

Systematic review on gender socialisation in pre-school education

Revisión sistemática sobre la socialización de género en la etapa de educación infantil

Revisão sistemática na socialização do género na fase de educação da primeira infância

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| <p>KEYWORDS: Early childhood education; gender; roles; stereotypes; systematic review</p> | <p>ABSTRACT: Throughout the early childhood education stage, gender identity is established through the process of socialisation through which boys and girls acquire and construct stereotypes and stereotyped gender roles, in many cases dichotomised and sexist. The general objective guiding this study is to find out about gender socialisation and the acquisition and construction of stereotyped roles and gender stereotypes in boys and girls at the Early Childhood Education stage based on systematic review in the Web of Science, Scopus and Dialnet databases. After a systematic search, 124 documents from all databases made up the final sample. To begin with, a qualitative-quantitative analysis of the selected publications in each of the databases was carried out, followed by a content analysis of the presence of gender roles and/or stereotypes of boys and girls in these studies. We conclude with the identification of a greater number of publications in the Web of Science database on this subject; the existence of a greater number of publications that focus their studies on boys and girls in the second cycle of Early Childhood Education; and the presence of stereotyped roles and gender stereotypes concerning play and toys.</p> |
| <p>PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación infantil; género; roles; estereotipos; revisión sistemática</p> | <p>RESUMEN: A lo largo de la etapa de Educación infantil se configura la identidad de género mediante el proceso de socialización por el cual, niños y niñas adquieren y construyen estereotipos y roles estereotipados de género, en muchos casos dicotomizados y sexistas. El objetivo general que guía este estudio es conocer la socialización de género y la adquisición y construcción de roles estereotipados y estereotipos de género en niños y niñas en la etapa de Educación Infantil a partir de la revisión sistemática en las bases de datos Web of Science, Scopus y Dialnet. Tras una búsqueda sistemática, 124 documentos de todas las bases de datos</p> |

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| | <p>han conformado la muestra final. Para empezar, se ha realizado un análisis cualitativo-cuantitativo de las publicaciones seleccionadas en cada una de las bases de datos para en segundo lugar, realizar un análisis de contenido sobre la presencia de roles y/o estereotipos de género en los niños y niñas en dichos estudios. Se concluye con la identificación de un mayor número de publicaciones en la base de datos Web of Science sobre dicha temática; la existencia de un mayor número de publicaciones que centran sus estudios en niños y niñas del Segundo ciclo de Educación Infantil; y la presencia de roles estereotipados y estereotipos de género en relación al juego y los juguetes.</p> |
| <p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação da primeira infância; género; papéis; estereótipos; análise bibliométrica</p> | <p>RESUMO: Ao longo da fase da educação infantil, a identidade de género é moldada pelo processo de socialização através do qual rapazes e raparigas adquirem e constroem estereótipos e papéis de género estereotipados, em muitos casos dicotomizados e sexistas. O objetivo geral que norteia este estudo é conhecer a socialização de género e a aquisição e construção de papéis estereotipados e estereótipos de género em meninos e meninas na etapa da Educação Infantil a partir da análise bibliométrica nas bases de dados Web of Science, Scopus e Dialnet. Após uma pesquisa sistemática, 124 documentos de todas as bases de dados formaram a amostra final. Para começar, foi realizada uma análise qualitativa-quantitativa das publicações seleccionadas em cada uma das bases de dados, seguida de uma análise de conteúdo da presença de papéis e/ou estereótipos de género em rapazes e raparigas nestes estudos. Concluímos com a identificação de um maior número de publicações na base de dados Web of Science sobre este assunto; a existência de um maior número de publicações que focalizam os seus estudos em rapazes e raparigas no segundo ciclo de Educação Infantil; e a presença de papéis estereotipados e estereótipos de género em relação a brincadeiras e brinquedos.</p> |

Introduction

In relation to the concepts of sex and gender, it is necessary to differentiate between sexual identity and gender identity, since sexual identity is acquired based on the biological peculiarities of the body, i.e. the genitals (Freixas, 2001). In contrast, gender identity is the set of feelings and thoughts that a person has as a member of a gender category (Carver et al., 2003). Therefore, male or female gender identity is constructed through the process of differential gender socialisation according to each person's body marker (Lameiras et al., 2013). That is, according to the theory of differential gender socialisation, people in their socialisation process acquire a differentiated gender identity that entails cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural styles, axiological and moral codes and stereotypical norms of behaviour assigned to each gender (Walker & Barton, 1983).

For Bussey & Bandura (1999), gender stereotypes are patterns of behaviour learned through direct and indirect experience and observation. Thus, they could be defined as a subtype of social stereotypes that set patterns of appropriate behaviours and actions for men and women (Díaz de Greñu & Anguita, 2017; Ari et al., 2022). In other words, gender stereotypes reflect a particular culture and history, which is why they persist over time in response to the maintenance of social norms and needs (Mosteiro & Porto, 2017).

Over the last decades, much research has been done on the influence of the environment on children's acquisition of gender roles based on existing gender stereotypes in society, many

of which are sexist. Thus, the present literature affirms that the interaction of boys and girls with the different agents of socialisation encourages the acquisition of these stereotyped gender roles prematurely, from early childhood (Kumar et al., 2023). According to Matud et al. (2002) from birth, gender is constituted as an element that generates differences, so that adults treat boys and girls differently, thus, from a very early age, they are aware of the existence of differential expectations according to their sex. This differential gender treatment of boys and girls will condition their personalities, and the development of skills, abilities and capacities expected by society (Gutiérrez, 2010).

All these situations, which occur on a daily basis in the lives of boys and girls, mean that from a very early age, they show different ways of thinking, attitudes, behaviour, skills, desires, roles, etc., depending on the gender to which they belong. In this sense, several American studies affirm that from pre-school age, American children have already internalised the professional aspirations associated with traditional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity (Michel, 2001). In relation to the stereotypes that children, from an early age, have internalised, it is worth mentioning that already at the age of 6, boys and girls associate mathematics with men, which correlates with a lower performance of girls at this age in this discipline (Galdi et al., 2014).

Most research on the acquisition of gender roles and stereotypes in children's socialisation focuses on the early childhood stage (3-6 years) and the primary stage (6-12 years). Research such

as that conducted by Blodgett, Bakir and Rous focus on the study of the acceptance of gender roles and stereotypes in children aged 5-6 and 9-10 (Bakir et al., 2008).

A more recent study by Valera and Paterna "Ideología de género en el Alumnado de Educación Infantil" (Paterna & Valera, 2016), carried out an investigation with 5 and 6-year-old students in a public school on their gender ideology and the influence of the family and school on it, whose results show that boys and girls present a traditional gender ideology based on traditional gender roles and stereotypes; most families have traditional attitudes in the distribution of family tasks, and teachers do not follow coeducational practices in the classroom. Along the same lines, the article by Bian, Leslie and Cimpian, "Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge early and influence children's interests", focuses on stereotype formation at ages 5 and 6 (Bian et al., 2017).

However, there is not much literature that focuses its study on the beginnings of the acquisition of gender roles and stereotypes at younger ages, when the acquisition of some basic gender roles and stereotypes could begin to be glimpsed through the choices, preferences, ways of thinking and acting of children from 2 to 3 years old. Some studies, such as the one cited above by Martínez García, "Juego sociodramático y estereotipos de género: un estudio cualitativo en escolares de tres a seis años de edad" (Martínez, 2016), collects data on the process of construction of gender identity and the representation of gender roles and stereotypes through symbolic play in the second cycle of Infant Education, providing results on 3-year-old pupils.

Another very revealing study carried out by Carreras Port, Subirats Martorí and Tomé "La construcción de los géneros en la etapa 0-3: primeras exploraciones" (Carreras et al., 2012), was carried out in 6 municipal nursery schools "llars d'infants" in a town in Barcelona during the 2010-2011 school year, focusing observation on forms of sexism from the educational framework, the behaviour of the educators and some behaviours already generalised in girls and boys. Thus, in relation to forms of sexism in the educational framework and the behaviour of the educators, we can highlight sexist language and the selection of sexist stories by the educators. On the other hand, sexist behaviour on the part of boys and girls was observed especially in the playground, where there were more sexist power relations, roles, and attitudes.

Therefore, a bibliographical review is pertinent in relation to the acquisition of gender identity in the Infant Education stage, in order to know, exhaustively and systematically, the scientific

literature that exists in this respect in relation to the different socialising agents that influence the development of gender identity and in relation to the process itself during the Infant Education stage, in this way it will be possible to know the directions in which progress should be made in order to expand knowledge, opening or expanding lines of research that are less studied. The general objective guiding this study is to find out about gender socialisation and the acquisition and construction of stereotyped roles and gender stereotypes in boys and girls in the Early Childhood Education stage based on systematic review in the Web of Science, Scopus and Dialnet databases. Research on this subject is necessary in order to design educational proposals that develop equitable gender attitudes among boys and girls in early childhood.

Methodology

This work is approached from a descriptive, cross-sectional-retrospective, systematic review, through the analysis of published documents on gender socialisation and the acquisition and construction of stereotyped roles and gender stereotypes in boys and girls at the Early Childhood Education stage. In addition, the research carried out is presented from a quantitative design and providing a rigorous process of qualitative analysis (Bardin, 1986; Sayago, 2014). This consists of a systematic and sequential process of collection, selection, classification, evaluation, and content analysis of printed and graphic, physical and/or virtual empirical material that serves as a methodological source for a given scientific research (Rodríguez, 2013). Thus, on the one hand, a systematic review has been carried out and, on the other hand, a content analysis has been carried out. The search process was carried out following the protocol outlined in the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses, 2020). This statement is followed in order to systematize the evidence found in an organized way, through the rigorous use of a series of methods and techniques for planning, searching, and presenting the information to promote its replicability.

The procedure followed to search for documents has been different in each of the three databases. In relation to the search strategy for documents in the Web of Science and Scopus database, we opted for the advanced search model using keywords with the Boolean operators /Y/ and /OR/, as well as ordering the results from the earliest date to be able to chronologically approach the development of the different studies available

from the first ones appearing in the database. The documents related to the documents chosen in the different searches have also been selected. On the other hand, in the Dialnet database, the general search engine has been used by entering keywords and, as in the Web of Science and Scopus database, they have been ordered by year of publication.

The keywords used to search for documents were early childhood education, early childhood, infancy, preschool, kindergarten, gender roles, gender stereotypes, sexism, gender construction, gender identity and gender socialisation. Thus, 620 (n=620) records in the Web of Science database, 492 (n=492) records were identified in the Scopus database and 214 (n=214) in the Dialnet database, a total of 1326 (n=1326). The final sample of references was 124 (n=124).

The criteria for the inclusion of research articles were those whose subject matter is related to gender socialisation in children in the Infant Education stage, from different countries, including all years of publication and all types of publications.

In terms of exclusion or screening criteria, all documents in which the research did not include studies with children in the Early Childhood Education stage (0-6 years) and/or those not directly related to gender socialisation, gender identity development, acquisition of gender roles and stereotypes and sexism in children in the Early Childhood Education stage were discarded. We also discarded results that did not have open access to the text or no abstract available.

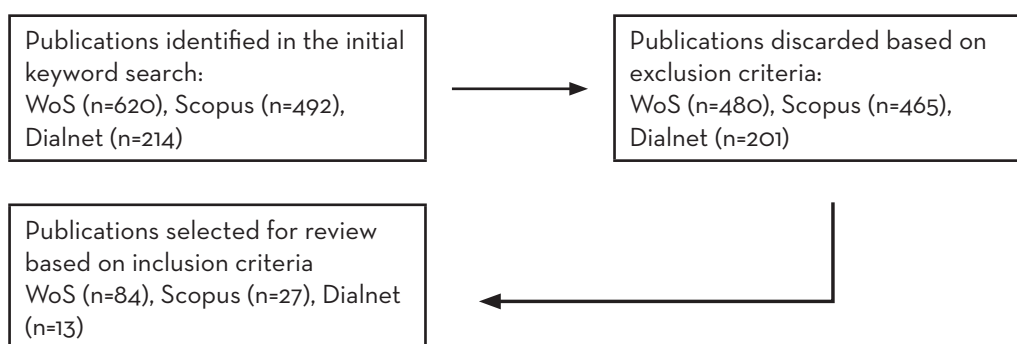


Figura 1. Descriptive flowchart of the sampling process (PRISMA 2020).
Note. Adapted from Page et al. (2021).

Results and Discussion

The description of the results of the 124 documents that constitute the sample has been organised around two areas, the first, referring to the systematic review (V.1.), has been broken down into 7 analysis variables: V.1.1: Database. V.1.2: Citations. V.1.3: Type of source. V.1.4: Year of publication. V.1.5: Country of provenance. V.1.6: Language. V.1.7: Type of publication. The second core, referring to content analysis (V.2.) has been broken down into 5 analysis variables: V.2.2: Presence of gender roles and/or stereotypes. V.2.5: Gender roles and/or stereotypes concerning games and/or toys. V.2.6: Gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to colours. V.2.7: Gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to children's stories and/or audiovisual productions. V.2.8: Gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to physical appearance and/or clothing.

Systematic review

V.1.1. Database

Of the 124 documents in the sample, 84 of them (67.7%) are located in the Web of Science

database, 27 of them (21.8%) are located in the Scopus database, while 13 documents (10.5%) are located in the Dialnet database. Therefore, the sample of publications located in the WoS database is more representative than the sample of publications in the Scopus and Dialnet databases.

V.1.2. Number of citations

The most cited article in the total sample, coinciding with the most cited article in all databases, was written by Julia Golden and Jennifer Jacoby entitled "Playing Princess: Preschool Girls' Interpretations of Gender Stereotypes in Disney Princess Media" (Golden & Jacoby, 2018), cited 156 times. Secondly, in the WoS and Scopus databases stands out the article by Hellen Jordan entitled "Fighting Boys and Fantasy Play: The construction of masculinity in the early years of school" (Jordan, 1996), and the article by Gerianne Alexandre, Teresa Wilcox and Rebecca Woods "Sex differences in infants' visual interest in toys" (Alexandre, Wilcox & Woods, 2010), each cited by 120 documents. Thirdly, the article written by Mindy Blaise titulado "A feminist poststructuralist study of children "doing" gender in an urban kindergarten

classroom” (Blaise, 2005), cited 134 times. And lastly, the article written by Emmanuel Mayeza entitled “It’s not right for boys to play with dolls’: young children constructing and policing gender during ‘free play’ in a South African classroom” (Mayeza, 2018), quoted 44 times.

The five documents in the sample published in the Dialnet database are, in first place of relevance, the article by M.^a del Carmen Martínez Reina and Manuel Vélez Cea entitled “Attitudes in children and adults about gender stereotypes in children’s toys” (Martínez & Vélez, 2009), quoted 38 times. In second place, the article published by Emma Lobato entitled “Juego Sociodramatico y esquemas de género: una investigación en Educación Infantil” (Lobato, 2005), quoted 21 times. Thirdly, the doctoral thesis by Josefa Quesada Jiménez entitled “Estereotipos de géneros usos de la lengua. Un estudio descriptivo en las aulas y propuestas de intervención didáctica” (Quesada, 2014). Fourthly, the conference written by Guadalupe Calvo García entitled “La construcción de las identidades sexuales heteronormativas en las escuelas infantiles. Study of two cases” (Calvo, 2011), cited in 15 publications. And lastly, the Doctoral Thesis written by María Luz Hierro Rincón

“Los niños y niñas ante la elección de los juguetes” (Hierro, 1996), cited 10 times.

VI.3 Source Type

With regard to the type of source of the documents in the sample, two types of results are extracted. On the one hand, the percentages in relation to the type of source of the total number of documents in the sample, as in each of the databases; and, on the other hand, the percentage of representativeness of each journal as the main type of source.

In relation to the total sample, 110 (88.7%) documents have been published in Scientific Journals, 11 (8.9%) documents have been published in Proceedings Books and revisions respectively, and 3 (7.5%) documents in the Thesis Catalogue of Dialnet. Of the sample documents published in Web of Science 76 (90.5%) papers appear in Scientific Journals and 8 (9.5%) in Proceedings Books, in Scopus, 27 documents (100%) appear in Scientific Journals and of the sample documents published in Dialnet, 7 (53.8%) of them appear in Journals, 3 (23.1%) appear in Proceedings Books and remaining 3 (23.1%) appear in the Dialnet Thesis Catalogue.

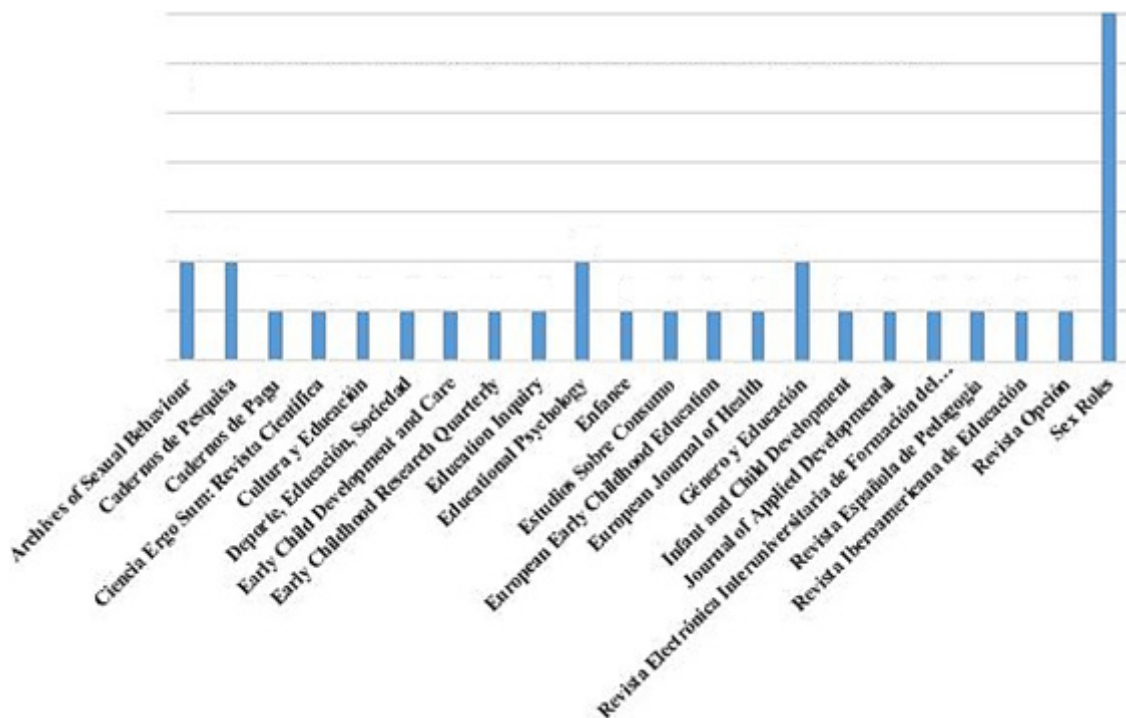


Figure 2. Representativeness of journals as a source of publications.

On the other hand, concerning the representativeness of the journals, the 110 documents in the sample were published in 22 journals. The five most representatives were in descending order:

Sex roles and, in second place, Archives of Sexual Behaviour, Cadernos de Pesquisa, Educational Psychology and Género y Educación, which contain two of the sample publications each.

V1.4. Year of Publication

In relation to the year of publication of the documents in the sample, a classification of the publications by calendar year is established for both the total number of documents and those in the Web of Science, Scopus and Dialnet sample.

In relation to the ranking by calendar year of the documents published in Web of Science in descending order 15 (17.9%) were published in 2020; 13 (15.5%) were published in 2021; 12 (14.3%) were published in 2022, 2018; 4 (4.8%) were published in 2017, 2016; 3 (3.6%) in 2023, 2011; 2 (2.4%) 2013, 2005; and 1 (1.1%) were published in 2015, 2014, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2007, 2004 and 2002.

Concerning the classification by calendar year of the documents in the sample published in Scopus in descending order 6 (22.2%) were published in 2018; 4 (14.8%) published in 2020; 3 (11.1%) published in 2016; 2 (7.4%) published in 2005, 2010, 2014 and 2019; and 1 (3.7%) published in 1995, 2006, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017.

Regarding the classification by calendar year of the documents in the sample published in Dialnet in descending order 3 (23.1%) were published in 2016; 2 (15.4%) published in 2007; and 1 published in 1996, 2004, 2005, and 2009, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018.

V1.5. Country of origin

Through this variable, results have been extracted from the country of origin of the publications both in the general sample and in each of the databases.

In relation to the country of origin of the documents in the general sample, 43 (34.7%) were developed in the United States; 23 (18.5%) in Spain; 6 (4.8%) in Australia; 5 (4%) in Korea and Russia, 3 (2.4%) in Brazil, Ukraine and the United Kingdom respectively; 2 (1.6%) in Australia, Korea, China, Chile, France, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, and Russia respectively; and 1 (0.8%) in Colombia, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, China, Turkey, Ukraine, France, Serbia, South Africa and Switzerland respectively. In addition, one document (0.8%) was produced internationally from the UK and China.

Regarding the country of origin of the documents in the Web of Science sample, most of them have a very diverse international origin: 37 (40%) of the documents come from the United States; 8 (9.5%) come from Spain; 6 (7.1%) come from Portugal; 5 (6%) come from Korea and Russia respectively; 5 (6%) are from Korea and Russia respectively; 3 (3.6%) are from Ukraine; 2 (6%) are from Chile, France, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and Russia respectively; and 1 (6%) are from

Colombia, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, China, Turkey, Ukraine and Switzerland respectively.

Thus, in Scopus 6 (22.2%) of the documents come from the United States; 4 (14.8%) come from Sweden; 3 (11.1%) come from Spain and the United Kingdom respectively; 2 (7.4%) come from Australia, Brazil and China respectively; and 1 (3.7%) belong to France, Norway, Serbia and South Africa respectively.

In contrast, the publications in the Dialnet sample are mostly national, with 12 (92.3%) of the 13 documents in the sample collected from the Dialnet database coming from Spain, while only 1 (7.7%) comes from Brazil.

V1.6. Language

This variable provides results on the percentages of the languages of origin of the different documents both of the total sample and the documents in the sample published in Web of Science, Scopus and Dialnet.

In reference to the total sample, more than half of the papers were published in English, a total of 92 (74.2%); 18 (14.5%) papers were published in Spanish; 7 (5.6%) in Portuguese; 2 (1.6%) in French and 1 in Ukrainian (.8%).

In Web of Science most of them have a very diverse international origin, 71 (22.2%) of the documents are in English; 5 (14.8%) in Spanish; 4 (11.1%) in Portuguese; 2 (7.4%) in Korean and Russian respectively; and 1 (3.7%) in Ukrainian.

Regarding the documents published in Scopus, the vast majority, a total of 21 (77.8%) were written in English and 2 (7.4%) were written in Spanish, French and Portuguese respectively. In contrast, for almost all the documents in the sample, 12 (92.3%) of the 13 published in Dialnet were written in Spanish and only 1 (7.7%) in Portuguese.

V1.7 Publication typology

This section provides results on the type of publication that constitutes each of the documents, both of the total sample and the documents in the sample published in Web of Science, Scopus and Dialnet.

In relation to the type of publication, most of the documents in the total sample are scientific articles, a total of 110 (88.7%), 8 (6.5%) of the documents are Proceedings and reviews respectively, and 3 (7.5%) are Doctoral Theses.

In Web of Science 76 (90.5%) are articles, 3 (3.6%) are Proceedings and 8 (9.5%) are reviews. With regard to the typology of the 27 documents in the sample published in Scopus, 100% are scientific articles.

Finally, concerning the documents in the sample published in Dialnet, 6 (46.2%) are scientific articles, 3 (23.1%) are doctoral theses and 3 (23.1%) are proceedings.

Content Analysis

V.2.1. Presence of Stereotypes and/or stereotyped gender roles

This section provides results on the presence or absence of stereotyped roles and/or gender stereotypes in the results of the studies of the publications in the sample. Thus, out of the 40 studies, gender stereotypes appear in 39 of them.

The most generalised idea among the results of the samples is that at a higher age, gender stereotypes and roles become more evident, appearing more frequently and in greater quantity, giving rise to the appearance of dichotomous and stereotyped schematic gender identities (Hernández et al., 2004; King et al., 2021). The same is affirmed by Martínez (2018), who observes that gender differences are accentuated in the second and third year of the Second Cycle of Pre-school Education. On the other hand, studies such as the one conducted by Skočajić et al.

In contrast, only one of the studies does not show gender stereotypes, that of Alexandre Wilcox & Woods (2009) in the United States, because it postulates that there is an innate component in the preference for toys by boys and girls, and for this purpose, it carried out a study on the visual preferences of toys with babies aged between 3 and 9 months, who have not yet acquired gender stereotypes.

V.2.2. Gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to games and toys

Through this variable, results were obtained on the presence or absence of gender roles and/or stereotypes, or, on the contrary, of counter-stereotyped and/or counter-stereotyped gender roles in relation to play and toys in the boys and girls who made up the samples of the 40 studies selected. Consequently, in 33 of the 40 studies, there were stereotypical and/or counter-stereotypical gender roles and/or gender stereotypes in relation to play and toys, and in only 12 of them, counter-stereotypical and/or counter-stereotypical gender roles and/or gender stereotypes were found.

In relation to play, Mayeza (2018) noted in the results of her study that one of the main problems is that play was highly conditioned by gender stereotypes, so boys and girls with stronger and more consolidated gender stereotypes limited

and punished children who stepped outside the pre-established gender norms, thereby constructing and reproducing these stereotypes.

For their part, Lobato (2007) indicated that boys and girls had dichotomous play choices, with girls directing their play activities towards personal relationships, caring actions, domestic work and beauty, while boys opted for play activities involving power, aggression, competitiveness and independence. Martínez (2016) found that boys rejected play activities related to care and girls avoided play activities involving force or violence.

Examples of these situations appear in many of the studies in the sample: differentiated play between boys and girls, with girls avoiding climbing or swinging so that their panties would not show when they were wearing skirts or dresses, activities that boys did. Most girls did not want to play football when it was proposed in class. Girls preferred to play at sewing and dress shopping and boys preferred to play with cars. Girls played at being princesses, making stereotyped and sexist body movements. When teachers asked schoolchildren to help look after the babies in the children's centre, only girls agreed to do so. The girls preferred to play mummy and daddy, read, do puzzles or draw, while the boys preferred to play football, cars, dinosaurs, make huts or run. Boys tended to have a more restricted play, mainly based on football, while girls had more variety of games. The girls brought Barbies dolls to class and the game consisted of changing their clothes, all pink and purple (Blaise, 2005; Mariano & Altmann, 2016; Martínez, 2018; Golden & Jacoby, 2018; Meland & Kaltvedt, 2019; Hjelmér, 2020; Hernández et al., 2004; Rodríguez, 2007; Martínez, 2016; Reybet, 2016).

Also, both boys and girls often rejected playmates of the opposite sex or other boys or girls, respectively, who did not comply with the gender norms imposed in certain stereotypical games, e.g., one boy tried to prevent another from playing with the girls; other boys prevented a girl from participating in their game; some girls did not let boys participate in their princess games; another girl did not let a boy participate in the kitchenette game; girls did not want boys to participate in the kitchenette game and the same happened with boys in the building game (Jordan, 1995; King et al., 2020; Buss-Simão, 2013; Mariano & Altmann, 2016; Martínez, 2018; Golden & Jacoby, 2018, Quaresma da Silva & Bertuol, 2015; Martínez, 2016).

When boys and girls shared games, especially in symbolic play, stereotypical gender roles were also observed. In this sense, in the role-playing games, girls preferred to play the role of mother, baby or sister in the little playhouse; girls who

played the role of mother or older sister were in charge of the upbringing and care of the home, thus performing actions such as hugging the “children”, feeding them, cleaning the house, etc. In contrast, boys preferred to play the role of the father, who was always away from home at work during play (Sotevik et al., 2019). When girls participated in boys’ games, they did so as helpers to the boys, limiting themselves to the role imposed on them. There were also other games between boys and girls in which girls took on the role of vulnerability as they had to be rescued, while boys took on the role of power in which girls were the trophy to be won (Martínez, 2018).

In relation to play areas, several authors in the sample reported in their results the division of boys and girls in different areas of the school according to gender. Thus, in Physical Education classes, boys did one activity in one half of the playground and girls did a different activity in the other half. When the girls were playing together and the boys invaded them, the girls established another girls’ playground. The boys occupied more space than the girls and the central areas of the playground. Girls and boys were placed separately in different locations. Boys occupied the central part of the playground. Boys were located in the central part of the playground and in the wheeled area, while girls were located on the swings and slides, in the arcades and behind the benches. In the classroom, the boys played in the construction corner and the firemen’s corner, while the girls played in the little playhouse, the hairdresser’s corner and the infirmary. Girls used a smaller space in their play (Chen & Rao, 2011; Bus-Simão, 2013; Martínez, 2018; Hjelmér, 2020; Hernández et al., 2004; Martínez, 2016).

According to Martínez (2016), the discrimination of toys according to the gender assigned to them by boys and girls was the first step in the acquisition of gender roles and stereotypes. In this line, many of the authors in the sample expose in their results the choice of different toys by boys and girls and the conception of these as masculine and feminine toys.

Examples of this phenomenon are children who considered toys categorised as neutral and ambiguous, boys’ toys. Boys had a preference for the truck while girls had a preference for the doll. Boys were more interested in toys labelled as masculine than feminine and girls showed more interest in toys labelled as masculine with colours labelled as feminine than in all other combinations. The police car, the toolbox and the fortified castle were considered boys’ toys by 90% of the schoolchildren, while the dresser, the doll and the kitchenette were labelled as girls’ toys by 88.99%,

as for the ambiguous toys, these were considered as masculine toys by the boys and as feminine toys by the girls (Cherney, Harper & Winter, 2006; Alexandre et al., 2010; Weisgram et al., 2014; Morin et al., 2016).

In all age groups, 9-17 months, 18-23 months and 24-32 months, there were stereotypical gender preferences for toys. Boys played more with toys considered masculine and girls with toys considered feminine. Girls used the toys that boys rejected. Toys were more stereotyped by boys and girls than other objects. Boys did not give trucks to girls, and girls did not give dolls to boys because they would not like them. Boys and girls chose warlike, sexist and competitive toys that generated gender differences (Todd et al., 2018; Martínez, 2016; Skočajić et al., 2020; King et al., 2020; Hierro, 1996).

Boys’ favourite classroom toys were Madelman, Action-Man and the football, while girls preferred Barbie, Super Babes or a small pink ball. Most schoolchildren classified Play Station, Action-Man, castles, off-road cars, helicopters, gardening sets, Buzz Light Year, motorbikes and tractors as boys’ toys, while handbags, cleaning trolleys, shopping trolleys, dolls’ houses, kitchenettes, dolls’ cars, fruit shop, sewing set, make-up set, Barbie doll and baby doll were classified as girls’ toys. The ball, football boots and trucks were considered masculine toys, while the doll, kitchen utensils and cleaning utensils were categorised as feminine toys (Hernández et al., 2004; Martínez, 2016; Quesada, 2014).

In contrast, there were also counter-stereotypical and counter-stereotypical gender roles concerning games determined as feminine and masculine. In this sense, a boy put on a skirt and played at being a daddy, cradled the baby, read stories, fed it etc. In class, a girl always wanted to play football. One boy always wanted to bake biscuits, and another loved to do plaits. One girl loved to play with the dirt and one boy played at being a hairdresser; another baked biscuit and played at home with his little kitchen. One girl always played football at home, although she did not play football at school. Some children used to go to the hairdresser’s corner or the little house (Buss-Simão, 2013; Martínez, 2018; Rodríguez, 2017; Hernández et al., 2004).

Based on their results Spinner, Lindesey y Calogero (2018) found that the more flexible the games of boys and girls were, the more use they made of both male and female toys. Thus, some boys and girls did not differentiate between gendered and gender-neutral toys. One boy used to play with dolls as with all other toys. One boy considered all toys to be boys’ and girls’ toys. One girl

used a building block, a toy typified as masculine, for cooking (Cherney & Dempsey, 2010; Buss-Simão, 2013; Quesada, 2014).

As a consequence of greater flexibility in the use of toys, boys and girls were more likely to choose opposite-sex companions (Spinner et al., 2018). In this context, in competitive games, boys and girls decided to play in mixed groups. One boy played with the girls in the doll corner and a group of boys and girls dressed up as princesses and started actively running and jumping. One boy always played with the girls (Mariano & Altmann, 2016; Meland & Kaltvedt, 2019; Quaresma da Silva & Bertuol, 2015).

V.2.3. Gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to colours.

This section provides results on the presence of gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to children's preference for gender-typical colours in the samples of the 40 studies, or, on the contrary, the presence of counter-stereotypical and/or counter-stereotypical gender roles. Of the total sample, a total of 15 studies recorded gender roles and/or gender stereotypes in relation to colours among their results, and only one study recorded the presence of counter-stereotypical or counter-gender stereotypes.

The results point to different gender preferences concerning colours and toy preferences based on their colour, so that colour and 'masculine' or 'feminine' toys have a direct relationship. Thus et al. (2010) provided in their results that colour was the main reason for boys and girls to assign a particular gender to toys. Yeug & Wong (2018) found that boys chose neutral toys with "masculine" colours and girls chose neutral toys with "feminine colours", and that when children were shown toys categorised as "masculine" and "feminine", their choice of toys based on their gender colours was amplified. Similarly, the results of Cherney et al. (2006) study concur, as presenting children with ambiguous or neutral toys with gendered colours typified as masculine or feminine amplified toy choice decisions based on colour.

Wong & Hines (2005) noted that at 2 and 3 years of age, boys' and girls' colour preferences for toys became stronger. The same results were obtained by Skočajić et al. (2020), as the older the age of children, the more colour-based gender stereotypes appeared. These colour-based gender stereotypes are not only found in the Western world, as Yeug & Wong (2018) were able to identify those Chinese children had the same preferences for colours associated with their gender as Western children.

In this sense, several studies agreed that gender colours influenced and intervened in boys' and girls' tastes and various aspects of daily life, with girls generally preferring anything related to the colour pink and boys to the colour blue or any other colour that was not pink. Examples of the results are the detection that girls wore mostly pink clothes. In the routine at the entrance to class in a Chinese early childhood education centre, the boys lined up on a blue line and the girls lined up on a red line. Purple and especially pink were categorised by the school children as "girls' colours" and blue as "boys' colours". Girls chose mostly pink toys typified as masculine over blue toys (Blaise, 2005; Weisgram et al., 2014).

The schoolchildren associated the colours pink and purple with the female gender. In the art corner, girls and boys used different colours in their drawings, with boys mostly using black and brown, while girls used pink, blue, or yellow. Several children liked Lightning McQueen because he was red and shiny. School children associated pink and purple with the female gender, and one girl who liked football wore football boots with pink laces. Girls in general used pink and purple objects: pencil cases, backpacks, folders, jackets, and trainers, while in boys' objects pink was absent, and girls related grey as a boy's colour (Meland & Kaltbedt, 2019; Quesada, 2014; Quaresma da Silva & Bertuol, 2015; Reybet, 2016).

Counter-stereotyped or counter-stereotypical gender roles based on colours have only appeared in the study by Quaresma da Silva & Bertuol (2015), whose results show that one boy used to play with a pink car and another boy used to wear a pink cap belonging to another girl's classmate without any problem.

V.2.4. Gender roles and/or stereotypes in relation to physical appearance and dress

This section yields results on the presence of gender roles and/or stereotypes, in relation to physical appearance and clothing, acquired by the boys and girls in the sample studies. Thus, in 11 of the 40 studies, there are stereotypical roles and/or gender stereotypes manifested in the children in the sample, while in 3 of them, there are also counter-stereotypes and/or counter-stereotypical gender roles.

Meland & Kaltvedt (2019) report in their findings that appearance and dress contribute to emphasising the gender to which boys and girls belong. Thus, for schoolchildren at a Children's Centre in Australia, being a "feminine girl" meant wearing pretty outfits with ruffles and curls matched to their stockings, barrettes, and hair

ribbons, while being a “cool girl” meant wearing sophisticated and sexy outfits, avoiding wearing boyish clothes and ruffles (Blaise, 2005). A girl looked in the mirror and painted her lips (Chen & Rao, 2011). A boy in class cheeks that other boys do not paint their lips, as it is something men should not do (Buss-Simão, 2013). Most girls think princesses should wear a crown, look pretty, comb their hair in curls and be well-dressed (Martínez, 2018).

Girls had acquired gender stereotypes in terms of beauty, clothing, and accessories (Gold-en & Jacoby, 2018). Girls often wore dresses, ponytails, and hair bands, while boys wore lions and car pictures on their T-Shirts. As early as age 3, some boys refused to wear traditional female costumes and girls refused to have moustaches drawn on them (Calvo, 2011).

The girls liked certain cartoon or fictional characters because of their physical appearance and clothing, while no boys referred to their liking for any character based on their physical appearance or clothing. Likewise, most boys and girls drew the women in their family with long hair and a skirt or dress and the men in the family with trousers and short hair, and most drew the father considerably taller than the rest of the family members (Que-sada, 2014).

One boy punished another by telling his classmates that he was carrying a pink girl’s handbag (Quaresma da Silva & Bertuol, 2015). Girls drew female silhouettes in pink, purple and light blue dresses and boys drew men in football club shirts (Reybet, 2016). Girls like to wear dresses, ribbons, and frills, while boys refused to wear anything that evokes femininity (Maganto et al., 2018).

In contrast, some studies registered the presence of counter-stereotypes and counter-stereotypical gender roles, for example, on one occasion two boys painted their lips (Buss-Simão, 2013). One girl wore her hair short and tended to dress in clothes that were categorised as masculine with dark colours (Meland & Kaltvedt, 2019). One boy commented that he would wear earrings when he grew up, another went to class wearing a pink cap, and another girl wore indoor football shoes (Quaresma da Silva & Bertuol, 2015).

Conclusions

After the systematic review based on the documents in the sample, we can affirm that the Web of Science database contains more publications related to the subject of this study than Scopus and Dialnet, which contains the most relevant publications according to the documents that cite them. Scientific journals are the type of source that contains the largest number of studies, both in the total

sample and in the sample from all databases, the most representative being Sex Roles, Archives of Sexual Behaviour, Cadernos de Pesquisa, Educational Psychology and Género y Educación.

The years 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022 saw the highest number of studies published in the total sample, coinciding with the sample from the Web of Science database. In contrast, more were published in Scopus and Dialnet in 2016, 2017, 2018 y 2020. Spain, the United States, Sweden and Australia published the most studies in the selected sample, the United States in the Web of Science and Scopus sample and Spain in the Dialnet sample. The language in which most publications were written was English and Spanish in Web of Science and Scopus and Spanish in Dialnet. In both the total sample and the sample corresponding to each of the databases, the majority of publications were scientific articles, with a small number of doctoral theses, conference proceedings review article.

With regard to the content analysis of the results of the selected documents, almost all of them show the presence of gender roles and/or stereotypes for boys and girls in preschool education and less than half show the presence of counter-stereotyped and/or counter-stereotyped gender roles. Similarly, the presence of these roles and stereotypes exceeds the presence of counter-stereotypes and counter-stereotyped roles in relation to the other variables measured, of which play and toys are much more important than the rest when it comes to relating them to the presence of stereotyped roles and gender stereotypes in children, followed by those relating to children’s ideology and narrative, colours and finally stories and audiovisuals and physical appearance and clothing.

Lastly, with regard to concerning the need to broaden lines of research, this study presents a necessary and complementary review of a discipline that has been quite developed, especially in recent years.

Even so, it is necessary to extend the line of study on gender socialisation in the first years of life and on the first appearances of gender stereotypes and roles in children under 3 years of age, belonging to the First Cycle of Infant Education.

As we have seen, gender socialisation and the acquisition and reproduction of stereotyped roles and gender stereotypes begin to take shape in boys and girls before the Second Cycle of Infant Education and, therefore, what happens during this period will influence, be maintained, amplified and diversified in later years, consolidating immovable gender norms that are increasingly difficult to change if action is not taken from the beginning.

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