How students with intellectual disabilities evaluate recommendations from internet forums

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## Topics

## Sample

Three groups of 40 students each one:
- Group of students with ID
40 students [47.5 % female, average age 19 years (SD = 1.81, ranging from 17 to 23)]. Participants were students from a vocational training center for people with special needs from a mid-size city in Spain. Access to the center is restricted to young people who have an official diagnosis and certificate of disability
- Verbal mental age-matched control group (VMA)
40 students [52.5 % female, with an average age of 11 years (SD = 0.26, ranging from 11 to 12)] who matched on verbal mental age with the group of students with ID, as indicated by the expressive vocabulary task of KBIT.
- Chronological age-matched control group (CA)
40 Undergraduate students from the Education School of the University of Valencia (80 % female, average age of 19 years (SD = 0.40, ranging from 19 to 21) similar to that of the group of students with ID.

## Implications For Educators About

Other

# Abstract

Social networks enable people with intellectual disabilities (ID) to
participate actively in society and to promote their self-determination. However,
concerns have been raised regarding the potential limitations of people with ID to
deal with untrustworthy information sources on the Internet. In an experiment, we
assessed how adult students with ID evaluated recommendations in Internet forums
authored by either self-reported experts or by users under pseudonyms who supported
their claim either with documentary sources or their personal experience. We
compared the performances of students with ID to that of students of similar ages
but higher educational levels (chronological age-matched control group) and to
younger students with similar verbal mental age (verbal mental age-matched control
group). Participants were asked to evaluate to what extent a fictitious user should
follow particular recommendations given in a forum and to justify their evaluations
by writing a message to the fictitious user. Students with ID, as opposed to the two
control groups, recommended the forum advice to a higher extent regardless of
authorship and evidence used, and they included in their messages to the fictitious
user a higher number of opinions and information sources not present in the forum
without linking them to the actual discussion. The pattern of results suggested that
students with ID have a limited ability to evaluate recommendations in forums and
that they do not necessarily present a delay in the development of these abilities, but
rather an atypical development. Finally, we discussed the potential implications for
teaching digital literacy to students with ID.

# Outcome

The pattern of results suggested that students with ID have a limited ability to evaluate recommendations in forums and that they do not necessarily present a delay in the development of these abilities, but rather an atypical development.
These results suggest that students with ID need specific support to critically evaluate different source credibility cues present in SQA. Nevertheless, we would like to challenge the pessimistic views of the abilities of students with ID that have driven protectionist measures in the past