

## Sex, Love, and Stigma: A Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis of Sexual- Emotional Disability Discourse on Reddit Posts

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### Abstract

Sexuality and disability have always represented two opposite and distinct polarities due to a long-lasting narration of people with impairments as asexual, unattractive, unable, and non-normative individuals. However, they have found in social media a safe place where sharing experiences, feelings, and emotions with people facing similar issues. Drawing on Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis, this study investigates an underresearched area of discourse-based disability studies, namely digitally-based (intersectional) sexual-emotional disability discourses, by analysing a corpus of threads, posts, and comments retrieved from the Reddit social media platform. The results unveil that people with impairments still undergo marginalisation and alienation phenomena based on centrist culturally-based beliefs, ideologies, and mental models that enact a vicious cycle of stigmatisation by their able-bodied counterparts and internalisation of stigma by the disabled that contribute to enhancing their invisibility. Contemporarily, they also show that people with impairments try to resist and challenge ableist and heteronormative discourses through social media spaces. Accordingly, this paper aims to shed new light on the topic and provide insightful reflections on disability at its intersection between sexuality, socio-culturally-based ideologies, and media technologies.

### Keywords

ableism, disability discourse, critical discourse analysis, reddit, sexuality, social media studies