063	1.846	4.33
Excessive use of social media	21.53	15.33	0.006	5.703	2.16	6.68
Legend: M(Pre)= Pretest mean, M(Post)= Posttest mean, D(Pre)= Pretest deviation, D(Post)= Posttest deviation, TE= Effect size						
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Social Media Addiction Questionnaire, with the results of the Wilcoxon test and the effect size. (Source: SPSSv25)						

When analyzing the behavior of the dimensions based on the sex of the participants, it is observed that men have a higher level of obsession with social media than women (mean 16.38), and that women tend to control their use better (mean 7.85). Regarding excessive use, women show more excessive use (mean 16.00).

4.3 Evaluation of the statistical results of the Mental Health Protective Factors Questionnaire

4.3.1 Analysis of items from the Mental Health Protective Factors Questionnaire in the pre- and post-test

An increase in the levels of the self-efficacy dimension is evident: previously, only 66% of the group could solve complex problems; now, 80% can always solve them, and 66% usually know what to do in difficult situations. Self-esteem has increased: only 27% of the group despised themselves, and 53% did not consider themselves failures. Regarding self-pride, the level was increased, as previously only 40% felt proud of themselves on certain occasions; now, 60% frequently have reason to be. The social skills dimension increased, specifically the ability to mediate interpersonal problems: 46% regularly mediate, while before the implementation of the psychosocial intervention, only 13% were able to do so. Empathy and sympathy levels increased by 20%. Previously, only 20% expressed satisfaction with others, but after implementation, 40% expressed their satisfaction when they liked something about their performance.

In the decision-making dimension, 86% regularly consider factors when making a decision. The number of participants who designed a good action plan increased: 60% put it into practice, while previously only 40% were able to design and execute it. The number of

participants who perceive the future with optimism increased, as only 26% were optimistic. After the process, this percentage increased to 40% overall in this dimension. Resilience levels increased: 46% are now able to think clearly under pressure, 53% can overcome obstacles (up from 40%), and a positive attitude toward failure rose from 46% to 73%. Strength in the face of challenges and the ability to adapt to change increased by 6.7%.

Personal satisfaction decreased, as 80% of the group occasionally feel stressed by the academic demands of university, 40% feel they cannot rely on their professors when faced with a problem, and 66% feel they have distanced themselves from their parents due to entering university.

Regarding the final levels of protective factors, average values were obtained. Unlike the pretest results, 100% of the group reached this level; before the intervention, 66.7% had a low level, thus increasing the number of participants with an average level. The final risk factor level obtained is low. Unlike the pretest results, 66.7% of the group reached this level; previously, 66.7% had a high level, thus increasing the number of participants with a low level. The mean sum of the protective factor scores obtained was 101.6, and the risk factor score was 22.

4.3.2 Analysis of descriptive statistics, the results of the Wilcoxon test, and the effect size of the Mental Health Protective Factors Questionnaire

Table 2 shows significant differences in the comparison of the means for the self-efficacy, self-esteem, decision-making, and resilience dimensions, which increased positively. Since all three p-values were <0.5, there was no homogeneity of variance. A decrease was observed in social skills, optimism, and personal satisfaction related to the university context dimensions. Since the p-value was greater than 0.5, there were no significant differences between the means. Regarding effect sizes, resilience and self-esteem had a negligible effect; there was no effect in the social skills dimension. Self-efficacy and decision-making had a significant effect in favor of the program, serving as protective factors that changed the most. Optimism and personal satisfaction with the university context also had a significant impact. However, the change was negative, as these factors decreased due to the complexity of the subjects and the challenges encountered on the university campus.

Dimensions	Pretest M Result	Pretest M Result	Pretest M Result	Pretest M Result	Pretest M Result	Pretest M Result
Self-esteem	13.20	14.13	0.195	1.935	2.031	-0.46
Self-efficacy	8.27	9.13	0.032	1.580	0.516	-1.67
Social skills	14.87	14.67	0.975	5.040	1.759	0.11
Decision-making	14.87	16.33	0.085	3.399	1.397	-1.05
Optimism	16.20	13.67	0.067	3.913	2.992	0.85
Resilience	38.40	39.40	0.754	7.179	3.996	-0.25
Personal satisfaction	19.30	16.07	0.013	3.348	2.685	1.20

Table 2. Mean of Protective and Risk Factors with the Wilcoxon result and the effect size. (Source: SPSSv25)

Regarding the behavior of the questionnaire dimensions according to the sex of the participants, it was observed that men had higher levels of self-esteem (mean 14.43), social skills (mean 14.71), resilience (mean 41.14), and personal satisfaction (mean 16.57) in the university context than women. In contrast, women had higher levels of decision-making (mean 16.75) and optimism (mean 13.38) than men. Regarding self-efficacy, no changes were observed.

4.4 Evaluation of the User Satisfaction Survey Results

At the conclusion of the strategy, a User Satisfaction Survey was administered to each participant. Overall, the experience was satisfactory: expectations were met 80%, satisfaction with group work was 80%, satisfaction with the appropriateness of the sessions was 53.3%, satisfaction with the schedule of sessions was 46.7%, satisfaction with the quality of resources and materials was 73.3%, and satisfaction with the psychologist's performance was 80%.

5. Discussion

The assessment identified persistent and persistent use of social media, a result similar to that obtained by Heredia and García (2017), who found that 50% of their sample clearly used social media excessively. 100% of the sample used social media, as was the case in the study by Moreira de Freitas et al. (2021), which found that 100% of the participants used social media

frequently. Similarities were found regarding the most frequently used social media platforms. According to this research, the most commonly used platforms were Facebook and Instagram. Additionally, the data revealed that WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram were also frequently used. The results are consistent with those of Molina and Toledo (2014), as they indicate that the majority of respondents do not consider themselves addicted (78.2%), while only 21.8% considered themselves addicted to social media; in the present study, only 20% considered themselves addicted.

Regarding the results obtained from the Social Media Addiction Questionnaire after the program's implementation, it was observed that levels of social media addiction were low, similar to those obtained by Lamadrid (2023). This result is consistent with that of Araujo (2016), who, when evaluating the indicators of social media obsession, lack of personal control over their use, and excessive use, obtained low levels in all three. Regarding the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire's dimensions, differences were observed with respect to the results of Chiza-Lozano et al. (2021), who obtained a mean social media obsession of 29.92, with a standard deviation of 6.891; a mean lack of personal control of 14.09, with a standard deviation of 4.691; and a mean excessive use of 19.51, with a standard deviation of 6.378.

Regarding protective factors, a significant increase in self-efficacy was observed, with this factor experiencing the most significant change. This finding is consistent with Krzysztofek (2021), who suggests that the higher the level of self-efficacy, the lower the likelihood of social media addiction. In this case, social media addiction decreased, and self-efficacy increased. Furthermore, the level of resilience, which is generally high, was increased. By gender, men tend to be more resilient than women. These results differ from those obtained by Salgado Lévano (2009), who indicates that men and women have a medium level of resilience, with no differences by sex.

The analysis by sex reveals a decrease in optimism levels; women are more optimistic than men, which aligns with the findings of Sologuren-Montenegro (2018), who states that men tend to have lower levels of optimism and women a medium level. There were no changes in social skills, which differs from the findings of Domínguez Vergara and Ybañez Carranza (2016), who posit that there is an inverse relationship between social skills and social media addiction. If addiction increases, social skills decrease, and vice versa. In this case, social media addiction was reduced, but social skills did not change.

Regarding the evaluation of the program's effectiveness, based on the analysis of the pretest and posttest results, inappropriate social media use was reduced. Initially, social media obsession was 19.87, which decreased to 16.73. The lack of personal control decreased from 12.40 to 8.13, and excessive use decreased from 21.53 to 15.33. The effect sizes across all three dimensions were large. These results are consistent with the research by Capa Luque et al. (2022), which found a significant decrease in inappropriate use of social media and a significant increase in the self-efficacy dimension after program implementation. This result is consistent with that obtained in their study, although there are differences. The procedures for obtaining the results are similar.

6. Conclusions

During the development of this research, the proposed objective was met: to evaluate the effectiveness of the "Conecta Consciente" psychosocial intervention program in promoting emotional digital literacy in Cuban university students. Through the analysis of the pretest and posttest results, the inappropriate use of social media was reduced. Initially, the obsession with social media was 19.87, which decreased to 16.73. The lack of personal control decreased from 12.40 to 8.13, and excessive use decreased from 21.53 to 15.33. The effect size across all three dimensions assessed was large. In this case, the Student t-test was used; however, in the present study, the Wilcoxon test and Cohen's d test were employed.

Analyzing the results of the Mental Health Protective Factors Questionnaire, a medium level of protective factors and a low level of risk factors were found. Protective factors, analyzed independently, were high, except for social skills. Regarding protective factors, a significant increase in resilience and self-efficacy was observed, with the latter being the factor that showed the most significant changes.

This research demonstrates the effectiveness of the "Conecta Consciente" psychosocial intervention program in promoting emotional digital literacy among students at the Marta Abreu Central University of Las Villas. Furthermore, it contributes to the prevention of addiction to new technologies by providing training in protective factors for mental health. The flexibility of its design allows it to be applied to other areas of research.

One limitation of this research is its small sample size. Therefore, it is suggested that the psychosocial intervention program be expanded in future research to other groups at the Marta

Abreu de Las Villas Central University and to other educational settings, such as pre-university and secondary school levels.

Furthermore, since the study was limited to the analysis of pre-test and post-test results obtained through a quasi-experimental design, it would be advisable to include a control group in future implementations to facilitate comparison of results and to demonstrate further the effects of the psychosocial intervention program on the experimental group.

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Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and Disinformation: perspectives in Ibero-America[1]

Alfabetización Mediática e Informacional (AMI) en tiempos de Desinformación: perspectivas en Iberoamérica

Alfabetização midiática e informacional (AMI) em tempos de desinformação: perspectivas na América Latina

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Abstract: Media and Information Literacy (MIL) has contributed to the understanding and adaptation to the major evolutionary and cultural changes of the digital transformation. This research aims to focus on the challenges of ensuring digital citizenship with critical thinking and skills that can reduce the negative effects of disinformation. The study uses documentary analysis to examine theoretical elements on the topic and consults Ibero-American researchers and experts who have worked on it. Among the main results, elements associated with misinformation that should be strengthened in MIL programs are focused. These components would contribute to fostering skills and a digital culture that allows for critically addressing the disinformation processes that are generated today in the media and public sector.

Keywords:
Information, communication, digital transformation, digital government, digital literacy

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Resumen: La Alfabetización Mediática e Informacional (AMI) ha contribuido a la comprensión y adaptación a los principales cambios evolutivos y culturales de la transformación digital. La presente investigación tiene como propósito focalizar los desafíos para asegurar una ciudadanía digital con pensamiento crítico y habilidades que permitan reducir los efectos negativos de la desinformación. El estudio utiliza al análisis documental para examinar los elementos teóricos sobre el tema, y realiza una consulta a investigadores y expertos iberoamericanos que lo han tratado. Entre los principales resultados se focalizan elementos asociados a la desinformación que se deben potenciar en programas de AMI, para fomentar competencias y una cultura digital que permita afrontar los procesos que proliferan hoy día en el ámbito mediático y público.

Palabras clave:
Información, comunicación, transformación digital, gobierno digital, alfabetización digital

Resumo: A Alfabetização Midiática e Informacional (AMI) tem contribuído para a compreensão e adaptação às principais mudanças evolutivas e culturais da transformação digital. Esta pesquisa visa focar nos desafios de garantir a cidadania digital com pensamento crítico e habilidades que possam reduzir os efeitos negativos da desinformação. O estudo utiliza análise documental para examinar elementos teóricos sobre o tema e consulta pesquisadores e especialistas ibero-americanos que se debruçaram sobre o tema. Entre os principais resultados, destacam-se elementos associados à desinformação que devem ser fortalecidos nos programas de AMI para fomentar habilidades e uma cultura digital que permitam abordar os processos que proliferam hoje na mídia e nas esferas públicas.

Palavras-chave:
Informação, comunicação, transformação digital, governo digital, alfabetização digital

1. Introduction

The digital transformation in contemporary society demands new capabilities and skills to participate in and mediate increasingly complex digital environments, characterized by emerging dynamics of communication and access to information, as well as the intensive use of artificial intelligence (AI). These contexts, currently characterized by a web presence and functionality,

along with new challenges in the management and use of social networks, APKs, and AI tools, enable us to focus on scenarios that require cultural change and, consequently, the development of adaptive skills in response to these growing realities.

Digital contexts are generating profound transformations in the information society, with significant implications for professional fields and the daily lives of individuals. The accelerated development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is having a significant impact on information, communication, and knowledge-building processes (Castells, 2013; Amaral, 2016; Hernández-Serrano et al., 2017; Boaventura-Sales Paixão et al., 2022; García-Roca & Sánchez-Fortún, 2023; Marques de Carvalho et al., 2025).

Among the main distinctive elements of this transformation, which is also cultural, is an information and knowledge society where: a) the diversity of formats and the massification of social networks and the internet have led to a saturation of content (Castells, 2013), b) information can be accessed and consumed without constraints of time and place (Marques de Carvalho et al., 2025), c) a participatory and convergence culture (technological, media and cultural) is consolidated in which new networks and data flows are expanded, structured and organized (García-Roca & Sánchez-Fortún, 2023), d) the prosumer era has marked a significant change in the communicative environment, in its traditional modes of production and consumption of news (Hernández-Serrano et al., 2017), e. The phenomenon of cyberculture is emerging, supported by the sociocultural dimension and dynamics of the Internet, promoting a reformulation of social relations and the creation of communities in virtual environments, while simultaneously fostering the emergence of new behaviors (Amaral, 2016). The media and information context, for its part, is not exempt from substantial transformations: f) where people acquire a proactive role in the management of digital information (De Pablos Pons and Ballesta Pagán, 2018), g) in which an excess of digital information is recognized that demands specific capacities so that subjects can have an active position in the process of knowledge construction, capable of forming critical awareness and applying it throughout their lives (Boaventura-Sales Paixão et al., 2022), h) in an environment where media competencies become important from their actions within the media, interacting critically with messages from others, while producing and disseminating their own content (Ferrés and Piscitelli, 2012; García-Ruiz et al., 2014), i) where the communicative relationship depends on how individuals perceive and interpret each object or medium (Magalhães, 2021), j) where the media can determine the ways in which

individuals relate—primarily social media—, the quality of the information with which they interact can determine their actions and decisions, as well as the levels of civic participation (Dias-Fonseca and Potter, 2016), k) and where disinformation and post-truth are presented as increasingly complex phenomena in digital contexts (Ávila-Araújo, 2021) (Sabater-Quinto et al., 2025).

The digital landscape, therefore, demands new media and informational dynamics where individuals can build—in a critical, participatory, and inclusive way—a society tailored to these new realities. This entails recognizing the need to adapt to them and create skills tailored to this cultural change. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to identify the elements that should be considered in Media and Information Literacy processes to address the effects of misinformation.

2. Disinformation and its effect on the construction of digital citizenship

Disinformation is a phenomenon associated with the amount of information generated, accessed, and shared today. The phenomenon of infoxication, infosaturation, or information overload has significantly impacted the way individuals use, analyze, create, and share data, information, and digital content today. The issue in question is not new, but the communicative dynamics derived from the development of ICTs have fostered scenarios in which we are no longer mere web users, but prosumers, which imposes different understandings of this type of phenomenon. In recent decades, internet access, web development, the publication and openness of data, social networks, the technology industry, and the proliferation of digital companies/organizations, including media outlets, have significantly boosted the creation, availability, and accessibility of information. As a result, it is becoming increasingly complex to find rational limits on the processes of identifying, searching for, and consuming this resource. In this regard, authors such as Valverde-Berrocoso et al. (2022) have associated this phenomenon with the expansion of information saturation, information overload, and the trivialization of information, while Ávila-Araújo (2024a) describes it as a dynamic of information production, circulation, and use in contemporary society. However, although it has been argued that these phenomena are not recent and that they have occurred in other periods of the 20th century, as recently as 2016, the presidential elections in the United States of America and Brexit in the United Kingdom constituted political and socioeconomic processes that have revived or reinforced attention to this issue.

Regarding disinformation, Ávila-Araújo (2021) highlights that among the leading causes identified are the disintermediation of information, the emergence of social media with its algorithms and search engines, and the Big Data phenomenon, among other factors. In the author's view, we can add issues related to the use of AI, which poses new challenges in content generation and verification.

When addressing the phenomenon of disinformation, several terms are seen in use: "Fake News,"[2] "Junk News," "Deep Fake," "Fake Science"—which includes so-called historical denialism—"Clickbaits," "False Testimony," "Conspiracy Theories," "Hate Speech," "Infodemic," and the phenomena of "Misinformation," "Disinformation," and "Malinformation" (García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2021; Ávila-Araújo, 2024b; Guadarrama-Torres et al., 2025).

The term disinformation is defined as “verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented, and disseminated for profit or to deceive the population deliberately, and that may cause public harm” (Comisión Europea, 2018a).

> Understood as the deliberate dissemination of false or distorted information, it is a potent tool for manipulating public opinion and undermining democratic institutions. It is important to understand how disinformation is produced, disseminated, and consumed in order to combat it effectively. (Sabater-Quinto et al., 2025)

In digital contexts, disinformation thrives in areas where specific sectors—whether governmental, organizational, or social—begin to gain attention, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The conditions that generate it, which are sometimes considerably reinforced by the media, are permeated by situations or elements of "public" interest that are attractive due to their immediacy and social impact, whether political, economic, or social. Their cognitive basis is a concern or information gaps that need to be filled to reduce high levels of uncertainty. They are permeated by new digital realities, in which social networks, new communication channels and platforms, among other technological solutions, facilitate the creation and dissemination of content generated by any individual or organization.

Given this scenario, disinformation constitutes a phenomenon in which data, information, or digital content is generated—intentionally or deliberately—that infoxicates, complicates, or distorts a particular "situation," which may be worthy of attention from the public and media spheres. This emerging information scenario that is activated by the disinformation phenomena

[2] Some better known by their acronyms in English.

has among its effects or purposes, to mark personal positions of diverse nature, generate specific perceptions, influence states of opinion, activate emotional states, and enhance calls to action once they begin to be consumed and assimilate information from the diverse dynamics in which disinformation is presented.

Added to these elements are the adverse effects brought on by the speed at which false information spreads on social media and the internet (Aceituno-Silva, 2024). These new capabilities have contributed to the creation of new dynamics, channels, and communication and information facilities that make it challenging to confront "fake news," "hoaxes," or other elements associated with this topic.

In the public and media arenas, disinformation is presented as a complex phenomenon of great concern due to its speed and immediacy, as well as the lack of skills in using verifiable sources of information to address it. This is why, in recent years, it has gained greater attention from the political, research, scientific, and academic spheres. Due to its impact, this issue is prominent in the agendas, roadmaps, and resolutions of international and regional organizations and professional associations (ONU, 2024; IFLA, 2018; Comisión Europea, 2018), as well as in the creation of mechanisms to address these phenomena, such as the creation of fact-checking platforms, digital observatories, research and innovation programs and groups, alert systems, and the creation of expert groups, among other initiatives (Moreno-Espinosa et al., 2024; Sabater-Quinto et al., 2025).

From a media perspective, media outlets have begun to utilize fact-checking tools. They are enhancing their verification processes for news sources, aiming to counteract the easily disseminated streams of misinformation that are triggered and spread. While many solutions have focused on professional fields related to this area, addressing these types of situations in the public sector is more challenging and complex, not only because of the need to combat them, but also due to the mandate to safeguard citizens' constitutional rights, especially in the digital space.

In this regard, Baquero-Pérez (2025) states that "with the proliferation of post-truth or disinformation, public administrations can assume responsibility for protecting the truth, or, in other words, seeking to guarantee citizens' right to reliable information. It is essential to note that this role can potentially cross the line and infringe upon freedom of expression, a fundamental pillar of democracy. However, it must also be kept in mind that it should not be used as an excuse to spread lies and manipulate public opinion" (Baquero-Pérez, 2025).

In recent years, the use of generative AI has also been added, enabling the design or creation of digital content in various formats, such as text, images, and videos, to augment or enhance disinformation campaigns or scenarios. According to Gómez, Feijóo, and Salazar (2021), cited by García-Marín y Salvat-Martinrey (2021):

> The development of artificial intelligence systems makes it increasingly easier to create malicious videos and audios. Although the first tool for creating this type of production was used on audio, the application of artificial intelligence models to graphic processing represented a significant qualitative leap.

In this regard, these authors consider that:

> In the case of videos, deepfakes are executed by swapping faces or through lip-syncing, to make people believe that the person appearing in the video delivered a speech that, given its spectacular or morbid nature, is easily propagated in digital circles. (García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2021)

This new reality, fostered by the use of AI, presents new challenges in terms of ethics and the development of skills and technological solutions that enable the identification and detection of malicious use of this type of intelligence.

> Beyond the controversies common to all AI, RGA technology can be used to alter or manipulate pre-existing images or videos to generate fake ones that are difficult to distinguish from the real thing. AI is increasingly facilitating the creation of these deepfakes and so-called fake news. In other words, AI is making it easier for certain actors to commit unethical, immoral, and criminal acts, such as spreading disinformation, promoting hate speech, and incorporating people's faces without their knowledge or consent into completely false and sometimes compromising audiovisual materials. (UNESCO, 2024)

The disinformation phenomenon, while it requires strengthening some capacities focused on developing better technological infrastructures and new information architectures that support verification, of sources, data and information, also requires greater social awareness and understanding on the subject, as well as literacy that contributes to the creation of media and information skills, but above all those focused on analysis and critical thinking in citizens and the population in general.

2.1 Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Information Society

The conceptual ambiguity generated by the coexistence of various terms associated with literacy, such as digital, informational, media, and multimedia, brings with it a wide variety of theoretical approaches that, despite being oriented indistinctly, essentially refer to the importance of information and its use in various contexts (Ferrés & Masanet, 2015; Moreno et al., 2018). At the same time, it is associated with the terms digital and media competence in an integrated

manner (INTEF, 2017; Ballesta et al., 2017; Moreno et al., 2018; Redecker, 2020; Vuorikari et al., 2022).

Educational conceptions of literacy have defined the term as a set of skills and competencies (Buckingham, 2007). Changes in the media context, new cultural practices, the emergence of new digital media (Scolari, 2016), and the implementation of the concept in different contexts, such as media education, have led to the emergence of a wide variety of related conceptualizations: information literacy, new literacies, digital literacy, media literacy, multiple literacies, internet literacy, computer literacy, cyberliteracy, transmedia, or transliteracy (Buckingham, 2007; Koltay, 2011; Frau-Meigs, 2012; Masanet et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2013; ACRL, 2016; Scolari, 2016).

The convergence of elements that comprise the different types of literacies has led international organizations, such as UNESCO, to advocate for the unifying concept of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in its Curriculum for Teachers on MIL and its Competency Framework, aiming to establish a correlation between the various learning platforms.

In this case, technological, informational, and communicational aspects related to current contexts of social interaction, the right to freedom of expression, access to information, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue are complemented.

According to UNESCO (2013), there are several reasons why the different literacies converge within the MIL concept:

- Citizenship competencies that allow for the enjoyment of fundamental benefits and rights such as freedom of expression and access to information.
- Technological convergence.
- The need to shift the focus toward common elements of literacies.
- The need for an integrated approach to the implementation of methods, teaching processes, and skills development in personal, educational, professional, and social settings.

Based on the analysis of the conceptual and integrative elements of MIL proposed by IFLA (2011), Wilson (2012), the Moscow Declaration on MIL (UNESCO, 2012), UNESCO (2013), Grizzle and Torras Calvo (2013), the Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Age (UNESCO, 2014), Grizzle and Singh (2016), Renés Arellano (2019), Caldeiro-Pedreira et al. (2019), E. Courtenay-Rattray in UNESCO (2020), and Boaventura-Sales

Paixão et al. (2022), MIL can be conceived as a transdisciplinary process of continuous learning and the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, competencies, and skills that seek to empower citizens by critically evaluating public information and media content. MIL promotes and empowers the use of various tools in a critical, ethical, and effective manner, enabling individuals to participate in and engage with personal, professional, and social activities and make informed decisions. This development is achieved by knowing how to identify, search, access, analyze, evaluate, organize, use, generate, produce, share, and communicate information and media content—in all formats—and by having creative, legal, and ethical knowledge of methods, as well as mastery and understanding of access, coverage, evaluation, allocation, use, production, and communication of media content.

These elements stand out among the various approaches and proposed dimensions and indicators, demonstrating an evolution aligned with the rapid technological boom, changes in digital interaction methods, and the emergence of new media. In this regard, the proposals oriented towards audiovisual communication skills (Ferrés, 2007), media skills (Aguaded et al., 2011; Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012; Pérez-Rodríguez & Delgado-Ponce, 2012), information literacy (Catts & Lau, 2008), media literacy (Celot & Pérez-Tornero, 2009), and AMI (Wilson et al., 2011) stand out.

These approaches are highlighted in the Comisión Europea Reports (2006, 2007, 2007a, 2016, 2018, 2022). They are also recognized through the contribution of the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DIGCOMP) (Ferrari, 2013; updated and expanded by Vuorikari et al., 2022), which emphasizes the need to develop competencies in the digital landscape in an integrated manner.

The current integration promoted by MIL responds to practices and dynamics resulting from the evolution and development of technology, information, and media, which pose challenges from the very convergence and cultural approach with which it is conceived and designed.

2.2 Disinformation and MIL from the digital and development agendas

In recent decades, with the growth of digital transformation, e-commerce, e-government, and digital governance, literacy issues have gained greater importance. Added to this are the growing phenomena or contexts where disinformation places citizens facing high levels of

uncertainty due to the presence and generation of fake news, hoaxes, denialism, or hate speech, which significantly impacts the veracity of information in the public and media spaces.

Correspondingly, several international initiatives and agreements have sought to understand better these issues and the need to join forces in addressing them. Among the main agreements and initiatives focused on the international level are: the "Guidelines for the Formulation of MIL Policies and Strategies" (UNESCO, 2016); the "IFLA Declaration on Fake News" (IFLA, 2018); "Combating Online Disinformation: A European Approach" (Comisión Europea, 2018); "DigCom 2.2: Developing Digital Competencies for Citizens" (Comisión Europea, 2022); the “Tashkent Declaration on Universal Access to Information” (UNESCO, 2022); “Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean eLAC2024” (CEPAL, 2022); “Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Educators and Students: Media and Information Literate Citizenship: Thinking Critically, Clicking Wisely” (UNESCO, 2023); “United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity” (ONU, 2024); “Guide for the Use of Generative AI in Education and Research” (UNESCO, 2024); “Ibero-American Charter on Artificial Intelligence” (CLAD, 2023).

These international agreements, agendas, guidelines, or declarations emphasize the importance of developing digital competencies, as well as media and information literacy programs, to ensure that citizens are equipped with the skills to participate actively and critically in digital media.

3. Methodology

This descriptive research considered several methods and techniques, including documentary analysis and surveys. The former is used to identify and analyze the main theoretical and methodological elements associated with disinformation and AMI. This method is also used to review and characterize the international agreements and frameworks addressing these issues, making it possible to focus on the consensus, visions, and projections that stand out for their implementation. Among the analytical elements considered were: type of agreement, information on coordination and authorship, scope and projections, specific components for its development, and the main elements it promotes within development agendas and goals.

In the case of the survey, it is used as a technique to gather information—perceptions, criteria, and assessments—provided by researchers, academics, public officials, and experts who

specialize in these issues within the Ibero-American context. To this end, several areas or dimensions were identified for the analysis of the topic. The latter are presented below, with the categories considered in the design of the instrument:

• Dimensions

I. Perceptions of disinformation and MIL—from the perspective of public management—in relation to regional and national capacities; II. Level of development based on international agreements and frameworks; III. MIL programs and content; IV. Education and vocational training;

• Research categories or elements

I. Perceptions of disinformation and MIL: a) Importance and visibility of the phenomenon in the region and country; b) Most affected population groups; c) Sectors and areas where the issue is promoted and strengthened. / II. Level of development based on international agreements and frameworks: d) Progress based on international agreements and frameworks; e) Levels of maturity; f) Prioritized sectors. / III. MIL programs and content: g) National and h) Regional awareness-raising and literacy efforts and actions; i) Approach and coverage of the issue; j) Competencies and skills; k) Learning actions and resources; l) Tools and practices; m) Key dynamics, processes, media, and informational elements; n) Initiatives, laboratories, and platforms; ñ) Indicators for evaluating programs / IV. Teaching and vocational training: o) Curricular approach; p) Concept within vocational training.

Once these dimensions and categories were identified, a survey/questionnaire was designed in Google Forms to facilitate its dissemination, and it was shared with researchers, teachers, public officials, and experts who have worked on the topic in the Ibero-American context. The identification of experts considered the topics under study, including disinformation and AMI, as well as the professional fields linked to these phenomena, such as information, communication, journalism, and digital transformation, among others.

The form was published in May 2025 and disseminated through various digital communication channels. The instrument remained open until mid-June 2025.

4. Discussion

Analyzing the international framework—agendas, resolutions, agreements, official communications—on Media and Information Literacy and Disinformation, it can be affirmed that in recent years it has been an emerging topic of interest for international organizations, professional associations, and development strategies. The disinformation phenomena occurring today generate harmful effects not only politically and economically, but also have a significant influence on social sectors and citizens, reinforcing their social impact.

Democracy, freedom of expression, institutional integrity, credibility, transparency, respect, ethical conduct, but above all, the trustworthiness and veracity of information in digital environments, have been considerably affected by the proliferation of disinformation. Consequently, several projections have been conceived from various international scenarios, reinforcing the need to create greater objective and subjective capacities to confront these processes. Among the latter, a greater digital culture and the creation of media and information competencies to address it stand out.

The analysis of the ten international agreements and initiatives mentioned in the theoretical section of this research reflects that the issue is of great concern to the highest body of the United Nations, as well as the European Commission, ECLAC, and representatives of non-governmental organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Until 2016, special emphasis was placed on MIL and digital competencies, with UNESCO as the United Nations agency that had addressed the issue the most due to its mandate within the system. By 2018, the phenomenon of disinformation began to gain greater focus[3], which increased from 2019 to 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The communicative phenomenon of social media, changes in media and information practices and dynamics, the increase in content creators or so-called "influencers," web positioning and visibility strategies, and the consumption of digital content online have significantly influenced concerns about the reliability and veracity of information shared and distributed through the Internet and new digital environments.

Among the main principles, guidelines, and challenges associated with this topic identified in this study are:

[3] Possible result, in part, due to the political and social processes and phenomena that began to be seen in the presidential campaigns of Donald Trump (2016) and Brexit, among other evolutionary elements.

• Recognition of ICTs as an essential and unavoidable resource for the development of society, and consequently, digital rights.
• Existence of digital ecosystems with new forms of citizen interaction and engagement.

• Collaborative efforts that require promoting MIL policies, programs, and information, media, and digital competency frameworks to ensure greater awareness and improved performance of digital cultural change.

• Recognition, from the social sphere, of the need to promote and strengthen policies, regulations, strategies, and procedures related to I. Disinformation, II. AMI, III. The Use of Personal Data, IV. Security, integrity, and privacy in digital environments, and V. IAGen—the latter due to its implications for the creation and sharing of content.

• Concern about disinformation—and its effects—as a complex, rapidly spreading phenomenon that may intensify with technological, information-communication, and media developments, as well as with the impact of generative AI.

• Need to safeguard the right to freedom of expression, including the right of access to information.

• Continue supporting the integrity of ecosystems with free access to quality information, ensuring open, inclusive, safe, and protected environments free from discrimination and hate.

• Promote the empowerment of people through the right to seek, analyze, validate, access, share, and socialize information and ideas of all kinds, with freedom of expression and critical thinking, without interference with their opinions. Avoid censorship to combat disinformation.

• Strengthen social capacities by coordinating stakeholders to counter rumors and disinformation, hate speech, radicalization, extremism, messages of violence, and other elements that violate civil rights.

• Promote and strengthen non-discriminatory laws and policies that prevent hate speech, disinformation, and gender-based violence, avoiding the suppression of voices and fostering self-censorship.

• Ensure that vulnerable and marginalized groups are not disproportionately affected by issues of integrity and disinformation.

• Contribute through transparency, participation, and accountability to ensure quality information and prevent disinformation.

• Generate skills that promote critical thinking, supported by processes of active and democratic e-participation, awareness of ethical responsibilities, diversity, and dialogue.

• Need to strengthen national and institutional legal frameworks for the understanding and assimilation of generative AI, as well as the creation of digital skills for its ethical and responsible use.

• Reduce the gap generated by AI, which includes the use of content without consent, lack of transparency and explainability of AI, content generated through AI that can contaminate the internet, lack of understanding of the real world, reducing the diversity of opinions, and further marginalizing already marginalized voices, undermining the creation of criteria and critical thinking.

These elements of the development agendas and agreements illustrate the international and regional landscape regarding MIL and disinformation. However, while efforts are perceived as focused on establishing policies, developing programs to build digital skills, and increasing literacy in the use of platforms, social networks, and media, the views of some experts and specialists studying the topic in the Ibero-American context could illustrate some of the challenges currently being identified.

In this sense, the application of the form used in the study was carried out through various academic and professional networks that address the topic in the Ibero-American context. During this information-gathering process, opinions were obtained from sixteen expert researchers who participated voluntarily—62.5% female and 37.5% male. Sixty-two and a half percent of respondents were between 36 and 50 years old, 25% were over 50, and 12% were under 35. Eighty-two percent of respondents held a Master's or Doctorate in science, and the majority worked as professors, researchers, or specialists working in the fields of Communication, Information, and ICT. Sixty-two percent of respondents were Cuban experts, 18% were Brazilian, and the same number were Spanish. The majority of respondents were from the fields

of Library, Documentation, or information sciences, as well as communication sciences. Experts from the fields of ICT, Law, and Education were also included.

Among the main results obtained was that all respondents considered disinformation to be a top priority issue in today's society, focusing on it as a sensitive phenomenon in their countries due to its adverse effects and political, social, and economic implications. Consequently, all participants agreed that it should receive greater attention from all sectors of society, particularly because it affects the entire population and public and private entities, but primarily because it includes population groups that may be significantly affected, especially young people (90%), older adults (92%), and people with disabilities (60%). It is worth noting that adults and children are also identified, but to a lesser extent, reflecting the impact on all age groups. Interestingly, all population groups considered themselves negatively affected by disinformation, with some being more affected in specific situations and others in any situation of this type.



Chart 1. Population groups most affected by disinformation practices. (Source: Own elaboration)

In today's society, actions aimed at combating disinformation are evident; however, the efforts, strategies, and capabilities to address it remain insufficient. These actions are most frequently observed within/from the United Nations System, the European Commission, and academia. While it is recognized that these efforts could be strengthened, this is where the issue has been most projected and emphasized.

Regarding progress in international agreements and legal systems, it is worth noting that 81.3% of experts believe the issue is highly dispersed across specific sectors and areas that typically address the topic. It is also notable that 68.8% believe it is mediated by the type of agreement and the specific area in which it is promoted, such as Technology, Information, Communication, Law, and Public Management, among others. A further 62.5% and 56.3%

report that progress lacks a systemic and integrated vision from the digital sphere and is very weak at the national level. To a lesser extent, 50% argue that progress on disinformation is still weak and insufficient, although some multidisciplinary approaches are being employed to address it. Interestingly, none of the respondents believe there has been "significant progress and an accelerated approach from the legal perspective."

The aforementioned elements correspond to perceptions of maturity levels from the legal and strategic perspectives. In this sense, policies related to digital transformation are focused, but they should be further strengthened to achieve their objectives. In this regard, their explicit approach is considered necessary through digital agendas, communication policies, and laws, as well as transparency and access to information laws. This is further compounded by the need to strengthen the issue across both educational and criminal justice frameworks in relation to digital rights and the ethical and responsible use of AI.

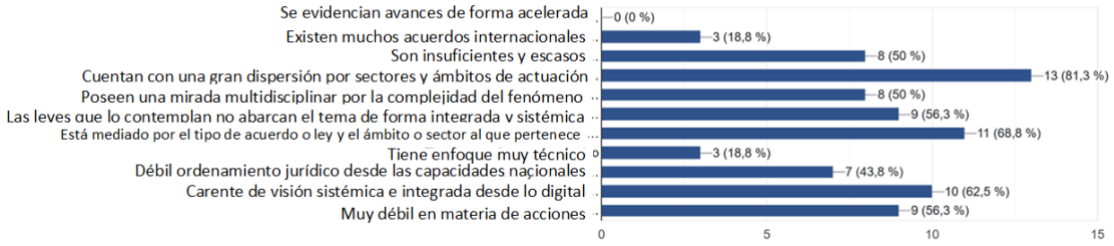


Chart 2. Perceptions of progress on disinformation based on international agreements and legal frameworks. (Source: Own elaboration)

93.7% of respondents believe that the issue should be addressed more extensively in the public sector and at the public level, given its implications for citizens.

Regarding the visibility of literacy and awareness-raising actions—by region or country—it is identified that they are being carried out, but in an isolated and infrequent manner, at least within the MIL programs themselves. At the national level, actions promoted by governments, universities, communication campaigns, political campaigns, unions, or professional associations are identified. At the regional level, initiatives are focused on those from international organizations, networks or communities of practice, academic or university associations, and country alliances.

One of the most interesting elements of the study lies in the experts' criteria regarding the areas or fields where capacity building on the topic should be strengthened. In the case of awareness-raising, this effort should be strengthened by universities and educational systems, as well as social media and alternative communication channels, including digital ecosystems and their components. However, as this is a global problem, it can continue to be addressed through forums such as the United Nations, regional alliances, government strategies, and professional associations. These elements coincide when referring to socialization processes. However, it is worth noting that those surveyed agree that, due to the complexity of the issue, it should be addressed in nearly all media, digital, and public management spaces. In general terms, there is a marked interest in strengthening all these actions among almost all sectors related to:

- SDGs and United Nations System agendas
- Regional councils, forums, and alliances
- Government strategies
- Regional and national digital agendas
- Media systems
- Universities and educational systems
- Alternative communication networks and channels
- Professional associations
- Academic guilds
- Digital ecosystems of organizations and entities

Regarding the approach to disinformation issues in MIL programs, respondents believe they focus more on media and social networks (73.3%), with an emphasis on the development of digital skills (66.7%), addressed from the specifics of communication and media (66.7%), with attention to information skills (46.7%). However, it should be noted that these are still not adequately addressed (46.7%) and lack approaches and capabilities for citizens (46.7%).

According to experts, the competencies and skills to be developed in an AMI program focused on disinformation should include: 1. Knowledge of how the media works; 2. Knowledge

of social media; 3. Informational competencies for identifying and locating information sources; 4. Skills to validate and contrast data and information; 5. Development of critical thinking; 6. Skills to identify hoaxes, fake news, and other types of disinformation practices; 7. Knowledge of web positioning, and 8. Skills to report, dismantle, or alert about potential hoaxes, fake news, and other types of disinformation practices. In addition, there are competencies related to participation and citizen rights, as well as policies and laws regarding communication, information, and its ethical and responsible use. Thus, some strategies, resources, and actions should be essential in the design of these programs: 1. Holding talks, workshops, training sessions, debates, and forums; 2. Using regulatory frameworks and international agreements, 3. Using educational and methodological materials on the topic, 4. Using courses, short videos, and outreach campaigns.

Among the tools and practices to consider are source and media checklists, as well as tools for source analysis and account verification, both with a 93.3% accuracy rate. Additionally, 80% of respondents reported using fact-checking platforms and resources, followed by social media alerts at 73.3%, and data verification tools, real-time checking, and digital forums at 66.7%, respectively. Last but not least, the use of image and video analysis tools was recognized by 60% of respondents.

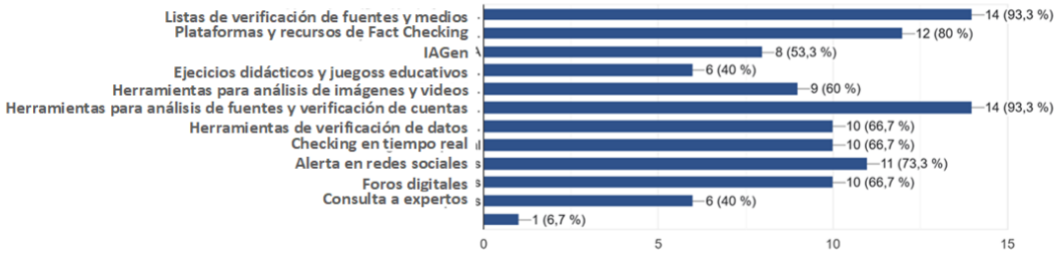


Chart 3. Tools and practices to consider in AMI programs to address misinformation. (Source: Own elaboration)

Among the media, people, and informational elements to consider in MIL to combat disinformation are the use of experts and the media, with a 81.3% share. The role of professional networks, academic communities, and specialized networks is also recognized, with 75%, as well as fact-checking tools and professional associations, with 68.8%. The analysis of these results

also highlights observatories (scientific, specialized, etc.), citizen participation mechanisms, and journalists and communicators, with 62.5%. In comparison, the use of e-government and transparency portals is identified by 56.3%. Among other initiatives identified by the experts are UNESCO, digital media observatories, and some anti-disinformation platform initiatives that have been developed in various regions and countries.

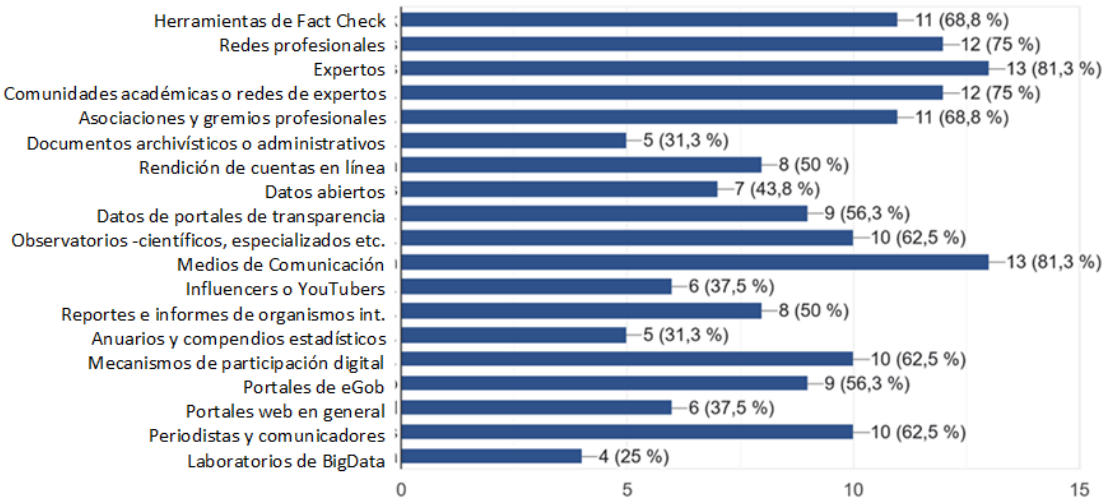


Chart 4. Media, people, and informational elements to consider in MIL programs to address disinformation issues. (Source: Own elaboration)

Regarding the curricular approach to disinformation, it is interesting that 56.3% of experts point out that the topic's coverage and presence in curricula are insufficient, as it should be addressed transversally across all professional fields. Similarly, 50% believe that the topic is not yet considered relevant, and 37.5% believe that it is addressed, but limited to Social Sciences programs such as Communication, Journalism, Documentation, etc. All respondents believe that it is not sufficiently addressed, given the complexity and impact of this social phenomenon today. In fact, 100% of respondents suggest that disinformation should have a transversal approach in vocational training due to its implications and consequences for the social and civic spheres.

Overall, experts recognize the importance of a better understanding of AI in this type of phenomenon, the need for greater engagement between all local stakeholders, and the importance of creating MIL programs that address and delve deeper into this topic.

5. Results

Based on the analysis of normative and regulatory elements, as well as a survey of Ibero-American experts, a set of elements can be identified and proposed (Figure 1) that are essential for enhancing capacities and competencies related to disinformation in MIL programs.

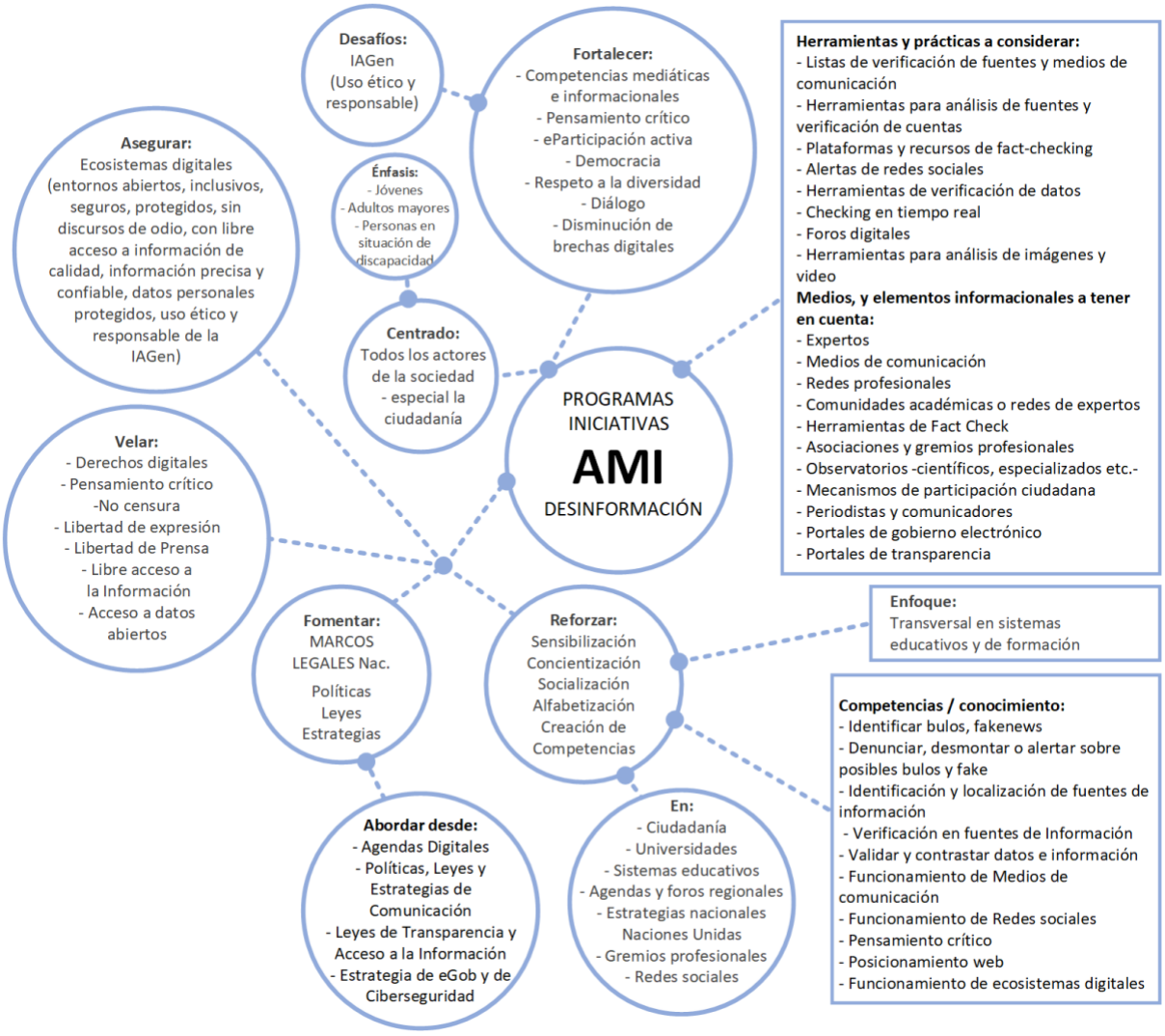


Figure 1. Development elements for media and information literacy on disinformation issues. (Source: Own elaboration)

These elements could be conceived for the design and implementation of AMI programs focused on disinformation. In addition to raising awareness and literacy on the topic and developing information, media, and digital competencies, new challenges arise from the ethical and responsible use of AI. Similarly, challenges arise in the assimilation of best practices regarding the use of social networks, Fact-Checking platforms, institutional portals, e-

government, transparency and accountability portals, open data repositories, scientific observatories, and media outlets.

In parallel, skills and abilities are required to know how to identify, use, and compare institutional sources—entities and organizations—and personal sources—experts, journalists, communicators, and other actors—that can contribute to curbing disinformation processes and facilitate the informational processes developed by individuals, critically analyzing the reality presented and being able to perceive, identify, verify, compare, evaluate, dismantle, and report disinformation phenomena.

6. Conclusions

Disinformation is an unavoidable phenomenon of utmost social concern. Its effects, across all sectors of society, can be harmful and affect vulnerable groups, generating uncertainty, media manipulation, distortion of reality, and even potential hate speech. Adding to this reality is AI, which poses new challenges and problems regarding content creation, emphasizing the need to generate and deepen its ethical and responsible use. However, while digital agendas and international agreements address this issue, it requires greater skills and abilities—media and informational—on the part of citizens.

Given this scenario, disinformation constitutes a phenomenon in which data, information, or digital content is generated—intentionally or deliberately—that infoxicates, complicates, or distorts a particular "situation," which may require attention from the public and media spheres. This emerging information landscape, triggered by disinformation phenomena, has among its effects or purposes the following: shaping personal positions—of various kinds—generating specific perceptions, influencing opinions, activating emotional states, and strengthening calls to action once information begins to be consumed and assimilated from the various dynamics in which disinformation is presented.

Based on the main elements of analysis of the regulatory framework and a survey of Ibero-American experts, it can be affirmed that disinformation, from the perspective of AMI, constitutes a topic of the highest priority and attention for both academic communities and public administration. While international and national initiatives focused on disinformation are visible, digital literacy constitutes an emerging issue, driven by the rapid development of ICTs and the new dynamics imposed by the media, especially social networks. This demands policies and

laws that more precisely address the need to develop these processes—of AMI—based on digital rights and the entire regulatory framework related to the topic.

Likewise, greater integration and coordination of stakeholders is needed to implement actions and activities in the public arena focused on developing media, information, and digital competencies—including those of the IAGen—to identify and combat disinformation from all sectors of society, thereby ensuring principles and values centered on democracy, equality, diversity, inclusion, participation, and respect for human rights.

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Media Education as Public Policy: Social Participation and Democratic Reconstruction in Brazil

Educação Midiática como Política Pública: Participação Social e Reconstrução Democrática no Brasil

Educación en medios como política pública: participación social y reconstrucción democrática en Brasil

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Abstract: The article discusses the formulation of the Brazilian Media Education Strategy (EBEM) as a public policy built through a participatory and cross-sectoral process involving government, civil society, and the academic community. Based on the experience of the public consultation, the mapping of initiatives, and the editions of the Brazilian Media Education Week, we highlight the centrality of social listening as a democratic foundation of Brazil's media education policy. Drawing on authors such as Bordenave, Martín-Barbero, Soares, Buckingham, among others, the text presents media education as a strategic axis for promoting critical citizenship in a context marked by disinformation and informational inequalities, affirming its dialogical nature and reflecting on the possibilities and challenges in the implementation of such a policy.

Keywords:
Media education, public policy, social participation, EBEM, Brazil

Resumo: O artigo discute a formulação da Estratégia Brasileira de Educação Midiática (EBEM) como política pública construída por meio de um processo participativo e intersetorial, envolvendo governo, sociedade civil e comunidade acadêmica. A partir da experiência da consulta pública, do mapeamento de iniciativas e das edições da Semana Brasileira de Educação Midiática, destacamos a centralidade da escuta social como fundamento democrático da política pública brasileira de educação midiática. Com base em autores como Bordenave, Martín-Barbero, Soares, Buckingham e outros, o texto propõe a educação midiática como eixo estratégico para a promoção da cidadania crítica em um contexto de desinformação e desigualdades informacionais, afirmando sua natureza dialógica e problematizando as possibilidades e desafios na implementação dessa política.

Palavras-chave:
Educação midiática, política pública, participação social, EBEM, Brasil

Resumen: El artículo discute la formulación de la Estrategia Brasileña de Educación Mediática (EBEM) como una política pública construida a través de un proceso participativo e intersectorial, que involucra al gobierno, la sociedad civil y la comunidad académica. A partir de la experiencia de la consulta pública, del mapeo de iniciativas y de las ediciones de la Semana Brasileña de Educación Mediática, destacamos la centralidad de la escucha social como fundamento democrático de la política pública brasileña de educación mediática. Basado en autores como Bordenave, Martín-Barbero, Soares, Buckingham y otros, el texto propone la educación mediática como un eje estratégico para la promoción de una ciudadanía crítica en un contexto de desinformación y desigualdades informacionales, afirmando su naturaleza dialógica y problematizando las posibilidades y desafíos en la implementación de dicha política.

Palabras clave:
Educación mediática, política pública, participación social, EBEM, Brasil

1. Introduction

This article describes and analyzes the formulation of Brazilian public policy on media literacy through a process of qualified social participation, which conferred democratic

legitimacy to the development of a national strategy on the topic. The analysis draws on the Report of the Public Consultation on Media Literacy (SECOM, 2023b), conducted between May and June 2023, which gathered more than 400 contributions from educators, experts, researchers, journalists, public administrators, and civil society representatives from all regions of the country. The public consultation aimed to map perceptions, practices, challenges, and proposals related to the development of media and information literacy in Brazil. This evidence supported the development of the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy (EBEM), launched in October 2023 during the 1st Brazilian Media Literacy Week (SBEM), an event promoted by the Federal Government with the support of UNESCO and civil society.

The EBEM represents an important milestone in the recognition of media literacy as a public policy of the State, transversal to educational, communication, and digital rights policies. It is a strategy that articulates interministerial actions, teacher training, development of pedagogical resources, and partnerships with public school systems, universities, and civil society organizations. Its emergence occurs in a historical context, a proposal of the Digital Policies Secretariat of the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic (SPDIGI/SECOM-PR), created in January 2023 with the mission of formulating, coordinating, and implementing public policies aimed at promoting digital rights, combating disinformation, and formulating public education and training policies for the use of digital communication services, as established by Decree No. 11,362 of January 1, 2023 (Decreto nº 11.362, 2023) and by Ordinance No. 1 of January 19, 2023 (SECOM, 2023c). The formulation of the EBEM reflects a participatory and intersectoral effort to integrate media literacy into the strategic agenda of the Brazilian State.

By emphasizing the centrality of social participation in the policy formulation process, this article highlights the development of the EBEM and proposes that the model of active listening and intersectoral coordination can serve as a reference for other public policies in the field of digital education. It also discusses the challenges to its effective implementation in the territories and the paths for monitoring, improvement, and continuous evaluation of the policy.

The methodology is based on documentary analysis of the two main milestones—the Public Consultation Report (SECOM, 2023b) and the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy (SECOM, 2023a)—complemented by the analysis of civil society contributions submitted via public consultation through the Participa + Brasil platform, between May 19 and June 30, 2023.

It is also a process of participant observation, carried out “up close and from within” (Magnani, 2002; Durham, 2004; Velho, 2004), since the three authors of this text are simultaneously involved, in different ways, in the construction of the policy and in the academic debate on the topic. With distinct trajectories, which converge in the Digital Policies Secretariat of the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic (SPDIGI/SECOM-PR) precisely at this time of reconstruction of digital public policies in the country, the authors adopt a perspective that articulates institutional experience, academic research, social listening and critical reflection.

2. Public consultation as a tool for qualified listening and a diversity of voices

In recent years, Brazil has faced growing challenges related to disinformation, polarization in the digital environment, and online rights violations, which have intensified the need for developing public policies focused on media literacy. Although several valuable initiatives have been established in the country—mainly by civil society organizations and universities, particularly within the scope of outreach projects—as of 2023, Brazil still lacks a consolidated, nationwide public policy on media literacy.

Many of the existing initiatives were linked to the field of Educommunication, which gained momentum through the work of teachers, communicators, journalists, and educators (Soares, 2011, 2018; Soares et al., 2016), as well as the consolidation of academic and professional networks in the late 1990s. Since then, these initiatives have developed methodologies, trained professionals, and reached diverse territories and audiences. In this process, associations such as the Brazilian Association of Researchers and Professionals in Educommunication (ABPEducom, n.d.) have played a fundamental role in strengthening the field, training professionals, conducting research and scientific events, disseminating academic productions, and encouraging the exchange and sharing of experiences that have gradually consolidated the field as a strategic area of research and practice in the country.

Globally, organizations such as UNESCO have played a significant role in the field since at least the 1980s, stimulating debate and the creation of curricula based on the concept of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), which "encompasses the skills that enable people to interact critically and effectively with the content of communications; the institutions that facilitate this content; and the use of digital technologies" (UNESCO, 2023, p. V). The formulation of the

Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy stems precisely from the recognition and interweaving of these historical constructs: the recognition that valuable experiences must be transformed into state policy capable of achieving scale, permanence, and impact. It is also worth highlighting some aspects and concepts of media literacy that EBEM works with:

- "Development of skills to deal with the set of information, behavior, and social practices in the digital environment in a critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical manner."
- "The understanding of the digital environment as both a means and an object of learning, to be developed through the promotion of critical thinking, creative production, and digital citizenship."

The Public Consultation on Media Literacy was thus carried out through a process of broad social mobilization, recognizing, valuing, and building upon the accumulated experiences and knowledge that preceded the policy. It took place entirely remotely, through the Participa + Brasil platform, between May 19 and June 30, 2023. The process was preceded by preparatory work from SPDIGI/SECOM, which involved research, coordination with civil society, universities, and other ministries, as well as the drafting of the reference text submitted for consultation. This text presented the principal proposed axes for federal government action in the field of media literacy, including actions aimed at basic education, guidelines for the use of technologies by children and adolescents, and agreements with digital platforms to protect rights in the online environment (SECOM, 2023b).

The methodology of the Public Consultation on Media Literacy (SECOM, 2023b) combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of the contributions received through the Participa + Brasil platform. The 418 comments submitted by 99 participants—an average of 4.2 comments per person—were categorized based on their recurrence and the tools provided by the platform itself (SECOM, 2023b).

Each comment was classified into one of three categories: general comment, when it offered broader reflections, conceptual analyses, or normative references without pointing to a specific section of the text (347 occurrences); wording suggestion, when the participant suggested specific textual changes in highlighted sections (66 occurrences); and rejected, for isolated cases (5 occurrences) that lacked thematic, textual, or contextual relevance. Overall,

98.80% of the contributions were accepted for analysis—a figure that demonstrates the engagement of the participating public (SECOM, 2023b).

The most commented paragraph was number 65, which addressed teacher training in partnership with civil society organizations, receiving 24 contributions (SECOM, 2023b). All sections of the reference text received comments, with section 5, dedicated to initiatives planned for the current government administration, receiving the most significant volume (155 comments, or 37.1% of the total), followed by section 3, which addresses conceptual and normative frameworks (129 comments, 30.9%), and section 1, which addresses the political context and the urgency of public policies for the topic (80 comments, 19.1%) (SECOM, 2023b). The classification of the comments enabled a thematic analysis of the incident content, respecting the diversity of approaches and suggestions, and significantly contributed to the formulation of the Brazilian Media Education Strategy.

The main contributions of the public consultation highlighted the need for a cross-curricular media education policy that encompasses all actors, themes, strategies, and territories—in addition to the cross-curricular nature of media education itself, which should be integrated into the various disciplines offered in educational settings. Among the main recommendations systematized in the report are the strengthening of partnerships with universities, federal institutes, and civil society organizations, as well as the institutionalization of the agenda in councils and interministerial bodies. Also highlighted is the importance of encompassing multiple communication languages, aligning with legal and regulatory frameworks, and incorporating topics such as digital health and data protection.

The training of teachers, community workers, and local leaders also stands out, as does the appreciation of territorial experiences and the expansion of access to information. Furthermore, a challenge is the development of a policy that has continuity, as well as ensuring that digital platforms are committed to user protection and that public technologies are developed that promote the country's educational sovereignty and autonomy. The Guide on the Use of Digital Devices by Children and Adolescents (SECOM, 2025), launched by SECOM in 2025, is an example of coordinated action in this regard, by proposing practical guidelines aimed at promoting the conscious use of technologies and caring for the psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents, reinforcing intersectorality as a pillar of public media education policies.

3. From listening to the formulation of the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy

The contributions of the public consultation were fundamental to validating the axes already outlined in the initial proposal for the reference text and, above all, to incorporating new demands, conceptual adjustments, and concrete action suggestions that allowed the EBEM to be formulated as a policy anchored in situated diagnoses and consolidated experiences throughout the country. This process reinforces the idea that public policy is not born ready-made. Instead, it constitutes a dialogue with the individuals and groups that demand it and make it exist, especially in the current scenario, where digital media, social networks, and communication platforms are increasingly present in everyday life. At this time, it is crucial to learn how to interact with these environments critically and reflectively, avoiding naive and superficial interpretations of the information and content that circulates.

Besides reflecting listening to Brazilian society, the Strategy also aligns with the guiding principles of public policy in the international arena. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that media and information literacy should be conceived as an essential tool for exercising critical citizenship and promoting human rights. In its publication "Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely!", UNESCO emphasizes the importance of intersectoral actions, citizen participation, and lasting institutional commitments—guidelines that also guided the development of the EBEM (Education and Social Education) program in Brazil.

In his book "Manifesto on Media Education," British researcher David Buckingham (2022) emphasizes that understanding how media works is essential for civic development. He notes that in many schools, an approach focused on the technical use of technology still predominates, while aspects related to public policy and media rights are often neglected.

Data from the TIC Kids Online Brasil (Cetic.br, 2025) survey reinforce this urgency: the number of children accessing the internet before the age of six has grown considerably, indicating increasingly early exposure to the digital environment. By 2024, 93% of children and adolescents were online, with 98% accessing the internet using a cell phone, the primary device among this population (81% of users aged 9 to 17 reported owning a cell phone). This panorama underscores the importance of integrating media literacy into the school curriculum as a vital component of comprehensive development.

This aligns with a central theme explored by Stuart Hall in much of his work: the media do not simply reflect reality; they produce and negotiate meanings that shape our everyday social

experience (Hall, 1997). His critique of stereotypes reveals how certain groups or contexts are fixated on simplified images that naturalize power hierarchies and crystallize inequalities. By revisiting this issue, we observe that discussing media literacy implies examining how the media function and how they construct social representations, reinforce (or challenge) stereotypes, disseminate or combat misinformation, and shape access to information through algorithms and digital bubbles. Critical reading of photographs, videos, narratives, and digital interfaces thus becomes an indispensable skill. This effort toward critical understanding also underpins the formulation of public policies that guarantee universal access to media literacy as a right. This approach does not seek to indoctrinate or impose perspectives, but rather to offer tools for children, adolescents, and adults to develop interpretative autonomy and awareness of their role in the media ecosystem (Filizola & Parente, 2023).

In Brazil, recent debates and public consultations resulted in the definition of six pillars of the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy, as we have seen: media literacy in basic education; ongoing training and qualification of education professionals and mediators; partnerships with civil society, academia, and the private sector; educational campaigns; conscious use of screens and digital devices by children and adolescents; and, finally, social participation.

It is important to emphasize, however, that this policy is being implemented in collaboration with, among other partners, the Ministry of Education (2018), aligning media literacy with digital education and the comprehensive education proposal. It also supports actions aimed at preventing violence in schools. For the first time, media literacy was included in the federal government's Multi-Year Plan (2024-2027), with ambitious goals: to train 300,000 education professionals and 400,000 healthcare professionals in this field. Furthermore, it became part of the National Textbook Program (PNLD), which calls for proposals, ensuring that new textbooks for Youth and Adult Education, Elementary School, and High School include media literacy content.

In addition to the MEC and organizations such as the National Council of Education, the National Union of Municipal Education Directors (Undime), and the National Council of Education Secretaries (Consed), the EBEM, as a collective effort, involves various ministries, such as Health; Human Rights; Science, Technology, and Innovation—to name just a few—also counts on the cooperation of international organizations such as UNESCO. Partnerships with

civil society organizations have also been essential, as demonstrated by the series of courses offered on AVAMEC, the Ministry of Education's online training platform for educators.

These initiatives project an increasingly solid presence of media literacy in daily school life, public policies, teacher training, family discussions about the use of technology, and actions to strengthen freedom of expression, responsible journalism, and combat disinformation. In short, the goal is to consolidate media literacy as a right and an indispensable necessity of the 21st century.

Recognizing its procedural nature, the EBEM (Educational Education and Training Program) provides, in its text, for review mechanisms every two years, based on evidence generated by the policy's implementation, valuing its capacity for renewal in dialogue with the territories and stakeholders who make it concrete.

4. Social Participation: Brazilian Media Literacy Week and Mapping Initiatives in Brazil

When discussing social participation, it is essential to clarify the type of participation being referred to. Here, we provide some references, such as Juan Díaz Bordenave (1994), who emphasizes the importance of education and the effective use of communication by citizens, particularly in popular participation processes aimed at defending democracy. According to Bordenave (1994), for whom participation is a fundamental human need and inherent to our social nature, "participation is a process of developing critical consciousness and acquiring power" (p. 77). For the thinker, "one only learns to participate by participating" (p. 73).

It is essential to note that there are various levels of participation, and the term has become somewhat overused, as if it were a one-size-fits-all solution. Some authors, such as Nico Carpentier (2017), even raise this concern, arguing that there is no single way to conceptualize participation, an inherently unstable concept. The author notes that the traditional view we still hold of the media can prevent us from recognizing the forms of participation that occur in less conventional spaces and formats. While acknowledging that we are currently experiencing a time of unprecedented media participation, he notes that there are multiple ways to interpret what participation means.

A significant contribution to this debate comes from the Latin American thinker Jesús Martín-Barbero, who emphasizes the active role of citizens in appropriating media to express their experiences and social context. For the author, communication goes beyond the mere

transmission of messages. It becomes a space for building citizenship and political visibility, allowing individuals to make themselves present in ways previously inaccessible. As he states, it is through communication that people "begin to have a power they never had before," gaining prominence and social participation (Martín-Barbero, 2008, p. 161).

4.1 Brazilian Media Literacy Week

In this case, we present two successful participatory experiences that are part of the current Brazilian media literacy policy. One of them, the Brazilian Media Literacy Week (SBEM), encourages individuals, schools, families, and all Brazilian citizens or residents to participate in a media literacy activity at the end of October and register it on a platform specifically created for this purpose, potentially inspiring other similar initiatives. SBEM is the local version of UNESCO's Global MIL Week, which has been held since 2011, usually in the last week of October.

The 1st Brazilian Media Literacy Week (SECOM, 2025) took place from October 23 to 27, 2023, and successfully mobilized 397 activities across the country. At that time, the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy was launched, now recognized as the national policy in this area, scheduled for review every two years. The first version of the SBEM featured webinars, the dissemination of best practices, international experiences, discussions on the challenges and interfaces of media literacy, educommunication, and popular education, and a repository of media literacy activities related to topics such as digital citizenship, combating disinformation and hate speech, cyberbullying, and others.

The 2nd Brazilian Media Literacy Week (SECOM, 2025) took place between October 29 and November 1, 2024, and had 190 registered activities. The smaller number of activities was initially due to an election year, and therefore, their timing did not coincide with UNESCO's Global MIL Week. That year, the highlighted themes of Brazilian Week were information integrity and journalism, climate change, and digital rights, addressed through the "Giving Voice to Those Who Make It" webinars.

The virtual meetings provided an opportunity to share theoretical and practical experiences in media literacy through projects such as Coar Notícias, a journalism initiative that works with media literacy in news deserts, using regional language (for example, cordel in the Northeast), and COLO-Collective of Children's and Youth Journalism, which advocates for the

strengthening of journalism for children and adolescents and the right of this audience to receive and be a source of information and disseminate the importance of children's and youth journalism as a support for the teaching-learning process, including media literacy. In the environmental field, we can mention the Environmental Journalism Observatory, an extension project affiliated with the Environmental Journalism Research Group at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), which focuses on journalistic production related to environmental issues. These and other projects were selected based on the Mapping of Media Literacy Initiatives carried out in partnership with UNESCO throughout the country, with attention paid to the representation of all regions. The 2nd Week also featured thematic panels on Communication and Media Education, discussing children's and adolescents' digital rights and public communication, as well as an international overview that included perspectives from Latin America, France, the United Kingdom, and Denmark, all key SECOM partners. Together, the two editions reached approximately 80,000 people participating in their activities across the five regions of the country, not counting live broadcasts, access to repositories, lesson plans, webinars, and in-person programming (SECOM, 2023e; SECOM, 2024).

4.2 Mapping of Media Education Initiatives

The Mapping of Media Education Initiatives was a joint initiative between UNESCO and the Secretariat of Communication of the Presidency of the Republic, conducted through the General Coordination of Media Education (CGEM), linked to the Directorate of Online Rights and Media Education (DDEM) of the Secretariat of Digital Policies (SPDIGI).

The primary objective of the survey was to gather information on projects, programs, and initiatives focused on media education (and related areas) operating at the local, regional, and national levels, encompassing public and private institutions, as well as civil society organizations. The idea was to recognize the diversity of voices, formats, and media present in existing experiences in the country and to give visibility to what was being done in different regions of Brazil—continuously, not sporadically—valuing initiatives already underway and encouraging the formation of a national network.

To this end, between July 5th and 25th, 2024, UNESCO and SECOM made a form available to identify these initiatives. The strategy used was the "snowball" methodology, in which early respondents nominated new participants, gradually expanding the database. Despite

the risk that this method could reinforce a "community bias"—by involving individuals with similar profiles and belonging to specific niches—an attempt was made to mitigate this limitation by selecting a diverse initial group of participants, spanning various areas of academic and professional activity.

Another precaution was taken to ensure that the initial submissions of the form included all five Brazilian regions. However, this alone does not guarantee an equitable distribution of responses, considering the diverse local realities and varying levels of development among the initiatives. The form was initially sent to networks and associations of researchers and professionals in the fields of communication and education, as well as to SECOM partners in the public sector and civil society who already worked with media education. Within twenty days, 496 responses were received.

It is worth noting that this number refers to the total number of registered initiatives, not the number of responding institutions, as some organizations completed more than one form to report different initiatives. It is also important to emphasize that, at this time, the mapping is under study and, therefore, what we share here is only an initial portion of its results.

Initially, 18 forms were identified that reported no initiatives in this area. Therefore, of the 496 responses received, we excluded these 18, totaling 478 valid responses for analysis.

In addition to basic information—such as the name of the initiative, the responsible institution, and a description of the activities—the form also sought to relate the actions to the pillars of the Brazilian Media Education Strategy. This analysis has the potential to contribute to the formation of a future national network, as well as provide support for reviewing and improving the EBEM itself, whose new, updated edition is scheduled for release in 2025.

Another aspect of the mapping was understanding the type of support media literacy initiatives received (or did not receive), as well as identifying their primary needs—essential data for developing a national policy that takes into account the different realities, demands, and contexts of action.

A key point to note is that the mapping likely overlooks many initiatives. Whether due to the short period of circulation, potential respondents' limited time, or even a lack of awareness of its existence, we consider its results significant. This is especially true when compared to data from previous editions of Brazilian Media Literacy Week, which had 397 initiatives in its first

edition and 190 in its second. This mapping, therefore, represents a crucial step in strengthening public policies and national coordination regarding media literacy.

4.2.1 Main Mapping Results

Although this article does not intend to delve into the mapping results, it is worth highlighting some initial findings.

During the 20 days that the Media Literacy Initiative Mapping form was circulated via email or WhatsApp groups, we received a total of 478 valid initiatives: 195 from the Southeast, 95 from the South, 73 from the Midwest, 63 from the Northeast, and 52 from the North.

Another response that provides important guidance for the development of media literacy public policy in the country concerns the role of higher education institutions, which play a significant role in promoting this field in Brazil. According to the data collected, approximately 25% of the initiatives originate in these academic environments. This highlights the importance of initiatives such as outreach projects, research groups, and observatories, often affiliated with universities, federal institutes, and colleges, which serve as hubs for promoting practices and reflections on the topic.

Regarding the age group served by the initiatives, although many of them encompass multiple age groups, the data indicate that adolescents are the most frequently served audience, with 286 mentions in the form responses. Next are children (239), young people (223), adults (188), and finally, seniors (88). These numbers reflect the most frequently addressed area of the analyzed initiatives—Media Education in Basic Education. The emphasis on adolescents reveals a concern for the younger generations in the face of the rapid transformations of the digital environment, even in the face of the structural challenges and inequalities still present in the country. On the other hand, the data also point to the need to expand the reach of public policies and initiatives aimed at adults and seniors, who are often excluded from discussions on digital inclusion and media education.

Regarding support, it is worth highlighting the importance of the public sector, as financial support typically originates from the national public sector, followed by the international private sector, and then the national private sector. This financial support, however, appears in fourth place in the responses, after Encouragement/ Recognition from my superiors, institutional support from the government, and Encouragement/ Recognition from the

community. Related to this topic, it is worth questioning the role of the Brazilian business sector in addressing issues such as disinformation, environmental/scientific denialism, hate speech, media literacy, and others. After all, the organizational environment is also influenced by this broader context, just as the organization itself can disseminate disinformation (Da Silva et al., 2023).

Finally, it is worth mentioning the pillars of the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy that are most explored in the mapped initiatives, one of the most relevant pieces of feedback for SPDIGI/SECOM-PR. This is because the EBEM update, scheduled for 2025, will need to consider whether the axes initially defined based on public consultation remain priorities or change, and whether basic education—the central focus of EBEM and a priority area for the Ministério da Educação (2018), SECOM's leading partner—is also reflected in ongoing actions.

The positive finding is that Media Education in Basic Education—the focus of SECOM-PR's media education public policy—truly stands out as the axis with the most significant number of initiatives, followed by Educator and Multiplier Training/Qualification, Educational Campaigns, Conscious Use of Screens, and Social Participation. It is worth noting that respondents could select up to three axes of action, in addition to the "Other" option, later indicating the specific area (if not within the six EBEM axes).

5. Final Considerations

The construction of the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy marks a unique moment in the formulation of public policies in Brazil: a process conducted based on actively listening to society, articulated between government, academia, and civil society, on a topic that represents a simultaneous inflection of various technologies and social dynamics.

The social participation materialized in the Public Consultation, in the Mapping of Initiatives, in the formulation of the Brazilian Media Literacy Strategy, and in the editions of the Brazilian Media Literacy Week—not only shapes the content of the policy but also founds the very way of implementing it: dialogical, open, and in permanent construction. The challenge that arises, at the same time, is to consolidate a national-scale policy that reaches all territories and that simultaneously engages with the diversity of local contexts, recognizing that no guideline is exhausted in itself, as it gains meaning and is perfected in the vitality of the spaces where citizenship is exercised.

Added to this is Brazil's increasingly prominent role in global debates: by actively participating in forums such as the G20 and BRICS and leading international agendas on information integrity and digital rights, the country projects its domestic experience as a reference and, reciprocally, brings to domestic policy standards and commitments that raise the ambition of media literacy. In this intertwining, the Brazilian Strategy asserts itself as an instrument for strengthening social and institutional capacities that reinforce the Brazilian democratic fabric. In a context of recognized and profound technological and social transitions, reflections on educational processes to deal autonomously, meaningfully, and socially constructively with new technologies—in this case, media and information technologies—are revealed as structural.

This perception has been recorded in recent international forums, such as the BRICS Declaration on Artificial Intelligence (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2025), which highlights the role of Media Literacy in ensuring, with discernment, the integrity and authenticity of information at micro and macro-social levels, a capacity that is essential for the possibility of interpersonal relationships, communities and groups, as well as the cohesion of the socio-political fabric, for the security of economic exchanges, development and democratic values.

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Deconstructing the Manipulation of Paulo Freire in 'A Face Oculta': Algorithmic Analysis of Media Narratives

Deconstruyendo la manipulación de Paulo Freire en 'A Face Oculta': análisis algorítmico de narrativas mediáticas

Desconstruindo a Manipulação de Paulo Freire em 'A Face Oculta': Análise Algorítmica de Narrativas Midiáticas

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Abstract: This article analyzes the media manipulation of intellectual figures through the documentary "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire", produced by Brasil Paralelo on YouTube. A methodology combining discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, detection of argumentative fallacies, and framing study using algorithmic techniques was applied. The results reveal a systematic pattern of emotional and argumentative distortion aimed at undermining the critical thinking associated with Freire. The study proposes the Fallacy Density Index (FDI) as a tool to measure discursive manipulation in audiovisual media. Finally, it highlights the need to strengthen critical media literacy in the face of disinformation dynamics, contributing to the field of critical studies on communication, democracy, and digital technologies through the use of textual and emotional analysis algorithms.

Keywords:
Disinformation, media literacy, argumentative fallacies, Paulo Freire, media manipulation

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la manipulación mediática de figuras intelectuales a través del documental "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire", producido por Brasil Paralelo en YouTube. Se aplicó una metodología que combina análisis discursivo, análisis de sentimientos, detección de falacias argumentativas y estudio de framing mediante técnicas algorítmicas. Los resultados muestran un patrón sistemático de distorsión emocional y argumentativa destinado a erosionar el pensamiento crítico asociado a Freire. Se propone el Índice de Densidad de Falacias (IDF) como herramienta para medir la manipulación discursiva en medios audiovisuales. Finalmente, se destaca la necesidad de fortalecer la alfabetización mediática crítica frente a dinámicas de desinformación, contribuyendo al campo de los estudios críticos de comunicación, democracia y tecnologías digitales mediante algoritmos de análisis textual y emocional.

Palabras clave:
Desinformación, alfabetización mediática, falacias argumentativas, Paulo Freire, manipulación mediática

Resumo: Este artigo analisa a manipulação midiática de figuras intelectuais por meio do documentário "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire", produzido pela Brasil Paralelo no YouTube. Aplicou-se uma metodologia que combina análise discursiva, análise de sentimentos, detecção de falácias argumentativas e estudos de enquadramento, utilizando técnicas algorítmicas. Os resultados demonstram um padrão sistemático de distorção emocional e argumentativa, visando à erosão do pensamento crítico associado a Freire. O Índice de Densidade de Falácias (IDF) é proposto como ferramenta para mensurar a manipulação discursiva em mídias audiovisuais. Por fim, o artigo destaca a necessidade de fortalecer a alfabetização midiática crítica diante das dinâmicas de desinformação, contribuindo para o campo dos estudos críticos de comunicação, democracia e tecnologias digitais por meio de algoritmos de análise textual e emocional.

Palavras-chave:
Desinformação, alfabetização midiática, falácias argumentativas, Paulo Freire, manipulação da mídia

1. Introduction

The work of Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is fundamental to critical education, focused on "consciousness raising" and the liberation of the oppressed. Freire argues that "education must be a process of social transformation" where students are "active subjects" who question their reality (Freire, 1970), in contrast to the traditional model of "banking education," proposing education as participatory dialogue.

However, his pedagogy has been the subject of intense criticism, particularly in Brazil, where far-right neoliberal sectors have sought to construct him as a "national enemy" to delegitimize his influence (Godoi & Dimitrov, 2022). This process of demonization intensifies in the context of a "culture war" (Godoi & Dimitrov, 2022), where Freire's emancipatory philosophy is presented as a threat to the depoliticization of education (Feitosa et al., 2022). Vrydagh and Jiménez-Martínez (2021) highlight how this discontent has been exploited to foster hostility toward his legacy, even affecting educational debate.

Attacks on Freire are not limited to the discursive level: they have also translated into political actions that deepen social inequalities, as analyzed by Ribeiro de Almeida Chacon et al., (2023). In the digital realm, platforms such as YouTube have played a key role in disseminating hate speech against Freire (Busón, 2020), thereby expanding the reach of these disinformation strategies. Faced with this scenario, Costa et al. (2021) underline the importance of rescuing their teachings for a transformative education.

Freire's figure has been subject to multiple reinterpretations, frequently associating him with Marxism and the class struggle (Gadotti, 1996), thereby distorting his pedagogical approach, which focuses on the emancipation of the oppressed (Freire, 1970). The documentary "*A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire*", produced by Brasil Paralelo, Freire is part of this trend, using emotional resources and disinformation strategies to construct a distorted image. This study analyzes these strategies, articulating Entman's (1993) theoretical framework, Lewandowsky et al.'s (2012) fallacy analysis, and Pennebaker et al.'s (2007) sentiment analysis.

Despite the attacks, research such as that by Gadotti (1996) and Costa et al. (2021) reaffirms that Freire's legacy has empowered marginalized communities and promoted critical thinking on a global scale. This analysis seeks to consider both the challenges and contributions of his educational approach.

1.1 A Culture War

The expansion of attacks against Freire is part of a broader "culture war" where narratives about education and Brazil's past are contested (Godoi & Dimitrov, 2022). Brasil Paralelo, founded in 2016, emerges as a key player in this conflict, promoting a revisionist approach favorable to the far right (Bonsanto, 2022). Picoli et al. (2020) denounce how this perspective distorts historical truth and fosters an "education for barbarism."

Da Silva Martins (2024) suggests that Brasil Paralelo's revisionism demands a robust academic response. Santos (2021) reveals how this production company employs disinformation to reinforce conservative hegemony, a phenomenon that Gruner and Cleto (2021) extend to the context of the pandemic, highlighting its resistance to scientific truths. Salgado and Ferreira (2021) complement this by pointing out that Brasil Paralelo's media production seeks to legitimize a particular ideological vision.

In the field of education, Oliveira (2023) shows how the trilogy "Pátria Educadora" (Educator Homeland) by Brasil Paralelo has influenced the ideology of Bolsonarism, while Finger (2022) warns about the penetration of anti-scientific discourses into education through digital media. Faced with this scenario, Moraes and Cleto (2023) propose that analyzing the narrative temporality of Brasil Paralelo can be key to dismantling its historical construction, while Magalhães Rodrigues (2022) raises the need to confront its "reason of convenience" through critical dialogical approaches that resist post-truth.

Along these same lines, Busón et al. (2022) analyze how digital platforms, such as YouTube, become spaces of intensified ideological dispute, where polarizing narratives find echo and massive reproduction.

1.2 Background

This study analyzes the documentary "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire," produced by Brasil Paralelo, a group known for its conservative ideological approach and revisionist agenda on historical and educational issues. Founded in 2016, Brasil Paralelo plays a central role in Brazil's culture war, reinterpreting historical events from a perspective favorable to the far right (Bonsanto, 2022).

Several authors have criticized this approach: Picoli et al. (2020) denounce how it distorts historical truth and promotes an "education for barbarism," while Da Silva Martins (2024) argues

that its revisionism demands a critical academic response. Santos (2021) analyzes its alignment with ultra-liberal agendas, utilizing disinformation to consolidate conservative hegemony —a phenomenon intensified during the pandemic, as noted by Gruner and Cleto (2021) and Salgado and Ferreira (2021).

The impact of Brasil Paralelo also extends to the educational field. Oliveira (2023) examines how the Pátria Educadora trilogy has shaped the narratives of Bolsonarism, while Finger (2022) warns about the dissemination of anti-scientific discourses in digital media, which affects the critical education of new generations.

Faced with this ideological offensive, Moraes and Cleto (2023) propose analyzing the temporal construction of Brasil Paralelo's narratives to promote a deeper critical confrontation. Magalhães Rodrigues (2022) emphasizes the need to deconstruct its narratives through a dialogical approach that confronts post-truth and restores a more rigorous and critical historical understanding.

2. Methodology

This study proposes a methodology that integrates framing analysis (Entman, 1993), emotional language analysis (Pennebaker et al., 2007), and logical fallacy detection (Walton, 2012; Lewandowsky et al., 2012), assisted by textual analysis tools such as Syuzhet in R and VADER in Python. This approach combines elements from various disciplines to detect misinformation in audiovisual materials, representing an innovative approach compared to previous studies that addressed these aspects in isolation.

Entman's (1993) theory holds that the media select and emphasize certain aspects of reality to influence public interpretation. Pennebaker et al. (2007) highlight that emotionally charged words predispose viewers toward either positive or negative interpretations, while Lewandowsky et al. (2012) analyze how misinformation that combines facts and falsehoods affects perception. These conceptual frameworks allow us to understand how a critical documentary can subtly manipulate emotions and perceptions.

The methodological approach combines sentiment analysis and qualitative analysis of rhetorical devices, employing algorithms to answer the following research questions: What discursive features in "A Hidden Face of Paulo Freire" suggest a manipulative intent in the

representation of Paulo Freire? Is it possible to detect patterns of manipulation using text analysis algorithms?

The study examines the impact of fallacies, misinformation, and fake news, focusing on a documentary that attempts to shape public opinion about Freire. Tools such as Syuzhet enable the mapping of emotional polarization and narrative structure, providing a comprehensive approach to assessing how audiovisual narratives can distort perceptions.

The main objective is to analyze how the emotional language and argumentative fallacies present in the documentary distort critical perceptions of his educational legacy, through:

a) Identification and classification of the fallacies used and their impact on public perception.

b) Analysis of framing patterns that present Freire as a radical or confused intellectual.

c) Evaluation of the potential and limitations of algorithms in detecting disinformation.

The material was selected due to its widespread dissemination on digital platforms and its explicit ideological content, constituting an emblematic case for studying the role of framing and fallacies in the media manipulation of critical pedagogical figures.

Syuzhet and VADER, widely used in the analysis of sentiments and media narratives (Jockers, 2017; Liu, 2012), offered a robust quantitative approach for identifying emotional and narrative patterns. However, it is essential to acknowledge that their results may be influenced by cultural and contextual factors, as the emotional dictionaries they employ do not always capture the semantic nuances in critical texts such as the one analyzed here.

The Fallacy Density Index (FDI) is proposed as an emerging category for quantitatively measuring argumentative manipulation in audiovisual content. Inspired by the notions of informal logic (Walton, 2012) and studies on disinformation and fallacious rhetoric in digital contexts (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Han, 2022), the IDF seeks to identify the level of recurrence of fallacies per unit of time, which allows for estimating the intensity of the argumentative bias of a discursive piece.

Its instrumental value lies in offering a comparative metric for evaluating media narratives with ideological or propagandistic purposes, allowing its application in both critical analysis and media literacy processes. Like other metrics used in computational linguistics or framing analysis, the IDF does not aim to exhaust the complexity of discourse, but rather to contribute to making visible rhetorical structures that tend to inhibit critical thinking.

3. Results

3.1 Word Cloud Analysis

A tag cloud is a visual representation of keywords that describe online content. According to Kaser and Lemire (2007), tag clouds are similar to histograms. However, unlike histograms, which show frequencies of a few elements, tag clouds can encompass hundreds, making them ideal for identifying repeated words in a text. Although they are not definitive, they offer clues about their content. In the transcript of the documentary "tag cloud 1" (Figure 2), terms related to Freire's work are evident, such as "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970), with out-of-context quotes linking his work to politics rather than education. Words such as "*violencia*", "*revolução*", "*revolucionario*", "*marxismo*", and "*assassinato*" stand out, suggesting the focus of the material.

Following Entman (1993), who argues that framing involves selecting and highlighting certain aspects of reality, the documentary identifies political, educational, and ideological frameworks that shape the viewer's perception. Through lexical selection and narrative structure, criticisms of Freire are reinforced, and the possibilities for a balanced understanding of his legacy are limited.

3.2 Frame Identification

Political Framework: Freire's pedagogy is criticized for its connection to Marxism and its defense of class struggle, emphasizing his opposition to capitalism.

Educational Framework: His criticism of "*educação bancária*" is contrasted with "*educação libertadora*", distorting the participatory approach of his proposal.

Ideological/Religious Framework: A forced synthesis between Christianity and Marxism is suggested in his thought.

As Entman (1993) points out, "framing essentially involves selection and salience" (p. 52); here, a framing is evident that presents Freire as radical, focusing on his relationship with Marxism.

Selection and Salience

The documentary selects terms such as "opresores", "revolución", "*luta de classes*", and "capitalismo", reinforcing a polarized frame. Pejorative terminology such as "linguistic armadilhas" and "festival of metaphors" is used to disparage his work. This thematic emphasis

reinforces the perception of an underlying ideological agenda, as Gitlin (1980) describes regarding "selection and emphasis" in communicative frames.

Text Structure

The narrative structure begins by praising Freire and then demystifies him through progressive critiques, following Goffman's (1986) concept of the interpretive frames that guide the understanding of "what is happening" (p. 8). This shift in tone intensifies the emotional impact and prepares the viewer to reject his legacy.

Omissions and Approaches

The documentary overlooks the positive and globally recognized aspects of Freire's pedagogy, instead focusing solely on his association with Marxism and simplifying the complexity of his thought to a narrow political agenda. As Gitlin (1980) points out, frames function as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation" (p. 6), biasing the viewer's understanding.

Function of Framing

Problem Diagnosis: Marxist influence is identified as the central problem in Freire's work.

Moral Evaluation: It is implicitly suggested that his pedagogy is confusing, manipulative, and promotes violence.

Recommended Solutions: Although not explicitly stated, the need to reject Freire-inspired educational models is implied. This mechanism responds to what Lakoff (2004) defines: "frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world" (p. xi), construing Freire as an ideological threat.

Impact on Perception

The framing used in the documentary leads to a perception of Freire as a confusing and radical intellectual, triggering emotions of distrust and rejection. By associating him with revolutionary figures and discourses of violence, negative stereotypes are reinforced in audiences unfamiliar with his work. According to Iyengar (1991), episodic and ideological frames can

influence the attribution of responsibility, distorting public perception through the use of striking visual images and simplified narratives.

3.3 Results of the Fallacy Analysis

After reviewing the documentary, numerous fallacies that distort Freire's work were identified. This documentary exemplifies how fallacies construct a distorted image, taking a topic out of context to attack Paulo Freire's legacy.

According to Walton (2012), detecting fallacies in a discourse is essential because it enables us to ensure clarity and argumentative rigor, thereby preventing interlocutors from being intimidated by personal attacks and encouraging them to evaluate arguments critically (p. 246). Furthermore, identifying fallacies promotes critical dialogue, allowing criticisms to be answered constructively, given that "an argument against a person is often a revocable criticism" (p. 234). Walton (2012) also warns that rhetorical manipulation can occur when authority is overused, which can suppress critical questioning (p. 287). Ultimately, the ability to detect fallacies is crucial for developing practical critical analysis, particularly in contexts where technical communication can lead to misunderstandings (p. 277). Of the fallacies identified, we highlight how the figure of Paulo Freire was distorted in the documentary, manipulating concepts out of their original context and mistakenly associating him with dictatorships and violence. Below, we will address some of these fallacies:

- **Ad Hominem**

"*O principal livro de Paulo Freire não contém um método de ensino, mas a defesa de uma educação instrumentalizada para a formação de militantes revolucionários*" (≈ 22:43). Freire's work is questioned not because of his arguments, but because of the assumption that he seeks to train militants, ignoring the broader context of his work. Lewandowsky et al. (2012) state that “ad hominem fallacies divert attention from the real argument and can delegitimize the opponent's position” (p. 540).

- **False Dichotomy**

"*Uma vez estipulado que a educação libertadora é aquela que conduz os estudantes à revolução..."* (≈ 21:18). An opposition is presented between love and revolution, suggesting that they cannot coexist, ignoring historical examples where change has been promoted without extreme violence.

• Straw man

"Exceto por essa, e alguns outras experiências pontuais o método Paulo Freire nunca foi aplicando no Brasil" (≈ 2:29). It is argued that Freire's method has not been rigorously tested and has only gained relevance due to its ideology, which simplifies and distorts its pedagogy. This approach ignores the 1960 revolutionary experiment in Brazil and dismisses the application of his method in numerous countries.

For Walton (2012), informal logic provides us with the necessary tools to analyze arguments in real-world contexts, where premises can be complex and conclusions are not always obvious. He also mentions that "understanding the logical basis of inconsistency is another very useful tool" (Walton, 2012, p. 152), suggesting that the ability to identify inconsistencies in arguments is crucial to avoiding misunderstandings.

A critical education should foster the ability to identify fallacies and evaluate the validity of arguments, which is essential in an information-saturated world. By developing citizens capable of reflective and logical analysis, we not only prevent misinformation but also strengthen independent thinking and promote constructive debate.

3.4 Fallacy Density Index (FDI)

Han (2022) highlights that information overload makes us vulnerable to misinformation due to the lack of time for in-depth critical analysis. This rapid information overload fragments our ability to make rational decisions. Applying this idea to documentary filmmaking, we developed the Fallacy Density Index (FDI) (Tables 1 and 2) as a quantitative tool to identify the degree of discursive manipulation in an audiovisual text.

Type of fallacy	**Minute ≈**	**Number of fallacies**
Ad hominem fallacy / Attacking the person rather than their argument..	8:18, 9:55, 13:21, 16:18, 22:16, 22:43	6
Appeal to tradition fallacy / Arguing that something is correct or accurate simply because it has been done that way in the past.	12:20	1
False dichotomy fallacy / Presenting only two options when there are more possible options.	9:20, 14:30, 16:21, 17:30, 21:18, 23:10, 23:20, 24:20	8

Emotional Charge (Appeal to Emotion) / Persuading by evoking emotions, rather than presenting logical arguments or evidence.	16:00	1
False analogy / Comparing two things that are not truly comparable.	15:53, 22:47, 24:10, 25:20	4
Oversimplification / Reducing a complex argument or situation to an overly simple conclusion, ignoring important nuances.	17:30	1
False causation (post hoc) / Assuming that because one event follows another, the first caused the second.	20:50, 22:25, 23:50, 27:00, 27:40	5
Straw man fallacy / Distorting someone's argument to make it easier to attack or refute.	2:29, 7:03	2
Ambiguity / Using words or expressions with multiple meanings that lead to confusion in the argument.	24:40, 25:02	2
Fallacy of Hasty Generalization / Drawing sweeping conclusions based on an insufficient sample.	7:10, 14:35, 17:30, 21:10, 23:13, 26:04, 26:50	7
Non Sequitur / Conclusions that do not follow logically from the previous premises.	18:35	1
Total		38

Table 1. Fallacies identified in the documentary "A face oculta de Paulo Freire". (Source: Own elaboration)

Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2017) highlight that "in a saturated media environment, the speed of information often replaces the depth of analysis" (p. 34), facilitating the spread of fallacies, since there is no time to evaluate their veracity critically. T. E. Johnson and B. D. McCauley (2021) add that "continuous exposure to news content that contains logical errors can lead to the acceptance of incorrect information without adequate scrutiny" (p. 42), displacing critical deliberation.

Rating	**Description**	Fallacies per minute
Critical	2 or more fallacies per minute	More than 2 fallacies per minute
Very high	High fallacy load	More than 1.5 fallacies per minute
High	High fallacy density	Between 1 and 1.5 fallacies per minute
Medium	Moderate fallacy density	Between 0.5 and 1 fallacies per minute

Low	Low fallacy density	Between 0.2 and 0.5 fallacies per minute
Very low	Very low fallacy load	Less than 0.2 fallacies per minute
Nil	No fallacies	0 fallacies per minute

Table 2. Proposed index to evaluate a document. (Source: Own elaboration)

According to Lewandowsky et al. (2012), fallacies in public discourse contribute to the spread of misinformation and social polarization, thereby distorting rational discourse and influencing behaviors and attitudes. This context highlights the need for tools to quantify and analyze distortions. Entman (1993) emphasizes that the presentation of information influences public perception, while Wolton (2009) highlights the importance of citizens developing skills to discern the quality of information (p. 209). Bennett and Livingston (2018) observed that misinformation can range from lies to distorted truths, and Pennebaker (2011) emphasizes that linguistic choices reflect underlying attitudes that impact communication.

In this context, the Fallacy Density Index (FDI) is presented as a necessary tool for evaluating the quality of media discourse, measuring the density of fallacies, and contributing to the improvement of critical literacy. Table 2 summarizes the Fallacy Density Index (FDI) classification. We propose the following equation for its calculation:

$$IDF_scaled = (2, (Number\ of\ fallacies)/T)$$
$$(T)\ is\ the\ total\ time\ in\ minutes.$$
$$If\ (I > 2), then\ (IDF_scaled = 2).$$
$$CapIf\ (I \leq 2), then\ (IDF_scaled = I).$$
$$With\ 38\ fallacies\ in\ 31\ minutes, the\ initial\ calculation\ gives\ an\ index\ of:$$
$$IDF = 38/31 \approx 1.22$$
$$Since\ (1.22\ \leq 2), then:$$
$$IDF_scaled = 1.22$$

The FDI was calculated based on the number of fallacies detected per minute in the documentary, using a qualitative analysis to validate the classification. However, it is essential to note that the identification of fallacies depends mainly on the cultural context and the analyst's prior knowledge, which introduces a margin of subjectivity.

However, the FDI faces limitations, such as the simplification of arguments and the subjectivity in identifying fallacies, which depend on the reader and their context. Despite these limitations, the FDI can be beneficial as an approach for analyzing audiovisual materials and written texts. Its application in the classroom could help students identify fallacies and develop critical thinking skills. Combined with qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the FDI can offer a more complete view of how a material is designed to inform or misinform.

Fallacies are a key component of current disinformation, and analyzing them is a valuable exercise in critical thinking. In this document, we identified 38 fallacies in 31 minutes, obtaining an FDI of 1.22 fallacies per minute. This data, combined with sentiment analysis and framing, reinforces the hypothesis that the documentary actively manipulates viewers' perceptions. The FDI is proposed as a new approach to studying misinformation in audiovisual media, useful both for critical education and for future research on media polarization.

3.5 Sentiment Analysis (Syuzhet) and Use of VADER and the Python Library

The use of Syuzhet, developed by Jockers (2017, 2023), enables the extraction of emotions and narrative arcs from texts, which is crucial to understanding the construction of narratives. This analysis is crucial for detecting misinformation, as deceptive narratives manipulate audiences' emotions. Liu (2012) highlights that sentiment analysis not only assesses emotions but also helps identify audience perceptions, which is vital when confronting manipulative information.

On the other hand, Mohammad and Turney (2013) emphasize the importance of word-emotion association lexicons, which facilitate emotional analysis in texts. This allows for the recognition of rhetorical patterns in disinformation. These tools enhance the ability to detect and analyze disinformation, promoting critical information consumption and strategies to combat manipulation.

Sentiment analysis was conducted using the Syuzhet and VADER algorithms, which allow the extraction and evaluation of the emotional charge of the content. Graph 1 (Figure 1) shows the variation in sentiment scores throughout the analyzed text. The results, obtained using the VADER dictionary and the Python library, indicate a predominance of critical emotions toward Paulo Freire, with few sections of positive scores suggesting weak moments of optimism in a primarily negative context.

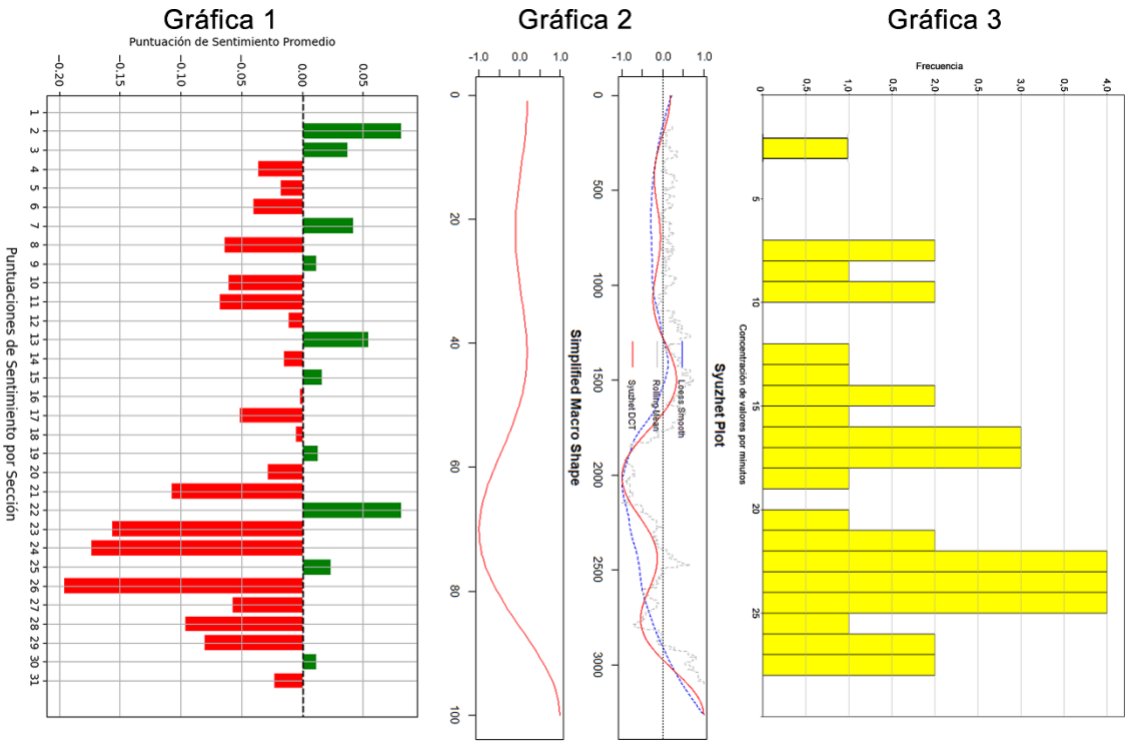


Figure 1. Combined graphs, polarity with VADER and Python; valence with Syuzhet and R; fallacies per minute, from the documentary. (Source: Own elaboration)

Graph 2 (Figure 1) represents the valence analysis using Syuzhet, where the X-axis at 0 indicates emotional neutrality. Values above the axis reflect positive emotions, while values below indicate negative emotions. The blue line plots valence over time, revealing peaks and valleys that represent significant emotional moments. Despite a slightly positive start, the majority of the analysis shows a substantial load of negative sentiments, with two peaks of criticism toward Freire confirming the overall trend of the discourse.

Finally, Graph 3 (Figure 1) illustrates the concentration of fallacies per minute in the documentary, as elaborated in Table II and generated using Python. This graph reveals that the peaks in the number of fallacies coincide with moments of most extraordinary emotional polarization. This cross-referencing of data between the IDF and sentiment analysis suggests that the documentary not only employs argumentative fallacies but also manipulates viewers' emotions, intensifying negative perceptions toward Freire. Together, these graphs reinforce the usefulness of the IDF as a tool for analyzing information in audiovisual documents.

As mentioned above, we generated a word cloud from the transcript to identify the words that were most frequently cited in the document, "Tag Cloud 1" (Figure 2). Although this

visualization highlights the relevance of certain words, it does not reveal the context in which they are used. By developing a positive and negative word cloud using the VADER dictionary adapted to Portuguese (Joaquim, 2021) and natural language processing tools in Python, "tag cloud 2" (Figure 2), we can observe how words cluster according to their emotional charge, thereby identifying the polarity of the content. Larger words indicate greater frequency, graphically representing the emotional polarity of the text and helping to visualize the dominant emotional trend.

The repetition of fallacies such as ad hominem and false dichotomy in "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire" not only distorts Freire's arguments but also reinforces a polarized perception of him, suggesting a narrative strategy aimed at delegitimizing his pedagogy by decontextualizing his ideas and associating them with ideologies. Extreme.

According to Van Dijk (1998), simplified associations in discourse, such as linking Freire with revolutionary figures, serve as delegitimization strategies that obscure the complexity of his contributions and reduce his legacy to a narrow political agenda. This process distorts essential components such as critical dialogue and cultural literacy, projecting a radicalized image that rejects his proposals without in-depth analysis.

The documentary uses a framing that links Freire with figures such as Guevara and Lenin, suggesting that his pedagogy encourages violence. This framing simplifies his notion of liberatory education, ignoring its ethical foundations. As Entman (1993) and Lakoff (2004) note, these frames activate ideological stereotypes that significantly influence public perception. Expressions such as “Paulo Freire's anti-capitalism” illustrate an intentional selection of ideological aspects to minimize his pedagogical legacy and emphasize a presumed political agenda.



Figure 2. Cloud of labels with the words from the transcription “tag cloud 1” and the negative and positive words “tag cloud 2” made with VADER and Python. (Source: Own elaboration)

The use of decontextualized quotes, such as "education that does not recognize just radical thought is wrong," reinforces this criticism by mistakenly associating his thinking with violence. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) emphasize that the manipulation of contexts facilitates the acceptance of distorted interpretations as apparent truths.

The argumentative fallacies identified in the documentary manipulate the discourse by diverting attention from the central arguments. Tactics such as ad hominem attacks present Freire as a radical thinker, negatively affecting the critical understanding of his work. Analyzing these

fallacies is crucial to promoting a more balanced academic discussion on Freirean critical pedagogy.

4. Discussion

The analysis reveals that the documentary "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire" employs systematic discursive manipulation strategies through the intensive use of argumentative fallacies, selective ideological frameworks, and a polarized emotional charge. The application of the Fallacy Density Index (FDI), with a value of 1.22 fallacies per minute, confirms a high frequency of fallacious reasoning that diverts attention from the genuine educational content proposed by Freire, creating a pattern of systematic argumentative distortion.

These findings align with Entman's (1993) approach to framing as a process of selecting and highlighting certain aspects of reality to guide public interpretation, and reinforce Van Dijk's (1998) idea that ideological discourses simplify and polarize social representations for purposes of symbolic domination.

Sentiment analysis reveals a marked tendency toward the construction of an emotionally negative narrative around Freire, intensifying the perception of threat and distrust toward his pedagogical proposals. This emotional strategy, described by Pennebaker et al. (2007), aims to influence cognitive reception processes and encourage reactive rather than reflective responses among the public.

From a methodological perspective, the combined use of algorithmic techniques and qualitative analysis allowed us to identify patterns of manipulation that were difficult to detect with the naked eye. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the application of automated tools, such as Syuzhet and VADER, poses limitations related to cultural sensitivity, semantic ambiguity, and the interpretation of complex discourses within their critical context.

The discursive strategy observed not only distorts Freire's legacy but also directly attacks his emancipatory conception of education. As Freire (1970) states in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, "true education is praxis, reflection, and action of man upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 48). Caricaturing his thought as an incitement to violence ignores the dialogical, ethical, and humanistic foundation that permeates his entire work.

Furthermore, the emphasis on Freire's supposed violence distorts his fundamental idea of "righteous anger" as the driving force of social transformation, understood not as physical

violence, but as a critical consciousness in the face of structural injustices (Freire, 1992). The emotional manipulation detected in the documentary trivializes this essential distinction, reducing the complexity of his proposal to a simplistic narrative of ideological confrontation.

From a theoretical perspective, the strategy identified in the documentary responds to a broader dynamic of cultural warfare, where disinformation is not an accident, but a systematic resource to reconfigure common sense and legitimize ideological projects of exclusion and inequality (Feitosa et al., 2022; Godoi & Dimitrov, 2022).

These mechanisms affect not only Freire's figure, but also the conditions necessary for democratic deliberation, critical thinking, and the construction of active citizenship, as he himself argued: "Authentic literacy cannot be separated from awareness" (Freire, 1985, p. 92).

Although this study proposes a combined methodology of discursive and algorithmic analysis, it is important to recognize some inherent limitations of the approach adopted. First, the identification and classification of fallacies involves an interpretive component that may vary depending on the analyst's training, context, and critical sensitivity, which introduces a degree of subjectivity into the coding process.

Furthermore, the algorithmic tools used, such as VADER and Syuzhet, rely on pre-trained emotional dictionaries, which can affect their accuracy in culturally or semantically specific contexts, such as Brazilian political discourse. These libraries struggle to capture nuances such as irony, sarcasm, ambiguity, or double entendres, which limits the automatic interpretation of specific fragments.

Finally, the object of analysis, a highly ideologized documentary, is embedded in a particular political and cultural context that can influence both the production and reception of discourses. Therefore, the results should be understood as a contextualized critical approach, rather than as an objective or generalizable truth.

Therefore, the results obtained underscore the urgent need to strengthen critical media literacy programs that can identify and resist discursive manipulation techniques, as well as to revitalize critical pedagogy as a tool for social transformation. Although this study focused on a particular case, its implications can be extrapolated to a broader phenomenon: the growing sophistication of disinformation strategies in the digital age and the need to build critical defenses that respect human dignity and the right to transformation.

5. Conclusions

This study showed that the documentary "A Face Oculta de Paulo Freire" employs systematic strategies of discursive manipulation, utilizing argumentative fallacies, selective ideological framing, and polarized emotional content to distort public perceptions of Paulo Freire's legacy. The application of the Fallacy Density Index (FDI), combined with sentiment analysis, enabled the quantification and characterization of these disinformation dynamics, confirming a sustained pattern of emotional and argumentative distortion.

The findings corroborate that the misrepresentation of figures who promote critical emancipation, such as Freire, responds to cultural warfare dynamics that seek to shape common sense and reinforce projects of ideological exclusion (Entman, 1993; Van Dijk, 1998). In this context, Freire's pedagogy, based on dialogue, reflection, and social transformation (Freire, 1970), becomes a strategic target of media disinformation.

From a methodological perspective, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating algorithmic techniques and qualitative analysis in detecting manipulative narratives in audiovisual products. However, limitations associated with the cultural and contextual biases present in current sentiment analysis and framing algorithms are recognized, suggesting the need to move toward more sensitive and adaptive approaches.

In this sense, the future development of more advanced tools, such as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) systems capable of interpreting complex contexts and detecting fallacies more accurately, could strengthen critical capacity in the face of media manipulation strategies. This line of research, although incipient, represents an opportunity to expand discursive analysis tools in increasingly sophisticated digital environments.

Ultimately, the results highlight the importance of enhancing critical media literacy programs that equip audiences to recognize emotional, logical, and narrative manipulation techniques. Freire's critical pedagogy, centered on raising awareness and transforming social reality, remains an indispensable guide for addressing the contemporary challenges of disinformation and polarization, and for defending the possibility of a genuinely democratic citizenship.

For future research, the Fallacy Density Index (FDI) could be applied in comparative studies across different audiovisual media or digital platforms to map argumentative patterns in political, educational, or informational discourses. It will be necessary to validate the FDI in

different discursive contexts to ensure its robustness and applicability. Its incorporation into pedagogical practices would allow teachers and students to develop critical skills in the face of disinformation through a structured analysis of rhetorical persuasion strategies.

Furthermore, the development of artificial intelligence models specifically trained to detect fallacies in Spanish and Portuguese would represent a significant advance in the automation of discursive analysis. These developments could be integrated with critical media literacy proposals, thereby strengthening the capacity for discernment in educational environments that are increasingly influenced by polarized narratives.

Within this framework, a complementary approach would be the creation of a computational dictionary of argumentative fallacies, structured with formal definitions, contextual examples, and recurring linguistic patterns. This resource would enable training algorithms capable of automatically identifying fallacious structures in authentic texts, as well as articulating argumentation theory, discourse analysis, and natural language processing (NLP) technologies. Combined with automatic transcription systems, its application could be extended to the analysis of audio and video, allowing the detection of manipulative patterns in audiovisual content through automated spoken language processing.

Its potential application encompasses both academic research and critical teaching, at a time when narrative control has become a contested field. Language models such as BETO, RoBERTa, spaCy, or the Transformers tools from Hugging Face could be adapted to this task through fine-tuning or hybrid rules, configuring a semantic alert system similar to a traffic light for patterns of argumentative manipulation, with applications in multiple fields such as education, communication, politics, journalism, and digital humanities.

Ultimately, studies on media manipulation should continue to be guided by Freire's vision, which emphasizes that critical thinking is essential for transforming reality and humanizing society. As he himself stated, "for critical thinking, the permanent transformation of reality, with a view to the permanent humanization of humanity" (Freire, 1970, p. 112).

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Youth Reflexive Processes Triggered by Cinematography

Los procesos reflexivos juveniles detonados por la cinematografía

Processos Reflexivos Juvenis Desencadeados pela Cinematografia

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Abstract: The research is located in the field of film and education studies, which has been prolific in the analysis of educational expressions in cinematography and, in particular, in value education. From this perspective, this study asks: how does cinema affect the reflective processes of young students? And from a qualitative methodological perspective inspired by biographical methods: how are the reflections triggered by films set in motion through quasi-biographical strategies such as reflection diaries? The theoretical perspective of the so-called education through cinema is assumed and, among the findings, it is observed that reflection diaries as a quasi-biographical tactic contribute to triggering processes of subjectivation mediated by cinematography.

Keywords:
Training, reflection, cinema, youth, higher education

Resumen: La investigación se ubica en el campo de los estudios de cine y educación, el cual ha resultado prolífico en el análisis de las expresiones educativas en la cinematografía y, en particular, en la "educación en valores". Desde esta perspectiva, este estudio se pregunta: ¿cómo contribuye el cine en los procesos reflexivos de los jóvenes estudiantes? Y desde una mirada metodológica cualitativa inspirada en los métodos biográficos: ¿cómo se ponen en movimiento las reflexiones detonadas por los filmes a través de estrategias cuasi biográficas como los diarios de reflexión? Se asume la mirada teórica de la denominada educación por el cine y, entre los hallazgos, se observa que los diarios de reflexión como táctica cuasi biográfica, contribuyen a que se desencadenen procesos de subjetivación mediados por la cinematografía.

Palabras clave:
Formación, reflexión, cine, jóvenes, educación superior

Resumo: Esta pesquisa situa-se no campo dos estudos do cinema e da educação, que se tem revelado prolífico na análise das expressões educativas na cinematografia e, em particular, na educação em valores. Nesta perspetiva, este estudo questiona: De que forma o cinema contribui para os processos reflexivos dos jovens estudantes? E numa perspetiva metodológica qualitativa inspirada nos métodos biográficos: Como é que as reflexões desencadeadas pelos filmes são postas em marcha através de estratégias quase biográficas como os diários reflexivos? Adota-se a perspetiva teórica da chamada educação fílmica, e entre as constatações está a de que os diários reflexivos, enquanto tática quase biográfica, contribuem para desencadear processos de subjetivação mediados pela cinematografia.

Palavras-chave:
Formação, reflexão, cinema, juventude, ensino superior

1. Introduction: The Uses of Film in Educational Processes

The field of film and education has been prolific in its approach, expanding into different subfields: film and values education, the personification of teachers in cinema, film and the teaching of various disciplines, and film as a didactic and formative resource and as a support for the educational function (García, 2022; Cambra et al., 2020), among the main ones.

While this work contributes to the binomial of film and education in general, it does so specifically through a series of guiding questions that have been posed, namely: How does film contribute to the reflective processes of young students? Thus, cinematic expression is understood as a strategy for training and mobilizing youthful dispositions through exercises of biographical inspiration. Therefore, it also asks: How are the reflections triggered by films brought into play through quasi-biographical strategies such as reflective diaries?

The article is organized as follows: this introduction provides a brief review of the research background that demonstrates the educational uses of film. It then adopts a theoretical perspective based on the idea of film as a transformative possibility. It then proceeds to a

methodological explanation of the work, followed by the presentation and discussion of the results. Finally, a series of conclusions is drawn.

Film has been recognized as a valuable tool for educating individuals in human values and attitudes (Chávez & Rodelo, 2017; Hernández et al., 2020). This perspective is based on the premise that viewers should be empowered to adequately analyze and critique the situations presented in films, through messages that guide them on the risks to avoid or that support the development of personal and social maturity, as well as the reinforcement of values (Ortega & Pérez, 2013). Similarly, Bonilla et al. (2012) mentioned the importance of educating young people in positive, fair, and democratic values so that they can embrace them at an early age; in this case, during adolescence, as this is when students' personalities are still developing, and they have not yet consolidated specific values in some regions of their lives. Thus, they view film as an attractive, innovative, motivating, and practical resource, since values, when embraced and put into practice, generate changes in behavior.

Contín's (2005) work has discussed how film products can be teaching resources for analyzing discrimination in schools. Film has also been used to raise awareness and sensitivity on issues such as autism (Díaz et al., 2024). Moreover, the same applies to addressing and problematizing school violence (Sell et al., 2014), migration and historical reconstruction (Rivero, 2021), and addiction prevention (Gutiérrez & Tello, 2011).

Cinema simultaneously generates and reproduces models and values (Sell et al., 2014). As can be seen, studies have agreed that it is an effective strategy for achieving better learning, as well as for "values education" among children and young people. Its unexpected positive pedagogical effects have also been highlighted (Bácares, 2023a), "that is, when student actors undertake autonomous or self-managed processes triggered by prior work with film. Likewise, the methods and strategies employed have been to utilize cinematic images as a medium for discussing content with specific values, or as strategies to combat discrimination, drug addiction, and other social problems.

2. From a perspective of reflexivity and the search for transformation

The work of Rodríguez and Manrique (2015) makes important distinctions regarding the use or integration of film in the classroom. They identify two major traditions: film education (the understanding of the elements that surround the art of cinema) and film education

(improving taste, ethical formation, and analysis of values and countervalues in films) (Pereira and Urpí (2005) cited in Rodríguez and Manrique, 2015).

The authors cited make a theoretical proposal that partially departs from previous traditions, enunciating it as a third path called film education. In this approach, they argue that film has the potential to bring about transformations at both personal and social levels, as it also influences public opinion and the way people interact with one another (Díaz et al., 2024).

The characteristics of film education, in general, are conceived as having the capacity to disturb the human mind and produce varied experiences; these processes lead to expanding the boundaries of the self. "That is, cinema is conceived as having the capacity to change people," but specifically, it does so through experiences and the awareness of these experiences in the actors involved. Rodríguez and Manrique (2015) comment that this process of making experience conscious must be carried out through a narrative, which is partly related to what one tells oneself and is also fueled by the participation of others. This is what the cited authors understand as the narrative-experience-action (NAE) cycle, becoming the axis of change or transformations mediated by cinema. Thus, from this perspective, the essential thing is to activate the NAE cycle.

There are different principles for this, among which the most notable, based on this work, is the one referring to interrogating subjectivity, that is, proposing educational experiences in which the important object of study is the subjectivity of the people who participate, in the case of the present study, within the logic of the film forum, and in particular, questioning the raw material of reflection: the very lives of young people, based on reflective diaries. Learning through life stories has been effective and highly valued by students, as it creates and enhances knowledge (Pereira et al., 2010). The authors also propose crossing boundaries, encouraging educational experiences that transcend conventional categories, including gender and social class, and generally foster the development of counter-narratives. "Understanding that cinema also fosters experiences," and in the particular case of students, they learn from their own and others' experiences, fosters cultural understanding and empathy (Guede & Cid, 2023). Furthermore, promoting shared reflection: "in which film analysis is invited from non-standardized, non-regulated positions, allowing and promoting dissent and discord" (Rodríguez & Manrique, 2015, p. 116). Finally, disturbance, in the sense of generating the capacity to create desires and realities in students, promoting and choosing films that respond to the needs and

interests of young people, "producing an alteration that is considered necessary for mobilization" (Rodríguez & Manrique, 2015, p. 117), "or as a possibility of offering positions to the subject and mobilizing desires" (Pereira et al., 2010).

3. Methodology

The broad research that informed this work used an eminently qualitative approach, mediated by different data collection strategies. More information will be provided in the reflective journal on which this article is based; however, it is essential to have a general overview of the work conducted.

The young participants were students in the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico; during the period of this work (2023-2024 academic year), they were enrolled in their fourth, sixth, and eighth semesters (16 young people: 12 women and four men).

The ten films considered in the broad work were chosen based on the fact that they addressed themes of peace education that, in general terms, related to elements such as conflict, experiences of violence, values such as freedom, independence, and expressions of diversity (neurodiversity and gender diversity). The extent to which they fostered educational uses and the reflexivity that the film enabled were also taken into consideration. For analytical purposes, this article presents only the results from the following films: "*El lugar sin límites* (Ripstein, 1978), which made it possible to discuss gender diversity; *Mar adentro* (Amenábar, 2004), which discussed, among other topics, death with dignity; *Precious* (Daniels, 2009), which fostered the analysis of violence against women, childhood, and the role of education; and finally, *El Acontecimiento* (Diwan, 2021), which focused on women's sexual and decision-making freedoms."

The film forum was the key strategy; however, to implement it, focus groups were used. “After the screening of each film, there was a group film forum discussion in which questions were posed from a semi-structured script that examined the main elements of each film. Once this stage was completed,” groups of four to five students were formed to move on to the third stage, the development of teaching guides. After the discussion within each subgroup, the most appropriate educational level for addressing the topic was determined, and a proposal was made.

Drawing inspiration from the broad field of biographical methods, it was of interest to explore this perspective further because it enables the qualitative identification of critical moments from which people construct their identities (Merino & Ramírez, 2007; Merino, 2009). Broadly speaking, these methods allow us to capture the events and shifts that mark a life change and also constitute, for those who undertake them, a strategy for self-knowledge (Merino & Ramírez, 2007). As Aguirre (1998) argues, written biographies provide access to the direct experience of social actors, to the processes of subjectivation of culture, and, specifically for this research, to the actors themselves, who are allowed to reflect, define themselves, and structure their experiences.

"So, in this work, the most personal reflection was undertaken by each young person and captured in a journal that we asked them to keep." They were provided with a notebook for this purpose. The instructions were relatively simple; furthermore, they included input from the entire viewing and prior group discussion. At home, they were required to write in their journals for each week about the following points: what deep reflections the film and the discussion that day had triggered in them; what aspects were consistent or divergent with their position; to what extent their original perspective had changed; and what reflection, in the form of an overall assessment, they made about the film in relation to their perspective and their lives.

The youth returned the reflective journals to the research group after the ten films were shown. They were transcribed and made available for analysis. This process began with a search for key themes and patterns (Coffey & Atkinson, 2003) or emerging themes (Bertely, 2000) in the data. This was followed by concept generation based on these patterns. Open coding was one way to achieve this, linking data fragments into specific concepts (Coffey & Atkinson, 2003), thus paving the way for interpretation.

Given the type of instruments and activities developed with the youth, we believe there is a triangulation of data from the different instruments used: 1. The film forum discussion; 2. The development of teaching guides with subgroup discussions and subsequent plenary presentation; and 3. The personal reflective journal. This allowed us to explore, clarify, and contrast the youth perspectives from the various instruments.

Finally, inspired by narrative analysis (Gibbs, 2012), we focused not only on what people say, but also on how they say it, why they say it, and what they feel and experience.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 A Way to Experience the Place of the Other

This section of the data, as expressed in the reflective journals, shows the different ways in which the films generally evoke responses in the students, as reflected. While reflection always appears, in these cases, it is imbued with the almost volitional moments provoked by the images and stories, as well as by the varied attitudes they have as responses after viewing.

"The protagonist conveyed a lot of anguish and fear, the defense of women's freedom and rights, and, above all, and most importantly, the ability to decide about her body." "The film made me feel worried, sad, angry, and powerless. Because it is clear she does not want to become a mother at that moment." "I must confess that in several scenes I look away because I cannot watch them without crying. The actress's work is impressive; she manages to convey so much pain." "But now I understand that I am not in her shoes, and that after twenty-something years of not being able to move, I too would be desperate." "It made me very angry when her mother did not even show any regret at the very last moment of the film. I would have liked it to end differently, with something better for Precious and her children."	- - Anguish - - Anger - - Sadness - - Despair - - Pain

Table 1. Content that triggers the path to empathy. (Source: Prepared by the authors based on reflection diaries)

First, we observe how the scenes and characters manage to generate feelings of anger and pain among the students, but they are aimed at moving their dispositions related to specific values, such as empathy, observing the suffering of others and not remaining immobile; questioning the reasons for said suffering; as well as the sensitivity that, as can be seen, also moves them to show empathy, even when dealing with controversial topics. The element of sensitivity, which various studies have pointed out as an indispensable component for learning, appears here precisely as a distinct entry from the formatively accepted ones, such as the truly emotional and the sensitive effects through images (Bácares, 2023b). In this case, it is also demonstrated that it can serve as a path to triggering empathy and a means to develop socio-emotional skills and competencies in young people.

Furthermore, regarding this part, we find what corresponds to what is truly positive from the student perspective, which has a double edge: That is, on the one hand, they point to the

characters' experiences as examples of overcoming obstacles, people who, despite their circumstances, came out on top. However, the other side, difficult due to its implications, can lead to a lack of questioning what they experienced and a downplaying of the fact that they came out on top, as in this case, when referring to *Precious*:

> I reflected on the tools and support the girl used to cope with everything. I thought she might fall into drugs, gangs, and illicit activities that would make her forget her problems, but no. It was a clear example that one can move forward in positive and productive ways, such as in this case, education. (Excerpt from a Reflection Journal)

This is undoubtedly a point to be carefully considered in pedagogical terms when addressing the themes reflected in the analyzed films, as fragmented interpretations can arise that overlook the complexity of the cases due to the prevailing positivity of "getting ahead." Despite the above, the path to achieving empathy and the ability to put oneself in another's shoes seems to involve using cinematography with themes that manage to move dispositions, to "disturb," in the sense that the films respond to their needs and interests (Rodríguez & Manrique, 2015), which leads their analysis to deep feelings such as anguish, sadness, and despair. This appears to be deduced from the young people's own expressions, which reveal how they envision themselves in hypothetical situations; that is, they represent models of behavior for themselves (Cambra et al., 2020). They also ask themselves how they would react, thus shaping the idea that disturbance is the necessary step toward mobilizing within themselves, articulating their desires with their actions (Rodríguez & Manrique, 2015); this is why we maintain that this movement leads to empathy. In a certain way, what we see from the above is also a strategy of otherness, which in this case is triggered by the film forum and the reflective journal.

4.2 Disturbance, Discomfort, and Awareness

Not every educational situation can modify or mobilize dispositions. In the case of films seen as mediations for personal transformation, they require arousing certain feelings that touch young people, and that the themes, stories, and images do not pass them by; that is, they have the potential to be problematized and represent the intersection of personal life with the cultural life of a society (Sell et al., 2014), in this case, of young people. This section incorporates a key point, that of discomfort for a particular group, for young men, as a strategy that the young women themselves glimpse:

> The film reminded me of another film called "Noise," which shares its feminist ideals and the discomfort caused by explicit scenes. I hope all people can watch films like this, feel that

> discomfort, and reflect on the discomfort they feel when watching a film like this. Many women feel it in their daily lives. (Excerpt from a Reflection Diary)

Moreover, the same process is commented on by the young men, who seem to agree, highlighting precisely their discomfort, what the film made them feel, and the projection they make in what, based on this research, are considered hypothetical acting situations, or as conceived under the narrative-experience-action (NAE) axis (Rodríguez & Manrique, 2015):

> The film was overwhelming for me to watch, as the scenes were uncensored. The scenes reached a point where they made me feel sick, but I still managed to finish it. The film made me think about how I would act if a friend wanted an abortion. In my opinion, we should be more open-minded about this issue, because we cannot make decisions about the bodies and futures of others. (Excerpt from Reflection Journal)
>
> I felt disgusted seeing how they humiliate and denigrate transgender people just for fun. They think they provide a dance service and must endure their sexual abuse, even escalating to harassment and public humiliation. (Excerpt from Reflection Journal)

Discomfort as a mobilization of dispositions, which in standard terms is associated with leaving a comfort zone or entering a field to which one is unaccustomed. What is perceived is a clear relationship, putting oneself in a position to mobilize dispositions through the mediation of cinematic elements. This is feasible when principles such as discomfort and the accompanying reflection, characteristic of activities and actions derived from biographical methods (Aguirre, 1998), are met, as in the reflection journal created based on this work.

What is remarkable is that this is not only possible due to topics such as gender violence and the right to free choice, but also because it brings to light the perspective of men who, through their expressions and reflective journal entries, question their own positions. That is, as they themselves maintain, the scenes disgusted them, but this seems to be the path to raising awareness of the issue, through engaging and "disturbing" content; therefore, they represent greater opportunities for learning, changing attitudes, and developing social skills (Pereira and Marín in Bácares 2023b). The change search is also critical in this part, coming from the reflections made by the young people, and they allude not only to experiencing feelings of anger and sadness, but also as an impulse towards action, generating changes mediated by cinema (Bonilla, 2005; Bonilla et al., 2012): “although it is difficult to see […] it is important for it to make us do something, I say yes, to make us sad, but also from a dignified anger to seek a change” (Excerpt from Reflection Diary).

4.3 Reflexivity/Subjectivation

In this part of the analysis, what stands out notably are the reflexivity processes that pave the way for subjectivation. That is, as Reguillo (2023) argues, questioning the way we think, distancing ourselves from ourselves (Zapatero & Estrada, 2022), and from the social order, as a logic derived from experiences (Dubet & Martuccelli, 1998). Thus, the stories reveal the profound reflections that the young people have established and captured in their reflective journals. Aguirre (1998) argues that implementing this strategy allows us to gain a sense of self-definition and opens up the possibility of structuring our experiences.

> Today, coincidentally, on International Women's Day, I realized that everything around us can be different from what we are accustomed to. I used to say, I believe abortion can be legal when it is rape, although my opinions on the subject are based on the existence of contraceptive methods and other ways to protect oneself. Until today, when I saw this film, what a person really experiences, what a single woman can experience, in a highly complex way, radically changed my perspective. Now I believe that, while preventing abortion is the first thing that must be done, promoting the responsible use of contraceptive methods and supporting young people in how to take care of their health, it's necessary for the abortions that already exist to be transformed into accompanied, safe, assisted abortions, completely free and safe. (Excerpt from a Reflection Journal)

While it can be said that what is discussed in this case is not triggered exclusively by film analysis and the logic of a film forum, but rather as part of the accumulation of experiences, the fact that it is objectified by writing it in a journal of reflections on the films makes it easier to distance oneself from the film and what was discussed, and to examine it in more detail, from a more reflective perspective, thus offering positions to the subject (Pereira et al., 2010). The strategy of presenting this in a journal after the other exercises that preceded it can largely achieve what the story itself reflects.

However, despite the reflective processes the students underwent, the way the women undertook their analysis stands out because they were challenged by the themes addressed in the films. It's not that these topics are uniquely suited to them, but rather that their perspective is highlighted by seeing themselves reflected in them, such as abortion, motherhood, and pregnancy. This is reflected in Table 2:

Themes of the film	Themes of the film	Themes of the film
Abortion	“I'm going to emphasize that in some way it moved something inside me. In different ways. I've been through difficult things alone as a woman, but definitely not one of the magnitude of	Supporting a woman

	experiencing an abortion and pregnancy alone. It's certainly one of the things I'm most afraid of facing. Before, I didn't see the importance of support, and how important it is not to leave a woman alone in a stage like that. The decision is up to the person who goes through such a difficult experience.”	through this process.
Abortion	“While I was watching the film, the following question arose: Does sexual freedom exist for women today? To which I came to an answer that I don't really like very much, since, if we compare the situation of the protagonist and how she was judged for having started her sexual life, this isn't far from reality, because they still judge girls who are sexually active.”	Sexual freedom
Motherhood	“For me, being a mother doesn't limit you or prevent you from achieving your dreams and goals. Sometimes it redirects you; you have to find another path, but it never binds you. I believe that fear is what often drives us to act; it blinds, deafens, and clouds our minds. It's a very normal part of human life and can always be used to your advantage or against you.”	Motherhood that doesn't tie you down
The pregnancy	The pregnancy The development of the film shows the pregnancy as the end of the world, maybe that's how I see it realistically, this wasn't the case, but when I analyze the context of the main character, where her context was that she would be the first in her family to finish a degree and at a certain point she had the pressure of not failing all the people who trusted her, maybe it was the end of the world, not in a general way, but at least her world would have ended."	Do not disappoint

Table 2. Cinematic interpellations. (Source: Prepared by the author based on the reflection diaries related to the film The Event)

In this case, the fragments of the reflection journals are focused on the film The Event (Diwan, 2021), and the prevailing theme is pregnancy and abortion. The reflections revolve around two broad perspectives that converge toward the end of the young people's reflective process, along the lines of rights, but which emphasize the role played by those who accompany women in this process, their absence, and the necessity of such support. On the other hand, there are a couple of reflections that show an interesting movement toward accepting motherhood, not seeing it as a burden, nor does it have to be seen as a burden to carry, nor does it represent the end of the world for people. However, as this work argues, the initial positions quickly shift in response to the images and the story. Part of what was discussed in the film forum is captured in the reflection journals, and then understanding prevails: yes, it could be the end of the world for someone burdened with so many family expectations. Based on the above, we can argue that the reflective journal, as a quasi-biographical exercise, fulfills the purpose of subjectivizing culture and eliciting a definition of themselves or possible selves from its actors (Molina et al., 2024), which is mediated by the perspective of others constructed in the dialogue of the film forum.

This is one of the contributions that studies in the field have shown: the capacity of cinematic narrative to influence and shape behavior (Sell et al., 2014).

4.4 The Content of Reflexivity

Now, and more precisely, the content of reflexivity speaks to the possibilities of embarking precisely on the path of subjectivation, under the understanding that content is the trigger that can be problematized and become, as considered with Aguirre (1998), a process of subjectivation. Hence its importance; what is interesting to highlight in this section, then, is precisely the content that triggers reflective processes.

Excerpts from the reflective journals	Values in Question
"It seems absurd to me that someone feels wiser than we are, and that because of this, we should have children we don't want and don't even know if they'll have the life they deserve. Because that's another point: just because a pregnancy has reached term doesn't mean the babies will have a decent life. Why is it so complicated for a woman to decide when and at what point to have a child?"	Women's Freedom of Choice.
"Manuela's courage and vulnerability make me reflect on the importance of being true to herself. Her fight for acceptance and freedom is a powerful reminder of the importance of embracing our authenticity, even when we're facing opposition from those who don't understand or accept our differences."	Authenticity and Difference.
"Ramón suddenly found himself unable to move, unable to walk, unable to eat, and unable to go to the bathroom on his own. He was completely dependent on other people. And that's fine, it's fine to have someone's support, but to what extent is depending on someone living? I think that's just existing, and what's the point of existing without truly living? I think the film opens up a vast amount of moral debate, but if I were in Ramón's position, I would try to do the same thing. But if I were in his family's shoes, I would try to understand it."	Moral Dilemmas.
"I am part of the LGBT community, and a friend who is also part of the community and I were told that we would never be allowed to work wherever we wanted, just because of this fact. But seeing this teacher changing the lives of these girls and helping them made me feel very happy and want to do something like that."	Professional Identification, the Teaching Figure.

Table 3. Value reflexivity. (Source: Prepared by the authors based on reflection diaries)

The importance of the themes that interested the young people in highlighting serves to show the elements that spark their interest and open up educational possibilities. It is no coincidence that these are emerging and current themes in the Mexican sociopolitical context. In addition to the arguments they present, the background of their interest is revealed through these themes; for example, the values of freedom, choice, and women's rights are explored in the films *El Acontecimiento* (Diwan, 2021) and *Precious* (Daniels, 2009).

On the other hand, authenticity and moral dilemmas are also found in other elements that the young people highlight as themes and values that sparked their interest. The first can be positioned on the side of sexual diversity, a discussion that emerges from the film analysis of *El lugar sin límites* (Ripstein, 1978). On the other hand, the moral dilemmas faced in a situation like the one experienced in *Mar adentro* (Amenábar, 2004) seem to suggest that the main option is to accept the protagonist Ramón's decision. When they apply reflection to experience, as a process of subjectivation, they face the dilemma and express the types of topics that, in addition to making them reflect, are part of their interests and represent formative possibilities, such as the points at which films portray educational issues, in which young people project themselves by assuming educational figures as role models for their future professional performance.

5. Conclusions

Studies have shown the changes that can be achieved through filmmaking (Bonilla, 2005; Mujika & Gaintza, 2021), particularly with strategies similar to those employed in this work, such as self-reports following film viewing. It is clear that film raises awareness, and this appears to be a necessary condition for fostering learning. From our perspective, it is an indispensable element for personal transformation through film, for values education, and for the development of socio-emotional skills and competencies.

This study is based on the reflective processes triggered by the pairing of cinema and education. It showed how this unfolds through the mediation of reflective journals and the discussion of films that meet the requirements of responding to the needs and interests of young people. It is presented from a pedagogy of questioning (Freire & Faundez, 2013), as well as a reflective and dialogic approach (Nascimento et al., 2022).

It highlights the elements of fostering a relationship with life, particularly in adolescents and young people; prioritizing discussion in film forums and focus groups, with strategies such

as those implemented in this work, through personal journals where young people can expand the limits of the self and project their possible selves (Rodríguez & Manrique, 2015; Molina et al., 2024). All of the above can be very effective for personal and social transformation. Putting values into practice has been proven effective (Bonilla et al., 2012). One way to do so, particularly with young people, is to incorporate cinematic elements that challenge established values and, in addition to discussing them in a diverse environment, to objectify them and capture them in diaries that allow them to distance themselves and initiate the process of subjectivation.

Cinema requires sensitivity and intellection from the viewer (Lizarazo, 2022), and the results of this work show that there are greater formative possibilities when these are deliberately activated. This research aligns with various studies (Rodríguez & Manríquez, 2015; Orefice, 2020; Cambra et al., 2020) that have identified changes in young people's perspectives following extensive work using cinema as a formative medium. The scheme that emerges from this study for expanding the self and exploring the possibilities of personal transformation through cinematography is as follows: visualization, film forum (guided discussion), application (e.g., a teaching guide), and narration (e.g., a reflection journal) = possibilities of subjectivation.

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