

## Media language and the reinforcement of capacitist stigmas about people with disabilities



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### ABSTRACT

The object of study of this article is to analyze, qualitatively, the discursive content of media language, based on a case study, which seeks to highlight the reinforcements of capacitist stigmas about people with disabilities. Therefore, the meaning of inadequate bodies is questioned to try to understand, as an objective, the relationship between prejudice and ableism. The relationship between media and disability is discussed, presenting specific cases of the use of narratives on the Razões para Acreditar website. The research problem is expressed by the guiding question of showing the tense relationship identified in the analyzed media discourse, in which the stereotypes launched about people with disabilities, instead of being deconstructed, end up contributing to express the social stigmas that reduce the condition of person, disability.

**Keywords:** People with disabilities, Capacitism, Deficiency, Media language, Stereotypes and social stigmas.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Starting from the assumption that, since their emergence, the media have the capacity to transform, inquire and shape ways of thinking and living, which impact societies and their future generations, which is even more verified now, with the advent of the internet and social networks, the present study turns to analyze the media language. In a case study focused on a specific website, entitled "Reasons to Believe", with the purpose of identifying the reinforcement of ableist stigmas placed on people with disabilities.

Although it is recognized that the media are capable of changing realities, there seems to be little concern in changing the way journalism portrays people with disabilities, in addition to the low investment for Brazilian journalism to abandon the ableist narrative and become an ally of those who still face challenges to be seen and heard. For this reason, it is urgent to expand studies that discuss the



importance of the relationship between journalism and prejudice against people with disabilities, because through these studies new debates are presented, raising questions and deepening knowledge on the subject.

In order to contribute to this discussion, this article, through four case studies taken from the Reasons to Believe website, aims to expose and exemplify perceptions that society has about people with disabilities — These perceptions, for the most part, oscillate between considering people with disabilities sometimes as an example of overcoming, sometimes as a social burden, limiting the gaze to disabled lives. In addition, it aims to show the role of the media in the potentiation of the ableist narrative, still operative in society, as well as the media exploration of the public's perceptions about this minority.

To this end, questions are raised about what can be considered as normal bodies, confronting such conceptualizations with the idealized aesthetic standards of perfect bodies, excluding, therefore, the conditions presented by people with disabilities, generating narratives that are included in the senses of ableism, as a prejudice to limit, in its framing, the condition of the person with disabilities, as if that condition completely defined her. In addition, data from the IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics are presented to show the numerical scope of this group, among the Brazilian population, as well as examples of the protective legal basis, already enshrined in our legal system.

In turn, the methodology is based on the case study, with qualitative analysis, focused on the discursive condition of the media in question, through the method of content analysis, which includes not only the written narratives, but also the image production of this means of communication. In this sense, a methodological option is also made, based on the principle: "nothing about us, without us", since, in addition to two of the authors being people with disabilities, other voices are joined, also from people with disabilities, to deepen the discussion on the subject.

## **2 INADEQUATE BODIES? UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PREJUDICE AND ABLEISM**

Prejudice against people with disabilities is characterized as a mechanism of social denial and denial of the diversity of existing bodies, since disability is reduced to lack, to inefficiency, and bodies are seen as abnormal, since they escape from what society calls "normality".

For Mello (2016), ableism is the materialization of attitudes permeated by prejudice that categorizes subjects according to the adequacy of their bodies to an ideal of beauty and functional capacity. It is a concept present in the social field that evaluates people with disabilities as unequal, less able or incapable of managing their own lives, and for ableists, disability has the character of a diminished state of the human being.



With regard to the meanings covered by ableist definitions, the statements of Vitória Bernardes (2019), a quadriplegic psychologist, member of the Hellen Keller Feminist Collective, who is a National Health Advisor, deserve to be highlighted, according to which:

Ableism is to people with disabilities what racism is to black people and sexism is to women; and is based on the premise of the incapacity and unproductivity of the person with disabilities. Ableism is the structure that prevents us from being at the center of decisions, occupying spaces of power or at least feeling represented in these spaces, in addition to preventing social access, as it disconfigures the capacity of people with disabilities, disregarding the plurality and differences in disability and overvalues capacities that are often not even necessary for certain activities. (BERNARDES, 2019, p. 01).

However, as Débora Diniz (2007) points out in her book *What is Disability*, contrary to what is imagined, there is no way to describe a body with a disability as abnormal. Abnormality is an aesthetic judgment and therefore a moral value about lifestyles; Since disability is part of a body, as a characteristic it will always be there. You can't get rid of it or just set it aside for a while; It goes with you wherever you go. Those who already understand enough know that disability does not define anyone completely and that it is not some kind of death sentence or imprisonment.

According to the world's first report on disability, issued in 2011 and produced jointly by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, there are more than one billion people in the world with some type of disability, that is, about 15% of the world's population. As shown by data from the National Health Policy for Persons with Disabilities produced by the WHO and accepted in Brazil by the Federal Government, through the Ministry of Health:

[...] About 10% of the population of any peacetime country has some form of disability, of which: 5% are mentally disabled; 2% with physical disabilities; 1.5% with hearing loss; 0.5% visually impaired; and 1% with multiple disabilities. (MINISTRY OF HEALTH, online, n.p.).

In Brazil, according to the 2010 Census, conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), almost 46 million Brazilians, about 24% of the population, declared having some degree of difficulty in at least one of the skills investigated (seeing, hearing, walking or climbing stairs), or having a mental/intellectual disability. However, the data from the 2023 Census have not yet been published, so that, based on the statistical data of the numerical growth rates of the population, associated with the incidence, in this context, of people with disabilities, these quantifications probably reach even more significant numbers. However, even with the data lagging by about 13 years, it impacts the quantification signaled, in order to highlight the dimensions of its scope.

In the country, this significant incidence, with its social impacts, has been considered by several legal constructions, whose enumeration could escape the scope of this article, although it is impactful if we mention the two most current legal definitions that deal with the issue. In this sense, an important



legal definition was brought by Legislative Decree No. 186/2008, which deals with the subject as follows:

"Persons with disabilities are those who have long-term impairments of a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory nature, which, in interaction with various barriers, may obstruct their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." (BRAZIL, Legislative Decree No. 186/2008, p.01).

Likewise, one cannot fail to refer to the definition of person with disabilities provided for in the Brazilian Law of Inclusion, Law No. 13,145/15, to avoid possible errors arising from the most diverse conceptualizations that have come to be established over time. Therefore, this law, known as the Statute of Persons with Disabilities, defines that:

"A person with a disability is considered to be one who has a long-term impairment of a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory nature, which, in interaction with one or more barriers, may obstruct his or her full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other people. § 1 The evaluation, when necessary, will be biopsychosocial, performed by a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team and will consider:  
I – impediments in the functions and structures of the body;  
II – socio-environmental, psychological and personal factors;  
III – limitation in the performance of activities; and  
IV – the restriction of participation". (BRASIL, Law 13.145/15, p.08).

In addition, it should be noted that, in both legal definitions referred to, the person with disabilities is presented, at a personal level, from physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impediments, but such circumstances are launched, at the level of interactions with barriers found in social structures, which prevent them from experiencing full and effective participation in the context of that same society. Therefore, in addition to these personal circumstances, with their evident psychological repercussions, one must consider the socio-environmental factors that cause this obstruction to the full performance of their activities.

It is evident, therefore, that the legal grounds for the equalization of conditions between people with disabilities and people without disabilities are already given. However, a more comprehensive analysis of the social contexts in which these socio-environmental barriers are shown indicates the need for a great effort to modify certain stereotypes and true stigmas that are active in this same society, so that the object of study now turns precisely to the media language with which these issues are presented. In order to verify the way in which this media language, especially through virtual media, reproduces these stereotypes, as if reinforcing a process of its consolidation in the social environment.

Therefore, the impact of media language on the understanding and perception of disability is considered as a factor that plays a fundamental role, either in changing thinking or in perpetuating the stigmas and prejudices leveraged by ableism. Thus, these reflections can open space for other discussions, equally relevant, about how the media can produce empathy, without taking advantage of emotion and without reducing the existence of these people to disability, allying themselves with the



fight against ableism, as well as about the social and political impacts that would come from this change.

### 3 MEDIA AND DISABILITY

By proposing an analysis of the media language that deals with people with disabilities, it is based on the assumption that, through the narrative used, the social context is portrayed, since the media, in general, despite all its specificities and the means and instruments that are used, is inserted, is part of this context and transforms it. mediating and producing meanings. But, in addition to being a mediator and producer, it acts as a disseminator of concepts and preconceptions, being able to modify or reinforce existing thoughts in entire societies.

Thus, this discursive condition of the media, by disseminating, producing and consolidating meanings, operates in the sphere of the social imaginary, that is, in the set of representations of meanings that, in this case, refer to people with disabilities. In this sense, media narratives are inserted in this context of representations of the social imaginary, which, in their own character, imply becoming determinant of a series of actions that occur in the social environment in which they are inserted and from which they emanate. Therefore:

The social bond serves as a cement for life in society. However, it is only actualized by the forces of shared values, of images revered together, and of feelings and affections intensified in communion. There is no social bond without imagery. The knot between social and imaginary ties, in societies marked by contradiction and conflict, depends on the paradigm of complexity: the irreconcilable is reconciled in everyday experiences. In rational abstraction, the contradictory must be purged. In the concrete of everyday practices, paradox feeds the imaginary. In each character, yes and no, good and evil, truth and illusion, ideology and culture, understanding and explanation, affection and unreason, coexist. (SILVA, 2003, p.21).

With the advent of the internet, such capabilities have become even stronger and more evident, since the internet is a public space, which allows information to cross borders in a matter of seconds. Therefore, using these virtual media, the media is able to quickly reach a large number of audiences with the most diverse profiles and disseminate, through mass communication and narrative construction strategies, the desired information. In this sense, then, the problem that the research intends to analyze is structured, since through this mass communication, it can be impossible to construct critical thinking, through the use of a narrative built under an ableist view, in which the social representation of people with disabilities always follows the same patterns: that of 'hero-warriors' who are always seeking to overcome their own limits or the 'poor wretches' who are nothing more than burdens for the society.

Prejudice is not only in the misuse of words and expressions, it is present whenever people with disabilities are invalidated by their disability or seen only from it. Alseni Maria da Silva, in a text published in the Observatory of Inequalities (2022), puts it this way:



Ableist attitudes are diverse: an example of this are those that start from the conception of disability as a condition that limits the human being in its totality, which is why any achievement or emancipatory attitude adopted by people is considered as an act of overcoming. This involves a "heroicization" of people with disabilities who, when compared to others, are placed in superior positions, since their performance overlaps. (SILVA, 2022, n.p.).

In the same sense, being among the millions of Brazilians who live with a disability, the journalist, writer and psychologist Emílio Figueira, comments on the social representation of people with disabilities and the importance of the media in this context:

There is no point in rehabilitating the individual physically, intellectually and professionally if his image is not recovered in the eyes of society, so that society naturally accepts him. In this way, the mass media [...] emerge as the main alternatives for this purpose. (FIGUEIRA, 2011, n.p.).

However, although the media can transform the social context in which we live, it can also perpetuate a stereotyped understanding, promoting "discrimination, systematically influencing perceptions, interpretations and judgments" (DOVIDIO et al., 2010, p. 7 apud BIROLI, 2011, p. 80). At the same time, stereotyped understandings "can also derive from and be reinforced by forms of discrimination, justifying disparities between social groups" (DOVIDIO et al., 2010, p. 7 apud BIROLI, 2011, p. 80). The media, by disseminating stereotypes combined with appealing language, diverts itself from the interest of changing the social context in favor of profit and visibility. As Flávia Biroli reminds us, quoting Lippmann (2008), "the view of facts depends on 'where we are positioned and the habits of our eyes'" (BIROLI, 2011, p. 87). (Texts presented in free translation by the authors).

It is worth emphasizing, then, once the theoretical assumptions capable of clarifying aspects of the object of study have been exposed and, in order to account for such objectives, to demonstrate the expressions used by the media language, the following topic presents the facets of how the ableist narrative of the Brazilian website Reasons to Believe is constructed. Thus, it is a question of focusing this study on a media channel present in the virtual space of the Web, which collects millions of followers on social networks, moves readers from all regions of the country and reinforces prejudices about the lives of people with disabilities.

#### **4 CASE STUDY: REASONS TO BELIEVE: DO WE HAVE IT?**

In order to analyze the way the ableist narrative is constructed, the media chosen was the website "Reasons to believe", which has 5.2 million followers on its Instagram account and 158 thousand followers on LinkedIn; Thus, this significant scope provided the criterion that defined their choice. In addition, in addition to this criterion of comprehensiveness, the methodology of content analysis was used. (BARDIN, 2004), based on two categories, i.e., the category of appealing language and the category of feeling of emotion. Thus, a common characteristic was reached in all the subjects



covered by the site, that is, the use of appealing language to arouse, in the reader, the deepest feeling of emotion.

On the other hand, in the analysis of the content of the articles presented by the site, through this case study, with the objective of showing the construction of this specific social representation, the method proposed by Bardin (2004) was used, with the elaboration of two categories associated with the segment under study, when they are defined, sometimes as 'warrior-heroes', sometimes as 'poor burdens', when referring to the experiences of people with disabilities. On the other hand, the analysis has a qualitative character, to the extent that, from these categories, the basic meanings presented by the narratives of the site are identified, in order to highlight this inseparable link between the construction of the ableist social imaginary in relation to people with disabilities and the subjects who participate in it, based on a dynamic relationship between them. (PRODANOV and FREITAS, 2009).

It should also be noted that such methods of content analysis of the materials presented, from the qualitative point of view, as a case study of the site, refer to a broader concept of media language, in which the use of images in narrative construction is also considered. Therefore, not only what is written, but also the content expressed by images, integrates what is considered as narrative construction. Thus, when entering the site, the Internet user is faced with an interface full of titles and images that arouse almost immediate commotion, as well as, when clicking on any of the available stories, he is faced with texts written to raise awareness; And, at the end of each text, there is a link to collect donations for the main character of the story.

It is noted, when making an analysis of the platform's media kit, that large and renowned companies act as partners of the project, showing that the appealing language has not only the role of moving those who read, but, mainly, of raising financial resources. Therefore, it is the type of narrative that sells, enriches and brings prestige to those who organize this type of specific media focus. Therefore, the way the characters are portrayed and the articulated ableist narrative leads to commotion in the construction of the stories, which becomes an essential ingredient for the generation of profit. In the specific case of the stories of people with disabilities conveyed by the site, the pattern remains the same: either the characters portrayed are heroes, warriors who have overcome barriers and are living their lives despite their disabilities, or they are portrayed as poor people who are not seen as members of society and make life difficult for those who are around. that is, they are considered as burdens.

The following are four stories published on the website "Reasons to Believe" (RPA), which clearly explain how the narrative adopted by the website reinforces stereotypes about people with disabilities and reproduces ableism through emotion, always placing them in positions of "heroes" or "burdens". It is worth remembering that "these stereotypes permeate society in a way that prevents them from being perceived as something that can be questioned" (YOUNG, 1990, p. 59).



When listing the specific cases under study, it is necessary to bring the information of authorship of the referred articles, when presented, or if they refer to the general wording of the site itself, without declared authorship. In addition, images presented on the website are added in each case, as well as the link where they can be accessed, along with the respective videos, as their complete presentation in this article would exceed the limits established for the exposition of the study itself. However, as the images are analyzed in addition to the written text, this resource is relevant to the understanding of the proposal.

## 4.1 THE EYES OF THE UNSEEN

### 4.1.1 Case 1 – RPA wording<sup>1</sup>

The child, a 12-year-old girl, lives with her parents and two siblings. Everyone in the family, except the girl, is visually impaired. As written by Reasons to Believe, she is the one who takes care of the house, washes the dishes, takes the family to the market, to the pharmacy, to the hospital and wherever else they need to go. Also according to the website, the child is "the eyes of the family".

### 4.1.2 Case 2 – Rafael Melo<sup>2</sup>

The girl, a 2-year-old baby, lives with her parents, who are visually impaired. As mentioned in the text of Reasons to Believe, the child is a light in the family's home and came to illuminate their lives, as he helps parents to walk, use their cell phones and even avoid accidents with objects around the house. According to the website, she was advised about her parents' disability after she was born and soon understood their limitations and started helping them and showing them things using touch.

In both cases, there are obvious similarities for those who read: the protagonists have visually impaired parents, they are the only ones in their families who can see; And they're both children. In addition to the obvious similarities, there is one that underlies the narrative, but which meets the theme of this article: ableist narratives linked to emotion.

In the two cases presented, the narrative is constructed in an inverted way, placing the main characters in the role of caregivers of those who, in reality, should be their caregivers. Even though they are children and need care and support to develop, they are placed as the foundation of the family, because they have the ability to see, while their parents are placed in a place of incapacity and disability because they are visually impaired.

Through expressions and words used in the texts, the site reinforces the idea that already exists about people with disabilities: the inability to perform daily tasks, the need to always have someone around to help and, in addition, the burden that it is for the "caregivers" of people with disabilities to

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<sup>1</sup><https://razoesparaacreditar.com/crianca-unica-que-enxerga-na-familia-ganha-vaquinha-para-reformar-sua-casa/#:~:text=Ana%20Beatriz%2C%2012%20anos%2C%20mora,hospital%20e%20onde%20precisarem%20ir>

<sup>2</sup> <https://razoesparaacreditar.com/filha-pais-cegos/?noamp=mobile>





be in this position. But does disability – especially visual impairment that is the subject of the stories cited – really make individuals disabled and incapable of performing daily tasks?

In case 1, there is a short video that shows the mother and child cooking. In the video it is possible to see that the girl receives instructions from her mother about what to do and how to do it, not being alone at any time when performing the task.

In case 2, there is a video of a story made with the family by a TV station. It was posted on the 2-year-old's Instagram and shows a snippet of the family's routine. Although the video has an ableist narrative and also places the girl as "the eyes of the family", some of the scenes demonstrate that the parents are fully capable of taking care of their daughter and that in their routine there are tools that contribute to the accomplishment of tasks.

In the video, the mother can be seen combing and arranging the child's hair; You can also see the family going for a walk. In it, it is still possible to see that the girl is holding the hand of her father, who has completely lost his sight; And behind her is her mother, who has 5% to 10% of her vision. In the scene of the walk, it is possible to notice that the little girl wears a backpack on her back and that this backpack is attached to an elastic band, which the mother holds while walking. With this elastic band, parents are able to be aware that the girl is close to them and do not lose her while walking. On Instagram, where the family shares their daily lives, there is a lot of content that shows how parents perform everyday tasks: from content explaining how they use their phone's accessibility features to how they handle medications without needing help from third parties.

Analyzing the two cases presented, it is clear that the main characters do not play the role of caregivers for the parents. Even though the narrative used puts them in this position, parents are able to perform tasks for themselves and take care of their children. In the case of the 12-year-old, the fact that he helps his parents with household chores does not mean that the parents do not perform it. In the case of the 2-year-old girl, she reproduces what she lives at home, the way her parents perform tasks is something common to her, not yet discerning what it is to help with tasks. Therefore, none of the children in the cases analyzed constitute, as the website states, "the eyes of the family". On the other hand, neither family represents a burden for the two children. However, the narrative articulates this idea producing the effect of commotion.

## 4.2 OVERCOMING THE INSURMOUNTABLE

### 4.2.1 Case 3 – Gabriel Peter<sup>3</sup>

Being the sole breadwinner of his family, a 72-year-old man with hearing and motor disabilities travels miles every day in a city in the interior of São Paulo, selling popsicles. On a day with "good sales" it collects a total of R\$30.00. According to the website, the main character lives with four other

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<sup>3</sup> <https://razoesparaacreditar.com/idoso-anda-kms-vendendo-picoles-vaquinha/>



people in his house, which was built within the family's financial reality, with the money received from the 72-year-old's retirement.

In addition, the website reinforces that one of the residents of the house is unable to go out to work, because she has "a vision problem and sees almost nothing", that the other resident, her mother-in-law, is 83 years old; and that the young people who reside in the house are looking for jobs. Therefore, the elderly are the only ones to bring financial resources to support the household.

#### 4.2.2 Case 4 – Gabriel Peter<sup>4</sup>

This case is about the story of a 24-year-old young man who, as written on the website, despite not having both arms and being born with a malformation in his legs, never gave up on the dream of becoming a skilled programmer. "Your physical limitations may be a restraining factor in some aspects of your life, but they don't stop you from having a brilliant professional career celebrated by friends and colleagues."

As written by Reasons to Believe, the character made a post on his LinkedIn that yielded almost 70 thousand likes and a thousand comments from Internet users, who praised his independence and knowledge in the area. The author of the article also adds that the programmer is an inspiration.

In both cases presented, the ableist narrative uses emotion and places people with disabilities in a position of inspiration, making them be seen as examples of overcoming (hero-warriors), who live their lives according to their realities and despite their disabilities.

In the first case, the text of the website is accompanied by a video made by someone who sees the elderly man pushing his popsicle cart and calls him in order to buy all the remaining popsicles. The video is accompanied by a text that reads: "He is disabled, elderly and never gives up! Congratulations for your persistence in being Brazilian and an honest worker!"; Highlighting a certain way society sees people with disabilities: an example of determination and persistence, which does not allow itself to be hindered by disability. An inspiration, a warrior, a hero.

However, in Brazil, people without disabilities, who are the family's only source of income, persist every day; But their need is not romanticized, because it is known that work is what provides them with income. It's not about determination, it's about survival. One can question whether it is not the same that happens to this elderly person, as a person with a disability, that is, it is a matter of survival, but which, here, is romanticized by the condition it presents.

By describing a 72-year-old who has disabilities as "someone who maintains a youthful routine," the site reinforces the ableist stigma; and, also, the ageist, that is, the prejudice in relation to the age group, when he states that he is an inspiration because he "does not let himself be discouraged", despite his disability and his age.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://razoesparaacreditar.com/jovem-sem-bracos-def-pernas-programador-rj/>



Analyzing it from another angle, far from the commotion produced by the ableist narrative, one realizes that, if there is something to be "overcome", it is not disability, but poverty. Just like the stories of people without disabilities who "balance plates" to achieve the minimum, the character's story lays bare the flaws, poverty, and helplessness of the system we live in. The difference is in the way society sees people with disabilities and how the site takes advantage of this social vision to build the story.

In the second case, after mentioning the post on LinkedIn, the site cites examples of comments made by those who read the post on the platform:

Example 1: "Damn, your post was a slap in my face and a message to stop worrying about what's not worth it."

Example 2: "Success. Know that your message has gone around the world, I speak of Angola, Africa and I already see in you a source of inspiration and overcoming. Your post gives us the strength to keep going and complain less about life and value the little things!"

In the case of the young programmer, he is seen as a warrior who serves as an inspiration to other people, because even with a disability he runs after his dreams. In addition, people use it as a model to "complain less" and "to stop worrying about what isn't worth it." Believing that having a disability is a burden, society creates that people with disabilities have no dreams, that they hate their lives and that they have no right to complain about anything.

As mentioned in the article of case two, the programmer had his vast resume rejected because the job vacancy was not intended for people with disabilities; and according to the character, people with disabilities are just numbers to fill the obligation of the Quota Law. It should be noted here that this Law of Quotas for PWD 8213/91 – Law No. 8,213/1991, came to be known as the law for hiring PWD (Disabled) in Companies; provides for Social Security Benefit Plans and makes other provisions for the hiring of people with special needs. With regard to hiring, specifically, it determines in its article 93:

The company with 100 (one hundred) or more employees is obliged to fill from 2% (two percent) to 5% (five percent) of its positions with rehabilitated beneficiaries or qualified people with disabilities, in the following proportion: I - up to 200 employees: 2%; II - from 201 to 500:3%; III - from 501 to 1,000:4%; IV - from 1,001 onwards: 5%. (BRAZIL, Law No. 8,213/91).

In this case, therefore, since companies are obliged to hire people with disabilities, according to the numerical data referred to, it is likely that the company to which the resume was sent had already completed its staff under these conditions, so that it did not hire the programmer, asserting not his resume, as a person and professional, but his condition. as if disability completely defined him. However, the law does not prohibit the hiring of people with disabilities on the basis of their résumé and does not require that a person with a disability be hired solely on the basis of the quota reserved



for this condition. In addition, the problem of the nomenclature used is also highlighted, since, at the time, the expression "people with disabilities" was used, as if this condition were something carried by someone and that, therefore, could get rid of it; secondly, the use of the expression PCD, which reduces the person to just an acronym, reinforcing the disability and not the condition of personhood.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, for ableists, there is nothing worse than having a disability; And even if the legislation establishes criteria of equivalence, these are interpreted, when they are applied, in a restrictive way, asserting not the general qualification of the person, via the curriculum, but the condition of the disability. But those who feel ableism in their skin, every day, know that the problem is not in disability, but in society and the social exclusion imposed by it.

Therefore, through the case studies carried out on real stories, which were published on the Reasons to Believe website, it is evident how the media reinforces existing stereotypes in the construction of the social representation of people with disabilities, either by portraying them as heroes, who overcome their disabilities to accomplish what they need and want, or as burdens, who cannot perform on their own even basic daily tasks. Thus, due to the little discussion about prejudice that affects this portion of about 25% of the Brazilian population, which can no longer be considered a minority, as well as the lack of knowledge about how prejudice acts and because it is rooted in society, the ableist discourse continues to predominate, reproducing social dynamics and articulating itself with economic dynamics. proving to be quite profitable, causing its use to be increasingly normalized, making it difficult to modify existing conceptions.

## 5 FINAL THOUGHTS

The fundamental question that was then sought to be highlighted concerns the definition itself, established today, when dealing not with disability, placing it in the first place and even before the affirmation that it is a person. Therefore, the correct expression refers to the person with a disability, because in this way it soon becomes clear that it is a question, before any other considerations, of a human being, a person, in whom a condition is manifested, the disability, which does not define him completely, but which is even more constituted as an identity trait. This is the necessary paradigm shift in order to deconstruct the stereotypes and even stigmas that, over time, have come to be associated with disability, limiting or hindering all other possibilities of social participation of people with disabilities.

Entities originating from organized civil society, which work in defense of the establishment or expansion of the rights of people with disabilities, have managed to install a protective legal system,

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<sup>5</sup> More information about the problem of the nomenclature used in relation to people with disabilities can be found in the article: "The transformations of the nomenclature of reference to people with disabilities and the social impact for inclusion", authored by Antônio Janiel Ienerich da Silva and Henrique Alexander Grazi Keske, published by the Brazilian Journal of Development, which can be accessed at: <file:///D:/Downloads/admin,+ART.+107+BJD.pdf>



such as those mentioned, and have even managed to generate a political agenda capable of triggering some public policies aimed at realizing such rights. In this sense, this paradigmatic change is perceived, in which, fundamentally, the issue of disability is shifted from the medium-biological spheres and, therefore, centered on the particular conditions of each one, to affirm that disability is related to socio-environmental aspects and social obstacles that prevent the full participation of people with disabilities.

However, stigmas and stereotypes still remain, such as, mainly, the one that considers the person as disabled, at a general level, not only for some specific activity, or with restrictions in the face of certain obstacles, when what occurs, however, refers to the fact that he or she can be perfectly qualified for a series of other social functions and activities, including professional activities, in all areas. In the same way, when people with disabilities obtain some result in these activities, they end up being pointed out as an example of overcoming, giving rise to the definitions of "warrior-heroes", or they start to be considered as a "poor-wretch", a burden to society. Such stigmas and stereotypes, in turn, are expressed, on a daily basis, in the mass media, notably on digital platforms, triggering the case that the study proposed to examine.

Because of this, the motivation of the present study was to evidence, through the website in question, considered as a sampling, the role played by the media, in reinforcing such stigmas and stereotypes, by presenting people with disabilities as included in one or both categories, that is, as "warrior-heroes", or as "poor-poor-poor/social burdens". On the other hand, this could be demonstrated by the analysis of the language that the consulted materials present, both in their discursive constructions, properly speaking, and in their imagery, through strong emotional appeals, with the purpose of generating social commotion, by exposing the disability.

The present study, therefore, is inserted in the context of presenting a deepening of this discussion, in the sense of proposing that the media, in general, instead of reinforcing such stereotypes and stigmas, for whatever purpose, engage in playing another fundamental role reserved for it, as a content creator and, therefore, as a social influencer. so that such stigmas and stereotypes are deconstructed, unveiling and demystifying positions towards people with disabilities. In this way, it would be contributing to the creation of concrete conditions for effective social inclusion and accessibility, at a general level, promoting situations of real equality between people with and without disabilities.



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