

BETWEEN ALGORITHMS AND IDENTITIES: RED PILL, THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES, AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN BASIC EDUCATION

**ENTRE ALGORITMOS E IDENTIDADES: RED PILL, CONSTRUÇÃO DAS
MASCULINIDADES E FORMAÇÃO CIDADÃ NA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA**

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ABSTRACT

The intensification of digital culture and the growing prominence of algorithms embedded in digital platforms have transformed the socialization processes of adolescents and young people, influencing the circulation of discourses, the construction of identities, and the dynamics of social interaction. In this context, content associated with the Red Pill movement has become an important topic of academic inquiry due to its potential implications for the construction of masculinities, gender relations, and citizenship education in Basic Education. Against this backdrop, the present study aimed to analyze the relationship between the discourses promoted by the Red Pill movement, the construction of masculinities, and the citizenship education of Basic Education students, considering the role that algorithms and the dynamics of digital culture play in shaping young people's socialization processes. From a methodological perspective, this investigation adopted a qualitative research approach. Regarding the technical procedures, a bibliographic review was employed as the primary methodological strategy, enabling a critical analysis of the scientific literature on digital culture, algorithms, the Red Pill movement, masculinities, gender relations, youth identities, and citizenship education. The findings demonstrated that the research objectives were achieved by highlighting the interconnections between algorithms, Red Pill discourses, the construction of masculinities, and citizenship education in Basic Education. The analysis provided insights into the mechanisms through which these narratives are disseminated across digital environments, their potential repercussions on youth identities, and the crucial role of schools in fostering critical thinking, digital citizenship, respect for diversity, and the promotion of human rights. It is concluded that strengthening pedagogical practices grounded in critical education

constitutes a consistent strategy for enabling students to develop the competencies required to critically interpret digital content and to build social relationships guided by democratic principles.

Keywords: Digital culture; Red Pill movement; Masculinities; Citizenship education.

RESUMO

A intensificação da cultura digital e o crescente protagonismo dos algoritmos das plataformas digitais têm transformado os processos de socialização de adolescentes e jovens, influenciando a circulação de discursos, a construção das identidades e as formas de interação social. Nesse contexto, os conteúdos associados ao movimento Red Pill passaram a integrar o debate acadêmico em razão de suas possíveis implicações para a construção das masculinidades, as relações de gênero e a formação cidadã na Educação Básica. Diante desse cenário, o presente estudo teve como objetivo geral analisar como se relacionam os discursos do movimento Red Pill, a construção das masculinidades e a formação cidadã de estudantes da Educação Básica, tendo em vista o papel que os algoritmos e as dinâmicas da cultura digital exercem sobre os processos de socialização entre os jovens. Quanto aos aspectos metodológicos, a investigação é qualificada como uma pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa. Em termos de procedimentos técnicos, utilizou-se a revisão bibliográfica como um recurso metodológico, o que possibilitou uma análise crítica das produções científicas sobre cultura digital, algoritmos, movimento Red Pill, masculinidades, relações de gênero, identidades juvenis e formação cidadã. Os resultados demonstraram que os objetivos da pesquisa foram alcançados ao evidenciar as relações entre algoritmos, discursos Red Pill, construção das masculinidades e formação cidadã na Educação Básica. A análise permitiu compreender os mecanismos de

disseminação dessas narrativas nos ambientes digitais, suas possíveis repercussões sobre as identidades juvenis e a relevância da escola na promoção do pensamento crítico, da cidadania digital, do respeito à diversidade e dos direitos humanos. Conclui-se que o fortalecimento de práticas pedagógicas comprometidas com a educação crítica representa uma estratégia consistente para que estudantes desenvolvam competências necessárias à interpretação reflexiva dos conteúdos digitais e à construção de relações sociais orientadas pelos princípios democráticos.

Palavras-chave: Cultura digital; Movimento Red Pill; Masculinidades; Formação cidadã.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of digital technologies has brought significant changes to the ways individuals interact, access information, and construct identities, particularly among adolescents and young people, for whom these transformations have become especially evident. These changes in social relationships have been accompanied by new forms of access to information that are broader, more immediate, and increasingly influential in shaping identity formation and individuals' perceptions of themselves within their communities and society. Consequently, digital platforms mediated by algorithms no longer function merely as neutral tools for content distribution but have become active and influential agents in socialization processes, fostering and reinforcing virtual communities. Moreover, these platforms contribute to strengthening particular worldviews by shaping interpersonal connections and interactions within digital environments. Among the contemporary phenomena emerging in this context, the discourses disseminated by the Red Pill movement have gained

prominence due to their widespread circulation across digital platforms. Given their potential implications for the construction of masculinities, gender relations, and educational processes within Basic Education, these discourses have attracted increasing attention from the academic community.

The importance of this issue becomes evident when considering the urgent need to understand how digital culture influences education and the development of young people's citizenship, particularly in a context where digital environments continue to expand and the information individuals consume is increasingly shaped and personalized by algorithmic systems. Understanding this phenomenon is essential for critically examining its implications for educating individuals capable of acting as reflective, autonomous, and engaged citizens. Within this scenario, schools increasingly share with other social institutions the responsibility for fostering ethical, critical, and democratic education among younger generations. This shared responsibility highlights the challenges associated with the dissemination of digital content, which may reinforce harmful stereotypes, promote discriminatory narratives, and encourage oversimplified interpretations of social interactions. Consequently, schools are called upon to adopt proactive and conscious educational practices that enable students and the broader educational community to critically understand the complexities of contemporary social relations. Therefore, investigating the intersections among algorithms, youth identities, emerging masculinities, and citizenship constitutes an essential contribution to advancing discussions on education, digital culture, and democratic citizenship in light of the profound transformations shaping contemporary society.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How do the discourses promoted by the Red Pill movement, disseminated through digital environments and their underlying algorithms, influence the construction of masculinities, and what are their implications for citizenship education in Basic Education? This investigation is grounded on the assumption that understanding this phenomenon may contribute to a deeper comprehension of technology-mediated youth socialization processes and, consequently, support the development of educational practices that promote critical thinking, democratic coexistence, and respect for human rights.

Based on this perspective, the general objective of the study was to analyze the relationships between the discourses promoted by the Red Pill movement, the construction of masculinities, and the citizenship education of students in Basic Education, considering the role played by algorithms and the dynamics of digital culture in youth socialization processes. Specifically, the study sought to: understand how Red Pill content is disseminated across digital environments frequented by adolescents and young people, identifying its characteristics and mechanisms of dissemination; investigate how these discourses may influence the construction of masculinities, gender relations, and youth identities within the context of Basic Education; and analyze the role of schools in fostering critical citizenship capable of engaging with digital content that shapes values, behaviors, perceptions of masculinities, and patterns of social coexistence.

Considering the research question and the proposed objectives, this investigation adopted a qualitative research approach. Regarding the technical procedures, a bibliographic review was employed as

the primary methodological strategy, enabling a critical analysis of the scientific literature addressing digital culture, algorithms, the Red Pill movement, masculinities, gender relations, youth identities, and citizenship education. This methodological approach proved appropriate to the nature of the research object, allowing the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives and supporting an evidence-based interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

This article is organized into four sections. The first presents the introduction, providing the contextualization of the topic, the research problem, the research objectives, and the methodological procedures adopted. The second section describes the methodological approach and the technical procedures employed in the study. The third section presents the theoretical framework, organized into three interrelated subsections addressing digital culture, algorithms, and the dissemination of Red Pill discourses; the construction of masculinities, youth identities, and gender relations; and, finally, citizenship education, critical education, and the role of schools in the digital era. The fourth and final section presents the concluding remarks, summarizing the principal findings of the study, its contributions to the field of education, and recommendations for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework was structured into three interrelated sections, designed to provide the conceptual foundation for the discussions developed throughout this study. The first examines the principal aspects of digital culture, the functioning of platform algorithms, and the dissemination processes associated with Red

Pill discourses. The second analyzes theoretical contributions concerning masculinities, youth identities, and gender relations, emphasizing the socialization processes that shape identity construction within contemporary society. The third discusses the role of schools in promoting critical citizenship education, focusing on digital citizenship, the development of critical thinking, respect for diversity, and the implementation of educational practices aimed at strengthening democratic coexistence in response to the challenges posed by digital environments.

2.1. Digital Culture, Algorithms, And The Dissemination Of Red Pill Discourses

Digital culture has established a new paradigm for the production, circulation, and consumption of information, significantly transforming patterns of social interaction and identity construction. Within this context, digital platforms operate through algorithmic systems that select, organize, and recommend content according to users' behavioral patterns, influencing not only what is viewed but also the symbolic frameworks that shape perceptions, values, and social positioning. Consequently, digital environments have become privileged spaces for the formation of discursive communities, in which particular narratives are continuously reinforced through automated recommendation mechanisms (Lawson, 2018; Lima-Santos; Santos, 2022).

During the early consolidation of the Internet as a space for social interaction, there was widespread optimism that digital environments would promote more democratic relationships and reduce the influence of structural social inequalities. As Lawson (2018, p. 3) observes, there was an expectation that "digital spaces

would provide a utopia free from inequalities, where subjectivities shaped by race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class could become fluid or disappear altogether." However, the evolution of digital platforms has demonstrated that these technologies not only reproduce existing social conflicts but may also intensify processes of discrimination, polarization, and radicalization through the operational logic of algorithms and the attention economy.

This phenomenon is closely associated with the business model underlying digital platforms. Their sustainability and economic viability depend largely on maximizing users' time spent online while simultaneously increasing engagement levels. Within this framework, recommendation systems tend to privilege content capable of eliciting strong emotional responses, thereby favoring the dissemination of polarized, sensationalized, or controversial messages. As a consequence, informational bubbles emerge in which users are predominantly exposed to content that reinforces their preexisting beliefs and convictions. This dynamic reduces exposure to divergent perspectives and strengthens mutual validation processes among socially homogeneous groups that share similar values, attitudes, and opinions (Schmitt; Gonçalves, 2025; Abrahamsen et al., 2024).

From this perspective, Lima-Santos and Santos (2022, p. 4) argue that:



The omnipresence of the Internet across virtually every sphere of everyday life in the twenty-first century has implications not only for the different sectors that constitute social organization but also for the formation of contemporary subjectivities. By entering and navigating cyberspace, individuals may experience the illusion that they are capable of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the world, albeit virtually, according to their own desires. Digital technology creates and reinforces the illusion that users exercise complete control over the processes of information production and dissemination with nothing more than a click of their fingertips.

This perspective highlights that users' apparent autonomy is exercised within an environment continuously mediated by computational architectures that determine the visibility and accessibility of available information.

It is within this context that the Red Pill movement has found favorable conditions for its expansion. As discussed by Regagnan and Souto (2024), the Red Pill community is structured around the construction of a narrative asserting that men are subjected to a society purportedly dominated by feminism, advocating the need for a male "awakening" as a prerequisite for understanding this perceived reality. Although inspired by popular culture, particularly the metaphor of the "red pill," its discourses incorporate antifeminist arguments, biologically deterministic interpretations of gender

relations, and recurrent criticism of gender equality policies, thereby promoting a hierarchical conception of masculinities. Ferreira (2025) further argues that these discourses have gained increasing prominence on platforms such as YouTube, where digital communication strategies facilitate their widespread dissemination.

Before presenting the conceptual framework, **Table 1** summarizes the principal elements connecting digital culture, algorithmic functioning, and the dissemination of Red Pill discourses, providing a synthesized overview of the relationships discussed throughout this section.

Table 1. Relationships Between Digital Culture, Algorithms, and the Dissemination of Red Pill Discourses

Dimension Analyzed	Characterization	Relationship to the Dissemination of Red Pill Discourses
Digital culture	An environment characterized by intense connectivity, continuous information flow, and the formation of virtual communities.	Expands the reach of identity-based narratives and facilitates the organization of groups around shared interests.
Platform algorithms	Systems that personalize content based on user behavior and engagement metrics.	Recommend content similar to previously consumed material, increasing repeated exposure to the same narratives.

Attention economy	A model that prioritizes content capable of generating prolonged engagement, interaction, and sharing.	Emotionally charged and polarized messages tend to receive greater visibility.
Information bubbles	Environments in which content converging with users' preferences predominates.	Reduce exposure to divergent perspectives and reinforce processes of belief confirmation.
Digital communities	Networks of interaction organized around shared identities, values, and narratives.	Facilitate the continuous circulation of masculinist discourses and strengthen individuals' sense of group belonging.
Red Pill discourses	Antifeminist narratives that reinterpret gender relations from a hierarchical perspective of masculinities.	Achieve extensive dissemination through digital platforms mediated by algorithmic recommendation systems.
Educational implications	Influence socialization processes, identity construction, and the citizenship education of adolescents and young people.	Reinforce the need for educational initiatives focused on critical digital literacy and citizenship education.

Source: Prepared by the author based on Lawson (2018), Lima-Santos and Santos (2022), Regagnan and Souto (2024), Abrahamsen *et al.* (2024), Ferreira (2025), Schmitt and Gonçalves (2025), and Betti and Wolff (2025).

As shown in Table 1, the recent literature, as evidenced by the research sources underpinning the present table, demonstrates that the dissemination of these discourses does not result exclusively from the initiatives of content creators, but also from the ways in

which digital platforms structure their content distribution mechanisms.

Betti and Wolff (2025, p. 19) observe that:

The number of masculinist, right-wing, and antifeminist channels continues to grow, while channels created by feminists, left-wing groups, or LGBTQIAPN+ communities have also increased in number. However, the latter are often disadvantaged by algorithms whose biases are embedded in the platforms themselves. These platforms are not neutral, as became particularly evident in early 2025 with the election of Donald Trump in the United States, who was openly supported by influential figures such as Elon Musk, owner of X (formerly Twitter), and Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp).

Although the debate regarding the factors contributing to this scenario remains ongoing, these authors emphasize the importance of critically examining the role of digital platforms in amplifying particular discourses (Betti; Wolff, 2025).

Beyond the influence of algorithms, the expansion of the Red Pill movement has been associated with the emergence of digital communities that provide identity recognition, a sense of belonging, and simplified explanations for personal experiences of frustration, insecurity, or social dissatisfaction. According to Miguel and Priori

(2023), these spaces frequently combine narratives related to financial advice, entrepreneurship, and self-improvement with misogynistic discourses, producing content that initially appears ideologically neutral but progressively incorporates hostility toward women and feminist movements. This communication strategy broadens the dissemination of such messages among adolescents and young adults who were not initially seeking content explicitly associated with the masculinist movement.

Accordingly, understanding the interplay among digital culture, algorithms, and Red Pill discourses represents a relevant area of inquiry within Basic Education research, as these phenomena directly influence youth socialization processes and the construction of masculinities. In this context, schools assume a fundamental role in promoting critical digital literacy, fostering the ethical use of digital technologies, and developing competencies that enable students to recognize algorithmic recommendation mechanisms, critically evaluate the digital content they consume, and strengthen forms of social interaction grounded in respect for human rights, gender equity, and democratic citizenship (Gomes et al, 2026).

2.2. The Construction Of Masculinities, Youth Identities, And Gender Relations

The construction of masculinities is a social, historical, and cultural process continuously shaped by institutions, interpersonal interactions, and diverse contexts of socialization. Rather than representing a single or universal way of being a man, masculinities encompass multiple socially constructed expressions that vary across historical, cultural, and political contexts, rejecting biologically deterministic or essentialist perspectives. Accordingly, masculinities

should not be understood as a homogeneous model but as a plurality of experiences influenced by social class, race, generation, sexuality, and cultural belonging (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013; Louro; Goellner; Felipe, 2018; Oliveira, 2024). This perspective broadens the analytical framework for examining how adolescents and young people construct their identities within a society increasingly mediated by digital technologies.

Youth identities are continuously shaped through dynamic processes of negotiation between individual experiences and collective social references. Families, schools, peer groups, and digital environments simultaneously contribute to the formation of values, beliefs, and representations that influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and others. As Silva and Barreira (2021) argue, the construction of masculine identity results from the internalization of shared social representations that establish expectations regarding behaviors considered socially appropriate for men. From this perspective, digital platforms transcend their function as communication tools and become environments of socialization in which discourses, symbols, and cultural practices are continuously produced, shared, and reinterpreted by individuals.

The literature on masculinities demonstrates that this field of inquiry provides valuable insights into both the continuity and transformation of contemporary masculine models. In this regard, "engagement with these young men and the promotion of studies on masculinities may illuminate 'a connection between the growing field of men's studies, popular anxieties about men and boys, feminist perspectives on patriarchy, and social models of gender'" (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013, p. 261). This perspective enables masculinities to be understood as relational constructs that are

continuously influenced by symbolic disputes within society and by the discourses circulating across multiple contexts of socialization, including digital environments.

In the contemporary context, the convergence between digital culture and identity formation processes has amplified the visibility of narratives that seek to define standards of masculine behavior, often grounded in stereotypes of strength, dominance, competitiveness, the dissemination of hate speech, and the rejection of gender equality agendas.

Oliveira (2024) argues that gender identities are continuously shaped by cultural transformations, emerging through social interactions and systems of shared meaning. Similarly, Araújo (2021) emphasizes that families, schools, and other educational institutions continue to exert a significant influence on the development of youth identities despite the growing presence of digital technologies. Consequently, understanding how these different socialization contexts interact is essential for examining the effects that specific digital discourses, including those associated with the Red Pill movement, may have on the construction of masculinities among students in Basic Education.

Before proceeding with the present discussion, Table 2 is presented to synthesize the principal theoretical references examined in this section, highlighting the relationships among the construction of masculinities, youth identities, socialization processes, and the potential influences of discourses disseminated within digital environments.

Table 2. Analytical Dimensions of the Construction of Masculinities, Youth Identities, and Gender Relations in Basic Education

Dimension	Characterization	Contributions to Understanding Red Pill Discourses in Basic Education
Masculinities	Social, historical, and cultural constructs that assume multiple forms according to social contexts.	Demonstrates that there is no universal model of masculinity and that digital discourses actively shape competing definitions of masculine identities.
Youth identities	Ongoing processes of identity construction influenced by multiple contexts of socialization.	Highlights that adolescents are simultaneously influenced by family, school, peer groups, and digital environments.
Gender relations	A set of norms, values, and social representations that guide interactions between men and women.	Enables the analysis of how specific discourses reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes.
Social representations	Shared systems of meaning that shape collective perceptions and behaviors.	Explains how narratives disseminated through digital networks may naturalize particular conceptions of masculinity.
Socialization processes	Learning experiences developed through social institutions and everyday interactions.	Demonstrates that identity construction results from the interaction between face-to-face and digital influences.
School	A space for citizenship education, democratic coexistence, and knowledge production.	Promotes educational practices aimed at fostering critical thinking, respect for diversity, and gender equity.

Digital environment	A space characterized by the continuous circulation of discourses, values, and identities mediated by digital platforms.	Expands adolescents' exposure to diverse narratives about masculinities, reinforcing the need for critical digital education and responsible technology use.
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Source: Prepared by the author based on Araújo (2021); Connell and Messerschmidt (2013); Louro, Goellner, and Felipe (2018); Silva and Barreira (2021); Oliveira (2024); Souza, Ferreira, and Rodrigues (2023); and Gueiros and Brasilino (2025).

The dissemination of discourses associated with the Red Pill movement among adolescents and young people is embedded within broader symbolic disputes surrounding contemporary masculinities. By offering simplified interpretations of affective relationships, gender roles, and social organization, these narratives may influence how some students understand themselves and interpret their relationships with others. This influence does not result from a direct causal relationship between digital content consumption and social behavior; rather, it emerges from the interaction of multiple socialization processes involving families, schools, peer groups, and digital environments. From this perspective, understanding masculinities as socially constructed enables the recognition that youth identities remain open to negotiation, critical reflection, and transformation throughout the educational trajectory (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013; Silva; Barreira, 2021; Oliveira, 2024).

Within this context, schools play a pivotal role in expanding opportunities for the development of masculinities grounded in respect for diversity and democratic coexistence. The literature

indicates that pedagogical practices committed to gender equity contribute to reducing the reproduction of stereotypes historically associated with masculinity (Araújo, 2021; Silva; Barreira, 2021; Souza; Ferreira; Rodrigues, 2023; Gueiros; Brasilino, 2025).

In this regard, Souza, Ferreira, and Rodrigues (2023, p. 14) argue that:



Building healthier masculinities in schools requires educational institutions to provide more equitable opportunities, such as ensuring that both sports and artistic activities are equally accessible to all genders, thereby fostering the normalization of these activities beyond socially constructed stereotypes. Likewise, active family participation in everyday school life is essential, bringing together two highly significant social contexts for the construction of masculinities.

This perspective reinforces that addressing exclusionary discourses does not depend exclusively on educational institutions but also requires strengthening partnerships among schools, families, and communities in supporting the development of adolescents and young people (Gomes, 2022).

The educational role of schools extends far beyond the transmission of formal knowledge, encompassing students' ethical, civic, and social development. By creating opportunities for dialogue, critical reflection, and engagement with diversity, schools enable young people to develop the competencies needed to critically evaluate information circulating through digital media and to challenge

discourses that perpetuate gender inequalities. In this sense, Gueiros and Brasilino (2025, p. 4) state that:

The school, as a historically constituted social institution, represents a privileged setting for the production, circulation, and construction of meaning. Rather than serving merely as a space for the transmission of formal knowledge, it functions as a powerful arena in which everyday experiences are mediated through systematic knowledge. In this capacity, schools play a fundamental role in democratizing access to literate culture, creating conditions that enable individuals to develop a critical understanding of the social realities surrounding them and, consequently, to act upon those realities.

This perspective demonstrates that education constitutes a privileged setting for fostering critical engagement with digital content and promoting social interactions grounded in respect for human rights. Based on these theoretical discussions, examining the interconnections among Red Pill discourses, the construction of masculinities, and the formation of youth identities has become particularly relevant for understanding the contemporary challenges faced by Basic Education.

Such an investigation not only sheds light on the complexity of these relationships but also provides valuable insights into factors that directly influence students' educational experiences and personal development. The contributions of Connell and

Messerschmidt (2013), Louro, Goellner, and Felipe (2018), Araújo (2021), Silva and Barreira (2021), Souza, Ferreira, and Rodrigues (2023), Oliveira (2024), and Gueiros and Brasilino (2025) converge in demonstrating that masculinities are neither fixed nor biologically determined. Rather, they are socially constructed and continuously shaped by the multiple socialization processes individuals experience throughout their lives. In a society increasingly permeated by digital technologies across virtually every sphere of daily life, strengthening educational practices that foster critical thinking, recognize the diversity of identities, and encourage respectful dialogue on gender relations has become essential. Such initiatives make a significant contribution to the development of democratic citizenship by equipping students with the knowledge, critical awareness, and social competencies necessary for active, responsible, and inclusive participation in contemporary society.

2.3. Citizenship Education, Critical Education, And The Role Of Schools In The Digital Age

Citizenship education constitutes one of the primary objectives of Basic Education and is intrinsically associated with the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies that enable students to critically understand the social realities surrounding them. Furthermore, this educational process is essential for preparing learners to participate actively in democratic life and to exercise their rights and responsibilities in an ethical and responsible manner. Accordingly, citizenship education extends beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge to encompass the cultivation of values that promote democratic coexistence and social responsibility. In a context characterized by the pervasive circulation of information across digital environments, this educational mission surpasses the

boundaries of conventional curricular content, fostering competencies related to the critical evaluation of information, appreciation of diversity, respect for human rights, and the promotion of democratic values. From this perspective, citizenship education represents a fundamental dimension of Basic Education, contributing to the development of reflective, autonomous, and socially engaged citizens. In this regard, Gomes (2022) emphasizes the central role of school-based citizenship education in preparing individuals to participate consciously and actively in society by integrating knowledge, values, and attitudes aligned with the democratic principles that underpin Brazilian education.

The transformations driven by digital culture have significantly reshaped youth socialization processes and the ways in which adolescents construct references concerning identity, social interaction, and civic participation. Although continuous access to digital platforms expands opportunities for learning and communication, it also increases students' exposure to polarized discourses, misinformation, and narratives capable of reinforcing prejudice and social inequalities. Within this context, digital citizenship education is no longer a complementary educational topic but has become an integral component of the school's formative responsibilities. As argued by Tavares (2024), Fernandes and Cardoso (2024), and Mattos *et al.* (2025), educating digital citizens requires developing competencies related to the ethical use of digital technologies, information verification, responsible communication, and critical participation in digital environments.

These challenges become even more evident when digital content significantly influences perceptions of gender, masculinities, and interpersonal relationships. Recent studies have demonstrated that

virtual communities organized around masculinist discourses effectively exploit digital platforms to amplify their visibility, facilitating the circulation of narratives that normalize gender inequalities and legitimize reductionist interpretations of the complex dynamics between men and women (Ferreira, 2025). In this context, the educational role of schools extends well beyond the transmission of disciplinary knowledge, positioning educational institutions as spaces of critical mediation between students' learning experiences and the democratic values that underpin citizenship education. Consequently, schools assume an indispensable role in fostering critical reflection and strengthening the democratic principles essential to civic life (Gomes, 2022; Paula et al., 2026).

This perspective is highlighted by Paula *et al.* (2026, p. 4), who state that:



The construction of masculinities within the school context represents a field of inquiry that extends beyond the simple description of gendered behaviors. Schools function as spaces where identities become consolidated, values are internalized, and narratives concerning what it means to be a man acquire performative significance. Within this context, the emergence of movements such as Red Pill culture introduces a level of complexity that cannot be overlooked. Grounded in the systematic rejection of feminist perspectives and the reaffirmation of gender hierarchies, this culture permeates school environments through digital networks, influencing how adolescent boys and young men understand their identities and their relationships with women.

The analysis conducted by the authors demonstrates that contemporary educational processes must take into account the multiple influences exerted by digital environments on the development of youth identities, particularly when certain discourses seek to normalize practices that are incompatible with democratic values and human rights (Paula et al., 2026).

Drawing upon the logic of the attention economy, a concept originally proposed by Herbert Simon (1971), human attention has come to be understood as a scarce resource and, consequently, one of considerable economic value. From this perspective, the greater the volume of available information, the more limited individuals' capacity becomes to sustain attention, a condition that underpins

the business models of contemporary digital platforms. Within this framework, recommendation algorithms tend to prioritize content capable of maximizing user engagement, thereby favoring the dissemination of emotionally charged and polarized narratives, including those associated with the Red Pill movement (Gomes *et al.*, 2026).

In contrast to traditional conceptions of masculinity, the perspective of plural masculinities broadens the understanding that there is no single legitimate way of being a man. This approach adopts a relational and transdisciplinary perspective, recognizing the diversity of masculine experiences, the relevance of intersectionality, and the importance of promoting gender equity. In this regard, Oliveira, Brito, and Lopes (2023) advocate moving beyond hegemonic conceptions of masculinity by valuing more inclusive models that are consistent with democratic principles.

Within this scenario, addressing discourses associated with the Red Pill movement requires strengthening critical digital literacy, understood not merely as the ability to use digital technologies but also as the capacity to critically evaluate the content disseminated through digital platforms, recognize hate speech, misogyny, and misinformation, and develop the analytical competencies necessary to challenge these narratives using evidence-based reasoning. In the context of Basic Education, this perspective can be implemented through active learning methodologies that encourage students to critically analyze videos, digital influencers, and algorithmically recommended content while promoting the development of counter-narratives grounded in human rights, gender equity, and democratic coexistence. Consequently, schools become privileged spaces for dialogue, inclusion, plurality, and critical reflection,

contributing to the education of digitally literate, civically engaged, and socially responsible citizens (Chaveiro; Oliveira; Gotti, 2025).

Table 3 is presented below to synthesize the principal dimensions that articulate, among other aspects, citizenship education, critical education, and digital citizenship, highlighting how these elements can guide pedagogical practices aimed at addressing discriminatory discourses and promoting social relationships grounded in ethics, dialogue, and respect for diversity.

Table 3. Dimensions of Citizenship Education and Critical Education in Addressing the Challenges of Digital Culture in Basic Education

Dimension	Characterization	Contributions to Citizenship Education in Basic Education
Citizenship education	Development of knowledge, values, attitudes, and responsibilities aimed at democratic participation.	Promotes the exercise of citizenship, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and respect for human rights.
Critical education	An educational process that fosters analysis, reflection, argumentation, and intellectual autonomy.	Equips students to critically interpret discourses circulating in digital environments.
Digital citizenship	Ethical, responsible, safe, and participatory use of digital technologies.	Encourages efforts to combat misinformation, hate speech, and discriminatory practices across digital platforms.

Digital culture	An environment characterized by the intensive circulation of information, networked interactions, and algorithmic mediation.	Develops competencies related to the critical evaluation of digital content and the assessment of information credibility.
Role of the school	An institution responsible for students' holistic development and the promotion of democratic coexistence.	Promotes pedagogical practices that strengthen critical thinking, dialogue, and respect for diversity.
Teacher education	Development of competencies that enable educators to facilitate discussions on citizenship, gender, and digital technologies.	Supports pedagogical interventions grounded in democratic principles and scientific evidence.
Democratic coexistence	Construction of social relationships based on empathy, dialogue, inclusion, and respect for diversity.	Contributes to preventing discriminatory discourses, strengthening a culture of peace, and promoting respectful social relationships.
Human rights education	Integration of the principles of equality, human dignity, and social justice into educational practices.	Promotes the development of school environments committed to equity, diversity, and critical citizenship.

Source: Prepared by the author based on Gomes (2022); Ferreira (2025); Tavares (2024); Fernandes and Cardoso (2024); Mattos *et al.* (2025); Henrique, Rocha, and Silva (2024); Paula *et al.* (2026); and Cruz *et al.* (2023).

The consolidation of critical citizenship education requires schools to develop pedagogical strategies capable of critically examining the

discourses circulating across digital environments that influence values, behaviors, and patterns of social interaction. Such educational efforts should not be limited to identifying inappropriate content or adopting exclusively punitive approaches. Rather, they should encompass educational processes that promote reasoned argumentation, ethical reflection, and the recognition of diversity as a fundamental principle of democratic life (Gomes, 2022).

From this perspective, Mattos *et al.* (2025) emphasize that digital citizenship involves the development of competencies related to responsible participation in virtual environments, the critical evaluation of information, and the conscious exercise of freedom of expression. Similarly, Fernandes and Cardoso (2024) argue that education for the responsible use of digital technologies should be integrated into everyday school practices, enabling students to understand the social implications of interactions established through digital platforms.

Within the field of masculinity studies, recent literature indicates that preventing discriminatory practices requires educational interventions capable of challenging traditional gender models and broadening the possibilities for constructing masculine identities masculinas (Fernandes; Cardoso, 2024); Mattos et al., 2025; Paula et al., 2026).

In this regard, Paula *et al.* (2026, p. 10) state that:



Preventing violence against women within the school environment therefore requires a profound transformation in the ways schools construct and legitimize masculinities. This involves far more than simply punishing violent behaviors; it requires questioning the structures that allow such behaviors to emerge and persist. Such transformation entails curricular revision incorporating critical gender perspectives, teacher education that equips educators to recognize and intervene in power dynamics, and the creation of spaces in which boys can explore alternative ways of being men that do not depend upon the subordination of others.

This perspective reinforces the view that addressing discourses associated with the Red Pill movement should be accomplished through continuous educational practices grounded in the promotion of human rights, gender equity, and the development of inclusive school environments. This understanding is further supported by studies examining the influence of traditional models of masculinity on the reproduction of social inequalities. Nahas *et al.* (2021, p. 140) document that "the influence of toxic masculinity on the future of the struggle for gender equality reveals how power structures are perpetuated through socialization processes that normalize aggression and domination." This finding demonstrates that certain behaviors should not be interpreted as inherent individual characteristics but rather as socially constructed patterns produced and reproduced across multiple contexts of socialization, including families, schools, peer groups, and digital environments.

As Henrique, Rocha, and Silva (2024) observe, education plays a central role in critically examining these social constructions, fostering relationships grounded in respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

The discussions presented throughout this section indicate that citizenship education in Basic Education should be understood as a continuous process of intellectual, ethical, and social development that enables students to critically interpret the discourses disseminated through digital culture and to respond to them in an informed and responsible manner. The studies conducted by Gomes (2022), Tavares (2024), Fernandes and Cardoso (2024), Mattos *et al.* (2025), Ferreira (2025), Henrique, Rocha, and Silva (2024), Cruz *et al.* (2023), Paula *et al.* (2026), and Nahas *et al.* (2021) converge in demonstrating that schools represent strategic spaces for preparing individuals to identify mechanisms of misinformation, recognize discriminatory discourses, and establish social relationships grounded in ethics, dialogue, respect for diversity, and the protection of human rights. Accordingly, promoting critical education and digital citizenship constitutes a robust educational pathway for addressing the challenges posed by the dissemination of narratives concerning masculinities in digital environments, while preparing students to participate actively in democratic life in accordance with the principles that underpin contemporary citizenship.

3. METHODOLOGY

Understanding the relationships among algorithms, digital culture, the construction of masculinities, and citizenship education in Basic Education requires an investigative approach capable of

encompassing the complexity and multidimensional nature of contemporary social processes. It is through this careful and systematic examination that it becomes possible to understand how these interconnected elements shape and influence the development of individuals within contemporary society. The dissemination of discourses associated with the Red Pill movement across digital platforms extends beyond the boundaries of communication technologies, encompassing cultural, educational, and relational dimensions. Consequently, these narratives influence the ways in which young people construct their identities and establish social relationships. In this sense, the movement affects not only interpersonal interactions but also the broader processes through which social bonds are formed, ultimately shaping relationships among different generations and social groups. Investigating these phenomena is therefore essential for advancing understanding of the challenges faced by schools, particularly in light of the rapid expansion of interactions within digital environments. Such knowledge provides a theoretical foundation for the development of educational practices committed to active citizenship, democratic coexistence, and the promotion of human rights.

Considering the research question and the objectives established for this study, the investigation adopted a qualitative research approach. This methodological perspective is appropriate for studies that seek to understand complex social phenomena whose meanings emerge from the interactions among individuals, discourses, and historical contexts. As Trevisol Neto (2017, p. 39) states,



When the objective is to understand the nature of a social phenomenon, the qualitative approach is appropriate because it seeks to comprehend meanings rather than objective measurements and is grounded in a functionalist conception of science. Qualitative research is employed in complex or specific contexts.

Internationally, qualitative research is firmly established within the Social Sciences and Humanities because it enables interpretative analyses that acknowledge the complexity of the phenomena under investigation, facilitating a deeper understanding of cultural, educational, and social dynamics that cannot be adequately explained solely through quantitative indicators (Santana; Narciso; Fernandes, 2025).

This perspective is particularly appropriate for the purposes of the present study, given that the construction of masculinities, the formation of youth identities, and the influence of digital discourses are processes shaped by multiple historical, cultural, and social factors. Examining these phenomena requires an analytical perspective capable of investigating how values, social representations, and practices are produced, shared, and continuously reinterpreted across different contexts of socialization.

In this regard, Silva and Barreira (2021, p. 180) argue that



Discussions aimed at understanding identity formation processes originate from multiple fields of inquiry. Identity is a topic that requires an interdisciplinary effort for its understanding, given its organic construction, making it essential to integrate the diverse research methods developed across different areas of knowledge.

This perspective reinforces the suitability of qualitative research for investigations situated at the intersection of education, digital culture, gender, and identity formation.

Regarding the technical procedures, the study was based on a bibliographic review. This method occupies a prominent position in international scientific research because it enables the organization, critical evaluation, and synthesis of accumulated knowledge concerning a specific research topic, thereby facilitating the identification of convergences, knowledge gaps, emerging trends, and theoretical developments within the specialized literature. According to Santana, Narciso, and Fernandes (2025), the bibliographic review is widely employed in scientific research because it promotes dialogue among diverse academic contributions, strengthening both analytical rigor and the robustness of the resulting interpretations. In the present study, this methodological procedure proved particularly appropriate for conducting a critical analysis of the relationships among Red Pill discourses, the construction of masculinities, and citizenship education within the context of Basic Education.

The bibliographic review was based on the analysis of scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings, as well as books and book chapters addressing digital culture, algorithms, masculinities, youth identities, gender relations, digital citizenship, and citizenship education. The selection of these materials enabled the integration of theoretical contributions from multiple fields of knowledge, fostering an interdisciplinary understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This diversity of sources enriched the analytical process by combining recent scientific studies with well-established theoretical frameworks, thereby strengthening the consistency of the discussions developed throughout the study (Santana; Narciso; Fernandes, 2025; Trevisol Neto, 2017).

The methodological approach adopted proved consistent with the objectives of the research, enabling the collection, analysis, and integration of multiple theoretical perspectives concerning a contemporary social phenomenon of considerable complexity. The combination of qualitative research and bibliographic review provided a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among digital culture, algorithms, Red Pill discourses, the construction of masculinities, and citizenship education while preserving the interpretative depth required by the research object.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The increasing prevalence of interactions mediated by algorithms and digital platforms has generated new challenges for Basic Education, particularly regarding the construction of youth identities, the development of masculinities, and the consolidation of citizenship education grounded in democratic values. The

dissemination of discourses associated with the Red Pill movement demonstrates that digital environments have evolved beyond spaces dedicated solely to communication and entertainment, becoming influential settings that shape values, perceptions, and patterns of social interaction. Accordingly, this study contributes to the academic debate by examining the interrelationships among digital culture, algorithms, masculinities, and education, thereby advancing the understanding of a contemporary phenomenon that directly affects educational processes and socialization practices within school contexts.

The findings indicate that the general objective of the study was achieved, as it was possible to analyze the relationships among discourses associated with the Red Pill movement, the construction of masculinities, and the citizenship education of students in Basic Education, while considering the influence exerted by algorithms and the dynamics of digital culture on youth socialization processes. Likewise, the specific objectives were accomplished throughout the investigation. First, the study examined the characteristics, principal narratives, and dissemination mechanisms of Red Pill content across digital environments frequented by adolescents and young people. Second, it investigated the potential influence of these narratives on the construction of masculinities, gender relations, and youth identities. Finally, it analyzed the role of schools in promoting critical citizenship education through the reflective interpretation of digital content and the strengthening of values related to ethics, democratic coexistence, and human rights.

The first section of the theoretical framework demonstrated that digital culture and algorithmic systems significantly influence the dissemination of information and the formation of virtual

communities, thereby increasing the visibility of particular discourses through recommendation systems and content personalization. The analysis showed that these mechanisms contribute to the creation of informational environments characterized by the repeated exposure to similar narratives, reinforcing the need to develop competencies related to the critical evaluation of content disseminated through digital platforms.

The second section of the theoretical framework demonstrated that masculinities are socially constructed through continuous interactions among individuals, institutions, and cultural contexts. The investigation showed that youth identities are shaped through multiple socialization processes involving families, schools, peer groups, and, increasingly, digital environments. Furthermore, the findings suggest that discourses associated with the Red Pill movement may reinforce stereotypical interpretations of gender relations, highlighting the importance of educational initiatives that foster dialogue, critical reflection, and the recognition of the diversity of masculine experiences.

The third section of the theoretical framework highlighted the central role of schools in promoting citizenship education in response to the challenges posed by digital culture. The findings indicate that fostering digital citizenship, critical thinking, and human rights education constitutes an effective strategy for addressing misinformation, discriminatory discourses, and other practices that undermine democratic coexistence. Consequently, the educational mission of schools extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge to encompass the ethical, social, and civic development of students through pedagogical practices that encourage critical reflection on digital information and the

construction of relationships grounded in respect for diversity and shared social responsibility.

The findings also indicate that addressing the challenges posed by Red Pill discourses requires coordinated action among schools, families, communities, and other social institutions. The complexity of this phenomenon demonstrates that citizenship-oriented educational processes cannot be limited to the development of digital competencies alone but must also promote dialogue, empathy, evidence-based argumentation, and democratic coexistence. In this regard, education emerges as a privileged context for fostering youth identities grounded in respect for diversity, equality of rights, and commitment to democratic values.

Future research should include empirical investigations involving students, teachers, and school administrators in Basic Education to examine how discourses associated with the Red Pill movement permeate different educational contexts and to identify the pedagogical approaches that are most effective in strengthening citizenship education. Studies exploring families' perceptions of the influence of digital platforms on youth identity formation are likewise warranted, as are comparative investigations across different educational settings. Such studies have the potential to expand the scientific understanding of the relationships among algorithms, digital culture, masculinities, and education.

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