

A Systematic review of the presence and participation of students with intellectual disabilities in Spanish universities

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Abstract

Inclusive education remains a challenge to be embraced by the national educational system, and this challenge becomes even more pronounced when considering the access and participation of young individuals with intellectual disabilities in higher education. The present systematic review aims to delve into the scientific literature addressing the theme of the presence of students with intellectual disabilities in Spanish university classrooms. To achieve this, a thorough examination of 34 scientific articles published between 2012 and 2022 was conducted across the databases of Dialnet, RedALyC, SCOPUS, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Through the analysis of the selected studies, a research trend regarding the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in Spanish universities is identified, and the results are summarized. These results indicate a disparity between the increasing response of Spanish universities to students with intellectual disabilities and the limited production of scientific literature on the subject. The review concludes by emphasizing the need to promote high-quality inclusive research processes within the university environment, with a focus on accessibility and equal opportunities for young individuals with intellectual disabilities in higher education.

Keywords

university, intellectual disability, inclusion, inclusive education, higher education

Introduction

The comprehensive inclusion of students in the educational system is an imperative goal that educational entities in the 21st century must pursue without exception (Azorín & Ainscow, 2020).

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The diversity and pluralism that characterize contemporary society should be effectively embraced in all schools and institutions of higher education, thereby providing tailored educational responses to both the collective needs and individual idiosyncrasies of the student body (Moriña, 2017). In this context, educational policies grounded in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the 2030 Agenda should be regarded as the facilitating roadmap for meeting the challenge of inclusion, with the aim of shaping a future in education defined by equity and social justice (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2019).

Both from a traditional perspective within the educational landscape and from a more inclusive viewpoint, students with disabilities have historically been and continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups concerning their access to quality mainstream education (Francisco et al., 2020). This disparity becomes even more pronounced at the higher education levels (Dolmage, 2017). Advances in societal awareness, community efforts, and the advocacy for the fulfillment of the rights of individuals with disabilities have facilitated significant progress in the inclusion of students with diverse abilities in the mainstream educational model (Amor et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the most pressing challenge remains the design of schools that cater to all, promoting real and effective inclusive practices, ultimately striving for an education system devoid of exclusion (Ferguson, 2008).

In the context of the national educational landscape, Spain has experienced a fluctuating trajectory concerning initiatives aimed at fulfilling the principles of equal opportunities and educational equity for individuals with disabilities (Huete, 2017). The coexistence of various educational models intended to address the needs of students with disabilities, coupled with the frequent enactment of legislative reforms in education, has at times impeded progress toward inclusion or has resulted in an unbalanced or insufficient approach in certain cases (Rubio, 2017).

However, given the significant presence of students with disabilities within the national education system, the need to move towards a socially inclusive pedagogy becomes increasingly evident (Gale et al., 2017). According to the National Institute of Statistics' Survey on Disability, Personal Autonomy, and Dependency Situations, in the year 2020, the number of individuals with disabilities registered within compulsory school age (between 6 and 15 years old) stood at 106,300, while the group of individuals aged 16 and older who were pursuing post-compulsory education reached a total of 120,800 (INE, 2020). Regarding the resources deployed for the educational inclusion of both groups, 35.3% of students with disabilities received insufficient support or, in some cases, did not receive the necessary assistance to achieve their educational inclusion. In the group of students aged over 16, it was determined that almost 30% of the students did not receive any form of support for their inclusion. Therefore, disability continues to pose a challenge for educational environments, especially at the post-compulsory levels due to their voluntary nature. Currently, only 1.5% of university students have some form of disability (Fundación Universia, 2021), with it being noteworthy that out of this percentage, only 11% have an intellectual or cognitive disability (Fundación Universia, 2021). This fact underscores the urgent need to transform the university model towards a social approach to disability that enables the adoption of effective, but above all, genuine inclusive solutions and practices (Bunbury, 2020).

On the other hand, the limited presence of intellectual disability in the Spanish university system contrasts sharply with the high percentage of individuals without disabilities currently pursuing higher education studies (González & Miles, 2021). This situation poses a competitive disadvantage for individuals with disabilities actively participating in the labor market, which is reflected in the elevated levels of unemployment within this community (Laborada et al., 2021). The university, as a leading institution in higher education, must undertake the challenge of addressing the educational needs demanded by society as a whole, efficiently fostering the country's economic development, promoting the principle of social inclusion, and consolidating cultural diversity (Maassen et al., 2019). Therefore,

the focus should be oriented towards the effective preparation of candidates who can enter an increasingly demanding, yet more inclusive, labor market in the broadest sense of the term (Goodman, 2021; Tenorio et al., 2021).

In Spain, there is a growing interest in increasing the participation of students with intellectual disabilities in the university environment, both by creating more inclusive environments and spaces and through the implementation of education tailored to the characteristics and needs of students with cognitive diversity (Planella-Ribera & Martínez-Rivera, 2021). However, given the evidence that the educational response offered to this profile of students has been insufficient thus far, it is essential to continue advancing along the path initiated by developing socio-educational policies that guarantee access to genuinely inclusive higher education (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021). In this context, the purpose of this study is to deepen our understanding of the current situation of students with intellectual disabilities in Spanish university classrooms, aiming to identify key areas for improvement and provide a tool for furthering the journey towards university inclusion for young adults with intellectual disabilities. From the main objective, specific research objectives are derived, which are as follows: 1) analyze the scope and impact of scientific literature developed in the last decade (specifically between 2012 and 2022) regarding the presence and participation of students with intellectual disabilities in the Spanish university system; 2) present the analysis of the main findings, and 3) offer a prospective outlook based on the results obtained in order to make a valuable contribution to the path of inclusion for students with disabilities in Spanish universities.

Method

Methodological design

In order to address the research question and the stated objectives, we opted to conduct a systematic review of qualitative information (Siddaway et al., 2019). To ensure adherence to quality standards, this research aligns with the principles outlined in the PRISMA 2020 Statement (Page et al., 2021), a tool that allows for the analysis of the integrity of studies based on systematic reviews (Page et al., 2022). The formulation of the research question and the subsequent literature review were carried out using the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome) strategy, as it proves to be an effective formula for accurately defining the initial question, maximizing the bibliographic search for evidence, and focusing the scope of the study (da Costa et al., 2007). In this case, the PICO strategy aligns with the following criteria: as for the Population, students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in Spanish universities were considered; in terms of the Intervention, university programs open to the participation of students with intellectual disabilities were taken into account; for the Comparison, the overall situation of students with intellectual disabilities in the university environment was considered in contrast to the general state of students without intellectual disabilities; and as for the Outcomes, the presence and degree of participation of students with intellectual disabilities in the analyzed university programs were considered.

Information sources

Data collection was conducted during the first quarter of 2023, with the last date of data retrieval being April 17, 2023. Given that the study's focus is on analyzing university experiences developed in the Spanish territory, the primary databases initially consulted for obtaining results were Dialnet Plus and RedALyC, as they are the main repositories for the dissemination of Spanish scientific research in the fields of social sciences and education. However, Web of Science (WoS) and

SCOPUS databases were also reviewed because they are considered two of the most prestigious search engines for international scientific research dissemination. During the review process, the following databases were excluded: Biblat, ProQuest Latin America, Iberia Database, Education Database, and ERIC. They were either excluded due to having a limited catalog of Spanish scientific production or because they contained scarce references related to the area under analysis.

Search strategy

Two separate basic search equations were designed based on the predominant language of each database. For databases primarily oriented towards Ibero-American scientific production, such as Dialnet Plus and RedALyC, the search equation was defined as “UNIVERSI* DISCAPACI* INTELLECTUAL*.” In the case of international databases like WoS and SCOPUS, the originally defined search equation was “university AND intellect* AND disab* AND (Spain OR Spanish).” However, some adjustments were made to the original search equation for SCOPUS to enhance its discriminatory power. The term “(Spain OR Spanish)” was replaced with the term “Spa*.” It is important to note that the search conducted in RedALyC did not yield significant results, even after several adjustments. Therefore, this search engine was exclusively used for manual searches for specific articles. The fields in which the search was conducted included all available fields for Dialnet Plus and WoS. In the case of SCOPUS, the search was restricted to execute only in the title, abstract, or keywords of the articles.

Selection criteria

The selection criteria used in the searches of the databases employed were “journal articles” (for source type) and the date range “between 2012 and 2022” (for the publication date of bibliographic resources). Additionally, a filtering based on the field of knowledge was performed, selecting in each database those areas that closely matched the desired topic, while ensuring sufficient flexibility to avoid unintended exclusions (Table 1).

After applying the aforementioned selection criteria, a subsequent screening was conducted on the bibliographic references extracted from the databases. The purpose of this screening was to exclude articles related to “experiences outside of Spain,” “non-university students with intellectual disabilities,” or any texts addressing divergent topics from the main objective of the study.

Data collection and analysis

The searches conducted in the three databases (Dialnet Plus, SCOPUS, and WoS) yielded a total of 1,397 results. Additionally, 16 supplementary articles were identified through manual searches in RedALyC and Google Scholar, resulting in a total of 1,413 references. Among these, 27 duplicates were identified, resulting in a final number of 1,386 references.

On this combined list of references, an independent review of the articles was conducted by the researchers based on reading the abstracts, selecting those that met the proposed selection criteria. Any discrepancies between the reviewers were resolved through joint examination of the records for which there was disagreement and subsequent discussion to reach a final decision. By consensus, a total of 1,004 articles were eliminated from the selection as they addressed topics different from the focus of the review; 319 were excluded as they dealt with educational programs for students at levels other than university; while 29 were discarded as they focused on university experiences in

Table 1. Relationship between Search Sources, Limiters, and Search Equations.

Data base	Constraints	Search Equation
Dialnet Plus	• Years: 2012-2022 • Subject area: Psicología y Educación	UNIVERSI* DISCAPACI* INTELLECTUAL*
SCOPUS	• Years: 2012 – 2022 • Subject area: “Social Sciences”, “Psychology”	TITLE-ABS-KEY (universi* AND intellect* AND disabi* AND spa*)
Web of Science Core Collection	• Year: 2012 – 2022 • Subject area: “Education Special” – “Psychology Multidisciplinary” – “Education Educational Research” – “Psychology Educational” – “Psychology Developmental” – “Social Science Interdisciplinary” – “Psychology” – “Psychology Social” – “Social Issues” – “Education Scientific Disciplines”	ALL=(university AND intellect* AND disab* AND (Spain OR Spanish))

countries other than Spain. Finally, a list was composed consisting of 34 articles that make up the final selection of bibliographic references under study.

The number of articles on which there was initial agreement between the reviewers for their final selection was 31, while 1,351 articles were rejected by both. Based on these data, the degree of agreement shown by the Cohen’s Kappa coefficient was 0.9379. The NNR index of the search conducted, which indicates the number of readings required to locate a relevant reference (Best et al., 2014), in this case, is 40.76. Figure 1 illustrates the flowchart followed for the reference selection process.

Results

Subsequently, a descriptive analysis of the scientific literature reviewed regarding the subject of study is undertaken, along with the synthesis of the key findings. Table 2

The quantitative analysis of the selected article list demonstrates that the year 2020 has the highest number of articles published on the subject under analysis, totaling 8 articles. Concerning the scientific output of the study area, a significant increase is detected in the period from 2018 to 2022, with the publication of 22 studies, compared to the previous five-year period (2012-2017) during which 12 relevant articles on the subject were published. Figures 2, 3 and 4

Regarding the thematic lines of the analyzed articles, five distinct subcategories have been identified within the general theme of the inclusion of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in the Spanish university context. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the works are dedicated to describing university programs designed for students with intellectual disabilities, while twenty-six percent (26%) of the studies examine the degree of university inclusion of this student profile in regular university settings. The primary theme of eighteen percent (18%) of the articles focuses on issues related to pedagogical intervention and methodology for university students with intellectual disabilities. Six percent (6%) pertain to experiences of inclusive university research, and only three percent (3%) of the sample of articles is devoted to matters concerning the competence of university faculty in addressing the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms.

Furthermore, it can be observed that the thematic diversity of the studies has increased over time. It is evident that during the initial years analyzed, the majority of the articles almost exclusively addressed the description of university programs for students with Intellectual Disabilities. In

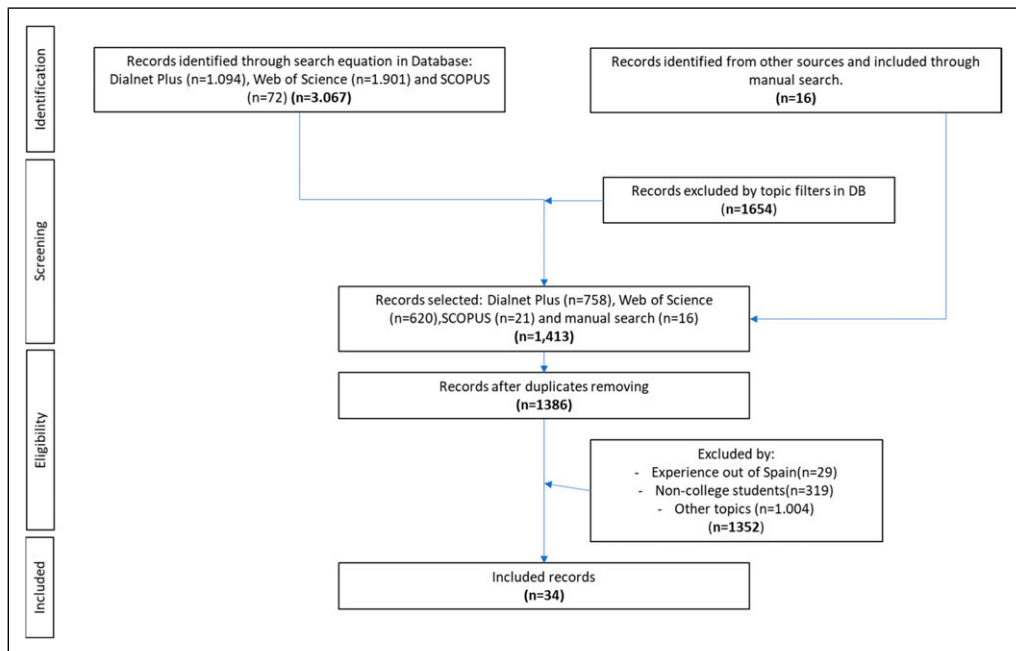


Figure 1. Flowchart.

contrast, in subsequent years, the thematic focal points diversified, encompassing various aspects of the university life of students with intellectual disabilities.

Taking into account the keywords from the analyzed articles, a total of 80 different terms have been identified. The most frequently occurring descriptor, with a frequency of 58.82%, is “Intellectual Disability,” followed by “Inclusion” (35.29%) and “University” (23.52%). Figure 5 illustrates the frequency of the most relevant keywords cited in at least 3 articles from the selection.

The geographical distribution of the Spanish universities where the conducted research has been focused yields significant results. A total of 13 out of the 34 selected references place their studies in the university context of Madrid, with publications associated with the Autonomous University of Madrid standing out in this regard. Following this, we find universities in the province of Murcia (with 4 articles), the province of Alicante (with 3 publications), and universities in Girona and Jaén (each with 2 publications). The remaining provinces have one article each.

According to bibliometric indices, the Lawani index, which calculates the average number of authors per article divided by the number of works included in the selection (Lawani, 1981), is 2.7. However, it is important to note that a single article has 14 authors, which significantly inflates the calculated average. On the other hand, the collaboration coefficient by Ajiferuke, Burell, and Tague (1988), which ranges from 0 to 1 and tends to be closer to 1 when there is a higher degree of collaboration, returns a value of 0.5. Finally, the Subramanyam index (1983), which represents the level of collaborative articles out of the total, is 0.82, with six articles authored by a single individual.

The analysis of quality indicators for the selected references has been carried out considering the quartile of the journal in which the article was published, based on the publication date, in Scientific

Table 2. Selected Articles and Themes.

Reference	Thematic Content
Alcázar (2019)	Retrospective Assessment of the DEMOS Programs at the Pontifical University of Comillas (Madrid).
Aquino-Linares & Moreno-Navarro (2022)	Descriptive Work Depicting an Inclusive Academic Experience at Pablo de Olavide University (Seville).
Barbancho et al. (2022)	Presentation of an Educational Experience for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities at the University of Barcelona.
Belmonte & Mirete (2020)	Descriptive Study on the 'Todos somos Campus' Program (University of Murcia).
Campos (2021)	Analysis of Key Aspects of Spatial Environments and Proposal of Recommendations for Creating University Environments Based on Architectural and Cognitive Accessibility.
Cañadas & Calle-Molina (2020)	Evaluation of the Perception of Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the UAM's Promotor Program regarding their participation in a Physical Education Curriculum.
Castañón-Morcillo & Hernández-Sánchez (2020)	Assessment of the Inclusive University Experience: Diploma in Social and Vocational Training for Young People with Intellectual Disabilities at the University of Granada.
Cerrillo et al. (2013)	Evaluation of the Impact on the University Community Resulting from the Inclusion of Young People with Intellectual Disabilities at UAM.
Corbí et al. (2021)	Research on Self-Perceived Training Needs of University Teachers Regarding Inclusive Teaching Processes.
Delgado et al. (2022)	Analytical-Descriptive Study on the Effects of Including Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the University Environment, Based on the Hypothesis That It Reduces Levels of Parental Overprotection.
Díaz & Calvo (2015)	Research on the Impact of the 'Espazo Compartido' Training (University of La Coruña) on Students and Their Families through Their Perceptions.
Ducca et al. (2022)	Description of the Participatory Inclusive Research Process on the Continuum of Overprotection-Autonomy of University Students with Intellectual Disabilities at the University of Jaén.
Felgueras-Custodio et al. (2020)	Research on the Impact Generated in the Social Interaction and Emotional Regulation of Students in the University Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities at URJC (Madrid).
García & Berástegui (2013)	Overview of the DEMOS University Academic Program at the Pontifical University of Comillas (Madrid).
Izuzquiza & Rodríguez (2016)	Introduction to the Promotor Program at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM).
Izuzquiza (2012)	Dissemination of the Impact of the Promotor Program (UAM) through the Analysis of Results Obtained in 6 Studies Conducted between 2005 and 2010.
Izuzquiza et al. (2013)	Analysis of Results after a Decade of Implementation of the Promotor Program at UAM.
Judge & Izuzquiza (2015)	Analysis of the Experience Reported by Graduates with Intellectual Disabilities of the Promotor Program (UAM) Regarding Their Work Practices.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Reference	Thematic Content
Lucas-Molina et al. (2021)	Evaluation of the Impact of an Emotional Education Program on Students with Intellectual Disabilities at the University of Valencia.
Manzanero (2022)	Description of a Teaching and Methodological Experience in the Specialized Title of Legal Assistant for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities at URJC (Madrid).
Martín-Crespo & Espejo (2020)	Exploring the Experience of Inclusive Classes in the Mineralogy Subject of the Bachelor's Degree in Experimental Sciences at URJC (Madrid).
Mejía & Pallisera (2020)	Synthesis of Perspectives on Inclusive Higher Education from Academic Administrators and Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities at the University of Girona.
Mengual-Luna et al. (2017)	Description of Case Studies of Work Placements of Students from UCAMPACITAS at the Catholic University of San Antonio de Murcia.
Moreno-Rodríguez et al. (2019)	Assessment of the Impact of the University Specialist Title in Urban Green Solutions (URJC).
Pallisera et al. (2017)	Inclusive University Research on Independent Living and Disability at the University of Girona.
Pegalajar & Xandri (2015)	Descriptive Article on the Experience of the Academic Program Capacitas at the Catholic University of Murcia.
Polo & Aparicio (2021)	Inclusive Research on the Beliefs of Students with Disabilities about their Inclusion Experience in Spanish Universities.
Ramírez-Burgos (2016)	General Discussion Article on the Role of Spanish Universities in the Challenge of Inclusion of Students with Intellectual Disabilities.
Rodríguez et al. (2020)	Phenomenological Study Addressing the Perceptions of Graduates from the Promotor Program (UAM).
Roldán et al. (2022)	Case Study on the Implementation of Physical Activity in the University Training Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities at the Miguel Hernández University of Elche.
Suárez & Alcalá del Olmo (2020)	Development of a Practical Psychopedagogical Intervention for University Students with Intellectual Disabilities at the University of Malaga.
Suárez & Castillo (2019)	In-Depth Study of the University Educational Inclusion Project among Students in the Social Education Degree and the 'Todos somos Campus' Program at the University of Murcia.
Suriá (2018)	Identification of Profiles of Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Personal Well-being in University Students with Disabilities at the University of Alicante.
Suriá et al. (2017)	Comparison of the Empowerment Level of Students with Disabilities at the University of Alicante.

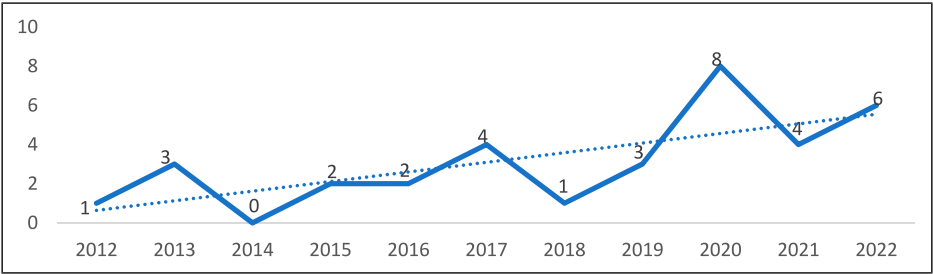


Figure 2. Annual Article Frequency.

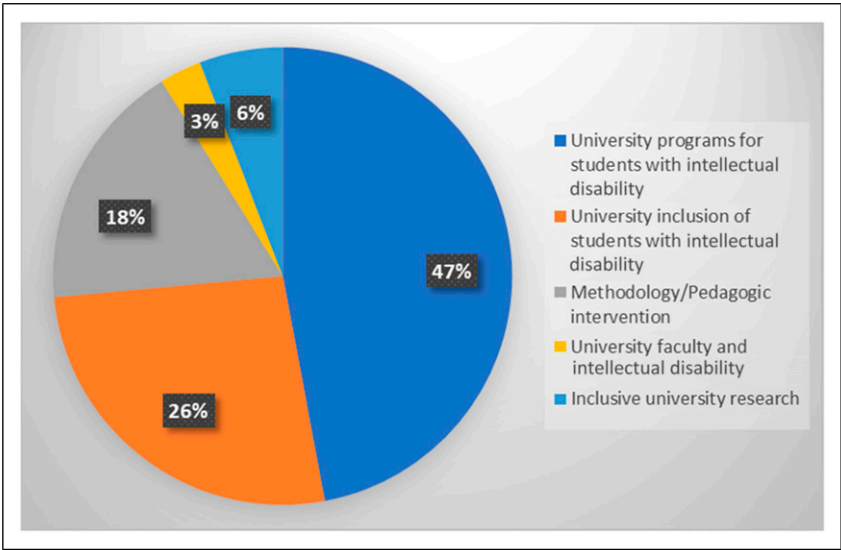


Figure 3. Thematic Distribution of References.

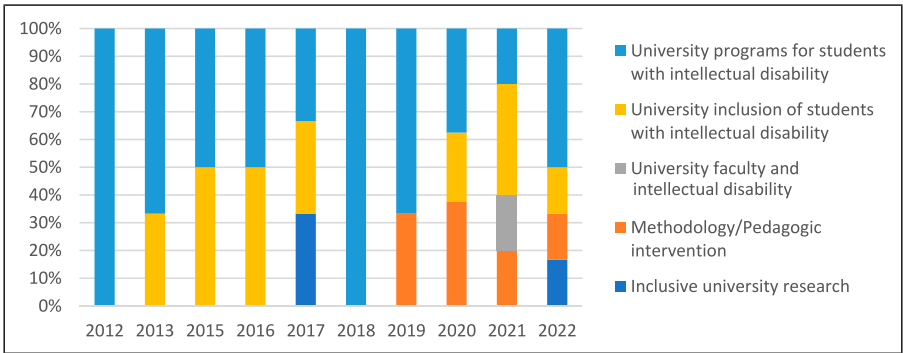


Figure 4. Percentage distribution per year.

Journal Ranking (SJ_R), Journal Citation Indicator (JCI), and Índice Dialnet de Revistas (IDR). It is important to highlight that out of the 34 articles included in the review, the journals corresponding to 10 of them did not have a value in any of the three indicators for the year of article publication. Figures 6, 7, and 8, on the other hand, depict the respective quartiles of the remaining journals in each of the indicators, differentiating by the thematic area to which the journal belongs.

Finally, as a quality indicator, the number of citations displayed in Google Scholar for the analyzed articles in the selection has been considered. Taking this indicator into account, the average number of citations for the articles included in the review is 10.91, with a median of 4. Two articles share the maximum number of citations, both with 70: Cerrillo et al. (2013) and Izuzquiza (2012),

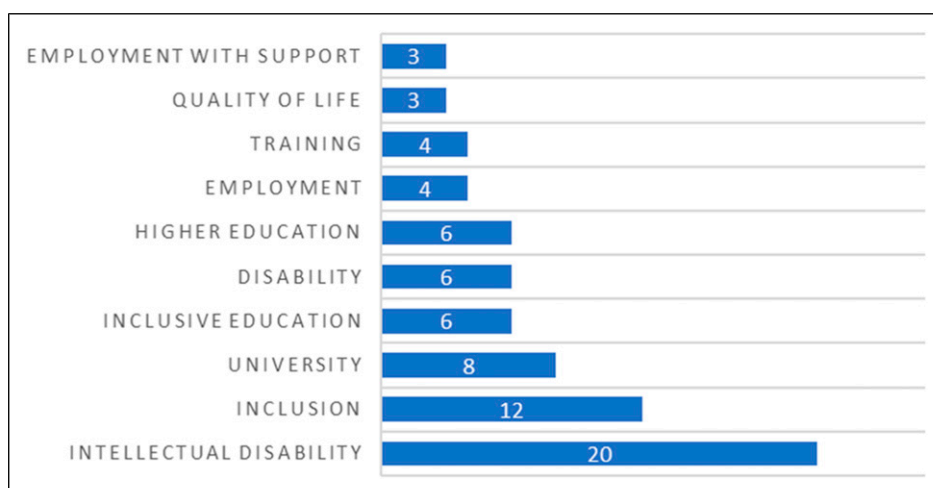


Figure 5. Frequency of most repeated keywords (>3).

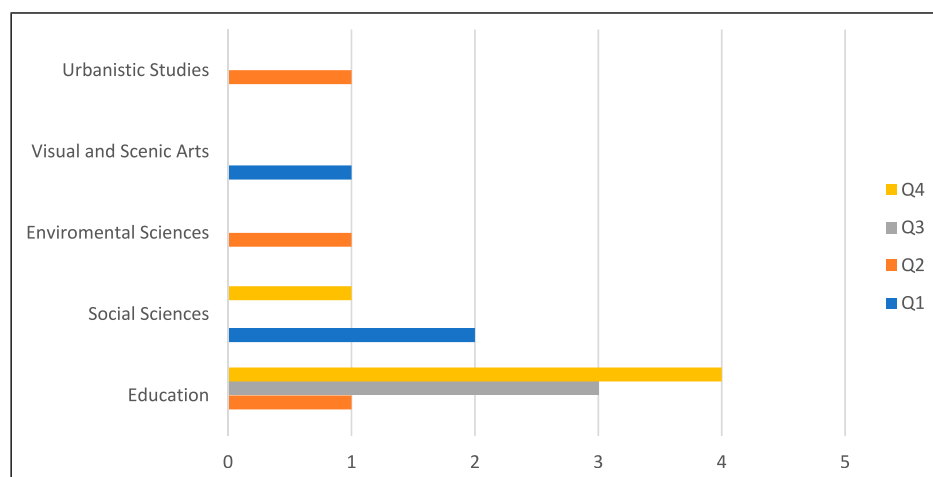


Figure 6. Quartiles corresponding to the journals in which the articles are published - SJ_R.

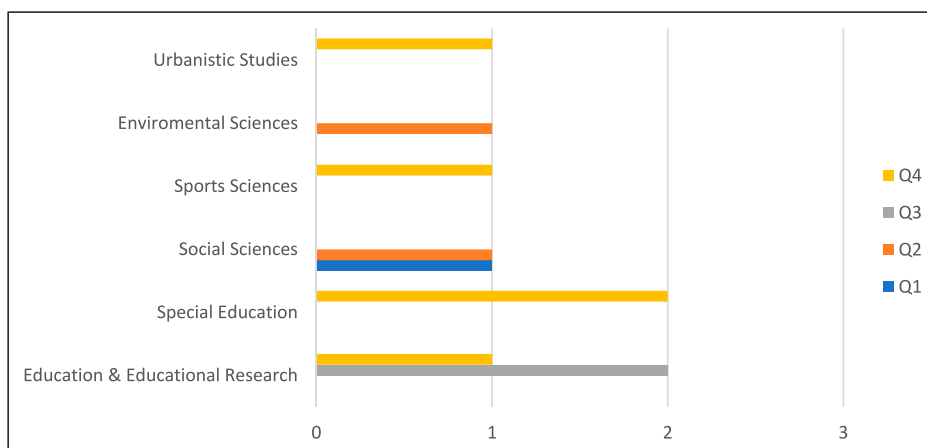


Figure 7. Quartiles corresponding to the journals in which the articles are published - JCI.

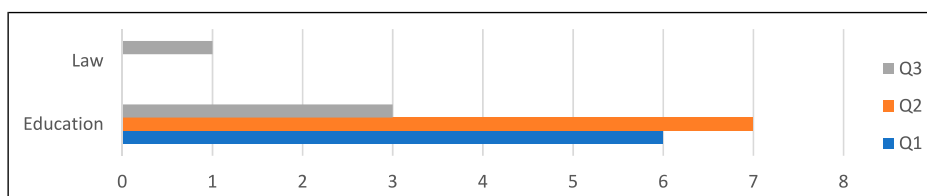


Figure 8. Quartiles corresponding to the journals in which the articles are published - Dialnet.

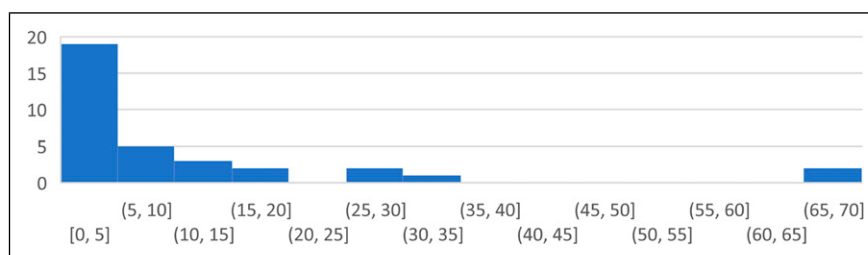


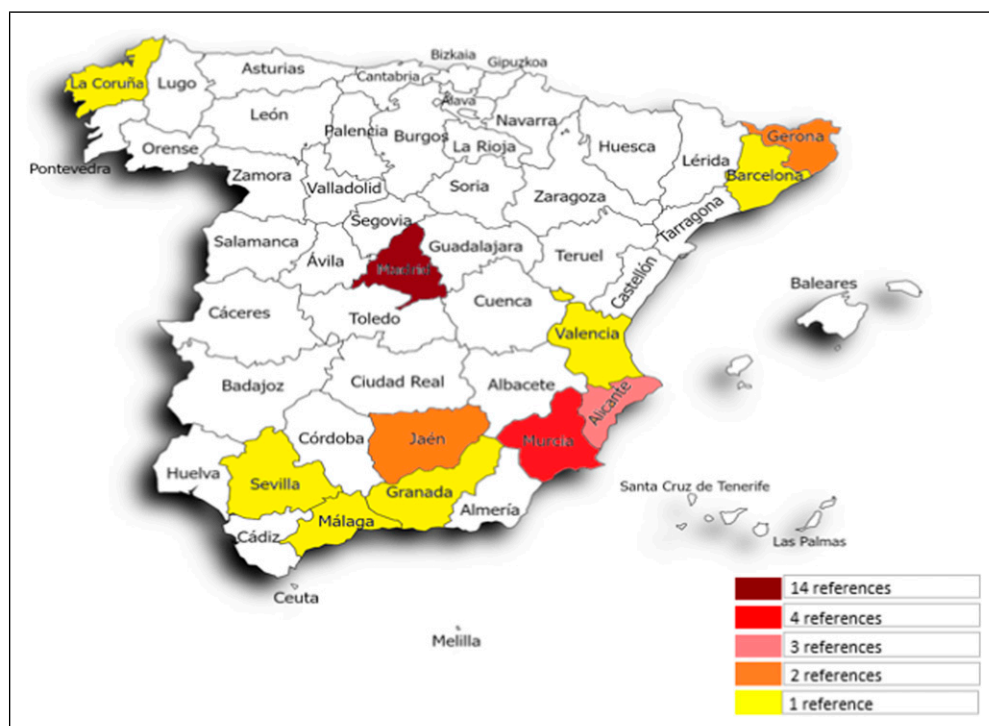
Figure 9. Histogram of articles according to citation range.

which are, interestingly, the two oldest articles included in the review. Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of articles according to the citation range [Picture 1](#).

Discussion and conclusions

The present research was conducted with the aim of analyzing the presence and participation of students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Spanish university system over the last decade.

Regarding the main objective of the study, it can be confirmed that the scope and impact of the scientific literature developed between 2012 and 2022 addressing the inclusion of students with



Picture 1. Number of records referred to Universities in each province.

Intellectual Disabilities in the Spanish university context have been thoroughly examined. The results arising from the fulfillment of this objective confirm that the scientific literature on the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in the national university system is limited or insufficient, with only 34 articles published over a 10-year period. However, it is noteworthy that a significant increase in this literature has been observed over the last 5 years analyzed. More specifically, there is an imbalance in the proportionality between the response that Spanish universities are currently providing to young people with special educational needs due to disabilities and the number of research processes stemming from this response. As a result of annual grant calls published by the ONCE Foundation, co-financed by the European Social Fund under the Youth Employment Operational Program, more than 30 Spanish universities, both public and private, have been able to offer specific training programs for students with DI for the 2021-2022 academic year (ONCE Foundation, April 19, 2023). Nevertheless, it is understood that many of these programs have been created relatively recently (starting from the 2017-2018 academic year, following the publication of the ONCE Foundation's First Call: Vocational training for young people with intellectual disabilities). Therefore, it is expected that the results of pedagogical experiences and their evaluations will be documented in future research and analytical-descriptive studies that have not yet come to light.

In relation to this last point, a noteworthy aspect of the selected articles is that a significant number of them share both authorship and the subject of study, with researchers originating from the Autonomous University of Madrid. In total, 7 out of the 34 works selected for review focus on various aspects of the Promotor training program for young people with Intellectual Disabilities. However, it is important to emphasize that this fact is closely related to the extensive history of the program, which has been a

pioneering initiative in the Spanish university landscape for over 18 years (Izuzquiza et al., 2013). Additionally, within the same context, it is worth highlighting that Madrid takes the lead in terms of the number of studies published on the presence of students with intellectual disabilities in Spanish university classrooms, with 13 out of the 34 articles included in the review. Similarly, the interpretation of this circumstance is influenced by the higher concentration of universities compared to other regions in Spain. For the 2021-2022 academic year, the province had a total of 17 universities (6 public and 11 private), in addition to the central headquarters of the National Distance Education University (UNED) (Community of Madrid, April 21, 2023). Furthermore, some of these universities stand out as pioneers in the implementation of specific university academic programs designed for students with cognitive difficulties. This includes the role of the Autonomous University of Madrid, through the aforementioned Promotor Program, which was initiated in 2004 (Izuzquiza, 2012), and the Pontifical University of Comillas, with the DEMOS Program, implemented in 2012 (Alcázar, 2019).

Another noteworthy point concerns the quality indices of the reviewed publications. Firstly, it's important to note that out of the 34 articles analyzed, 10 of them (29%) lack quality indicators in the SJR, JCI, and IDR indices. On the other hand, only 26% of the total articles are situated in the first quartile of any of the employed indicators. However, it's crucial to emphasize that the subject matter of this research, limited to the Spanish university context, leads to a significant portion of scientific production being located in national scientific journals. Although the trend in these publications has been experiencing exponential growth over the past decades, along with an increasing bibliometric quality trend (Ruiz-Corbella et al., 2014), there continues to be a wide disparity of opportunities between educational scientific publications in the Ibero-American context compared to the Anglo-Saxon context (Diestro et al., 2017). Nevertheless, despite the controversy and criticisms surrounding the use of bibliometric indicators to determine the impact factor of publications and, consequently, to evaluate the research performance of authors and institutions, these indicators remain an essential requirement for recognizing the prestige of scientific careers (Delgado-López-Cózar & Martín-Martín, 2019).

Regarding the objective that determines the presentation of the main findings, it is important to highlight that the content of the analyzed articles reflects limited thematic diversity within the scope of the study. Focusing on the presence of students with Intellectual Disabilities in Spanish university classrooms, the predominant central thematic line has been the description of specific university training programs for young students with intellectual disabilities (Castaño-Morcillo & Hernández-Sánchez, 2020). Only in the last years of the analyzed decade, an opening and diversification of topics have been observed, with the articles addressing other dimensions of inclusive processes for individuals with intellectual disabilities in university contexts (Campos, 2021), such as teaching and methodological processes in these educational settings (Manzanero, 2022), the competence of university teachers in dealing with diversity in classrooms (Corbí et al., 2021), or inclusive university research processes (Ducca et al., 2022).

The actual and effective participation of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in the context of higher education continues to be a challenge, not only in terms of inclusion within the university environment but also in research and scientific production (Paz-Maldonado, 2020). The trend in research content focused on disability in the university setting remains largely generalist, meaning that the majority of research efforts are aimed at understanding the situation of individuals with disabilities of various etiologies in universities, without focusing on the specific reality of students with intellectual disabilities. In this regard, it is crucial to consider statements such as those of Huete (2017), who asserts that "the population with intellectual disabilities presents functional limitations directly related to the learning processes, which can explain a lower educational level" (p. 97), and therefore, a real inequality of opportunities regarding their access to higher education programs (Amador et al., 2021).

Finally, in accordance with the last objective of the study, this research has been conducted with the primary purpose of becoming a valuable contribution to the path of inclusive education for students with Intellectual Disabilities in Spanish universities. The review of scientific literature conducted so far reveals that many efforts have been made by Spanish universities to make their campuses accessible environments for students with intellectual disabilities, especially through the creation and development of specific training programs for this group of students (Fundación Universia, 2021). However, ensuring the rights that guarantee equal educational opportunities for this type of student, particularly in the field of higher education, still remains a challenge to be met. One of the key tools available to Spanish universities to support effective inclusion is the Disability Services (SAPDU), which, as inclusion drivers for these entities, should be responsible for designing and promoting strategic plans to make the university environment fully accessible (Díaz et al., 2021). In Spain, entities such as Fundación ONCE, the Royal Board on Disability, and Crue Universidades Españolas focus their efforts on working collaboratively to define joint action plans for universal accessibility in the university environment (Madrid et al., 2020). Nonetheless, it is up to professionals in the education sector to continue working towards achieving a university curriculum that is objectively accessible to individuals with intellectual disabilities. This research suggests that, in this ongoing journey, the voices of those directly involved in this process, namely young students with cognitive difficulties, should be the first to be heard (Moriña & Carballo, 2020). One of the most effective channels for this is the implementation of inclusive research processes within the university (Murillo and Duk, 2018).

In conclusion, it is essential to emphasize the presence of various limitations in the process of conducting this systematic review. One of the notable limitations is the lack of a sufficient body of scientific literature on the educational inclusion of students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Spanish language (Amor et al., 2019), particularly concerning students with intellectual disabilities at the university level (Núñez, 2017). This limitation restricts the ability to generalize conclusions about the studied topic. As a prospective recommendation, it is suggested to initiate research within universities that, through the use of inclusive strategies, delve deeper into the reality of young students with intellectual disabilities in Spanish universities.

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