

## ABSTRACT

This study focused on how assistive technologies (ATs) affect the ability-disability construct of adult-onset locomotor disabled individuals in the South African city of Johannesburg. Its main aim was to understand the socialized use of assistive technologies in adult-onset locomotor disabilities and to unravel how the socialized use of assistive technologies affect the users' interpretations of the ability-disability construct; through the perceptions of the participants within a developing world context. Relatively, there have been few ATs studies in South Africa and they have excluded the 'voice' of the disabled people. Ten conveniently sampled adult-onset locomotor disabled individuals participated. An interpretive technique in the form of semi structured one hour interviews was used for data collection. The descriptors of events for the thematic analysis were the patterns or themes in which participants were constructing the narratives of their lives. These patterns were formulated using Braun and Clarke (2006) six stages of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within the data. Transcribed texts from the ten semi-structured interviews were subjected to thematic analysis based on how the participants perceived their assistive technologies. Four central themes emerged which centred on how people perceived their ability-disability; the social acceptability of ATs, accessibility factors and new trends in assistive technologies. The research findings indicate that most adult onset disabled individuals in a South African context tended to embrace the promises of technology centred on positive attributes such as: improved communication with others, increased mobility, physical safety, personal autonomy, control over one's body and life, independence, competence, confidence, the ability to engage in the workforce and participation in the wider community. Although such positive attributes seemed to reinforce perceived ability as the boundary between disabled bodies, technology was blurred. However,

this perceived ability was found to be rather misleading since it was premised in the same medical and social discourse that 'disabled' individuals. The participants' narratives were constantly constructing and reconstructing the way they perceived themselves as able or disabled. The studies therefore recommend that, disability narratives on the perception of ATs should be viewed as fluid, complex and multi-layered.