

Media Literacy in Sex Education of Adolescents in Spanish Public Schools

La alfabetización mediática en la educación sexual de adolescentes en centros públicos españoles

Alfabetização midiática em educação sexual entre adolescentes em escolas públicas espanholas

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This research analyzes the sources of information on sex education (SE) most consulted by Spanish adolescents aged 14 to 16 years, identifies the needs perceived by teachers in media and information literacy related to SE and examines the sources that support the content on sexual health in TikTok. Based on a survey of 303 adolescents, 20 interviews with teachers and content analysis of 551 publications, it is concluded that young people use the Internet, have little training in SE, have difficulty distinguishing truthful information and that the content on social networks lacks reliable sources.

KEYWORDS: Media and information literacy, sex education, teenagers, teachers, social media.

Esta investigación analiza las fuentes de información sobre educación sexual (ES) más consultadas por adolescentes españoles de 14 a 16 años, identifica las necesidades percibidas por docentes en alfabetización mediática e informacional relacionada con la ES y examina las fuentes que respaldan el contenido sobre salud sexual en TikTok. A partir de una encuesta a 303 adolescentes, 20 entrevistas a docentes y el análisis de contenido de 551 publicaciones, se concluye que la juventud recurre a Internet, tiene escasa formación en ES, dificultades para distinguir información veraz y que el contenido en redes carece de fuentes fiables.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Alfabetización mediática e informacional, educación sexual, adolescentes, profesorado, redes sociales.

A través de um questionário se investigou as fontes de informação usadas por 303 adolescentes para instruir-se sobre educação sexual (ES). 20 professores foram entrevistados sobre as necessidades de ES ligadas à alfabetização midiática e informacional (AMI) dos alunos e 551 publicações sobre saúde sexual no TikTok foram analisadas. Conclui-se que os adolescentes usam a Internet para aprender sobre saúde sexual e reprodutiva, que eles têm pouco treinamento nessa área e dificuldades para distinguir informações verdadeiras de falsas, e que as publicações sobre redes de saúde sexual não têm fontes confiáveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Alfabetização midiática e informacional, educação sexual, professores, educação, redes sociais.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of the Internet and social networks to consult the news continues to rise worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2024). A total of 39% of the younger population also acknowledges using social networks for information purposes, and TikTok has become the reference platform for consulting the news in this age group (Newman, 2023). The same happens regarding information related to sexuality. When boys and girls want to find out about sexual health issues they largely turn to the Internet (47.8%), followed by friends (45.5%) (Observatorio de salud sexual y reproductiva [SEC], 2019).

However, at the international level, there is great concern about the increase in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among adolescents (Schmidt & Marcus, 2023), which shows that quality information and prevention of STIs do not reach adolescents or do not reach them sufficiently. Also of concern are sexual crimes committed by adolescents against other minors, influenced by the consumption of pornography and the lack of training in sex education (SE) (Ruiz Repullo, 2024). Currently, the average age to start watching pornography is 13 years old (Robb & Mann, 2023).

In this context, this research aims to identify the sources of information about SE most consulted by Spanish adolescents aged 14 to 16 years, to identify teachers' perception of the media and information literacy (MIL) needs of students related to SE, and to examine the sources that back up the sexual health content on TikTok, which is consumed by young people.

STATE OF THE ART

Sex education in adolescents and the teachers' perspective

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006), sexuality constitutes a fundamental element in the life of a human being throughout their development, encompassing sex, gender roles and gender identity, eroticism, pleasure, reproduction and sex-affective orientation. For Unesco, from a human rights perspective, comprehensive sexuality education fulfills an essential role in the training of children and ado-

lescents, both through formal and informal education, for the achievement of full, safe lives free of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, non-consensual sexual relations, sexually transmitted diseases or physical, psychological and online violence based on gender or sexual orientation (Unesco, 2018). Thus, Unesco understands sex education as a teaching and learning process that contemplates multiple dimensions of sexuality, such as cognitive, emotional, physical and social.

In recent years, SE oriented to gender equality has gained special relevance, seeking to promote a socialization among adolescents free of sexist stereotypes in order to overcome gender roles and gender violence (Méndez et al., 2017). To this end, the social dimension of affective and sexual relationships is integrated into teaching, while also analyzing how power dynamics and gender inequalities can influence the construction of sexuality and affective experiences (Venegas, 2017). In this regard, several studies confirm the effectiveness of including specific content aimed at preventing male violence within school SE programs (Ramiro-Sánchez et al., 2018; Ubillos-Landa et al., 2021).

However, in terms of formal education, scientific evidence also indicates that when SE is taught from a transversal perspective, it implies that the teaching is not carried out in an official manner or that the contents are taught exclusively from a hygienist perspective and focused on biological aspects (Mañas Olmo & González Alba, 2022). Furthermore, Calvo González (2015) argues that this training barely contemplates the consumption of the media and social networks as informing agents on sexual issues, despite the fact that this aspect is becoming increasingly relevant. Based on this need, this author develops the concept of “media sex education” with the objective of not only working through digital resources but also educating young people on the use of digital technologies related to SE.

In this way, MIL training linked to SE seeks that adolescents learn to identify uninformative content related to sexuality, acquire a critical attitude that allows them to browse the Internet and discern between fictitious and real sexual representations, as well as to promote the understanding of stereotypical representations related to sex and sexuality (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2024). Moreover, MIL stands out for its capacity to stimulate creativity and the critical production of content

and messages, encouraging healthy, respectful and realist narratives about sexuality and relationships (Vahedi et al., 2018).

If we look at the perspective of teachers and social educators in training, Martínez Martín and Bejarano Franco (2021) identify two factors that hinder their commitment and instruction in SE. First, they highlight the lack of a university curriculum that addresses sexuality and gender equality in a global manner so that they can learn before they teach. Second, it is concluded that gender biases and false beliefs about sexuality among prospective teachers make it difficult for them to engage. Mañas Olmo and González Alba (2022) complete this vision with another study about prospective teachers' perception of SE. These authors detect two highly polarized optics. On the one hand, there are undergraduate students who consider it positive to incorporate SE in the official curriculum, while, on the other hand, some of the future teaching staff consider it negative. This disparity in the responses is replicated in the question of who should teach this subject. Some point out that the main support axis should be the families, in coordination with the school; others believe that families should not interfere in this training.

Education and sexual health in social networks

Democratization in access to the Internet has favored the plurality of voices in the digital environment. Consequently, more people have the opportunity to create and share content among their followers, allowing many people to become professionals in the field of content creation. In the most general sense, an influencer is defined as someone who specializes in one or several specific topics on which he or she provides information on a regular basis on one or multiple digital platforms. Through these channels, influencers establish communicative links which facilitate interaction with their followers and the training of a wider audience (Van Nispen, 2012).

Although it is undeniable that information and communication technologies (ICTs) significantly broaden access to information on sex education (SE) from a positive, informed and non-judgmental approach to sexuality, these same technologies can also facilitate the dissemination

of inaccurate and inappropriate content that perpetuates sexual myths and reinforces gender stereotypes (Unesco, 2018).

Recent research has warned that some content creators do not have certificates accrediting their ability to communicate on health-related topics, which may contribute to misinformation and affect the distorted knowledge acquired by Internet users (Herrera-Peco et al., 2021). It has also been shown that these figures are hardly supported by scientific sources to back up the information they convey (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). The only identified academic study which analyzed TikTok content on sex education and sexual health shows that the most-addressed topics are feminine anatomy and sexual pleasure, followed by contraceptive methods and sexual health (Fowler et al., 2022). However, this research does not assess the sources nor the veracity of the information.

The situation is alarming, since “the representations of the new media influence the behavior of citizens, not only in virtual spaces but also in the real life of these people and especially of young people and minors” (Collado-Alonso et al., 2023, p. 260). According to this study, a large proportion of the young population consider social networks and the content created by influencers to be a source of learning and support that they don’t find in formal education. In this context, the possible exposure of young people to uninformative content on sexual health and sex education in the digital environment is of concern, considering that they turn to the Internet 47.8% of the time for information on this subject (SEC, 2019) and that they face difficulties in discerning quality and curated information from the uninformative (Herrero-Curiel & La Rosa Barrolleta, 2023). In line with this, the report *The OECD Truth Quest Survey. Methodology and Findings* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024) points out that young people are less able to identify truthful news in the digital environment, although they are more confident than older people in their ability to recognize false content. This suggests that confidence is not necessarily related to the ability to detect informational disorders.

In short, the boys and girls currently studying in high school belong to generation Z and have not had to learn how to use electronic devices

in school. However, it is evident that this technological skill does not necessarily imply a mature development of critical thinking related to the media and other digital tools (Aguaded & Romero-Rodríguez, 2018; De Frutos Torres et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Objectives and research questions

The objectives of this research are, firstly, to identify the main sources of information on sex education (SE) that Spanish adolescents use and to find out their capacity to reflect on the content they visualize. Secondly, regarding the second research audience (teaching staff and guidance counselors), the study seeks to identify the needs they observe among students in terms of media and information literacy (MIL) linked to SE, to find out who they think should train students in SE and what prevents them from becoming more involved in this subject. Lastly, this study aims to examine the sources used in sexual health content on TikTok and discover the profession of content creators who divulge this type of information.

With all this in mind, the research questions on which this exploratory study is based are the following: 1) What are the main sources used by adolescents to learn about SE issues? 2) What urgent needs do teachers identify in terms of MIL linked to SE in the classroom? 3) What are the main sources of information used by youth opinion leaders to disseminate information about sexual health?

To fulfill the objectives and respond to the questions posed, a methodological triangulation has been carried out which combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. The survey responds to the first objective of identifying the sources of information about SE to which adolescents turn most often. The second objective is explored through interviews with teachers in order to identify their perceptions of student training in MIL linked to SE. Lastly, the analysis of TikTok content seeks to examine the sources used in posts on sexual health.

Surveys aimed at high school students

During the 2021-2022 academic year, there were 639498 students registered in the second cycle of high school (9th and 10th grades)

in publicly-owned educational centers (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2023). Based on this scenario, a response rate of 303 people was reached: 162 girls, 133 boys and 8 non-binary people; distributed throughout most of Spain: Basque Country (58), Castile and Leon (48), Andalusia (45), Castile-La Mancha (34), La Rioja (32), Murcia (28), Melilla (16), Balearic Islands (15), Cantabria (14) and the Community of Madrid (13). The total number of responses exceeded 270, which corresponds to a confidence level of 90 % and a sampling error of 5 %.

Before conducting the survey, a pretest was carried out with nine young people in order to guarantee the quality of this technique and a good understanding of the questions.³ The online survey, which was open from May 15 to May 30, 2024, sought to progressively expand the number of participants through the “snowball” method (Igartua, 2006) after trying to get the teachers who were interviewed to share the survey among their students. In addition, only one response per individual was permitted by limiting to one access per IP.

First, demographic and control questions were asked, followed by a section focused on identifying the sources and consumption habits of adolescents about content related to SE, and a final section aimed at discovering the perception that adolescents have of their training in MIL.

In-depth interviews with teachers and guidance counselors

In line with previous research on MIL with high school teachers (Herrero Curiel & La Rosa Barrolleta, 2022), in order to select the sample of educators from all over Spain, we contacted the State Register of Non-University Teaching Centers, under the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, from which we requested an updated list of publicly-owned high schools in Spain. From this list, which includes 34 575 schools, approximately 10 were randomly selected for each autonomous community and city, and the participation of a teacher or guidance counselor was requested in each case. Finally, out of a total of 200 telephone calls made, 20 teachers and guidance counselors from

³ Access to the survey questionnaire: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XtnJsDqt3s9owzoF8cnsQL9U5GsQpUDa/view?usp=sharing>

six autonomous communities (Basque Country, Castile and Leon, La Rioja, Andalusia, Cantabria and the Community of Madrid) and one autonomous city (Melilla) were interviewed.

After conducting the interviews telematically –due to the geographical location of the researchers– from the end of April to the end of June 2024, the codes and categories were operationalized using the Atlas.ti software. Of the 20 documents analyzed, seven codes, seven memos and 175 citations were counted. The codes used are the following: students' MIL, students' SE, students' sources of SE, pornography consumption, difference in porn consumption by gender, who should train in SE, and the reality of SE among teachers and guidance counselors.

Analysis of TikTok content

Content analysis is considered the most appropriate option to address the content on the social network TikTok (McCashin & Murphy, 2023). According to Sampieri et al. (2018), it is “a technique to study any type of communication in an objective and systematic way, which quantifies the messages of content in categories and subcategories and submits them to statistical analysis” (p. 260).

To compile posts on sexual health on the platform, we created an account for a hypothetical 15-year-old user, to avoid previous browsing altering the content offered (Fowler et al., 2022). The posts to be analyzed were found after entering keywords into the search engine of the social network which stores popular content through hashtags (Fielding et al., 2016). The terms used were: *#educaciónsexual* [sexeducation], *#educaciónafectivosexual* [affective-sexualeducation], *#saludsexual* [sexualhealth] and *#sexualidad* [sexuality], and resulted in a total of 665 videos. However, the final sample was reduced to 551 posts. The remaining 114 were discarded for different reasons: 38 talked about a different topic, 25 were in a language other than Spanish, 20 dealt with institutional policy, 16 were short movies, and 15 were TV programs. The video links, collected between August 2 and August 3, 2024, have been stored in an Excel table for further content analysis.⁴

⁴ Access to the code for content analysis: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15A>

RESULTS

Sex education of students and sources consulted

Regarding the perception of the teachers and guidance counselors interviewed about the training of students in sex education (SE), they all shared their concern about the insufficient affective and sexual learning of their students. A total of 40% of them highlighted pornography consumption as the main obstacle in the training of students in this area.

They aren't informed. They need a good explanation ... The sex education that they are receiving, from an increasingly younger age, is porn. This gives them a very distorted idea of what sexuality is (Interview 1, Juan del Enzina High School, León).

They do not have sufficient sex education. They will tell you that there is a lot of porn consumption ... They are transmitting a totally unreal reality about how they must live their sexuality (Interview 2, Gonzalo de Berceo High School, La Rioja).

In this respect, 80% of interviewees identify the gender differences in the access and consumption of explicitly sexual content and have highlighted that it is boys who watch and normalize this type of content the most.

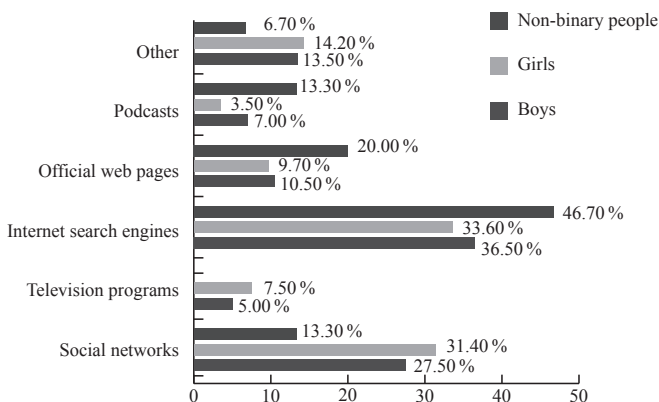
Girls consume a lot less porn. The girls get carried away by social networks and end up suffering other types of violence, such as *sextortion* (blackmail under the threat of publishing images in which the victim shows an erotic or pornographic pose) (Interview 5, 8 de Marzo High School, Cantabria).

Porn has done a lot of damage when it comes to guiding young men on how to have relationships with women because boys are obviously the ones who follow this type of reprehensible behavior (Interview 14, El Mirador de la Sierra High School, Ávila).

Likewise, teachers and counselors pointed out that when young people want to learn or get information on SE-related issues, a high percentage of them turn to the digital sphere. A total of 80 % of the people interviewed perceived that students turn to social networks, especially TikTok and Instagram, and another 50 % alluded to the Internet, where, according to their comments, boys and girls follow opinion leaders such as youtubers and influencers.

In fact, through the surveys, it was found that when students have any doubts about SE, they first turn to Internet search engines (35.4 %), followed by social networks (29 %). This preference was evident in both girls and boys, although girls reported consulting social networks more than boys (31.4 % compared to 27.5 %). Lastly, both genders reported browsing official websites to broaden their education, which reflects that a high percentage of them resort to the digital sphere.

FIGURE 1
SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONSULTED BY STUDENTS
FOR TRAINING IN SE



Source: The authors.

When asked about the reasons that lead them to consult the selected sources of information, easy understanding of the content was the main explanation (45.21 %), followed by routine (20.13 %), and trust in the

sources consulted (19.14%). However, creativity was barely taken into consideration (3.96%) and the remaining 11.55% corresponds to the “other” value. Of the latter, 45.71% confessed that they were not informed by any media source. This percentage was obtained by asking those who chose the response “other” to state what other sources they consulted.

Media and information literacy of students

A total of 35% of the people interviewed pointed out that young people have access to an excessive amount of information on SE through the Internet, and that they are not able to differentiate between curated and quality content and uninformative content, which results in part of the student body engaging in sexual and affective behaviors and having attitudes that concern teachers and counselors.

They are less and less prepared. They have more sources of information ... but we see that it is a disadvantage because of the number of hoaxes, lies, false myths and stereotypes to which they have access (Interview 6, Santiago Rusiñol High School, Madrid).

The SE that they obtain is through social networks, the Internet and from content that is not real nor appropriate. They have a distorted vision of reality (Interview 8, La Maroma High School, Málaga).

This perception from educators contrasts with the critical attitude that students say they adopt when they consume information both in the media and on social networks. Regarding the media, on a Likert scale where 1 means “very little reflection” and 5 means “a lot of reflection”, almost half of the respondents were in the middle (43.23%). Only 4.62% acknowledged adopting a very critical attitude, 20.79% expressed having a fairly critical attitude, and the remaining 31.35% shared that they reflect between little and very little on the content they consume in the media. Regarding social networks, the majority of the students surveyed were also in the middle ground (38.61%), although 6.60% confessed to having a very critical attitude, and another 22.77%, quite critical. The remaining 32%, a level

similar to the average, corresponds to a low and very low level of critical attitude towards the content viewed.

However, students have shown their need to acquire more tools to understand how to browse the Internet in a responsible, safe and critical way. A total of 68.32% of the student body stated that their center should provide more in-depth training in MIL; in contrast to 17.82%, who expressed their disagreement; and the remaining 13.86%, who responded with “don’t know - no answer”.

Videos about sexual health and sex education on TikTok

Of the 551 TikTok posts about sex education and sexual health analyzed, only 3.63% alluded to one or various sources of information. Among these videos, 90% (18 posts) referred to just one source, while 5% highlighted two sources and another 5% named three sources. Scientific sources prevailed (52.17%). However, institutional sources also stood out (34.78%), mostly referring to the World Health Organization, although two cases were also identified in which non-governmental organizations were alluded to (8.7%) and one occasion on which a reference was made to a social network profile (4.35%).

A total of 86.03% of the content analyzed was created by influencers, compared to 13.97% generated by users. Among the influencers, the presence of macro-influencers stood out (27.22%), followed by micro-influencers (24.68%), mega-influencers (17.97%) and nano-influencers (16.15%). In total, 67 840 likes and 568 comments were recorded on average for each TikTok.

We identified the training of half of the content creators from what is indicated in their profiles, and 41.38% of these people are trained in different health areas. Doctors with specialties related to sexual and reproductive health (obstetricians, gynecologists and urologists) were those who shared most content on TikTok (15.43%), followed by psychologists (8.35%). In a smaller proportion, we find those trained in sexology (5.99%). Dual training in psychology and sexology (6.9%), and professions in other health areas, such as nursing (1.81%) or pharmacy (1.45%), were also identified.

| TABLE 1 | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|--------------------------------|--------|------|
| CONTENT CREATORS ON TIKTOK TRAINED IN THE HEALTH FIELD | | | | | |
| Training | People | % | Training | People | % |
| Nurse | 10 | 1.81 | Psychologist | 46 | 8.35 |
| Pharmacist | 8 | 1.45 | Psychologist and pedagogue | 2 | 0.36 |
| Physiotherapist | 4 | 0.73 | Psychologist and sexologist | 38 | 6.90 |
| Doctor | 85 | 15.43 | Sexologist | 33 | 5.99 |
| Pedagogue | 1 | 0.18 | Sexologist and pedagogue | 1 | 0.18 |

Source: The authors.

Reinforcing sex education in classrooms

In terms of the need to reinforce SE among students, 100 % of interviewees expressed the urgent need to strengthen this training in classrooms. More than half of the students (57.10 %) stated their desire to broaden their knowledge of SE, while 22.7 % were against it, and the remaining 20.13 % responded “don’t know - no answer”.

However, not all educators agreed on who should be in charge of training young people. There are two opposing positions. On the one hand, half of the interviewees defended that the best option is to approach this training in an interdisciplinary way, in such a way that teachers, counselors, families and expert personnel (sexologists, psychologists, communication experts, etc.) are all involved.

As teachers, we know about our area, but we need to be trained in all aspects that can affect students. It is also good that experts who are more prepared come in and that there is fundamental work in the family (Interview 9, Juan del Enzina High School, León).

It is good that the talks are given by specialists, but teachers must be trained because in the end it is not just a matter of giving a talk and that’s it. There are also other agents who must educate young people like their families, the media ... (Interview 16, Comercio High School, La Rioja).

On the other hand, 45 % stated that the most effective method would be if only expert and external personnel were in charge of this training. However, the vast majority of those who chose this option consider that, in equal measure, teachers and counselors should have basic knowledge of SE to be able to support students when they need it. In general terms, they justified that the expert personnel have more solid training, and that young people attribute more credibility to them as they are external to the center. The remaining 5 % corresponds to a person who, unlike the rest, considered that it was important that only the teacher was in charge of this training.

With regard to the educational level of the people interviewed, barely 25 % have received official training from the provincial education delegations. Another 40 % indicated that they have tried to train on their own or that they have minimal knowledge because they are biology teachers. In short, these people have shown that SE training largely depends on the motivation of teachers, and they recognized that the work overload and the reluctance among some teachers and families to approach this topic makes it even more difficult for them to get involved in this subject.

CONCLUSIONS

In line with previous studies (Sanjuán, 2020; SEC, 2019), this research found that when adolescents want to find out about topics related to sex education (SE) they largely turn to the digital realm. From this data it can be inferred that, although boys and girls consume information about SE on the Internet because it is more accessible to them, most of them perpetuate this practice out of habit and convenience, which is conducive to the growing and problematic addictive use of the Internet by young people (Observatorio Nacional de Tecnología y Sociedad [ONTSI], 2023).

Despite the fact that very few adolescents acknowledged not being informed about issues related to sexuality through media or information sources, it would have been interesting to have inquired about the social groups they turn to in these cases, since several studies (González Rojas, 2020; Sanjuán, 2020) conclude that the first social circle with whom they talk about these issues is their peer group, followed by their part-

ner, their family and, lastly, their teachers. This scenario could suggest that the scarce and, at times, erroneous knowledge that part of the youth has about SE (Chatterjee & Kumer, 2023) –a perception confirmed by a large portion of the teaching and counseling staff interviewed– is reproduced among the youngest without them being aware of it.

In this context, despite the obstacles faced by educators in getting involved in training students in SE, they are convinced that this training is vital to promote gender equality in the classroom and to guarantee an education in values that counteracts the consequences of pornography consumption, such as the generation of an unrealistic idea of sexual relations or even an increase in sexual harassment and sexual aggression, especially by adolescent males (Waterman et al., 2022).

This finding contrasts with those of Mañas Olmo and González Alba (2022) and Martínez Martín and Bejarano Franco (2021), who found greater reluctance to implement SE in the classroom among trainee teachers. It is possible that active teachers see more clearly the existing needs of the students. Furthermore, half of the adolescents also showed the desire to learn more about SE in school, which shows they are aware that there are issues they don't know about or that they wish to know about in more depth.

Likewise, this research concludes that what the students lack in terms of media and information literacy (MIL) is significant. The teaching staff noted that many students do not know how to differentiate between false and truthful information, although two-fifths of the students said they adopted a moderately critical attitude towards the content of information consumed. However, the latter have been in favor of reinforcing their training in MIL, thus acknowledging, to some extent, its limitations.

This is not the only research which reflects the disparity between the students' perceptions of their MIL training and the impression that the teachers have. An example of this is the study by Herrero-Curiel and La Rosa Barrolleta (2023) about MIL training in high school students, as well as the most recent OECD (2024) report, where it is concluded that users' perception of their ability to recognize false or misleading content on the Internet is not associated with the ability to identify information disorder.

Meanwhile, content analysis found that those sharing posts about sexual health and education on TikTok hardly use any sources, which is consistent with previous research conducted on social networks with health-related posts (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). In this case, this reality is striking if one takes into account that a considerable number of those who have shared this material are experts in various areas of health. However, among the sexual health content creators there were also people with non-health professions such as lawyers, data analysts, filmmakers, communicators, lecturers or coaches.

This situation, coupled with the poor training of students in MIL, could promote misinformation about SE among youth. It is concluded that adolescents need to acquire tools that allow them to perform in the digital environment in a safe, responsible and critical manner. In summary, this research shows the urgent need to guarantee students an education in SE that includes training in MIL, so that adolescents can build healthy sex-affective relationships, enjoy their sexuality and face the challenges presented by the contemporary digital environment.

With regard to the limitations of the study, the survey did not achieve the desired territorial representation. It is possible that the social desirability bias may have determined the high number of adolescents who said they reflect on the content hosted on networks and in the media. Regarding the development of future studies, it is important to consider the perspective of families in research on MIL linked to SE, as well as to analyze which are the most common digital sexual crimes among young people and the knowledge that adolescents have of them.

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