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Article

Mapping the Inclusion of Children and Youth With Disabilities in Media Literacy Research

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Abstract

The way we communicate and make meaning in a complex socio-technical infrastructure demands multiple literacies. Media-literate citizens must be able to create, evaluate and effectively use information, media, and technology. The pandemic context demanded increased online learning and work, highlighting the importance of media literacy in citizens' lives. Although in recent years, crucial reforms have happened in education for children with disabilities, media education for them is residual and framed on medical concepts neglecting how disability is socially constructed. Aiming to map recent research (2015–2021) in the field of media literacy and children with disabilities, a systematic literature review was conducted. The number of articles obtained from a search for “media literacy and children” in the scientific databases ($N = 1,175$) supports the relevance of media literacy in research. Filtering these data for “children with disabilities” reveals an inexpressive sample, with 12 articles included in the study after the eligibility phase. The overall results indicate that this population is significantly underrepresented in media literacy research, explained by a low prevalence of studies with disabled children as an audience. Moreover, research designs have shown a greater focus on conceptual approaches, highlighting a deficit of fieldwork and tangible interventions. Strong ableist media discourses emerged as a barrier to the promotion of media literacy in this population, with a clear mismatch between media representations and the current disability paradigms, besides all the positive aspects of the actions registered in the sample.

Keywords

children; disabilities; inclusion; media education; media literacy; youth

Issue

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1. Introduction

Defining media literacy could be, by itself, a research piece. Nevertheless, for the specific purpose of the present work, it will be adopted as an umbrella term for the “investigation and promotion of the diverse competencies, and the skills needed in the contemporary media and communication environment” (Livingstone et al., 2014, p. 215). In a highly digitized society, these skills are crucial for full and engaged citizenship, due to their role in the comprehension of democratic structures, free self-expression, and conflict resolution, through access and analysis of diverse sources of information (Hobbs, 1998).

With the increased educational innovation based on digital media and, more recently, the pandemic context, media literacy skills have become increasingly central to students' inclusion, highlighted by platforms' low accessibility (Russ & Hamidi, 2021) and the proliferation of misinformation (McDougall et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the implementation of digital media platforms in different educational contexts also brought several opportunities, including personalized learning environments that are likely to accommodate the support needs of students with disabilities (Basham et al., 2016).

Full citizenship for individuals with disabilities has been a central concern due to the prevalence of ableism

in contemporary society (Nario-Redmond, 2019), which extends to media (Ellis & Kent, 2011). The Convention on The Rights of Persons With Disabilities is the legal framework for this concern by defining the conditions for full and effective participation and inclusion in society through the promotion of individual autonomy, independence, equality of opportunities, and accessibility (United Nations, 2006). This framing is also centered around the paradigm shift from a medical model of disability that emphasizes individuals' impairments and visions of "treatment" or "cure" (Silvers, 1998) to a social model that reinforces disability as emerging from the prevailing ableist social structures, based on the context's inability to accommodate their support needs (Ellis & Kent, 2011).

Accompanying this modification, fundamental changes in terminology and educational approaches have occurred—from "special" to inclusive education—aligned with the demands of activism organizations and grassroots movements (Greenstein, 2015) and which has consistent positive impacts on children's cognitive and social development (Hehir et al., 2016). Moreover, the designations of "disabled" or "handicapped" have been progressively replaced by the notion of "person with a disability," which prioritizes the identification of individuals as human beings before any specific physical, cognitive, or psychological conditions while preserving the sociopolitical impacts of the word "disability" (Andrews et al., 2019).

Considering this context, and with the notion that access to digital media per se does not impact the decreasing of social inequalities, media literacy can be seen as a crucial pillar for full inclusion and citizenship (Pernisco, 2014).

The present systematic literature review (SLR) aims to map the inclusion of children with disabilities in media literacy research through the operationalization of the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are children with disabilities targeted by media literacy and media education research?

RQ2: What are the conceptualizations of the intersection between disability and media?

RQ3: What are the positive outcomes of media literacy actions in children with disabilities?

2. Method

2.1. Eligibility Criteria

The method of the present study was developed considering the PRISMA 2020 statement guidelines for the reporting of systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021).

The eligibility criteria were formulated considering the above-defined objectives. Studies exploring media

literacy, directly or indirectly, concerning the specific characteristics and needs of children with any type of disability were included in the sample. Other eligibility criteria for the sample included: (a) peer-reviewed research, (b) published in the English language, (c) published from 2015 to the final day the systematic search was conducted, on 19th February 2021.

Every study that did not comply with these criteria was excluded, namely non-peer-reviewed research, research published in other languages which could not be properly assessed by the research team, secondary research, and research that did not approach one of the crucial aspects of this study's aim, including children, media literacy, and disability.

The selection of six years (2015–2021) intended to summarize and highlight the more recent conclusions in the field as a strategy to better understand the current needs for media literacy research with such audiences. The reporting of the most recent evidence is considered a relevant quality factor for systematic reviews (Schlosser, 2007).

The inclusion of primary non-empirical research frames the present study as an integrative review: a more exploratory approach that intends to establish the complete mapping of a set of concepts or phenomena of concern (Whittemore & Knafel, 2005).

2.2. Information Sources

The search was conducted in electronic databases defined during the search strategy. This included ACM Digital Library, EBSCO, and B-On. Considering the nature of the study and to ensure the inclusion of "grey literature" that can broaden the scope of the review while providing a more comprehensive view of the available evidence (Mahood et al., 2013), ResearchGate was also included as an information source.

2.3. Search Strategy

Considering the exploratory nature of the present review, the search strategy was always composed of two different phases. First, each database was systematically searched through the equation: "media literacy" AND ("children" OR "youth"). Secondly, the obtained studies were filtered with one of the following terms at a time: "special educational needs," "special education," "inclusive education," "disabilit*," "autism," "ASD" (autism spectrum disorder), "deaf," "deaf and hard of hearing," or "blind." Results were also filtered for the time range 2015–2021. The search was then conducted in the electronic databases with the search equation; filters were applied when possible.

2.4. Selection Process

The selection process throughout the final sample is represented in the flowchart in Figure 1. The identification

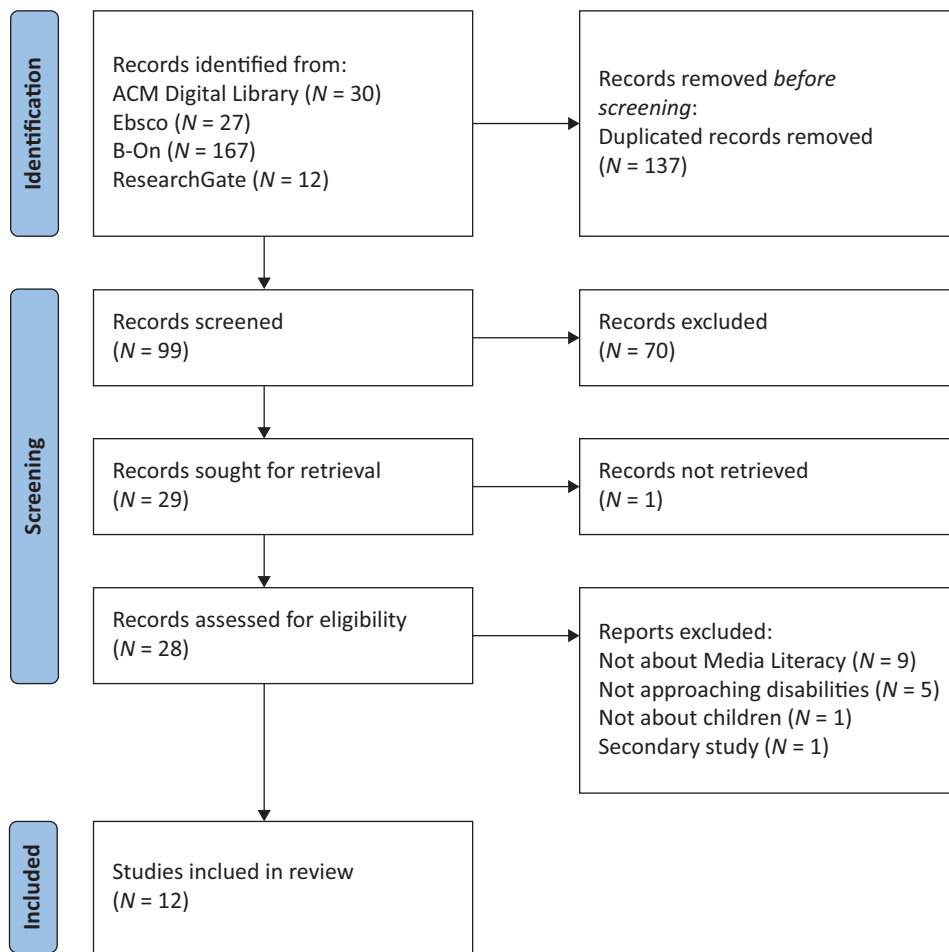


Figure 1. Flowchart of the selection process. Source: Authors’ work based on Page et al. (2021).

phase was developed by applying the search strategy to the information sources and retrieving the obtained data. In the screening phase, the above-defined criteria were applied at a superficial level, meaning that only titles, abstracts, and general information were considered. In the eligibility phase, the criteria were followed by thoroughly analyzing each study before selecting the final sample.

2.5. Risk of Bias

The risk of bias in the present study was approached through two different perspectives: (a) potential reporting bias in the selected studies, and (b) potential bias resulting from the content analysis performed by two different researchers.

The evaluation of the potential reporting bias was based on two different guidelines, depending on the research design of each study, namely, if it was an empirical or a conceptual study. In the first case, a 16-item version of the quality assessment tool for studies with diverse designs (QATSDD) was developed by Sirriyeh et al. (2012). To this extent, a set of nine criteria was transversally applied, and a variable number of complementary criteria that depended on the research design,

whether it be quantitative, qualitative, or both, was also applied. A scoring system to rate the compliance of the article with each criterion was adopted, ranging from zero (*not at all*) to three (*complete*), as originally described by the authors (Sirriyeh et al., 2012). Considering the need to assess the risk of bias in conceptual articles, another approach was also adopted, based on the research design elements in conceptual papers developed by Jaakkola (2020), aligned with a scoring system similar to QATSDD (Sirriyeh et al., 2012). The guidelines adopted to assess the risk of bias in each article are systematized in Table 1.

To ensure the reliability of the present study’s conclusion and considering the qualitative nature of the analyzed data (MacPhail et al., 2015), intercoder reliability was computed as a preliminary phase of the content analysis. Thus, it is possible to highlight the contribution of such technique to enhancing the systematicity, communicability, transparency of the developed coding, and cohesion of the research team (O’Connor & Joffe, 2020). Considering the sample size (Gwet, 2012), Cohen’s kappa was adopted as the intercoder reliability indicator. Multiple coding was applied to 16.67% of the coded material (two articles), following the good practices that generally recommend the application of

Table 1. Studies' characteristics regarding the sample and the adopted research design ($N = 12$).

Study No.	Citation	Adopted Guidelines
1	Cheung (2016)	
2	Ellison and Evans (2016)	
4	Friesem (2017)	
7	Alsumait and Fasial (2018)	Conceptual papers (Jaakkola, 2020)
8	Eriksson et al. (2019)	
11	Friesem and Probst (2020)	
12	Subashkevych et al. (2020)	
3	Probst (2017)	
5	Kasap and Gürçınar (2017)	
6	Rodriguez and Diaz (2017)	16-item QATSDD (Sirriyeh et al., 2012)
9	Hachisu et al. (2019)	
10	Anukool and Petsangsri (2019)	

this procedure to between 10% and 25% of the sample (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Cohen's kappa, agreement rate, and disagreement rate for each node were computed in NVivo 12, while averages and standard deviations for the full sample were manually calculated.

In the different coding nodes, kappa ranged from 0.50 to 1, with an average kappa of 0.80 ($SD = 0.20$) for the full coding. Agreement between the two coders ranged between 97.67% and 100.00%, with an average agreement of 99.39% ($SD = 0.60$), and disagreement ranged between 0.00% and 2.33%, with an average disagreement of 0.62% ($SD = 0.60$). The obtained scores are acceptable and represent "great" correspondence, mainly for an exploratory approach (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

2.6. Analysis and Synthesis of Results

In the present study, and considering its qualitative and exploratory nature, the synthesis of results was performed through content analysis with the support of NVivo software, version 12 plus. For risk of bias analysis and other numerical aspects of the review, descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS, version 26. A simultaneous top-down and bottom-up coding frame was developed to foster an analysis frame that fits both the study's conceptual framework and the data from the articles.

3. Results

3.1. Study Selection

Considering the nature of the present integrative systematic review and its goal of mapping the intersections between media literacy research and disability for children and youth, the obtained records in scientific databases were further analyzed with descriptive statistics procedures. The number of articles published between 2015 and 2021 obtained by applying the terms "media literacy" and "children" to the above-mentioned

scientific databases ($N = 1,175$) supports the relevance of media literacy in the current research scenario. Although the paradigm of inclusive education is adopted in the study, "special education" was used to ensure a broader spectrum of studies.

Nevertheless, when filtering such data to focus on interventions for children with disabilities, it is possible to highlight that such results become much less expressive, with only 236 studies (20.09%). Regarding the specific filters (Figure 2), the most inexpressive results were obtained for the term "ASD," with 11 articles (0.94%), followed by "inclusive education" ($N = 14$; 1.19%) and "special educational needs" ($N = 16$; 1.36%). The most expressive results were obtained for "disabilities" ($N = 67$; 5.70%), "special education" ($N = 34$; 2.89%), and "autism" ($N = 27$; 2.29%). A graphic representation of these results can be found in Figure 2.

3.2. Study Characteristics

The present SLR had a total sample size of 72 subjects, with each article's sample ranging from one to 50 subjects ($M = 14.40$; $SD = 20.38$). Due to the integrative nature of this work, seven studies with a conceptual or media-driven emphasis were included, and therefore, not included in the previous sample calculations. Studies were categorized considering their sample of participants or audience targeted in the conceptual approach. Thus, a total of four studies (33.33%) had children and youth with disabilities as a sample or audience, followed by studies approaching students in general, with a specific focus on the ones with disabilities ($N = 3$; 25%). Other considered samples or audiences included youth with ASD, adults with disabilities, teachers of deaf or blind students, deaf children, and experts in deaf children's education ($N = 1$; 8.33%).

In terms of research design, four studies (33.33%) were considered conceptual positioning articles; this means that their main focus is not on empirically testing premises but rather on integrating and proposing new relationships between constructs (Gilson & Goldberg,

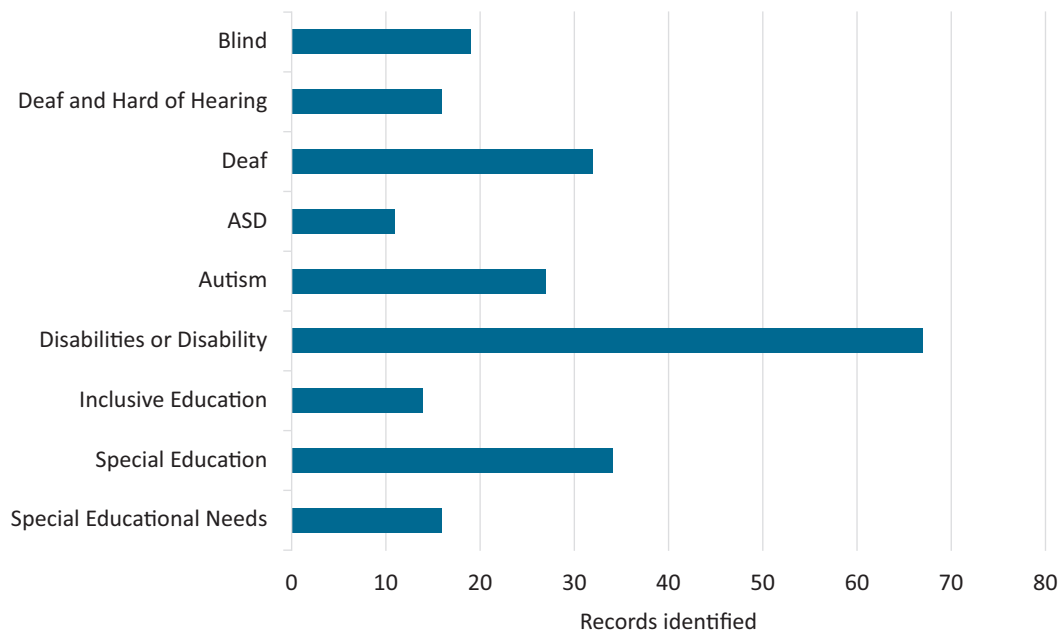


Figure 2. Records identified with each specific filter.

2015). The sample was also composed of two media critical analysis articles (16.67%), one case study, one in-depth interview (qualitative approach), one quasi-experimental study (mixed-methods) approach, one technology design report, one usability study (quantitative approach), and one focus group based descriptive study (qualitative approach), each representing 8.33% of

the sample. An overview of the studies’ characteristics is presented in Table 2.

3.3. Risk of Bias in Studies

By assessing the risk of bias in the sample’s empirical studies ($N = 5$), it was possible to register a heterogeneity

Table 2. Studies’ characteristics regarding the sample and the adopted research design ($N = 12$).

Study	Citation	<i>N</i>	Studied sample or audience	Research design
1	Cheung (2016)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Conceptual positioning
2	Ellison and Evans (2016)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Conceptual positioning
3	Probst (2017)	1	Youth with ASD	Case study
4	Friesem (2017)	n.a.	Students, in general, emphasizing the needs of the ones with disabilities	Conceptual positioning
5	Kasap and Gürçınar (2017)	50	Adults with disabilities	In-depth interview (qualitative)
6	Rodriguez and Diaz (2017)	12	Teachers of deaf or blind students	Quasi-experimental (mixed methods)
7	Alsumait and Fasial (2018)	n.a.	Deaf children	Conceptual positioning
8	Eriksson et al. (2019)	n.a.	Students, in general, emphasizing the needs of the ones with disabilities	Design report
9	Hachisu et al. (2019)	2	Students, in general, emphasizing the needs of the ones with disabilities	Usability study (quantitative)
10	Anukool and Petsangsri (2019)	7	Experts in deaf children’s education	Descriptive study (qualitative focus groups)
11	Friesem and Probst (2020)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Media critical analysis
12	Subashkevych et al. (2020)	n.a.	Children and youth with disabilities	Media critical analysis

Note: n.a. = not applicable in this specific research design.

in the reporting accuracy. While some reporting criteria registered a high level of compliance, such as definition of aims ($M = 2.80$; $SD = 0.45$), or the fit between research question and data collection tools ($M = 2.50$; $SD = 0.71$), others registered a low level of compliance, including evidence of sample size in terms of analysis ($M = 0.40$; $SD = 0.55$), and the reporting of detailed recruitment data ($M = 0.60$; $SD = 0.89$). Two criteria were not registered in any of the sample's articles, namely "representative sample of target group of a reasonable size" and "statistical assessment of reliability and validity of measurement tool(s)." The complete results can be found in Table 3.

By implementing the research design elements (Jaakkola, 2020) to the sample of conceptual studies ($N = 7$), it was possible to register an average compliance score above the mid-value for all studies, ranging from 1.83 ($SD = 0.75$) and 2.67 ($SD = 0.52$). The choice of theories and concepts used to generate novel insights was the most complied with ($M = 2.57$; $SD = 0.79$), followed by the choice of theories and concepts analyzed ($M = 2.43$; $SD = 0.79$). The perspectives in terms of applied levels of analysis and aggregation were the criterion with the lowest values of compliance ($M = 2$; $SD = 0.82$). Full results

for the risk of bias in conceptual studies are presented in Table 4. Considering their reflective and descriptive nature, media critical analysis and design reports were analyzed as conceptual papers to this extent.

3.4. Results of Individual Studies

3.4.1. Research Question 1

Children referred to as "students," "disabled children," and "children with special needs" are the main audience in the sources, followed by teachers, parents, and support technicians. Media literacy actions in studies took place mainly within schools ($N = 6$; 50%), with four schools referred to as special education and the other two as mainstream.

Media production and media analysis are mentioned in sources as the most used pedagogical approach. Since many media educators call for a reflective pedagogy, media production in education is increasingly emphasized and could also be a plus for children with disabilities, who could benefit from expressing themselves and their narratives (Cheung, 2016). Education that promotes media literacy to children with disabilities enables

Table 3. Implementation of the 16-item QATSDD (Sirriyeh et al., 2012) to the sample of empirical studies ($N = 5$).

Criterion/Study	3	5	6	9	10	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Explicit theoretical framework	3	3	2	1	1	2.00	1.00
Statement of aims/objectives in the main body of the report	3	3	3	3	2	2.80	0.45
Clear description of the research setting	3	2	3	1	2	2.20	0.84
Evidence of sample size considered in terms of analysis	1	1	0	0	0	0.40	0.55
Representative sample of target group of a reasonable size	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
Description of the procedure for data collection	2	1	3	2	1	1.80	0.84
Rationale for choice of data collection tool(s)	1	1	3	2	1	1.60	0.89
Detailed recruitment data	0	0	2	1	0	0.60	0.89
Statistical assessment of reliability and validity of measurement tool(s)	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
Fit between the stated research question and method of data collection	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3	n.a.	3.00	0.00
Fit between stated research question and format and content of data collection tool (e.g., interview schedule)	n.a.	n.a.	2	3	n.a.	2.50	0.71
Fit between research question and method of analysis	3	2	3	n.a.	1	2.25	0.96
Good justification for the analytical method selected	2	2	3	n.a.	2	2.25	0.50
Assessment of reliability of analytical process	0	0	0	n.a.	0	0.00	0.00
Evidence of user involvement in the design	2	1	n. a.	n.a.	1	1.33	0.58
Strengths and limitations critically discussed	3	2	n. a.	n.a.	1	2.00	1.00
Total	23	18	24	16	12	18.60	4.98
Maximum possible score for the study	42	42	39	33	42	n.a.	n.a.
<i>M</i>	1.64	1.29	1.85	1.45	0.86	n.a.	n.a.
<i>SD</i>	1.28	1.12	1.34	1.21	0.77	n.a.	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not applicable.

Table 4. Implementation of the research design elements (Jaakkola, 2020) to the sample of conceptual studies ($N = 7$).

Criterion/Study	1	2	4	7	8	11	12	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Choice of theories and concepts used to generate novel insights	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	2.57	0.79
Choice of theories and concepts analyzed	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	2.43	0.79
Perspective; level(s) of analysis/aggregation	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	2.00	0.82
Key concepts to be analyzed/explained or used to analyze/explain	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.14	0.38
Translation of target phenomenon in conceptual language; definitions of key concepts	1	3	2	3	3	1	2	2.14	0.90
Approach to integrating concepts; quality of argumentation	1	3	2	3	2	1	2	2.00	0.82
Total	11	15	14	16	14	12	11	n.a.	n.a.
<i>M</i>	1.83	2.50	2.33	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.83	n.a.	n.a.
<i>SD</i>	0.75	0.84	0.52	0.52	0.82	0.89	0.75	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: The maximum possible score was 18 for all studies; n.a. = not applicable.

them to understand how they are portrayed in the media through the decoding and encoding of media messages, as well as empowering them with a critical understanding of their identity and representation in a confident manner. Through media production, children with disabilities could have a voice in the media, be creators and not only consumers, and be prepared to take up a future career in media industries (Cheung, 2016; Ellison & Evans, 2016; Friesem, 2017; Friesem & Probst, 2020). Furthermore, through media analysis and the deconstruction of media representations of disability, all students will contribute to the fight against stereotypes and ableism.

Regarding interventions with children with disabilities, one source (8.33%)—Probst (2017)—presents a case study: “provocative selfies” with a 16-year-old female student diagnosed with ASD, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety. This student had a history of presenting difficulty with perspective-taking. In terms of procedure, “the participant was asked to select three images from Instagram to evaluate” (Probst, 2017, p. 51) and an inquiry-based discussion prompt designed to elicit critical evaluation of an image from social media followed. For each image, the researcher began with an initial question and then continued in a conversational tone, offering prompts to help address a variety of the areas covered by the National Association for Media Literacy Education’s key questions or to clarify the participant’s responses. The participant provided verbal answers, which the researcher then recorded. The four questions for the participant regarding image analysis were related to social awareness (two questions) and self-awareness. Results show that the participant was engaging in social comparison, but they had difficulty identifying their feelings about each image and interpreting the image. The author concludes that “this case study provides suggestive evidence of a promising opportunity to help students develop better social and

emotional learning skills through social media literacy education” (Probst, 2017, p. 54).

Hachisu et al. (2019) presented the development of EnhancedTouchX, a bracelet-type interpersonal body area network device for analyzing contextual information of interpersonal touch interactions, evaluated in the lab by two participants. One of the applications of EnhancedTouchX is EnhancedTouchPlay, a social playware that uses, measures, and interprets interpersonal touch interactions and can provide real-time visual and haptic feedback. Particularly, visual feedback facilitates touch interactions among children with ASD. One could ask why this is related to media literacy. But the answer could easily be found in the central role of personalized learning environments in promoting media literacy and related skills by including children with disabilities and human diversity in general in the education environment. EnhancedTouchPlay is a technology and a possible affordance to be used in social-emotional competencies, which is important to children’s understanding of their and others’ online presence and collaboration. The other three empirical studies have as the main audience teachers of deaf or blind students (Rodriguez & Diaz, 2017), adults with disabilities (Kasap & Gürçınar, 2017), and experts in deaf children’s education (Anukool & Petsangri, 2019), and all of them give important contributions to programs of media literacy development in children with disability.

3.4.2. Research Question 2

Considering the analyzed sources, the intersection between disability and media seems to be conceptualized in a dichotomous manner, including negative and positive views. Negative views were mentioned in five articles (N references = 28), and positive views in three (N references = 10).

How media unrealistically portrays people with disabilities emerges in the sample, strongly linked to the potential negative influences this factor may have on youngsters. Nevertheless, research also seems to acknowledge the role of media literacy education (Cheung, 2016). Besides Cheung (2016), other sources emphasized the negative conceptualizations of this intersection, including the likelihood of students with disabilities engaging in behavior that will receive rejection feedback that develops into social media prejudice (Probst, 2017). Friesem (2017) extended this premise by emphasizing how training in journalism and mass communication is influenced by this, based on the case of the negative portrayals of speech disabilities in textbooks, usually framed as a handicap. The negative framing of people with a disability seems to be transversal in media, crossing different platforms and ultimately impacting media literacy due to the lack of presence of people with disabilities in written media, most specifically in the first pages and other prominent positions (Kasap & Gürçınar, 2017). According to the work of Friesem and Probst (2020), with an intersectional focus that includes gender and sexuality, representations of disability in the media are still closely linked to strong ideologies of “normalcy.”

On the other hand, the positive conceptualizations of this intersection also emerged in the sample’s articles, closely linked to the potential of media literacy, namely based on critical media analysis. This included exploring the benefits for youth of using social media, specifically in promoting cognitive and affective empathy (Probst, 2017). Also, media seems to have a strong role in validating the existence of children and youth with disabilities by providing them with representations with which they can empathize, including paralympic athletes, artists, politicians, and scientists with disabilities (Kasap & Gürçınar, 2017). An interesting strategy to promote

this emerged from the work of Nikolaidis (2013), where the movie *Rust and Bone* was used to reflect on media, gender, sexuality, and disability, through critical analysis, as explored by Friesem and Probst (2020).

3.4.3. Research Question 3

In terms of media literacy actions’ positive outcomes, inclusion and social and emotional learning were the most frequent, being mentioned in six studies (50%) with 19 references (16.81%) and 16 references (14.16%), respectively. Problem-solving and e-health were the least present ($N = 1$; 8.33%), with four references (3.54%) and one reference (0.88%), respectively. Descriptive statistics on all the positive outcomes are presented in Table 5.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to perform an integrative review to summarize and analyze the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in media literacy research, with the overall results pointing to this population’s significant underrepresentation.

The first relevant aspect supporting these results is the number of studies about disabilities and media literacy compared to the number of studies approaching media literacy which do not include this population. Such an expressive result seems to provide a strong answer to RQ1 by acknowledging the low involvement of children with disabilities in media literacy research. Moreover, this lack of involvement is not only represented by the small number of studies obtained in this SLR but also by their specific characteristics. A dominance of conceptual research designs corroborates how the discussion around the media and information literacy skills of

Table 5. Positive outcomes of media literacy in the sample and number of references ($N = 12$).

Outcome	<i>N</i> Sources (%)	<i>N</i> References (%)
Inclusion	6 (50.00)	19 (16.81)
Social and emotional learning	6 (50.00)	16 (14.16)
Critical thinking	4 (33.33)	15 (13.27)
Identity expressions	3 (25.00)	12 (10.62)
Empowerment	2 (16.67)	10 (8.85)
Future work skills	3 (25.00)	8 (7.08)
Classroom engagement	3 (25.00)	8 (7.08)
Civic engagement	3 (25.00)	8 (7.08)
Collaboration	3 (25.00)	6 (5.30)
Problem-solving	1 (8.33)	4 (3.54)
Digital citizenship	2 (16.7)	3 (2.65)
Creativity	2 (16.7)	3 (2.65)
e-Health	1 (8.33)	1 (0.88)
Total	12 (100.00)	113 (100.00)

children and youth with disabilities is, above all, theoretical, highlighting a deficit of fieldwork and tangible interventions. It was also possible to note that even empirical studies frequently use experts or teachers as the research subjects instead of directly including the voices of children with disabilities. A lack of systematic approaches to sample definition and data gathering was also registered in the risk of bias analysis, supporting the results discussed above.

The answers provided to RQ1 show a discrepancy between media literacy research and the postulates of the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), based on the classical notion of “nothing about us without us,” as well as with the premises of inclusive research (Schwartz et al., 2019), where participants must have a “co-researcher” role.

The intersections between media and disability (RQ2) are mainly conceptualized through the dichotomy between a set of challenges and opportunities. The main identified challenges approached how media tend to represent people with disabilities in a stigmatized, unrealistic, and mainly negative way, impacting this audience’s views about themselves. These notions seem to be linked to a strong ableist media discourse centered around ideas of “normal,” which is simultaneously a cause and a consequence of the lack of disability representation and the lack of presence of these individuals in media and audiovisual production. Ultimately, a mismatch between media representations and the current social paradigms emerges, which diminishes the role of accessible media and the social context in the full citizenship of this population.

Considering the explored context, it seems easy to understand why media literacy is so crucial for children with disabilities, especially since this SLR has also concluded that they are more exposed to social media abuse. Nevertheless, the intersection between media literacy and disability presents opportunities to tackle this issue. Such opportunities include the documented role of media literacy interventions in promoting cognitive and affective empathy and a sense of otherness that develops awareness of diverse human functioning and identities.

Another relevant aspect to be discussed regarding the obtained results is how the positive outcomes of media literacy in children and youth with disabilities seem, to some extent, similar to those of children without disabilities, except for the inclusion factor. Reflecting on RQ3 allows us to understand that. In a highly digitized society, the promotion of media literacy in people with disabilities seems to be linked to effective educational and social inclusion. Furthermore, media literacy seems to promote other aspects that can also be, directly or indirectly, linked to inclusion, such as social and emotional learning, critical thinking, identity expressions, empowerment, future work skills, classroom engagement, civic engagement, collaboration, problem-solving, digital citizenship, creativity, and e-health.

4.1. Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present study provides a set of interesting insights into the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in media literacy, it also raises a set of practical and methodological concerns. Firstly, the sample size is small and considerable heterogeneity was found in the included studies, with a risk of bias that should not be ignored. Although this implies some methodological issues, it is important to highlight how it reinforces the invisibility of this group in media literacy research. Secondly, it is also important to note how an SLR only includes academic and research-driven approaches to the promotion of media literacy in children with disabilities. Even if we consult a broad range of articles, this does not consider the field interventions, potentially done in formal and informal education, which are not documented as a research piece. Another aspect is how the included studies do not allow for a more detailed analysis of the specific disabilities or support needs of some individuals from the sample (e.g., some motor or psychological support needs), which can be relevant considering the different layers of discrimination and how they intersect with media representations and roles.

Future research must consider human diversity in media literacy and media education research actions as a strategy to foster inclusion in education and society. Inclusive educational research can be operationalized through more representative and participatory research that considers these individuals as agents of change. Furthermore, this premise could be strengthened by a study that acknowledges other forms of dissemination actions to carry out a broader mapping of the field that transcends academia.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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