Children, young people and the news: a systematic literature review based on Communication Abstracts

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Abstract

Despite having their roots in Medicine and being more frequently used in Natural Sciences, systematic reviews can also be extremely useful when it comes to the Social Sciences, namely when the aim is to conduct a study that identifies and maps the subject of interest of scientists in a given area. In this paper, a systematic literature review has been applied to the main database in the field of Communication, Communication Abstracts, as to try and understand who studied the relationship between children and/or young people and the news, when and where that happened, as well as the angle of the investigation. A sample of 146 titles and abstracts was reviewed. The findings show that most of them were reception and representation studies, whereas production studies were in much smaller number; studies on parental mediation and journalists' ethical concerns when covering events involving children and young people were practically residual.

Keywords

children; young people; news; journalism; systematic literature review

Crianças, jovens e notícias: uma revisão sistemática da literatura a partir da Communication Abstracts

Resumo

Apesar de terem a sua raiz na Medicina e de serem mais frequentes nas Ciências Naturais, as revisões sistemáticas da literatura podem revestir-se de grande utilidade, também, nas Ciências Sociais, nomeadamente quando se pretende empreender um estudo que identifique e mapeie o que foi alvo de interesse por parte dos cientistas num determinado campo. Neste artigo, a técnica de revisão sistemática de literatura foi aplicada à principal base de dados no campo da Comunicação, a Communication Abstracts, com o intuito de perceber quem, quando e onde tem estudado a relação entre crianças e/ou jovens e notícias e qual tem sido o ângulo privilegiado pela investigação. Uma amostra de 146 títulos e resumos de artigos foi analisada. Os resultados revelam que os estudos de receção e de representação dominam a investigação no tema em apreço, sendo pouco expressivos os estudos sobre a produção e praticamente residuais aqueles que se debruçam sobre a mediação parental e as preocupações éticas dos jornalistas quando cobrem acontecimentos que envolvem crianças e jovens.

Introduction

"Newton could not have seen what he saw if not for Galileo, Kepler, Descartes and others" (Fiolhais, 2011, s. p.). This is how Portuguese physicist and essayist Carlos Fiolhais dissects, on *De rerum natura* blog, the evocative metaphor of dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants, according to which early discoveries allow us to see more. And further. The idea, first attributed to twelfth-century French monk Bernard of Chartres (and immortalized in the blue stained glass of the cathedral at the French city with the same name, in which evangelists stand on the shoulders of prophets), if applied to science, conveys this vision of scientific work as a *continuum*, and of advances in knowledge being based on previous findings. Still according to that same perfect depiction: "building science is like building a human pyramid" (Fiolhais, 2011, s. p.).

It is in this cumulative view of scientific work that lies the importance of knowing the state of the art of a given field before conducting any kind of research. Literature review is, thus, the basis of any research and is carried out with the intention of synthesizing everything one knows about a particular area of knowledge and promoting future researches (Carver, Hassler, Hernandes & Kraft, 2013).

Vom Brocke, Simons, Bjoern Niehaves, Bjorn Niehaves, Reimer, Plattfaut and Cleven (2009) stress the fact that the significance of this work is based on the search for relevant sources and their contribution to guarantee the research's relevance and rigour. The authors resort to Baker (2000, quoted in Vom Brocke et al., 2009) to explain that by relevance they mean avoiding to re-investigate what is already known, and they use Hevner et al. (2004, quoted in Vom Brocke et al., 2009) to specify that rigour comes from the effective use of pre-existent knowledge.

Made easier by information technologies, the increasing quantity of scientific knowledge available to the community was responsible for even more demanding literature review processes (Best, Taylor, Manktelow & McQuilkin, 2014; Campbell, Taylor, Bates & O' Conner-Bones, 2018), which made the need to evaluate their quality more urgent – an issue actually not that new. Back in the 1980s, Cooper (1988) noticed an increase in the amount of reviews in the fields of Education and Psychology, which was precisely associated to the "information explosion" and increase in researchers in the area (p. 105). In the face of this new reality, the American researcher and psychologist showed his concern about the quality of the reviews and pointed out the need to evaluate them thoroughly, by proposing a taxonomy for categorising them, whose goal was to "distinguish superior from inferior works" (p. 105).

The main disadvantage concerning traditional literature reviews is related to the absence of a specific guiding method, something Carver et al. (2013) synthesize as follows: "lack of rigor may influence results or make the researcher omit relevant publications,

altering the nature of the findings" (p. 203). Although they admit conventional reviews may be valid and interesting, Petticrew and Roberts (2006) also call our attention to the possibility of this kind of review resulting in a "partial review of a convenience sample of the author's favorite studies" (p. 6).

On the contrary, by being formally planned and methodically applied (Staples & Niazi, 2007), systematic literature reviews (SLR) seem to tackle arbitrariness, so common in narrative reviews, more effectively. According to Ramalho (2005), SLR's main objective is to reduce any chances of bias, which is what you hope for in any research study anyway. The author stresses objectivity and reproducibility, cornerstones of scientific work, as some of the main features of this kind of studies. Petticrew and Roberts (2006) point out yet another advantage, which they think justifies their increasing popularity: "they provide a means of dealing with the information mountain, by allowing large amounts of research information to be distilled into a manageable form" (p.11).

Origins and limitations of SLRs

SLRs' development can usually be traced back to the early 1990s with the publication of "Evidence-based Medicine Working Group" (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). This kind of study was, therefore, first used in Medicine in order to collect evidence and knowledge that could support choosing certain clinical procedures and adopting certain policies. Since then, many are the areas that have been advocating and benefitting from SLRs – such as Systems Engineering, Psychology, Nursing and Education. Regardless of the area they fit in, they seem to serve numerous purposes. This is a methodology used not only to get a broader view on a given research topic, but also to find evidence that meet specific research questions. In either case, the ultimate goal is to present a synthesis of earlier works.

Although their roots can be traced to Natural Sciences, there are several Social Sciences researchers who have conducted studies they intend to use to point out how SLRs can be applied to that particular field (Campbell et al., 2018; Faria & Faria, 2014; Victor, 2008).

Regardless of the discipline, all the papers that follow SLR procedures seem often over-enthusiastic about this research technique, frequently used without including researchers' critical assessment. We believe that whenever we choose to conduct a SLR it is important to also think about its limitations and everything lost when comparing to a narrative review, that is, a review that ignores strict and easily replicable criteria.

Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, in their paper "On being 'systematic' in literature reviews in IS" (2015), undertake a deep reflection on SLR, questioning many of its features and benefits. Following authors like Hammersley, Hjrland or Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson, they draw our attention to the fact that importing SLR from Medicine to other disciplines may result in an empiricist/positivist bias towards scientific knowledge. They

also stress the fact that using it could "undermine critical engagement with literature and what it means to be scholarly in academic work" (p. 161). Namely, they point out that the researcher's "interpretation, imagination, creativity and individuality in selecting and judging the studies and findings are to be minimized" (p. 165).

According to Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2015), SLRs cannot replace narrative reviews but, still based on the Australian authors, they can be useful for a specific purpose: "a meta-analysis that identifies and summarizes evidence from earlier research" (p. 163). Petticrew and Roberts (2006) see SLRs as a research method suitable for answering specific questions. They argue that rather than providing a debate about literature, they are a scientific tool: a way to look at studies like you look at survey respondents – "the results from one respondent may say something (...) but it is more likely that one will learn more by examining data from other respondents, by looking at the range of answers, and examining why those answers vary, and by attempting to summarize them" (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006, p. 15). An idea in all similar to that of Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003, p. 209): "meta-analysis offers a statistical procedure for synthesizing findings in order to obtain overall reliability unavailable from any single study alone".

Reasons for conducting a SLR

Once we were confronted with the need to conduct a literature review in order to identify who studied the relationship between children and/or young people and the news, as well as when and where that happened, plus the research's favourite angle, the SLR proved to be the right choice, more so because there was no study alike. The goal was to achieve a global, "panoramic" vision of the proposed topic.

In the chapter "Views on the news", written in 2011, Hobbs, Cohn-Geltner and Landis began by pointing out that "few topics are more marginalized in the scholarly literature of mass communication, education and human development than the topic of children, current events and news" (p. 43). This is an idea shared by different authors (Buckingham, 1997; English, Barnes, Fynes-Clinton & Stewart, 2019; Hobbs, Cohn-Geltner & Landis, 2011). And yet there are studies that address this subject focusing mainly on reception, production and representation (Pereira, Fillol & Silveira, 2015).

Even though saying that children are not interested whatsoever in the news is an old *cliché,* a few researchers suggested just the opposite (Carter & Allen, 2005; Silveira, 2019). Another study, focused on the relationship between British children and BBC's children's news service, *Newsround*, Carter, Messenger Davies, Allan and Mendes (2009) shows the role news may play on children's development as citizens, and that the fact they feel represented stimulates their interest on social issues.

The issues to be addressed in this SLR may be scientifically relevant for Communication Sciences because they can help create an overall picture of what research in this area has been like, by identifying the latest trends, the existing gaps, and what might help

fill them. Therefore, this kind of work may be of interest to researchers who study media, children and youth, as well as to journalism and education professionals.

Methodology

As mentioned earlier, a SLR should be formally planned and include several stages, each one of them with a sequence of steps (Staples & Niazi, 2007). All those moments should be set out according to a strict protocol that describes processes and methods to be used (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). This protocol should guarantee the alleged transparency, objectivity and possibility of replication of all the process. "Alleged" because, according to Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2015), "SLRs mistake the 'objective procedures' of the process for the objectivity of the review's findings", which ultimately will depend on the subjectivity of its authors (p. 166). In this paper, the planning and analysis steps were adapted from the model suggested by Petticrew and Roberts (2006), authors of a practical guide on SLR in the Social Sciences, as shown on the figure below.
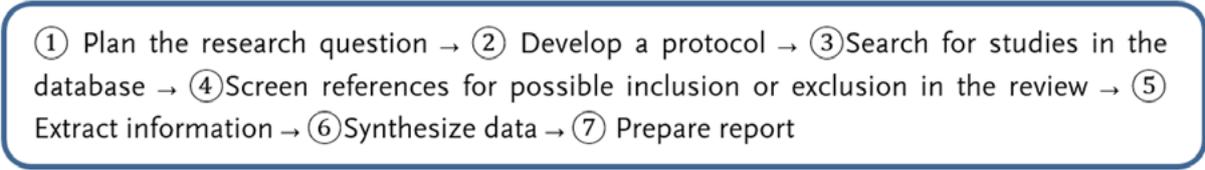
① Plan the research question → ② Develop a protocol → ③ Search for studies in the database → ④ Screen references for possible inclusion or exclusion in the review → ⑤ Extract information → ⑥ Synthesize data → ⑦ Prepare report

Figure 1: Steps in conducting a systematic review (adapted from Petticrew & Roberts, 2006)

We were inspired by Luís Pereira's model (2011) to report the data extracted from the syntheses.

Research questions

Bearing in mind that SLR questions must be closed-ended and the answers must synthesize findings (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015), we have formulated the following research questions:

1. Who has addressed the relationship between children and/or young people and the news in scientific research, and when, where, and how?

   1.1. Which were the most explored and neglected angles?

   1.2. Are there trends associated to specific time periods?

   1.3. How has the interest on the subject been progressing according to the number of papers and topics?

   1.4. Which were the most studied age groups?

   1.5. Which were the most studied media (press, radio, television, written journalism)?

1.6. Which researchers have studied these questions the most?

1.7. Which countries study this topic the most?

1.8. How is the collaboration between researchers from different countries?

1.9. Which journals have published the most papers in the field?

1.10. Which keywords were used the most?

Selecting a database

As a rule, SLR proposes to identify any study that might be relevant to a specific question. However, it is possible to use an alternative when mapping a general topic. Petticrew and Roberts (2006) call it a "quick review". It is a somewhat restricted (to a country, a year, etc.) systematic review. In this case, the review was restricted to one database, the most directly related to Communication, the concerning area of study.

Communication Abstracts was chosen because it provides titles, abstracts and bibliographic data from papers included in 240 academic journals indexed in Communication, Mass Media and other fields of study closely connected to them. Previously produced by SAGE, this reference database is currently managed by EBSCO and provides more than 360 000 registers, which date back from 1978. Despite being aware that using just one database influences the results (Best et al., 2014; Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015), we consider that, due to its scope and relevance, the data obtained through Communication Abstracts constitute an interesting enough sample to create an initial understanding of the studied topic.

Search formula and filters

Before conducting the research, we identified two sets of terms: 1) news; 2) children and young people. Regarding the second set, we have resorted to a symbol (asterisk) in order to research word variations, particularly plural forms. Boolean operators AND/OR were used to connect the sets; in order to obtain the best results, we also performed some tests with the help from a researcher at the University of Minho specialized in digital libraries. The goal was to find a comprehensive enough formula that could allow us to obtain the maximum of relevant results, without rejecting too many irrelevant ones, which usually happens when more search terms are added (Campbell et al., 2018). We used the following formula: "news AND child* OR adolesc* OR young* OR teen* OR youth*".

We chose "AB Abstract or Author-Supplied Abstract", having also refined it by resorting to the advanced search options. Results were restricted when it came to: *type of journal*, having chosen scientific journals (peer reviewed); *type of publication*, in this particular case "academic journals". There were no restrictions regarding the type of document because previous tests had shown that by selecting "articles", case studies

were automatically left out. Finally, we accepted results in five different languages: Spanish, French, English, Italian and Portuguese. There were no time restrictions since one of the research questions was about its progress over time. The research was conducted on 2nd December 2019, having obtained 777 results. In order to be able to establish a comparison, we have replicated it (having used the same terms and the same filters because searching through different databases does not guarantee the exact same possibilities) in the following scientific platforms.

Platforms	Number of References
B-On	2189
Eric	156
Google Scholar	3480
Scopus	2189

Table 1: Occurrence of search terms in different databases

As you can see, except for the Education-oriented database, ERIC, all the rest present a much higher number of results, whose analysis would require a higher amount of time.

Including and excluding papers

Regarding the references obtained through Communication Abstracts, the following step was to read all the titles and abstracts regarding the 777 papers as to choose those that corresponded to the inclusion criteria. Following Petersen and Ali's example (2011), we tried to establish clear, objective and easy to check criteria, and with no need for interpretation. We realised that, in order to check if some paper met the required criteria, we should resort to questions. For the sake of greater transparency, which according to Vom Brocke et al. (2009) ought to be guaranteed so the readers can make a better assessment of the review, we chose to specify a few exclusion situations that were likely to raise some doubts while replicating this work[1].

We hereby present the protocol we used to include or exclude the references found.

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[1] Just as the papers on SLR had cautioned us, in this study we also had to adjust inclusion and exclusion criteria along the selection process, because, as Staples & Niazi (2007) pointed out, researchers learn more about the topic by reading the papers, which allows them to improve early selection criteria.

INCLUDE IF THE ANSWER TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IS YES:

1. Is the paper focused on the relationship between the news and children or youth?
2. Is the paper only about news or news-related media?
3. Are the youth under 20 and does the sample include children and young people under 18?*

(*) On this issue, include if the answer is "no", provided that it concerns one of the following:
1. young people are over 20, but the paper focused on their relationship with the news when they were children or teenagers;
2. the article considers answers from adults, provided they fall into these two categories:
   2.1. parents or educators who take on the role of mediators of the relationship of their children with the news;
   2.2. parents or educators who talk about the experience and habits of their underage children.

EXCLUDE IF:

1. media coverage on children is used to study something else, for instance, the conditions and practices responsible for conspiracy theories to be mentioned in the news;
2. children/youth relationship with the news is mentioned in a context that addresses other age groups;
3. the way media covered some news about youth is analysed, but those in question are not news media;
4. the news result from a study that did not consider them a key element (for instance, there is a study on young people's use of social networks and the news just 'pop up');
5. the focus is adult behaviour, like paedophilia, child abductions, China's one child policy, gay parents, mothers who kill their children;
6. the news are a study variable among many analysed (eg. news and entertainment shows; use of media by young people in general);
7. the paper is focused on how an institution involving young people is represented in the press, but the purpose of the study is the relationship between institutional and media communication.

Table 2: Protocol used to include or exclude the references found

The process of selecting papers is probably the most demanding and time consuming task in a SLR. To make it easier, we chose to carry this out step by step.

First, we read all the abstracts, having excluded those which clearly did not meet the criteria, and having chosen those which did not leave any room for doubt. During this process, we found out that there were double references (the same paper published in more than one language or duplicate). For these twelve cases, one version was kept while another was excluded, in total of six papers.

There were also references that did not match any papers and were, thus, excluded, like editorials or indexes. Therefore, we eliminated 36 references, having kept 741 from the original 777.

As a second step, we read the abstracts of the papers whose selection was not evident. There were several cases in which abstracts did not translate into the data needed to conclude that they met the inclusion criteria. Most times this was related to the age of the subjects, which was not specified. This meant reading the full text and, sometimes, even writing to the authors. After clearing up all the doubts, we concluded the inclusion/exclusion process, having obtained 158 results. However, having already been alerted by Staples and Niazi (2007), who during a SLR identified papers, written by the same authors and that reported the same results, only slightly diverging in structure, we made an effort to compare the ones that shared authorship. This process resulted in the exclusion

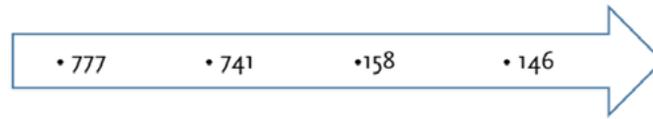of twelve more papers. Once we finished this, we ended up with the 146 papers that constitute the sample.

Figure 2: Progress of the number of papers that constitute the sample after all the selection steps

In the following table we find the information obtained from each abstract.

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About the papers	- Year of publication - Name of journal - Subject area
About the authors	- Name - Affiliation: nationality - Papers signed by several authors from different countries
About the studies	- Target audience - Media studied - Type of study - Methodology used

Table 3: Illustration of the kind of information to obtain from the abstracts

Analysis of results

Evolution of the number of published papers

Graph 1 depicts the evolution of the number of papers published over the years (1978-2019). Until 2003, the number of publications was very low, ranging from none to three. Between 2004 and 2016, the number of publications, even if oscillating, increased slightly to almost half a dozen per year, except for 2011 – when that number surpasses the dozen for the first time, reaching a total of 11 papers. This would only happen again six years later, in 2017 and in 2019, with a minor drop in 2018. In the past five years, there was a more solid increase in the numbers, always above seven papers per year. This recent increase in numbers could mean more attention from researchers regarding this topic, which may also be a consequence of concerns with *fake news* and the post-truth concept. As mentioned above, the increase in numbers after 2004 may result from the fact that information technologies made publishing scientific papers look easier[2].

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[2] Communication Abstracts website has got no information on the evolution of the number of papers made available in the database over the years, which would allow us to establish terms of comparison with the graph presented here.
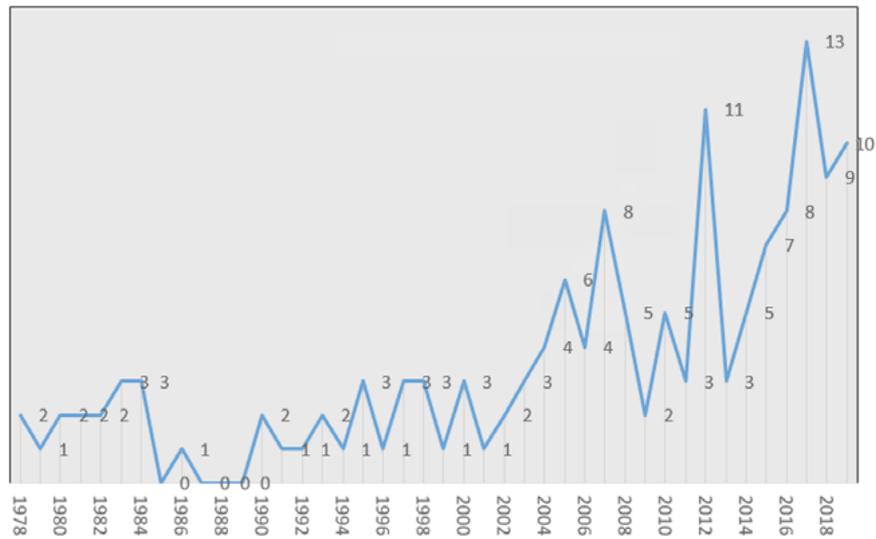
Graph 1: Evolution of the number of published papers per year (1978-2019)

Published papers per scientific journal

The following table shows the journals with greater number of papers about children, young people and news, which might be a useful piece of information, namely if you wish to know where to find earlier research on the subject and a relevant platform where to promote the produced work.

Scientific journals	Periodicity	%
Journal of Children & Media	15	10,2
Communication Research	10	6,9
Journalism Studies	8	5,5
Journalism Quarterly	6	4,1
Journalism	5	3,4
Communication Research Reports	4	2,7
Journal of Health Communication	4	2,7
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly	4	2,7
Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media	3	2,1
Journal of Educational Media	3	2,1
Mass Communication & Society	3	2,1
Newspaper Research Journal	3	2,1

Table 4: Scientific journals with greater number of published papers on the studied topic

The 146 papers in the sample are distributed among 70 publications. This illustrates the dispersion of papers and reinforces the relevance and usefulness of digital databases which allow researchers to have access to works they are interested in. According to the table above, there are 12 journals with three or more publications that include 68 papers, which amount to 46.3% of the total. The remaining 68 (53.7%) appear in journals with just one or two publications. It should be noted that five of the journals hold 30% of the references.

In first place comes *Journal of Children and Media*, founded in 2007 and currently published by Taylor & Francis Online, which is perfectly understandable since it is an interdisciplinary publication devoted to debating the presence of media in the lives of children and teenagers, focusing in three complementary topics: children as media consumers, representations of children in the media, and media organizations/productions for or from children. The journal, peer reviewed and published bi-monthly, collects theoretical and empirical studies by authors worldwide. As you can verify at the website[3], it aims to be an international forum about the above mentioned issues, either in local or national/global contexts.

Communication Research, which takes second place, has existed for 45 years and is published by SAGE Publishing. Similarly to *Journal of Children and Media*, it was created in the United States, but it offers you a more comprehensive coverage since it encompasses Communication Studies in whole, publishing papers that, according to its website, "explore the processes, antecedents and consequences of communication in a broad range of societal systems"[4].

While analysing the publications, it came as no surprise to us that scientific journals about Journalism, Communication and *Media* were in greater number, but it was curious to observe that seven of them had Education as their main focus.

Angles of approach to research

One of this SLR's main research questions was to figure out, from reading the abstracts, which were the most studied views on the relationship between the news and children or youth. Therefore, papers were firstly grouped by three traditional categories: reception studies and effects; production studies; and representation studies. Other three categories came out of the analysis on titles and abstracts: impact of news in political participation or socialization; impact of parental mediation; and journalists' ethical concerns when covering news that involve children. The 146 papers were, then, subdivided into the six categories[5], whose inclusion criteria are specified in the following table.

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[3] See https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rchm20/current

[4] Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/home/crx

[5] Whenever the paper could be listed in more than one category, we chose the dominant one. Regarding the "journalists' ethical concerns" category, it should be noted that the scientific papers found are about journalists' ethical concerns and not about ethical concerns raised by researchers as a result of the news coverage.

Category	Description
Representation	How the media portray topics related to children or young people (sexuality, crime, autism, teenage sex...), in general or in particular (Malala Yousafzai, for instance).
Impact of the news in political participation or socialization	Relationship between reading the news and citizen/political/environmental participation or political socialization of children or young people.
Impact of parental mediation	In case there is mediation, how it is done; how it affects young people's interest on the news.
Reception and Effects	How children or young people consume and/or receive the news; their level of literacy regarding the news, their critical thinking towards them or ability to assess their credibility; how a specific kind of news can affect children and youth.
Production	Studies on the production of children or youth-directed news or how they can draw their attention. A few papers about the news produced by children or young people were also added.
Journalists' ethical concerns	Coverage of news involving children; how journalists treat children when covering events somehow related to them.

Table 5: Definition of the different categories

The distribution by categories of the sample is as follows.
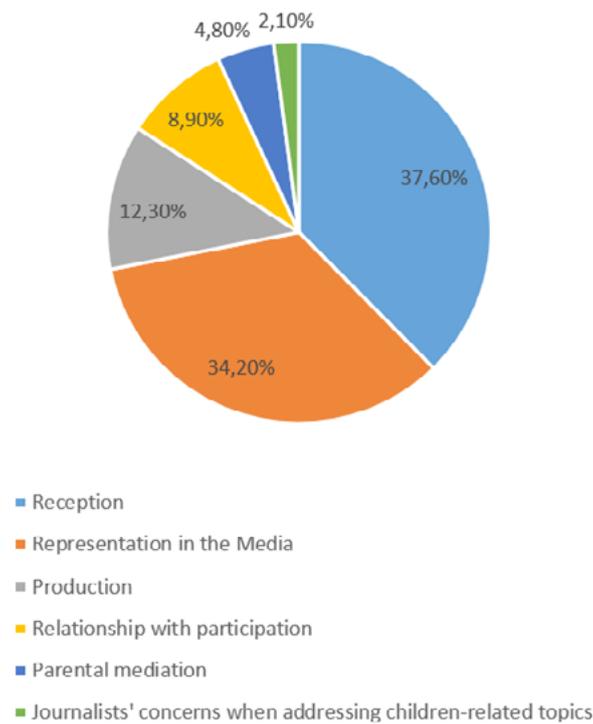
Graph 2: Distribution of the sample by different categories

As can be inferred from the graph, there are two major approaches to research in this area: reception studies (represent 37.6% total, and amount to 55 papers); not far from the first one, studies about media coverage of certain events related to children and youth (34.2% which correspond to 50 papers). Together, these approaches represent

more than two thirds of the whole sample (71.8%); therefore they are the categories which raise greater interest from researchers.

Either one of them, though, deserves a closer look.

Reception studies are present during the studied period (1979-2019).

A little over one fifth (21.3%) tried to understand how young people received and dealt with sad or violent news, which showed that researchers were somewhat concerned about potential effects. There were 11 papers included in this subcategory, a very close number to the one of the category on the impact in political participation and socialisation (13). According to these two sets of papers, there is yet another comparison to be made: studies focused on effects were distributed in time, between 1993 and 2019. Studies on the impact of the news in young people's participation focus on two particular moments, separated by three decades: there are records of papers between 1981 and 1984, which will only resurface between 2014 and 2019.

With regard to the 50 papers in the *representation* category, most of the topics (32) that motivated this kind of research concerns negative events, such as wars, child abductions, youth violence or crime, abuse. Six of the papers focus on the relationship between children and the internet, four of which address problems like *cyberbullying*, *sexting* or online risks. There are eight papers about health issues (mainly conditions) such as obesity, cancer in children or autism. The fact that research focus on negative events seems to show that the media are able to set an agenda, even for those who study them, since even the press tends to choose negative images when addressing the younger population; and this also applies to Portugal (Brites, 2013; Ponte, 2009).

Still in the representation category, researchers' concern with more vulnerable groups is quite evident: four of the papers are about immigrant or refugee children, other four about ethnic minorities. Youth living in the suburbs, multicultural or transgender children have also been object of investigation, as well as star-children (Malala Yousafzai or the protagonists of the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, 2008). Looking at the time frame when these papers were produced, it is clear that representation studies only became a trend in this research area from the late 1990s onwards. All the papers, except for one, were written between 1998 and 2019.

Getting back to the graph, the other four categories correspond to more than one fourth of the sample: 28.1% (41 papers).

The largest share focuses on the *production of news for and from children and young people* (12.3% which correspond to 18 papers). Only one piece is about school journalism: most of the reviews (67%) concern newspapers or television news targeted at childhood or youth in different parts of the world; BBC's *Newsround* is reviewed in more than one paper.

After the already mentioned publications about the *impact of the news on participation and socialisation* (8.9%, 13 papers), and raising little interest from the academy, is the review on parental mediation (4.8%, seven papers) and on the ethical concerns of

journalists regarding the way children and youth are treated in the news (2.1%, three papers).

Meta-analysis on the authors

Another research question aimed at identifying the researchers with the greater number of works published on this subject, in order to find bibliography that might have been missed by this SLR, as well as contacts of potential research partners. In order to do so, we followed a scoring system, since comparing the number of papers, while disregarding the fact that they were first or second (or more) authors, did not seem rigorous enough[6].

Even if the United States is, by far, the country with the greater number of papers published, European researchers are also very well represented, with a slight difference in favour of the Americans (nine to seven authors).

Table 6 shows that, even if the authors in the first two places are men, women are clearly the majority. Dafna Lemish pointed that out while examining her 13 years' experience as an editor of *Journal of Children and Media*: studies on children and media were still led by women, which did not come as a surprise to her "as long as the private sphere of family and the wellbeing of children, their education, and literacy are all perceived as women's territory – whether within individual households, public institutions, or scholarly field" (Lemish, 2019, p. 120).

The researcher who obtained the most points is Swedish. Adam Shehata is an Associate Professor at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication of the University of Gothenburg and signed four papers, three of which as first author. In this individual ranking, the following are two American authors who have written three papers each as first authors: Charles Atkin was a Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Wisconsin, over which he presided; Regina Marchi, Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers School of Communication and Information, in New Jersey, studies the intersection of media, culture and politics focusing on marginalised populations, including children – in 2017 she was a co-author of the book *Young people and the future of news: social media and the rise of connective journalism*, by Cambridge University Press.

Next, with five points each, are three Dutch scholars: Moniek Buijzen and Mariska Kleemans, both from the University of Radboud (which, similarly to the University of Amsterdam, has got a considerable number of researchers who contribute as authors or co-authors for this sample – Radboud nine and Amsterdam eight); and Juliette Walma Van Der Molen, from the University of Twent. Out of the three, the one that seems to focus more on the subject is Kleemans, whose research aims to investigate how the

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[6] We chose to give each researcher two points per paper in case they were the main authors and one point if they were co-authors. This way, for instance, two authors with two papers published, one of them with two papers as first author and the other one with two papers as co-author, would never score the same.

relationship between children and the news can be improved: "how can we get children more involved with the news and how can the news prepare them for their role in society"[7]. Kleemans is also concerned about the way negative news are presented to children. Buijzen's work is more focused on using Communication's scientific knowledge to improve young people's well-being. Van Der Molen studies how young people learn through different media in greater depth.[8]

Name	Country	Number of points	Number of papers
Shehata, Adam	Sweden	7	4
Atkin, Charles K.	USA	6	3
Marchi, Regina	USA	6	3
Buijzen, Moniek	The Netherlands	5	4
Kleemans, Mariska	The Netherlands	5	3
Van Der Molen, Juliette Walma	The Netherlands	5	3
Cairns, E.	Northern Ireland	4	2
Drew, Dan G.	USA	4	2
Edgerly, Stephanie	USA	4	2
Mathews, Julian	England	4	2
Moeller, Judith	The Netherlands	4	2
Riddle, Karyn	USA	4	2
Smith, Stacy L.	USA	4	2
Wanta, Wayne	USA	4	2
Wilson, Barbara J.	USA	4	3
Worthington, Nancy	USA	4	2
Unaffiliated	-	-	2

Table 6: List of authors with the greater number of published papers

If we pay attention to the countries with the greater number of papers published (according to the first author's nationality), the United States stand out with half the total. Next are the Netherlands, with 9.6%, and England, with 6.8%. When you add the number of papers whose first author is European, the percentage still falls short of the numbers achieved by American authors (31.5%). An invitation to reflection is the fact that the 24 countries list (22 if we only count first authors) includes territories marked by violence (internal or with neighbouring countries) or by strong repression. Among these are Israel, Palestine, Northern Ireland, South Korea, Turkey, Chile, Romania and Taiwan, which represent a third of the countries. Between 1978 and 1991 (included), the

[7] Retrieved from https://www.ru.nl/english/people/kleemans-m/

[8] Two of the authors who signed papers found in the present SLR were unaffiliated and we could not even find out their nationality by searching their names on the internet.

19 papers on the subject published and collected in Communication Abstracts database are from authors originally from the USA (14), Israel (três) and Northern Ireland (dois).

COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF PAPERS (1ST AUTHOR)	%
USA	73	50
The Netherlands	14	9,6
England	10	6,8
Australia	6	4,1
Belgium	6	4,1
Sweden	6	4,1
Israel	5	3,4
Canada	4	2,7
Northern Ireland	3	2,1
Unaffiliated	2	1,4

Table 6: List of nationalities (affiliation) of first authors

Regarding the authors, another goal was to learn if researchers from different countries have been cooperating, and if national realities have been compared. It was concluded that few are the works which intersect more than one reality or have the contribution of authors from different geographical and cultural contexts. There were seven papers written by authors from different countries (six pair up authors from two countries; one pairs up authors from three countries). There are, still, nine papers which focus on realities from different countries (Brazil and Sweden; South Korea and the Netherlands; India and the international reality; Turkey, Morocco and Flanders; Italy, Portugal and Spain; London and New York; USA, United Kingdom, Qatar and Jerusalem; 14 European countries) and one paper that compares Jews and Arabs in Israel. As Barnhurst (2000) points out, "comparing groups reared under a greatly differing news arena permits a search for common patterns", hence to understand, for instance, if there is a generational factor that crosses cultural or national boundaries. On the other hand, and according to the same author, differences may indicate different contexts, with "alternative policy choices", that should somehow be assessed. One way or the other, the comparison allows us to build grounded theory.

Regarding nationalities, it is observed that some countries have a greater interest in certain research areas. That is quite evident in the case of Sweden where four of the six papers are included in the category about the impact of the news on political participation and socialisation. From the 10 papers whose first author is British, three of them (30%) fit the production category, which must certainly be related to the fact that the British public service broadcaster, BBC, produces the oldest children-oriented television news, *Newsround*.

Meta-analysis on the papers

Regarding the works published, we learned that the attention given to children and young people is quite levelled: 68 papers focused on the first, and 67 on the latter. Eight of the papers focused on both indistinctly, and three focused on babies/toddlers (representation studies). In the case of the abstracts that mentioned age, the chosen children were aged between 5 and 13, and teenagers between 12 and 19. We could also observe that the papers about the impact of the news on political participation or socialisation focused mainly on young people, and research on the reaction to negative news focused on children instead.

Table 8 shows the results of reviews focused on the media studied.

Medium or media	Papers	%
No specific *medium*: journalism and news in general	49	33,6
Television	45	30,8
Newspapers	31	21,2
Online news	8	5,5
Television, radio and written press	4	2,7
Traditional and online press	3	2,1
Magazines	2	1,4
Television and newspapers	2	1,4
Radio	1	0,7
Television and radio	1	0,7

Table 8: Most studied *medium* or group of media

As you can see in Table 8, most of the papers were not about a specific *medium*, they rather addressed news in general. Among those which focused on one *medium*, television was the one that most drew the attention of researchers; it was followed by newspapers. There was only one paper solely dedicated to the radio. The digital medium is starting to attract some attention. The first paper to mention children's online news dates back from 2010, which slightly corresponds to the period in which the number of studies on television started to drop.

When it comes to the methodologies used, we were not able to come up with a statistical analysis because not all of the abstracts provided clear information about it. However, we could conclude that most papers were based on empirical studies, which serve as qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies. We identified a sole study based on intervention, and theory-based papers did not exceed half a dozen.

Finally, and following Ramos, Faria and Faria's example (2014), we created a cloud of words by importing all the keywords indicated by the authors of the various papers

into WordClouds[9] (48 authors did not provide any keywords, reason why the cloud was created based on the ones provided by the authors of 98 papers)[10].

Figure 3 shows us that the keywords we used for research were adequate and that the cloud, in its whole, portrays some of the results achieved in this study. Apart from the attention paid to the words related to research (news and children and/or young people), a few other words, which identify the categories found through a review of the abstracts, were also highlighted: reception/effects (*audience, effects*); representation and production (*analysis, content, discourse, framing*); impact of parental mediation (*mediation*); impact of political participation or socialisation (*political, social, socialisation*); journalists' ethical concerns (*ethics*). Thanks to this tool the results may help the keywords identify the research done in this field.

Figure 3: Map of keyword frequency

Final considerations

Systematic literature review turned out to be an adequate tool for mapping and conducting a meta-analysis of the existing work on the relationship between children and/or young people and the news. We would hardly have obtained the overview we wished for by using a conventional review. However, we consider that both reviews have

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[9] See https://www.wordclouds.com/

[10] The uppercase letters in the keywords were replaced by lowercase letters so that they come up only once in the cloud, otherwise the program will assume they are different words, hence generating two entries and misleading us about their exact number.

to be seen as complementary rather than alternative, namely in the Social Sciences field; otherwise, research could be subjected to a positivist bias. SLR was an important first step into carrying out an integral and critical reading of papers and, through them, other studies and authors.

The fact that the review was limited to one database determines which relevant studies on the subject will not be part of this sample; furthermore, it is focused on Communication and may not contemplate reviews from other fields. Also, the fact that most of the journals on Communication Abstracts are Anglo-Saxon limits the number of references available; that is why it will be important to broaden any future reviews to databases that provide scientific production in different languages, namely Portuguese. The kind of research that uses these databases also conditions the access to documental sources as important as books. Bearing these limitations in mind, we consider that this was in fact important work through which we were able to identify major areas of study – reception and representation – and neglected ones – production, impacts on participation, parental mediation and journalists' ethical concerns; moments when the topic received more attention, from 2011 until the present day; and the journals which featured it, mainly *Journal of Children and Media*. We could tell that, although the United States presented half the papers published, the list of authors who devoted themselves to the subject shows some balance between Americans and Europeans, and that the topic is of particular interest to women researchers. Most of the papers address news in general. Whenever studies were focused on a single *medium*, television was on top of the list, and from 2010 onwards studies on television started decreasing, and online seemed to capture researchers' attention. Regarding the targets, there was a balance between the number of studies focused only on children or only on youth. Geographically speaking, very little studies crossed over different realities; and a third of the countries with works published in this area corresponded to territories marked by violence or a recent history of totalitarian regimes.

To finish how we started, this SLR kept us from meeting the "giant" we alluded to in the beginning, but hinted some contours. The next step in the research is to really get to know him.

Translation: Helena Antunes

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