Social Media Skills and Safety Education Program For Adolescents with IDDs: An Occupational Therapy Approach

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BACKGROUND
Adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) have an interest in using social media (Allen et al., 2014). Research suggests benefits of teaching this population social media skills are increased social networks and online social participation (Raghavendra et al., 2018). Occupational therapists can aid this population through education and teaching emotional regulation skills and social media skills.

PROBLEM
Adolescents with IDDs are at a higher risk for cyberbullying and online harassment (Gillespie-Smith et al., 2021). There is a lack of exploring social media programs to decrease these risks.

PURPOSE
To develop a social media skills and safety education program to decrease the risk of online harassment for adolescents with IDDs and increase safe online social participation.

Outcome objectives:
1. Create a needs assessment for the Cutting Edge Pediatric and Adult Therapy facility as a guide for the program
2. Create and implement a social media skills and safety education program
3. Create and develop an infographic about safe social media use
4. Provide education to staff, clients, and their parents on safe social media use

METHODS
Site: Cutting Edge Pediatric and Adult Therapy Facility (CEPT) in Allen, Texas.
Needs Assessment: Gathered mixed methods information of informal interviews, observation, and pre-and-post surveys on Google Forms to identify the needs of the facility for the program development.
Participants: Adolescents with IDDs and their parents at CEPT.
• 21 total invited
• 21 respondents to pre surveys
• 18 respondents to post surveys
Strengths:
• Flexibility of the program
• Supportive and open learning environments
• Support from the therapists, site supervisor, and mentor

PROGRAM
General Program Goals:
1. Understand the risks and benefits of social media and internet use
2. Recognize and address cyberbullying and online harassment
3. Understand safe internet and social media behaviors
4. Identify different social media platforms and their intended uses

Theoretical Frameworks:
• The Social Participation Frame of Reference (Olson, 2010)

Sustainability:
• The Social Media Skills and Safety Education Program Manual and additional resources were provided to CEPT during a 45-minute lunch and learn

Strengths:
• Flexibility of the program
• Supportive and open learning environments
• Support from the therapists, site supervisor, and mentor

Discussion:
• An occupational therapy-based social media skills and safety education program can increase the participants and their parent’s confidence levels in using social media safely.
• Increase the likelihood of this population exploring social media as an occupation

Recommendations:
• Continue advocacy for this population
• Consider cognitive levels
• Increase time to complete the program to attain the long-term impact
• Internet, banking, and online shopping
• Video games and fandom spaces

Conclusion / Future Directions

References: