
Sense of belonging of Facebook users with intellectual disabilities

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Abstract

To date, persons with intellectual disabilities have not been viewed as potential users of social media applications and their voices have not been heard. The present study aimed to describe and understand the personal experiences of Facebook users with intellectual disabilities. Applying a grounded theory approach, interviews and observations were conducted with 20 adults with intellectual disabilities who frequently use Facebook. The qualitative content analysis indicated that the majority of the participants enjoy using Facebook, and it seemed that the online participation contributed to their sense of belonging and psychological well-being. The participants reported that they use Facebook mainly to maintain face-to-face social relationships. At the same time, they experienced stress and frustration due to technical and conceptual difficulties. The findings of the present study emphasize the need to support participation of persons with intellectual disabilities in online social applications and to ensure their safe and fruitful participation.

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Keywords: Intellectual disability, Internet, social media, social participation, sense of belonging, well, being

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