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Faculty Experiences of Social Media Implementation in Online Classrooms

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Psychology

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of the education process, with educators incorporating social media platforms both actively and passively within the learning environment. Yet, the implementation and usefulness of social media in the online learning environment as an educational assistance tool have not been adequately investigated. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how the incorporation of social media into the online learning environment is experienced by university faculty and if their experiences of use or required changes in pedagogy for implementation are affecting their ability or desire to implement the new technology. Individual virtual interviews were conducted with 10 full-time faculty members from colleges and universities within the United States. The constructs of the technology acceptance model (namely, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and general attitudes towards implementation) informed the creation of the interview questions. Thematic analysis yielded three common themes from participant responses: social media use, best practices, and pedagogical updates. Study findings have the potential to lead to positive social change for educators at the organizational level. Understanding how faculty are currently experiencing social media implementation in the online learning environment, including their hesitations for use or previous difficulties with implementation, can contribute knowledge that educators can use to help schools and teachers better incorporate social media in instruction.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family and friends who have shown me nothing but support over the many years of hard work to get to this point. You have been with me; you have supported me through smiles, excitement, and unwavering encouragement and provided a solid foundation for me during the trying times. You have been listeners allowing me to process my thoughts aloud, even though at times you had no idea what I was talking about, knowing it is what helped me to learn. I can never thank you enough for helping me to get to this point.

Both of my children have had to sacrifice too much time away from me over the past decade so that I could pursue this path and develop the building blocks for a better life for us. To my son Tyler, I will never forget your inspiring words of "storm trooper times flux capacitor." Those words have been a constant companion over the past several years of studying and writing. I look forward to all that you will showcase in the future. To my daughter Ella, ever the encourager- Little girl, you will do amazing things.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I investigate the perspectives of full-time faculty members teaching online courses about the implementation and usefulness of social media in the online learning environment. Online faculty members' experiences of social media implementation have not been sufficiently studied, according to my review of the literature. My focus was on gaining further understanding of how social media implementation into the online learning environment, as an educational tool, is affecting faculty and what their thoughts are about its usage in the future. The study's data collection and analysis contribute to the current literature on the topic of social media implementation in online learning environments. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the study including background information, the study purpose, the research questions (RQs), theoretical framework, research design, and the possible implications of the study.

Background

There is a growing body of research on the implementation of social media in online learning environments. Previous researchers who have studied social media inclusion in the online learning environment have addressed the lack of online student engagement and professor preparedness (Beth & Chera, 2017; Stott, n.d.), the creation of online learning platforms (Durak et al., 2017), the incorporation of social media presence into adult distance learning (Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2016; Kalelioglu, 2017), and even the creation of a toolkit to decipher the best social media usage for each classroom (Gulbahar et al., 2017). In the last few years, researchers have investigated the

supervision (Pimmer et al., 2016) and establishment of social media for online research communities (Renner, 2016). Galiher et al. (1995) found that success in the classroom with interactive technologies depended predominately on four factors: teacher role, barriers to effective instruction, student and teacher satisfaction, and emerging interactive environments.

With respect to the implementation of new technologies into the traditional course environment, Galiher et al. (1995) addressed two important questions regarding technological inclusion in the classroom: if the effective use of the technology was too overwhelming for the instructors and if the new roles being created by the technology inclusion were being properly addressed. Galiher et al. found that when these questions were properly asked and addressed prior to implementation the instructors felt more respected, engaged, and willing to reach out for help. The answers to these questions provide pivotal evidence related to the implementation of social media into the online learning environment as they point to teacher motivation and acceptance of the practice. Qualitative research that focuses on important aspects of appropriate use, implementation policies and procedures, and the outcomes of social media inclusion on goals for the course may clarify faculty perceptions of social media inclusion in online teaching.

Problem Statement

The adult learning environment is evolving. Instructors, teachers, and faculty members are implementing more online educational opportunities for learners (Giannoukos et al., 2016). One area of interest for researchers studying online learning environments is the incorporation of social media platforms into online education

(Gülbahar et al., 2017). Social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WikiLinks, Tumblr, and blogging sites are being included in the online learning environment to promote online engagement and learning processes (Alber et al., 2016). Researchers have looked at how online engagement impacts student success and overall motivation for learning (Banks et al., 2006; Haj-Bolouri & Flensburg, 2017). However, few researchers have examined how social media implementation is perceived, accepted, and carried out by the instructors, teachers, and faculty members who are engaged in online educational forums, according to my review of the literature.

Research has shown that teachers and faculty view technology as a part of lifelong learning, as necessary to include in educational opportunities, and as something that adds value to the course itself (Shipman, 2017). Research has also shown that many teachers and faculty are unprepared for the online learning environment due to both a lack of understanding of the use of new and advancing technologies and a lack of face-to-face interactions with students relative to a traditional setting (Beth & Chera, 2017). Studies show that challenges in faculty engagement with students often coincide with experiences that the students consider to be necessary for a positive online course experience—for example, quick reaction time to questions and one-on-one social engagement from the instructor—practices a professor who is unprepared for the online learning environment may struggle to implement (Beth & Chera, 2017). Although researchers are beginning to look at ways to improve student engagement and performance through new technology implementation and increased instructor interaction in the course room (Beth & Chera, 2017; Ng, 2018), there is a lack of necessary research

on how instructor experiences of social media inclusion in the classroom affect these problems within the online learning environment.

Research on technology implementation in the classroom has focused on incorporation strategies, acceptance, and attitudes of instructors, showcasing how the incorporation was successful when the individual instructors had a positive perception of the new technology. For example, Joo et al. (2017) conducted a study using the technology acceptance model (TAM) in which they identified that in order to have a successful technology-friendly learning environment the instructors must have both positive experiences with previous use of the technology and a positive intention to use the technology in the classroom. In both online and conventional learning environments, instructors are expected to develop and implement learning tasks that are designed to facilitate the achievement of the learning goals (Chen, 2014). Technological implementation in the course should be tied to learning tasks in a way that is meaningful and consequential, promoting learning opportunities for the students (Zsohar & Smith, 2008). Researchers have noted that the way in which an instructor perceives the need for and usefulness of technology in the classroom changes the way in which they implement the technology, affecting the learning goals for the course (Vongkullulxsn et al., 2018). Vongkullulxsn et al. (2018) identified that individual experiences impact the amount of time an instructor gives to matching technology appropriately to the learning objectives for the course, impacting the success of the students.

Researchers have also addressed the importance of instructor involvement, support, and engagement with regard to the impact it has on the learning environment and

the overall success of students. Hoerr (2015) found that when teachers feel respected, engaged, and positively challenged it leads to greater success of their students. Given that previous researchers have found that instructor perceptions and motivations affect technology implementation in the classroom, further research is needed regarding social media to address how faculty perceive the implementation of social media into the online learning environment. If implementations of new aspects of technology into the online learning environment are going to be successful, then understanding how instructors and faculty perceive the change is important.

Purpose of the Study

Researchers have repeatedly addressed the importance of teacher experiences in fostering the successful implementation of new technologies in the classroom (Dixit & Prakash, 2018; Joo et al., 2018; Pavlou & Vryondes, 2009; Scherer et al., 2018). Studies have shown that implementation without meaningful involvement by the instructor does not necessarily mean positive changes in the classroom (Jang, 2015). TAM identifies how necessary understanding teacher perceptions and experiences is to the successful implementation of new technology into the educational environment (Davis & Prakash, 2018; Scherer et al., 2018). The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how the incorporation of social media into the online learning environment is experienced by university faculty and if their experiences of use or required changes in pedagogy for implementation are impacting their ability or desire to implement the new technology. The participating faculty members' experiences were generally defined as anticipation and or the motivation for social media inclusion in the classroom, including

any hesitations to include social media in the online learning environment. My methods

of inquiry included an interview with general questions about current use and

incorporation practices for social media, personal and professional social media use, and

intentions for continued use. The participants were faculty members who offered courses

that were at least 50% or more online at the time of the study.

Research Questions

RQ1. How do university faculty describe their experience of using social media to

facilitate student social engagement in the online learning environment?

RQ2. How do university faculty describe their experience of curriculum

development or pedagogical changes, due to social media in the online learning

environment?

Appendix A contains the interview questions.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have used many theories to describe and or predict human behaviors

and technology. Regarding technology usage, Azjen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned

action (TRA) is a widely adopted psychological theory for explaining individuals'

behaviors in technology adaptation (Allam et al., 2019). TRA proposes that the closest

point of attachment or cause of human behavior is an intention that is determined by a

combination of attitude and subjective norm (Trafimow, 2009). Over the past 10 years,

many models have been proposed to describe the factors affecting technology adoption in

the classroom; the unified theory of acceptance and the TAM are the two major theories

(Scherer et al., 2018). The unified theory of acceptance and TAM stem from established and widely accepted psychological theories, including the theory of planned behavior and TRA (Scherer et al., 2018).

Davis proposed TAM as an adaptation to the TRA to specifically look at the field of instructional systems; the model has been widely and successfully used to predict users' acceptance of educational technology updates and changes (Allam et al., 2019; Ju Joo et al., 2017; Scherer et al., 2018). TAM is identified in the research as the most used model to determine intentions for and actual use of technology in the classroom (Joo et al., 2017; Scherer et al., 2018). TAM promotes understanding of faculty intentions to implement new technology in the classroom through several variables; perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and overall general attitudes towards the technology itself are among the model's constructs (Davis & Prakash, 2018; Scherer et al., 2018). TAM promotes extended understanding through incorporating external variables such as teacher or faculty self-efficacy, subjective norms, and facilitating conditions of technology implementation (Scherer et al., 2018).

TAM was the theoretical framework for this qualitative research study. I measured the faculty participants' perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and overall attitude towards the implementation of social media in the online learning environment. The use of TAM provided a means of understanding participants' perceptions of changes to the learning environment and their desire to enhance social media use. The constructs of TAM--perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and overall general attitudes towards implementation--informed the development of the

interview questions. My goal was to conduct well-rounded and thorough interviews that would engage the participating faculty members in a discussion about technology implementation and lead to a better understanding of their experiences.

Conceptual Framework

I sought to understand how online instructors, teachers, and faculty experience the incorporation of social media as a learning tool within the online learning environment. By using the widely accepted TAM as a theoretical framework for the study, I was able to derive insight regarding participants' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of social media and overall attitudes towards social media as a learning tool within the online learning environment (Davis & Prakash, 2018; Scherer et al., 2018). The conceptual framework of the study was based on qualitative interpretive description. I used the framework to explore how the faculty participants are making sense of this change in their world, to provide insightful accounts of their lived experience. Interpretive description is a qualitative inquiry approach that generates an understanding of a phenomenon that enables researchers to investigate how a phenomenon or event is impacting work in the field (Thorne, 2016). The RQ for this study regarded the clinical phenomenon of how faculty members experience the impact of incorporating social media into the online learning environment.

To provide an in-depth understanding of the clinical phenomenon in question, I used interview questions that ranged from basic content information to a deeper understanding of What participants think about the changes that are occurring within the field of online education as a whole and how they feel it will impact their own teaching

experiences. I completed a content analysis to organize and integrate the written

responses from the participants into themes associated with the TAM theory including the

anticipated use of new technologies, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and

overall general attitudes towards social media incorporation (Davis & Prakash, 2018;

Scherer et al., 2018). The TAM acted as a guidepost for the content analysis. I sought to

identify what the experiences are of online faculty in implementing social media as a

learning tool into the online educational environment. I concluded that the framework

identified was the best suited to achieving an understanding of the lived experiences of

the participants with regard to the phenomenon in question.

Nature of the Study

I used an interpretive, description-based, qualitative design for the study.

Qualitative researchers strive to account for the contexts by which individuals or groups

of individuals function within their lives and seek to provide a more in-depth

understanding of the world that those participants encounter (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Interpretive description is a qualitative method that assists researchers in generating

meaningful scholarly resources that can impact those in the field (Thorne, 2016). I

viewed the design as appropriate for this study's exploration of faculty members'

engagement in new technological advances. The study's RQs concerned the phenomenon

of how faculty members experience the incorporation of social media into online

coursework. The study began with a purposeful sampling of faculty members who

provide online learning environments for their courses. Participants were recruited

through email, Facebook groups, and LinkedIn social media sites. I interviewed the

selected participants using open-ended questions that were designed to showcase their experiences of social media incorporation in the online learning environment. Upon completion of the interviews, I printed transcripts and conducted a content analysis for the text-based qualitative data. I provide a more in-depth discussion of the nature of the study in Chapter 3.

Definitions

There are a few concepts within the study that benefit from a concise definition. They are as follows:

Experiences: Observations of facts or events or the development of practical knowledge or skills from observing others or engaging in specific activities (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Experiences are the process of perceiving through having personally gone through an event or reality.

Online learning environment: Access to learning experiences through the use of technology and the internet and the provision of education through both synchronous and asynchronous learning engagements with web-based technologies, pedagogies, and practices (Moore et al., 2011; Natalier & Clarke, 2015).

Pedagogy: The "art, science, or profession of teaching" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., "Definition"). A teacher's pedagogy includes their teaching style, perceived learning dynamics, course design, and their perceived role as a faculty member (Coppola et al., 2002).

Social media: Forms of electronic communication that enable the building of communities through the sharing of information, ideas, personal messages, and other

user-generated content such as educational and informative videos (Lee & McLoughlin, 2007; Sobaih et al., 2016).

Assumptions

In the case of academia, an assumption is the understanding that presented information is true and acceptable to both the presenter and the reader. Several assumptions were present in the compellation of this study. The assumptions included in this study were a) social media refers to all social networking sites with user-generated content such as Facebook, Twitter, Wiki, YouTube, blogs, and other digital social sites; b) participants were voluntarily providing truthful answers to the presented questions; c) I assumed that my conclusions were appropriate to the data collected and overall unbiased. The final assumption for this study is that the topic is appropriate and relevant.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitation occurs when all potential participants of the study did not have an equal opportunity to engage in the study, or if the researcher restricts the study in a way that prohibits potential participants (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). Delimitation in research is creating a boundary by which the research was held, in order to ensure the research meets the goals of the project. While the study could have been open to all higher education teachers and faculty, a delimitation of this study occurred because I chose to focus on full-time faculty who offer online courses, rather than focusing on adjunct faculty or other part-time teachers of higher education online courses. The reasoning behind this delimitation within this study was to create an understanding of perceptions by those

faculty who have the most consistency within the online learning environment and would engage with a higher volume of students.

Limitations

A limitation of a research study design is any potential weakness of the study (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). For this study, information was gathered on how online faculty engage in the use of social media within the online learning environment as an educational tool.

The potential limitations of this study are:

- the researcher selected the participants through a purposive sample, seeking out full-time faculty members who engage with at least 50% of their students through online learning environments,

- limited time to collect the data, the data was set to be be collected over a 2-week window of time with the data collection being halted after the researcher has received 25 participant responses,

- while the questions are worded as open-ended with the opportunity to provide detailed descriptions by the participants, the researcher must acknowledge that participants may not have discussed all techniques in which they used social media within the online learning environment either through purposeful or inadvertent omission,

- the sample of the study was restricted to United States based faculty members, therefore generalization and inference about the worldwide population would be limited, due to the United States based sample.

This study remains a positive source of reference for future research focusing on the use of social media in the online learning environment.

Significance

The aim of this study was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media applications in online classroom settings by determining what the faculty members who use online formats experience during the introduction of social media platforms into the online learning environment. Much of the current literature provides an overview of the implications to the students and how they have reacted to the social media platform inclusion. Some research is starting to look at faculty perceptions of social media inclusion and is starting to showcase the perceived positive uses for social media, but overall faculty are continuing to report low instances of implementation (Holmes, 2017; Keenan et al., 2018; Shipman, 2018). Connolly et al. (2019) completed a study in Australian vocational settings that questioned student and teacher readiness to adopt social media and highlighted the importance of inquiring about teacher readiness to adopt social media in the classroom because teachers who felt less inclined to adopt the practice did not meaningfully use the platforms. As previously stated, studies have shown that implementation without meaningful involvement by the instructor does not necessarily lead to positive changes in the classroom or the curriculum (Connolly et al., 2019; Jang, 2015). Jang found that teacher perceptions toward implementation of things like technology in the classroom can change the process of implementation, leading to failure of the new system and a lack of educational goals being met. That is, if instructors and faculty members do not feel that social media inclusion is justifiable or necessary, it

will change the way that they implement the inclusion and lead to a failure of the system

(Jang, 2015; Vongkulluksn et al., 2018). In addition, whereas current studies have

focused primarily on students' thoughts or reactions to the practice, it is important for

researchers to determine what faculty members experience with the inclusion of social

media and if has positively affected the way they teach. Based on the understanding from

previous research about the importance of faculty perceptions on the implementation of

new technology, this study can contribute to helping schools and teachers better prepare

for the advent of social media and open discussions of how their perceptions influence

the inclusion in the curriculum or course materials.

Summary

Through this study, I sought to identify how full-time online faculty members

experience the implementation of social media into the online learning environment. The

topic of social media inclusion into learning environments has been researched for many

years. However, little research exists on the perceptions and experiences of faculty

members on the desire to implement, its overall effectiveness, and how the

implementation itself affects the pedagogical practices of the faculty teaching the

implemented courses. The acceptance of technology in the classroom has been studied

for decades and TAM has indicated that the overall success or failure of a new

technological system is hinged on the perceptions of the faculty members (Pavlou &

Vryondes, 2009). I further explored faculty experiences and increased the opportunity for

understanding, which is beneficial for both the faculty members and the online learning

environment. The results of this study have the potential to contribute to positive social

change within the online learning environment by helping schools and faculty to better

prepare for the advent of social media and encouraging discussion of how instructor

perceptions influence inclusion in the curriculum and course materials.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A change in the learning environment affects the teachers and faculty who serve as the instructional facilitators. Research continues to show that faculty and teachers need to be invested in a new technology inclusion in order for it to be successful in the classroom (Maloney et al., 2014; Pavlou & Vryondes, 2009; Shipman, 2018). As each new technology has been implemented in learning environments, both in person and online, it has changed the way in which instructional facilitators (i.e., faculty) engage with learners. A more recent technology inclusion into the online learning environment has been incorporating existing social media platforms into the learning environment to enhance instruction and learner engagement.

Because the change in the learning environment will have a direct impact on faculty, it is essential to understand faculty thoughts and expectations of the new technology inclusion. Researchers have begun to identify how students, and in some cases, faculty think about the incorporation of social media into the learning environment (Maloney et al., 2014). Currently, much research points to the amount of information that is not known about social media incorporation in education as it continues to evolve, especially in the online learning environment (Jang, 2015; Sewling & Stirling, 2016). In the literature review, I explore what is known about the experience of social media and the online learning environment. The review showcases the need for this research study to increase understanding of this phenomenon.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of online education, including the rise in its popularity and recent technological advancements contributing to changes in the education system. The chapter continues with information about social media, previous incorporations into educational environments, and the updates to the pedagogy relevant to the incorporation. Key sections of the chapter are devoted to the literature search strategy, current expectations and viewpoints, the different types of social media and their incorporation into online curriculum, the theoretical basis for this research, and literature specific to social media and online students or faculty.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following databases for the literature search: PsycINFO, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, ProQuest, PsycEXTRAS, Sage Premier, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Searches of the literature included many search terms that were enhanced with Boolean operators. Keywords used in searching the literature included *online learning*, *learning*, *online education*, *education*, *communication in education*, *social media*, *social media interactions*, *social media AND education*, *online learning AND social media*, *social learning theory*, *technology acceptance model*, *faculty perceptions*, *educator perceptions*, *incorporation of social media*, *online courses*, *online classroom communication*, *teacher satisfaction*, and *online communication between faculty and students*. I also searched for specific theorists and related theoretical constructs. Initially the search began with research stemming from 2013 to 2019. The lack of seminal research on the area within the time line of 2013 to 2019 led to an expanded search of the literature into earlier publications. Once the search was expanded,

there was significantly more literature on the topic available. I searched from 1995 to

2019, with searches prior to 2010 used to investigate classic literature relevant to the

topic such as learning theories and the history of online education. The types of literature

searched included peer-reviewed journal articles, e-books, and books. An emphasis was

given to peer reviewed articles that specifically included case studies and other research

on the topic of social media engagement in education environments.

Theoretical Foundation

TAM is the most commonly cited theoretical model identified in the research that

addresses actual intentions to use technology in the classroom (Joo et al., 2017; Scherer et

al., 2018). TAM has been used to determine the likelihood that individuals or groups will

successfully implement a new technology or technological component into their daily life

or workspace (Dzaik, 2017). Fred Davis, a doctoral student who was responding to

concerns about unfavorable attitudes towards new technology, developed TAM in the

1980s (Dzaik, 2017). Davis adapted a widely used theoretical model at the time, TRA

(Allam et al., 2019). TRA is based on the idea that a person's performance on a specific

task is determined by their behavioral intention; it specifically looks at user acceptance of

information systems and other technology (Allam et al., 2019; Davis et al., 1989). TAM

was designed to explain technology acceptance across a range of individual and

organizational contexts, computer technologies, and overall user populations (Vankatesh

& Davis, 2000). Simply stated, TAM proposes that the features of a new technology or

technological system will directly influence the motivation of users to accept and

implement that technology. TAM provides a basis for tracing the impact of external

factors on the internal beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of individuals implementing new

technologies into their individual and work lives (Pavlou & Vryondes, 2009). Another

key aspect of TAM is that it can be used not only to predict the behaviors of individuals,

as seen in TRA, but also to explain what is going well with the system or what is

unacceptable to the users and therefore causing the system to fail (Davis et al., 1989).

  TAM originally stated that behavioral intentions to implement new forms of

technology are best understood by three main factors: perceived usefulness, perceived

ease of use, and overall attitude towards use of the new technology or technological

system (Dixit & Prakash, 2018). Early research on TAM identified that (a) individual's

technology use can in fact be predicted by their intentions, (b) perceived usefulness of the

technology is a major determinant of their intentions, and (c) perceived ease of use is a

significant secondary determinant of individual's intentions to use technology (Davis et

al., 1989). More recently, TAM has been expanded to include external variables such as

self-efficacy, subjective norms, and facilitating conditions of technology use (Scherer et

al., 2018). TAM was designed to enable practitioners of technology to predict if a new

technological system would be acceptable to users, diagnose any reasons why the system

would not be acceptable, and take action to correct the system as needed to increase user

desirability (Davis et al., 1989). Through the main factors of the theory, along with the

updated external variables, TAM aims to explain user intentions toward both

technologies and diverse media-based learning environments including online learning

environments and social media engaged learning.

Joo et al. (2018) used TAM to explore teachers' intention to use new technology and expanded on the idea of self-efficacy within the model. Joo et al. completed a paper-and-pencil survey of 300 undergraduate students enrolled in a required teacher certification course through the College of Education at three different Korean universities. The survey asked questions based on TAM, TPACK, and teacher self-efficacy using a 5-point, Likert-type scale (Joo et al., 2018). TPACK is a theoretical framework based on the three main knowledge categories for teachers: content, pedagogy, and technology integration (Joo et al., 2018). Teacher self-efficacy relates to their personal beliefs about themselves as educators and their ability to plan and implement learning activities associated with the new technology as a way to complete instructional objectives and promote student learning (Joo et al., 2018). In order to create a positive learning environment that is technology-friendly and inclusive, TAM suggests that teachers must have both positive past experiences with the technology and the intention to use the technology in their classroom (Joo et al., 2018). Joo et al. identified through their study that teachers' perceptions of usability and satisfaction were overall lower than the perceptions of students. The findings of the study showed that whereas TPACK did not affect the individuals' intention to use technology in the classroom, TAM had a significant impact overall (Joo et al., 2018). The study was able to establish that teachers do not blindly accept new technology implementation, and instead they critically accept a new technology implementation based on its benefits to the teaching and learning process (Joo et al., 2018).

When social networking sites began being implemented in conjunction with academic discussion, studies began to appear using TAM as the theoretical basis for acceptance of this practice (Dixit & Prakash, 2018). Dixit and Prakash completed a quantitative study of 172 participants in North India using both online and pen-and-paper questionnaires of a 5-point Likert- type scale. The study found that of the 170 respondents who completed the entire survey, 59.4% of social networking use was to contact old friends and relatives, with only 4.3% of use being for academic discussions in groups (Dixit & Prakash, 2018). The study focused on discussing social media engagement as a whole with the emphasis on using TAM as a basis for individual use, the study did not discuss at length or ask specific questions about engagement in academic opportunities for social media within the classroom setting. Dixit and Prakash (2018) showcased in their empirical study that TAM could be appropriately utilized to understand the intention to implement social networking site behaviors for academic purposes. Although they did not specifically focus on academic engagement in social media in their study, future studies like this one can implement TAM in a similar format to assess individuals' willingness to engage in social media in the classroom setting.

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of full-time faculty members who provide at least 50% of their courses online, in an effort to understand their perceptions of social media inclusion in the online learning environment. This study was grounded in the theoretical foundations of TAM that will serve to inform concepts and assist in examining the thoughts and perceptions of the faculty participants. In order to understand the likelihood of positive implementation of social networking into

the online classroom, research must include the teachers' perceived usefulness of the

system, the perceived ease of use of the new system as implemented into the online

environment, and the individual teacher's self-efficacy and motivation for the system.

This was accomplished through this study using TAM as the underlying theoretical basis.

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**</div>

Introduction of Social Media Into Online Education Classrooms

Online Education

In an online learning environment, the opportunity for students to engage in

higher education where they might have otherwise met obstacles of geographic location,

employment, or scheduling is increased and students are better able to engage in higher

learning. In general, an online learning environment allows for students and teachers to

be geographically separate and yet continue to engage in an academic exchange of

information. After the invention of the internet and the incorporation of email, streaming

video, and various classroom software programs that include the ability to have internet

conversations and discussions, online education began to evolve and grow exponentially

(Stadtlander & Giles, 2010). Because of the introduction of the online learning

environment and online classrooms, there have been software advances that enable higher

education models to engage in the exchange of information in both synchronous and

asynchronous ways.

Weller (2009) argued that online learning allows universities to understand the

evolution of the academic society and engage purposefully in this medium to maintain its

relevance within the academic culture as a whole. Advances in online learning

environments have continued, allowing for online libraries, research laboratories,

learning management systems, and virtual learning environments. However, researchers

have argued about the idea of a natural progression of technology and how it changes the

tools, systems, and other ways of thinking embodied in the online learning environment

specifically when it comes to the way in which higher education engages with learners.

Individuals have options when it comes to learning new things or developing skills; since

the advent of the internet, individuals do not have to be engaged in formal learning in

order to understand deeper levels of a topic they find interesting. Thanks to technological

advances, even non-students are engaging in learning every day because available

technologies have lowered the threshold to engagement (Weller, 2009). Historically, the

higher education system has been one that sought to enculturate learners into an academic

community, but this appears to be changing. Along with the advent of online learning

environments, the higher education community is working more towards personalization

in the learning environment to meet the changing demands of the academic culture

(Weller, 2009).

Online Pedagogies

Originally, online learning opportunities were offered during the early 1980s.

Research into the feasibility of online learning environments began in the late 1980s and

helped to increase the knowledge on effective and ineffective ways of engaging in what

was then identified as the *virtual classroom* (Coppola et al., 2002). Researchers then

began looking into the changing aspects of the cognitive, affective, and managerial roles

in online learning pedagogy to address the role changes happening when educators

transition from traditional roles to that of an online instructor and identified the need for the pedagogical shift in order to adapt to the new learning environment (Coppola et al., 2002). Researchers identified that teaching in the online learning environment requires different technical skills, approaches to teaching, and changes in the teachers' team dynamics within the overall educational system (Coppola et al., 2002).

An educational pedagogy is the toolbox of educators that includes their knowledge, skills, and strategies that are used within their craft of teaching. Many of the most important roles of an online educator are encompassed through their pedagogical implementation of the material. In an online educational environment, the teacher is no longer looked at as being the sole provider of information, requiring a pedagogical role shift to encompass the change in the delivery system while continuing to engage the students in ways that focus discussions on critical concepts, principles, and skills (Bergl & Muntz, 2016). In order to meet the changing demands of the learning environment, most educators have updated their pedagogical approaches to reflect architecture of participation and user-generated content (Lee & McLoughlin, 2007; Weller, 2009). Overall, the literature identified a shift into the Socratic pedagogy that emphasizes multilogues-- a conversation that perceived as many to many-- in the educational conversation (Coppola et al., 2002).

Teaching online typically requires a different set of technical skills and approaches than what is required at traditional brick and mortar institutions. Researchers have identified that educators face an increased workload due to pedagogical and technical challenges in the online learning environment, especially due to the increase in

time that it takes to create the courses, interact with students, and grade the students'
assignments electronically (Morris et al., 2005). A few of the pedagogical requirements
of the online educator as defined in the literature are providing guidelines for
assignments, offering intellectual feedback to students, examining and explaining issues
identified within the course, ensuring that comments are directed towards the content and
learning objectives of the course and engaging the students in discussions on critical
concepts, providing opportunities for user-generated content and participation, and
evaluating students' contributions (Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Lee & McLoughlin, 2007;
Morris et al., 2005; Weller, 2009).

     The shift from teacher-centered education to the learner-centered approach is one
large change in the online pedagogy (Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Coppola et al., 2002; Lee &
McLoughlin, 2007; Morris et al., 2005). The shift from the teacher-centered formal
practices into the learner-centered approach requires the educator to transition into the
role of instructional facilitator, mentor, and community spokesperson. In the learner-
centered environment, the learning process is meant to be cyclical in that the learners will
connect with the instructor and other students to share and find new information which
enables them to modify previously held thought patterns and belief systems, then they
will return to connect with the instructor and other students to share their realizations and
begin the process of gathering more information again (Kop & Hill, 2008). In this view,
pedagogies should resemble learning as a knowledge creation process and not simply the
consumption of information by the learner.

A large portion of the online learning environment is made up of adult learners; the learner-centered approach promotes the students as partners in the process and increases student motivation (Bergl & Muntz, 2016). Adult learning is based in the literature on the concept of andragogy. Andragogy regards underlying assumptions that adult learners have independent self-concepts and the capability to direct their own learning, have their own life experiences that they bring to the table to impact learning (Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Merriam, 2001). Researchers have indicated that adult learners have learning needs that are impacted by changing social roles, are problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge, and have intrinsic motivation for learning (Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Merriam, 2001). Because a large portion of the online learning environment consists of adult learners, and based on the andragogy of adult learners, a collaborative teaching model in which the students engage in the transfer of knowledge is appropriate for the online learning pedagogy.

Incorporation of Social Media in Higher Education

Social networking sites have connected with the daily lives of a large portion of the population. Social networking sites, otherwise referred to as social media, have evolved from enabling simple chatting with friends to aiding in developing new relationships, forming communities of like-minded people across the globe, and sharing information related to everything from academia and politics to socio-cultural identification and business (Dixit & Prakash, 2018). Social networking sites have been defined in the academic literature as a means of interacting between people, enabling them to communicate, collaborate, and share information through the internet with user-

generated content (Sobaih et al., 2016). Social media sites across contexts have been

characterized by the social processes of self-presentation and self-disclosure (Karpman &

Drisko, 2016). Social media, in short, creates connections between individuals and

enables them to become members of communities.

Social media within the contexts of higher education is still considered to be new

and evolving (Jang, 2015). As social media has been enhanced and updated, the

education sector has begun to see the possibilities to its application within the online

learning environments. Research has shown overall that educators have been repurposing

popular technologies within the confines of the classroom in an effort to increase both

engagement and flexibility for many years (Maloney et al., 2014). Educators are being

tasked with repurposing social media tools and sites into the online learning environment

in order to engage students and increase student understanding and productivity as online

pedagogies are transitioning into more learner-lead.

Proposed activities for social media integration include reflective and creative

writing, knowledge sharing, problem solving, and peer-to-peer teaching (Bergl & Muntz,

2016; Greenhow & Lewin, 2015). Specific resources identified within the literature

include incorporation of YouTube videos covering relevant topics in order to enhance

concept delivery, encouragement for students to tweet questions about covered topics

with hashtags pulling the concept back to ongoing Twitter conversations created in the

classroom, requiring students to reflect on training or experiences by writing blog posts

that can be made available for peer comments and feedback, student collaboration

through the creation of Wikis that enable them to synthesize information and share

related knowledge, Podcasts, Photo sharing (e.g., Flickr or the Figure1 app), and file collaboration (e.g., through Google Drive or Dropbox). These are also positive social media technologies that have uses within the online learning environment (Davis et al., 2015; Selwyn & Stirling, 2016).

The possible implications of social media within the online educational environment could increase peer collaboration and enhance communication between faculty and students, critical thinking applications, and complimentary learning (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015; Jang, 2015; Maloney et al., 2014). Greenhow and Lewin reviewed two studies: a European study in which social media was implemented into school classrooms with activities that were initiated and riven by classroom teachers, and a US study where a community overseen by experts engaged individuals in informal learning opportunities. The researchers wanted to identify a learning theory model that aligned with social media incorporation into the formal learning environment. The researchers found that social media assists students and teachers in developing new forms of inquiry, communication, collaboration, and identity work, while having positive cognitive, social, and emotional impacts on the students (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015). Greenhow and Lewin determined that in reality social media incorporation into the learning environment draws on social constructivist and connectivist theoretical ideals. Jang worked with McGill University to adapt one of their information systems courses on-campus to require students to engage in collaborative learning involving social media. Through a semi-structured survey, they collected information on how the students engaged with each other and the faculty on their required collaborative learning

experience (Jang, 2015). Jang identified that the key factor in students' social media choice for the project was convenience: the ability to interact and collaborate with their team with perceived ease. Jang showcased the positive possibilities of implementing social media into a face-to-face educational format and invited the possibilities of research into implementation of social media in the online learning environment.

Other authors have shown that the social media platforms not only enable academic networking and the dissemination of knowledge, but also allow for opportunities for professional development, attitudinal change, and self-discovery for students (Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Davis et al., 2015). Bergl and Muntz created a toolbox to assist educators with implementing social media practices to enhance their learning and teaching, exploring the benefits and challenges of introducing various platforms and how this can impact the interaction with students. The authors of this toolkit emphasized how social media can advocate and facilitate academic networking, dissemination of knowledge, collaboration with peers, and increase positive learner engagement while promoting teacher professional development, self-discovery, and positive attitudinal changes (Bergl & Muntz, 2016). Bergl and Muntz proposed the use of social media to include reflective writing, knowledge sharing, problem solving, and peer-to-peer teaching activities. Davis et al. created a toolkit that encouraged educators to incorporate YouTube and Twitter into on-campus classroom lectures and discussions, or have students use blog posts to reflect on learning activities. Davis et al. focused on the positive possibilities of social media incorporation in the on-campus or face-to-face learning environment while limiting any risks faced in the social media environment. Both sets of toolkits pushed for

the positive uses of social media in the learning environment while encouraging further

research into more evidence-based practices that would ensure appropriate incorporation

into the curriculum (Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Davis et al., 2015).

Updated Pedagogies Including Social Media

Students engage in formal and informal conversations, develop dialogues

encouraging collaborative content, manipulate digital images and videos, and have the

options of knowledge representation through social media. The environment created by

social media in the online learning environment is centered around the shift in education

to the learner-centered environment, but research shows that the change in pedagogy

takes enabling learner generated content to a never-before-seen level. The challenge for

educators then becomes enabling a student's self-direction, knowledge building, and

overall autonomy through provided options while maintaining appropriate structure

within the learning environment (Lee & McLoughlin, 2007). A new form of pedagogy is

evolving that again recasts roles and enables more autonomy than seen through the

original pedagogical shift during the implementation of the online learning environment.

The cooperative learning approach, when successfully implemented into the

pedagogy of a classroom, has shown positive changes in learning patterns for all age

groups in addition to an increase in information retention and usefulness (Durak et al.,

2017). Within the cooperative learning approach, students and teachers exist in a dynamic

learning environment within the classroom, creating a give and take of shared ideas,

understandings, and perspectives (Durak et al., 2017). Research on the cooperative

learning approach has shown that the successful implementation positively impacts

student achievement and attitudes towards the curriculum (Durak et al., 2017). The

incorporation of social media will enable the cooperative learning approach through

improvements in student knowledge, sharing, and collaborative learning (Jang, 2015),

and help professors to develop course designs and instructional frameworks that will

engage students.

Through the cooperative learning approach, social context and values of

knowledge are passed from learner to learner through their participation and becomes a

collective agreement between the learners as they incorporate the facts with opinions and

other dimensions of the social media experience (Babu et al., 2017; Greenhow & Lewin,

2015). Because of the knowledge sharing that occurs within the social media

environment, validity of knowledge can and will be negotiated through faculty and peer

review and discussion as an engaged community of learners each bringing expertise,

understanding, and offering synthesis of the information presented (Greenhow & Lewin,

2015). Social media tools within the classroom have begun to be championed for the

team-based collaborative learning and learner generated content afforded in higher

education environments, but this requires adjustment to the online pedagogies (Jang,

2015; Lee & McLoughlin, 2007).

Researchers have identified challenges in social media incorporation in online

learning environment curriculum development, and like that of previous technology

incorporations, point toward needed changes in order to find success overall (O'Hagan et

al., 2016; Roy et al., 2016). One of the ways that research suggests an adjustment in the

pedagogy of social media incorporated learning is through changing the way in which

learning is measured. In an online environment with social media incorporation driving

the educational system, learning cannot be measured as a mental phenomenon alone;

instead, it should be measured through the interactions between learners and faculty and

the meaningful understanding achieved by the learners through these interactions

(Pimmer et al., 2017). Arceneaux and Dinu (2018) reported on the modality and agency

of social media use in the online learning environment, noting that these changes needed

to be made in online pedagogy to change the ways in which the information was

presented and highlighting the importance of allowing individual students to become

creators of content within the online learning environment. Overall research calls for

faculty to incorporate social media in a way that aligns with the course goals and

increases student interactivity and discussion (Neier & Tuncay-Zayer, 2015).

　　　　Social media incorporation in the online learning environment should work to

engage students in both formal and informal learning opportunities, and increase

questioning, commenting, correcting, and acknowledging of information between peers

(Babu et al., 2017). The social media inclusion can support the social learning process of

students by combining formal and informal learning styles (Babu et al., 2017). Key

functions of social media include pedagogy that should engage students in (a) producing,

editing, and publishing information; (b) demonstrating communication competencies

across various formats in an academic setting; (c) participation and collaboration in both

formal and informal learning opportunities; (d) personalizing learning events that engage

students' interests; and (e) demonstrating essential skills in digital literacy with an

emphasis on academic integrity (Lee & McLoughlin, 2007).

Summary of Social Media in the Online Learning Environment

This study sought to understand faculty perceptions of social media incorporation into the online learning environment. The review of online learning set up within this section of the literature review enables understanding on the changes that had to take place within the teachers' abilities and pedagogies in order to transition from the face-to-face classroom into the online learning environment. Since research supports that the online learning environment is continuing to evolve and grow at rapid rates, the pedagogies of the faculty who are engaging students through those mediums must evolve and change as well. This research project will help to provide needed insight into the perceptions of faculty members on how the incorporation of social media into the online learning environment has impacted their personal and professional views towards social media, and in what ways they have had to further update their pedagogies in order to remain relevant with educational opportunities tied to the learning environment changes. In the next section of this chapter, the current research into perceptions of social media inclusion in the online learning environment will be explored in an effort to further understand the type of changes necessary for incorporation and what the research has unearthed thus far on how the change is impacting the learning process and overall faculty perceptions.

Current Literature on Perceptions of Social Media Inclusion

Student Perceptions of Social Media Inclusion

Overall, the research on social media incorporation in the learning environment is still in its early infancy and requires continued engagement by researchers. Researchers

have investigated the thoughts or perceptions of students on the engagement with social

media in the higher education environment overall (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018; Greenhow

& Lewin, 2015; Jang, 2015; Maloney et al., 2014; Martinez-Cerda et al., 2018; Neir &

Tuncay, 2015; Salmon et al., 2015). The research on this area showcases both heightened

excitement about the possibilities of incorporating social media platforms into various

learning environments, and the increasing concerns of users for potential pitfalls of the

incorporation.

In a qualitative study, Maloney et al. examined students' perspectives of social

media incorporation within the health profession curriculum and found that there was in

fact a large divide in the opinions of students with regards to engaging with their faculty

through social media as a whole. Maloney et al. completed an online survey of 142

students enrolled in an undergraduate physiology program at a single university campus.

The study asked thirteen questions (open-ended with free-text responses) about their

previous educational use of social media, potential perceived benefit on learning, and

willingness to follow certain educational groups through social media platforms

(Maloney et al., 2014). The questions asked were geared towards students' perceptions of

the appropriateness of integrating social media into education, anticipated or requested

social media platforms to be utilized, concluding with anticipated benefits, problems, and

concerns (Maloney et al., 2014). Maloney et al. had four key themes emerge in their

findings: (1) peer collaboration, (2) need for separation between personal and

professional roles, (3) anticipated complimentary learning, and (4) anticipated enhanced

communication. Although the research did not showcase an actual breakdown of

professional communication, participants reported that they felt social media would breakdown lines of professional communication if incorporated into the environment (Maloney et al., 2014). The largest concerns voiced by the students through this study were those of privacy, security settings, cost, technical issues, and user proficiency (Maloney et al., 2014). While gaining insight into the students views on these potential concerns is founded, the need for understanding what faculty think about the issues is more warranted as they are the ones within the learning environment who have the opportunity to make changes that would positively dissuade the concerns. My study has the potential to address those concerns with online faculty members.

Arceneaux and Dinu called for further research in the area of social media inclusion, after speaking with 405 college students, when their findings suggested that students worried about communicator credibility within social media platforms. The researchers conducted an experimental design with an online post-test, identifying how the presentation of textual based twitter messages or visual based Instagram messages affected recall of presented information (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018). The study was intended to investigate the influences of different social media platforms and how their presentations and source credibility affected how the students' perceived the information (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018). According to the researchers, their findings contradicted prior research indicating that social media information was viewed as less credible than professional news outlets (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018). A majority of participants struggled to accept, and therefore recall later, information that was presented by individuals rather than news corporations or other perceived experts in the field, findings that are

specifically contradictory to multiple previous research articles that identifies information being provided by social peers is more likely to be believed (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018). This contradiction in previous research pushes the authors to encourage other researchers to look into the implementation of social media into the learning environment. A follow up question may be, did how the teachers present the information from the two different sources impact the students' perceptions of credibility? Meaning, if the teacher or faculty member were not engaged and perceive the social media site as appropriate or relevant, could that alone have impacted how the students engage with the platform?

Other researchers have shown that students' perceptions of faculty who use social media are positive in personal settings and yet continue to be mixed when social media is incorporated into the classroom itself (Neir & Tuncay, 2015; Salmon et al., 2015). Neir and Tuncay (2015) completed a mixed methods study surveying 338 undergraduate students in a marketing program of a private university to understand their perceptions of implementing social media into the learning environment in higher education. Their findings from exploratory qualitative research suggested that students may not always fully understand social media tools, and the students overall rated instructors who used social media very positively in personal situations, but the ratings became more mixed when placed into the learning environment; some students were incredibly positive in their wording about the possibility, but some voiced concerns about it being appropriate, informative, and productive (Neir & Tuncay, 2015). One thing that the study did was start the conversation on the *why* teachers are perceived in certain ways through personal and professional or course attached social media—however, the study left with more

questions in this area than perceived answers. More qualitative studies would need to be conducted in order to create a more thorough understanding of the topic.

Salmon et al. conducted a qualitative study with an anonymous online survey of students in Australia. Salmon et al. found three emerging themes from their research: (1) perceived improvements to learning, (2) networking opportunities, and (3) objections to using social media in the online learning environment. They found that there were vastly differing views on a wide variety of questions regarding social media in the online learning environment. Specifically, the researchers noticed the contrasting views about social media even within the same learning cohort (Salmon et al., 2015). With such differing perspectives being showcased within the same studies both on views of instructors and on the incorporation of social media itself, further research is needed to identify why there are such differing opinions on the topic. My study can help to answer some of these questions by directly speaking with full-time faculty in the online learning environment and getting their perspectives about social media incorporation into the online learning environment.

Recurring themes in research on the perception students hold for social media inclusion include (a) creating opportunity for learner generated content, (b) fostering greater feelings of social connectedness, and (c) improving learning (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015; Maloney et al., 2014). However, the same researchers found recurring themes concerning student and instructor privacy, ethics, personal and professional barriers, the credibility of user-generated content, and overall message effectiveness (Martinez-Cerda et al., 2018; Neir & Tuncay, 2015; Salmon et al., 2015). Both the qualitative and

quantitative researchers focusing on the student population showcase a need for continued research because of the discrepancies between student beliefs.

Through the current study, I sought to open a dialogue about how the perceptions of faculty members may be affecting the implementation process of social media inclusion, which has an impact on perceptions by students and their perceived benefits from social media in educational respects overall. In the next section, I review research that includes both student and faculty perceptions, showcasing how much of the research in this area has focused on student perceptions and has lacked the needed in-depth discussion with the faculty members themselves.

Student and Faculty Perceptions of Social Media Inclusion

Research into social media inclusion in the learning environment must be continued in order to understand both potential benefits and possible limitations of this technology implementation. Specific research needs to be completed on understanding the phenomenon of faculty perceptions of social media inclusion both in traditional courses and online learning environments. Some researchers began seeking an understanding of the phenomenon of social media inclusion in the learning environment through research including both students and faculty. Aymerich-French (2015) conducted a study of graduate students and faculty in traditional educational environments to address potential privacy concerns. Aymerich-French determined that social media had been widely adopted in that particular university and was seen as a valuable resource for teaching. The study consisted of 94 students completing a survey and 18 lecturers participating in a written interview solely about their current use of social media and

possible implications for teaching (Aymerich-French, 2015). The study was limited by the use of only one university, and only addressing students and faculty who were in traditional classrooms (Aymerich-French, 2015).

Holmes (2017) completed a mixed methods study using a survey completed by 452 leaders of 142 higher education institutions in the western part of the United States, in which over 85% of participants reported that they used at least one social media platform. Holmes's research explored how social media was perceived by students and faculty for personal and professional or educational purposes, not focusing on the strict use of social media in the learning environment (Holmes, 2017). There was a mixed view of social media as an aid to enhance or support instruction practices, with only 47% reporting that social media was appropriate for business and professional use (Holmes, 2017). In this study, the overall attitude towards social media was profoundly positive and most of the participants identified that they did not feel social media was a threat to institutions or instruction, but the participants (both students and faculty) were divided in the opinion to fully support social media in the traditional classroom (Holmes, 2017). In the qualitative responses, the researcher found vastly conflicting views about social media as a whole, potential uses, actual uses, as well as differing opinions on the skill level needed for institutional staff to appropriately utilize the platforms for educational effectiveness (Holmes, 2017). Further qualitative research, such as this study, has the potential to explore this hesitation by faculty to determine possible problem-solving options, or engage in conversations with colleges and universities to update implementation techniques.

With respect to how social media affects educational outcomes, Pimmer et al. (2017) noted that perceptions of students and faculty appeared to be affected by the idea that social media platforms themselves were never neutral or devoid of values but instead carried the ideological values of their creators and users as a whole. The researchers focused on the changing view of the learning process and updating the verbiage about learning in general to allocate for the meaning achieved through the written interactions between learners and the instructors in a digital space (Pimmer et al., 2017). The findings from these primarily quantitative research studies point to the need for continued research in the area to further understand where the divide is between overall positive views of social media and its potential for educational advancements, and the number of students and faculty who have a negative reaction to the thought of social media inclusion in the educational environment.

Connoly et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study in Australia that evaluated how students and teachers felt about using Facebook in a vocational setting. Connoly et al. conducted a 15-item survey of 13 teachers and 35 students that enabled qualitative descriptive information to be collected anonymously and efficiently, then completed in depth focus groups of five teachers and six students. The participants were a convenience sample across two teaching areas of business and literacy from one small vocational institute in Australia (Connoly et al., 2018). Although the study is one of only a few qualitative studies completed regarding social media in education, it is minimally generalizable to other populations because of the specific location and vocational group of students and teachers. However, the findings of the study on the use of Facebook in a

vocational environment highlights the importance of further research on student and faculty readiness to incorporate social media into the learning environment (Connoly et al., 2018).

One of the largest educators and student research projects on understanding social media use in the classroom was by Stathopoulou et al. (2019) who used a mixed method approach to help understand the phenomenon in higher education in the United Kingdom. However, their research was divided into a quantitative section for faculty questions with a qualitative student-centered research section. Stathopoulou et al. conducted research that quantitatively addressed faculty members' use of social media in higher education and then moved into a qualitative study with the students within the same university that addressed how students perceived the incorporation. Within their study, the only data that was gathered from faculty members consisted of use patterns; the team then went on to engage the students in understanding their thoughts and perceptions of the phenomenon (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). The researchers again identified a limited use of social media as an educational support tool. although the faculty predominately found social media to be perceived as useful for educational support purposes in higher education (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). Perhaps, had the qualitative nature of the student section of their research been expanded to the faculty, there might have been a deeper understanding for the divide between perceived usefulness and actual use of social media in education practices. My study attempted to open up the dialogue between faculty members in online learning environments and researchers, enabling an opportunity for

understanding the discrepancy between perceived usefulness and actual implementation of the practice in courses.

Faculty Perceptions of Social Media Inclusion.

Researchers have shown through TAM that understanding the perceptions and experiences of faculty is essential as a way of knowing if the incorporation of a new technology will be successful. Researchers have only just begun asking questions of faculty regarding social media incorporation into the online learning environment. Current research on social media incorporation that focuses on faculty incorporation is predominately quantitative and continues to showcase findings with contrasting views by participants with the perceived usefulness of social media being identified at a high rate among participants, without actual use taking place at the same rate (Adams et al., 2018; Hashim et al., 2018; Sobaih et al., 2016; Stathopoulou et al., 2019).

Some researchers have started to notice the divide in quantitative data between perceived usefulness and actual incorporation rates and have started qualitative inquiries to better understand this phenomenon. These researchers are beginning to notice a commonality-- limited use of social media-- and are looking for answers as to why this is the case when there is a perceived value. A study conducted in the United Arab Emirates identified that the most used social media platform was YouTube (with passive viewing of online videos) with perceived ease of use being identified as the reason for its higher usage (OBaidli et al., 2018). OBaidli et al. conducted a mixed methods study of 168 participants who completed an online survey of both open and closed questions on social media utilization in higher education. The researchers determined that faculty who saw

the value of social media across a wide range of platforms were more likely to try and use it in the classroom setting, but like other studies before it, there remained a disconnect between faculty members identifying a perceived value of social media and actually incorporating it into their classrooms (OBaidli et al., 2018). OBaidli et al. also understood that faculty members were gathering mixed messages from their institutions about utilizing new technologies and therefore were unsure about implementing social media due to a lack of developed protocol.

Although this study was completed in a traditional educational environment, this study raises questions about changes in pedagogies as previously perceived by researchers that occur in the online educational environment (OBaidli et al., 2018). Do the faculty have the course development knowhow to successfully incorporate social media into the online learning environment? Would they be more likely to engage the use of social media into the learning environment if they had higher levels of institutional support? OBaidli et al., like other researchers that came before them, pushed for continued research in this area to promote understanding on the disconnect between perceived value of social media in education and the current trend of minimal engagement. Using the TAM, this study helped to answer some of these questions by looking into the perceived ease of use and faculty's perceived ability to appropriately incorporate the platforms.

One 2018 qualitative study investigated business communication faculty members in the Southeast United States to identify their perceptions and usage of social media in the face-to-face classroom alongside their professional social media use. Sapkota and

Vanderputten (2018), recruited business communication faculty members via emails, phone calls, and LinkedIn social messaging. Eleven participants were scheduled for interviews of 45-60 minutes each (Sapkota & Vanderputten, 2018). The study identified overall poor perceptions of faculty members towards curriculum incorporation of social media (despite seeing exponential potential in the business or professional field) and using a modified TAM the researchers were able to discuss poor incorporation practices as a result (Sapkota & Vanderputten, 2018).

Although the study opened up a dialogue of perceptions by business communication faculty, there was a small sample size of only 11 participants and generalizability to a larger population is limited with the nature of the questions focusing consistently on business communications (Sapkota & Vanderputten, 2018). One outstanding thing that Sapkota and Vanderputten did was make note of the fact that the faculty members were already using social media personally and professionally and indicate that this use did not necessarily mean that the faculty were ready to use it in the educational environment. This reaction by the faculty members in their study identifies the need for questions in future research about the appropriateness of social media in the classroom, which is addressed in my study.

Another research study, which used a qualitative case study approach, was obtained that specifically identified teacher perceptions of social media in online education and focused on adjunct faculty members in Northeast United States (Fedlock et al., 2019). The researchers looked to understand how the adjunct faculty perceived social media incorporation into the online environment in the situation that they were not *in*

control of the curriculum creation, instead subjected to incorporating a pre-existing protocol (Fedlock et al., 2019). The researchers conducted a purposeful sampling of adjunct faculty teaching online courses, providing in depth interviews (Fedlock et al., 2019). The researchers identified that the online adjunct faculty's perceptions and practices varied significantly, and concerns were presented that hindered positive incorporation of the practice, including a lack of training, the amount of time included in successful incorporation, and a general lack of institutional support (Fedlock et al., 2019). The research team identified that their participants appeared to reflect on social media from a personal rather than a professional point of view without putting emphasis on how the professionalism would affect implementation into the learning environment (Fedlock et al, 2019); however, the researchers did not further explore this portion of the phenomenon and the question remains: is this because their participants were adjunct teachers who are not professionally associated with education as their primary position. Emerging themes from the research included (1) uniformity of purpose versus personal beliefs, (2) need for justification versus the importance of student engagement, and (3) facilitation versus direct instruction (Fedlock et al., 2019). Future researchers are encouraged in this area to understand both student and faculty privacy and engagement concerns and to push forward an initiative in higher education to promote the use of social media training for online adjunct instructors (Fedlock et al., 2019).

It is studies such as the one conducted by Fedlock et al. that encouraged the need for my study in order to fully understand the phenomenon of faculty perceptions of social media incorporation into the online learning environment and create opportunity for

positive changes in the online education environment as a whole. What the Fedlock et al. study did that was important was specifically talk to teachers in the online community about incorporation of social media into the learning environment, something that had not happened previously with respect to online teacher's perceptions. The researchers showcased the importance of understanding what the teachers think about implementation and how much it affected their actual implementation practices, which may account for the discrepancy in the research on overall faculty thoughts in social media implementation. My study is different; it focused on full-time faculty members rather than the adjunct faculty (on whom Fedlock et al. focused). Full-time faculty members have more control over their courses and are more likely to have had opportunity to showcase contributions to the online learning environment as a whole over their adjunct counterparts.

Summary of Current Literature on Perceptions of Social Media Inclusion

Many questions that arose from student-centered research stemmed from a lack of understanding on how the perceptions of the faculty members incorporating the changes may have affected the outcomes of the course goals regarding social media. Researchers that incorporated both students and faculty began to notice a trend of discrepancies between positive views of the potentials of social media incorporation, and actual incorporation practices of social media into the learning environments both in face-to-face classrooms and through online learning environments. However, researchers that combined student and faculty perceptions remained primarily quantitative when discussing faculty views, missing the more in depth understanding of the phenomenon

that can be showcased through the qualitative inquiry. Researchers since the mid-1980s have showcased through TAM that if a teacher did not believe in the new technology being implemented into the classroom, it affected the way in which it was presented and the overall implementation. I sought to shed light on this topic, hoping to open the door for a conversation with the faculty members who are implementing this change and informing the field on how this may be impacting the views of the of not only the faculty, but the students themselves who are impacted by the perceptions of their course instructors.

Summary and Conclusions

Over the past 10 years, use of social media in personal and professional settings has escalated and become a mainstream identity for many users; resultingly, social media has been incorporated into educational systems both in person and online. Research on social media inclusion remains in its infancy, but researchers have already found that since online learning is inherently social and participatory, it demands a more collaborative pedagogy; as a result, social media inclusion became a catalyst for active learning in online education (Lawson & Murray, 2018). As online educational systems continue to evolve, researchers show more incorporation of pre-existing social media sites as tools into the online learning environment as a part of their pedagogical toolkit (Martinez-Cerda et al., 2018). Researchers showed that social media in the online learning environment enabled students to practice learning through formal and informal conversations across a range of contexts and exhibit authority over when, how and with whom they learned the required material (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015). Researchers up to

this point have focused primarily on how to incorporate social media, what students think about the usefulness and success of social media incorporation, and some of the pitfalls into successful incorporation (Babu et al., 2017; Bergl & Muntz, 2016; Davis et al., 2015; Karpman & Drisko, 2016; Lee & McLoughlin, 2007; O'Hagan et al., 2016; Selweyn & Stirling, 2016). Researchers are beginning to ask about teachers and faculty perceptions of the transition to social media incorporation, but much of the necessary information about faculty perceptions of this phenomenon remain unknown.

Researchers historically researched new technology incorporations through TAM and identified successful implementation by how the faculty in the classrooms viewed the change. As of now, other research has not been conducted that showcases how online faculty perceive the social media implementation. Those researchers that considered the perceptions of teachers and faculty members have begun to open up the field to a deeper understanding of successful incorporation of this new technology into the learning environment. While researchers ask these questions, there is a need for a wider base of the target population that would enable generalizability to the population of online faculty. Research needs to be conducted with emphasis on how online college and university faculty experience the incorporation of social media into the online learning environment, how they think it would benefit their curriculum, and if it is in line with their pedagogical identity. My research sought to understand those faculty experiences and shed light on how the social media inclusion is viewed, how it has impacted the educational encounters within the online learning environment, and how the faculty have

had to update their pedagogical practices in order to appropriately engage with this new

technology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to research faculty experiences of social media incorporation into the online learning environment. One of the contributions of this study to the literature is knowledge about the ways in which faculty experiences of social media incorporation affect their willingness to engage in the process of social media incorporation within their learning environments. I conducted the study using a qualitative, interpretive, description design. The key elements of this design include an actual real-world question, a general understanding of what is known and not known about the subject matter, and an appreciation of how the target audience will receive and can utilize the answer generated by the study (Thorne, 2016). Interpretive description is an approach to qualitative research that is used to extend understanding on research topics that are of practical importance to a discipline (Thorne, 2016). When analyzing interview data, the researcher focused on significant statements within participants responses that showcase their perceptions, emphasizing phrases that appear to have particular meaning to the participants. In this chapter, I describe the role of the researcher, recruitment of participants, and data collection procedures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures for the study, followed by an overall chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative researchers assess real-world problems. Interpretive description is an attempt to promote insight into questions that are useful for the field (Korstjens & Moser,

2017; Thorne, 2016). In short, qualitative inquiry allows for a behind-the-scenes look into the study in question. Qualitative designs are emergent and flexible, and a qualitative RQ needs to be open to all possible findings, engaging the researcher in what is possible to find, should not be answerable in only a *yes* or *no* response. This study had two RQs:

RQ1. How do university faculty describe their experience of using social media to facilitate student social engagement in the online learning environment?

RQ2. How do university faculty describe their experience of curriculum development as a consequence of social media in the online learning environment?

Qualitative inquiry can consist of grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, narratology, and participatory action research, each method of inquiry based on its own set of assumptions and procedures (Staller, 2010). I based this study on qualitative interpretive description because the goal of the study was to understand the participants' experiences and perceptions with emphasis on how this will translate into real-world interactions and changes within the learning environment. Interpretive description studies consist of a small number of participants, enabling the researcher to focus on patterns of meanings and overall emerging themes from the interview process (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Thorne, 2016). The use of interpretive description inquiry helped me to answer the RQs by enabling an understanding of the ways participating online faculty members experienced the phenomenon of social media incorporation into the online learning environment.

Role of the Researcher

Within a qualitative design, the researcher is identified as an instrument or tool within the process, acknowledging that the researcher's schema is reflected in their interpretations and observations of the phenomenon (Staller, 2010). It is this assumption that makes it important in qualitative inquiry for the researcher to be transparent about their personal perspective and acknowledge their own subjectivity of the phenomenon in question (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). For this study, my role was that of active learner and observer.

I had no professional relationship or ties with any of the participants. I also had no professional affiliations with any of the colleges or universities with which the participants might be affiliated. The study was not associated with my current or previous work environment. I identified no conflicts of interest.

Methodology

An interpretive description design in qualitative methodology engages the researcher in developing an understanding within the study that can result in advancing disciplinary knowledge (Thorne, 2016). Researchers and methodologists have stated that a qualitative research study should be utilized when *why* questions remain unanswered (Moore et al., 2011). This study was sparked by the following questions: Why does this implementation work in some cases and not in others, and is it affected by the way the faculty view the implementation? In order to understand this question, a qualitative study on the experiences of the faculty members on social media implementation was necessary based on previous research of TRA and TAM.

Participant Selection Logic

The purpose of this study was to further understand a specific phenomenon, and not to generalize findings to the public as a whole. As such, it required a purposeful sampling of participants. In general, qualitative researchers are more likely to engage in purposeful sampling in an effort to identify specific phenomena and develop a closer understanding of the target population (Staller, 2010). Purposeful sampling enables the researcher to identify individuals who have knowledge of, and opinions on, the subject in question. The target populations for this study were individuals who were full-time faculty at colleges and universities who engaged in online teaching for at least 50% of their teaching practice. An individual was not disqualified for the study due to gender, age, geographic location, or other demographic information so long as they are identified as a full-time faculty member who provided online education for at least 50% of their teaching practice.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I identified potential participants through a few pathways: creating an internet search of online faculty through multiple internet-based private universities and requesting permission to engage with a private Facebook group that is specific to online higher education faculty. I chose to use advanced contact to request cooperation and educate the potential participants on the purpose of the study and motivate them to engage (Shuttles, 2008). In the initial contact post on the private group Facebook site and in the emails, the potential participants were offered an incentive of a $10 Starbucks gift card to complete the virtual interview. Shuttles (2008) reported that research response

rates are overall improved when combining an incentive with advanced contact to potential participants. In order to remain ethical, and not to appear coercive to the potential participants, the incentive was kept to a minimum (see Valerio & Mainieri, 2008). In this initial contact, the individuals were provided the option to engage through clicking on a web link that would take them to an anonymous online questionnaire.

I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University to gather and analyze data before making any contact with potential study participants. The interview process began with an informed consent explaining to the individual the voluntary nature of the research, their ability to choose to withdraw at any time throughout the questionnaire for any reason, their ability to skip any question should they choose, and confidentiality practices (Valerio & Mainieri, 2008). The individual participants had minimal personal or professional risk from engaging in the study; I assumed the risks to be no greater than the risks they would hold engaging in their day-to-day lives.

The sources of data in this study stem from faculty members at U.S.-based universities, who currently teach courses that are at least 50% online learning environment directed. Specifically, data came from the following sources.

1. Technology-based, individual interviews using the website http://doxy.me/ashleygeorge that allows video conferencing. Interviews will consist of 15 open-ended questions to identify faculty experiences and perceptions of the incorporation of social media into the online learning environment, including any possible hesitations that faculty

members may have on the incorporation, or current issues keeping

faculty members from the incorporation of the technology.

2.   Member checking interviews with select participants completed as

technology-based individual interviews.

Data collection was set up to continue for a 2-week period of time after the

initiation of the study, or alternatively, data collection was to be halted after 25

participant interviews had been completed.

Data Analysis Plan

In this study, the researcher asked in-depth questions about faculty experiences of

social media incorporation into the online learning environment. Participants who are

identified as full-time faculty members in higher education who provided at least 50% of

their teaching online completed online interviews. The main RQs were (a.) How do

university faculty describe their experience of using social media to facilitate student

social engagement in the online learning environment? and (b.) How do university

faculty describe their experience of curriculum development or pedagogical changes, due

to social media in the online learning environment? The chosen interview questions (see

Appendix A) aided in gathering data about the perceptions of the faculty members of

social media inclusion into the online learning environment. Use of the qualitative

approach enabled me to gain positive insight into the phenomenon in question.

I content analyzed the participants' answers. The content analysis enables

researchers to evaluate any type of media and determine what is being said and how

(Ungvarsky, 2019). Conceptual analysis is a process by which the researcher will

determine both the initial existence and continued frequency of certain concepts within the responses of the participants, relational analysis takes the understanding of the content further by expanding on the conceptual analysis to understand the relationships between the concepts presented (Ungvarsky, 2019). In order to fully understand the phenomenon in question, the collected data will undergo both conceptual and relational content analysis in order to determine how often each of the concepts arise in the responses along with how the responses are connected across all participants (Ungvarsky, 2019). Each of the concepts noted across the faculty participants' answers were carefully analyzed to ensure understanding of faculty perceptions. Appendix B contains a word cloud of participant responses.

After the data collection process was halted, the data collected through the interview was concluded and data analyzed. Each of the engagements with the participants; through email, the completed interview, or any follow up phone calls or emails were transcribed and stored in a word document along with my reflexive diary. The word document was labeled, enabling me to identify, sort, and clarify content in relation to the RQ, and then was analyzed through the assistance of NVivo.12 for Mac data analysis software. Through the use of NVivo.12, I was able to conceptualize and categorize participant responses, analyze the data thematically, and determine categories and codes by using the initial RQ and the questionnaire as a guide. NVivo.12 for Mac's matrix coding process and visualization possibilities provided the opportunity to identify content and relationship patterns throughout the data. Finally, I engaged in the

interpretation of the results based on the identified content, themes, and relationship patterns associated with the RQs.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research works as the quality control for the study, ensuring that the researcher has done their due diligence to ensure that their study meets appropriate scientific standards of practice. For this study, the researcher will go through multiple levels of quality controls to ensure that the outcome of the study was trustworthy. The four main quality controls in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility acts as the internal validity for a qualitative study and has multiple strategies for a researcher to ensure credibility throughout the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Two credibility strategies were used throughout the data collection and analysis to create trustworthy results, persistent observation, and member checking. Persistent observation of the data was obtained through constantly reading and re-reading the data, analyzing, and revising concepts as appropriate throughout the study. Member checking is a common practice in qualitative research and serves to strengthen the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In member checking, the researcher will provide the opportunity for several of the study participants to read the content analysis of the researcher and determine if they agree with the findings based on how they answered the questions themselves. Member checking was performed after the initial content analysis, allowing the participants to review the data, analytical categories, and interpretations to provide feedback.

Transferability in qualitative research identifies how the results of the study can be transferred to other contexts or settings with new participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to obtain transferability within this study, the researcher will engage in the thick description. For every part of the study process, the description of the interactions with the participants, their responses, and all context of the study was described in thick, rich detail, creating an opportunity for the study to becoming meaningful to an outsider. The goal of transferability is for an outsider to be able to step into the research study and completely replicate the project if they chose to do so; a thick description of all aspects of the study is necessary in order to complete this task in qualitative analysis.

Dependability and confirmability act as the audit trail for the study, through the records kept by the researcher throughout the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The aim of dependability and confirmability is to be utterly transparent with the description of research steps taken from the beginning of the study to publication. Dependability focuses on the consistency of the study, requiring the researcher to check to see if the content analysis is remaining within the accepted standards. Confirmability focuses more on the researcher's neutrality, ensuring that the interpretations and analysis are not skewed by the researcher's viewpoints. Reflexivity is examining the researcher's own conceptual lens, assumptions, values, and how they might impact the research process in all phases of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure dependability and confirmability throughout the study, the research will keep a detailed record of the research path while engaging in reflexivity through a diary of the research process.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical principles are in place to protect the individual participants from the start of the recruitment process through the publication of findings (Valerio & Mainieri, 2008). The IRB process through Walden University ethically scrutinizes every aspect of the study prior to any engagement with individual participants including advance contact or recruitment. The researcher will obtain IRB approval from Walden University prior to any contact with potential participants or data collection.

Participants, when directed to the web link for the interview/questionnaire, were first presented with informed consent for the study that entailed their rights as participants. The informed consent was written without any psychological jargon or complex language that a faculty member in another field of study would be able to easily understand. The participants were informed of the nature of the study, potential benefits of the study, confidentiality, and privacy, the voluntary nature of the study and how to withdraw should they choose, that they do not have to answer every question should they choose, and how they would be able to gain a report of the study findings. Participants were given contact information for the researcher, should they have any questions or concerns before, during, or after the study. Finally, all participants received a debriefing summary via email.

All data, including the printed question responses, reflexive diary of the study by the researcher, handwritten and digital charts compiled during the content analysis, and all copies of communication between the participants and the researcher are stored in a locked file cabinet and digital copies are stored under a password-protected drive in a

secure location in the researcher's home office. All digital files will be deleted, and paper copies will be shredded five years after the completion of this study.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided a detailed description of the research project methodology. The qualitative research design enables the researcher to develop an understanding of the phenomenon in question of faculty members' experiences of the social media implementation into the online learning environment. This chapter reviewed the participant selection, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and analysis. Finally, the chapter concluded by addressing the issues of trustworthiness within the study and ethical considerations. Within the next chapter, the researcher will provide the findings of the study on faculty perceptions of social media inclusion in the online learning environment. Chapter 4 will specifically showcase how the data collection occurred, the demographics of the participants, and the processes used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 will conclude with evidence of trustworthiness within the study and the study results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how university faculty experience the implementation of social media in the online learning environment and to understand how their experiences of use or required changes in pedagogy have affected their ability or desire to implement the new technology. I sought to answer the following two RQs: (a.) How do university faculty describe their experience of using social media to facilitate student social engagement in the online learning environment? and (b.) How do university faculty describe their experience of curriculum development or pedagogical changes, due to social media in the online learning environment? In this chapter, I provide information on the demographics of the participants, data collection and procedures, analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, and overall results.

Demographics

This study involved a purposeful sampling of full-time university faculty working within the United States. I was able to secure 10 participants for the study. The participants came from varying backgrounds and universities throughout the United States. The participants' time as a full-time faculty member also varied from one participant in their first semester as a full-time faculty member to one participant who had been teaching as a full-time faculty member for 35 years. The participants came from fields of study including business management, organizational leadership, nursing, kinesiology, art history and archeology, literature, educational psychology with an emphasis on metacognition, agricultural education, communications, and film (see

Appendix C for a table of participant demographics). The proposed number of participants for this study was originally 25, with the participant recruitment lasting for a total of 2 weeks. Participant recruitment was terminated after a period of 8 weeks with 10 participants.

Data Collection

I began recruitment attempts on December 1, 2020, after receiving IRB approval. On this date, I began to send out individual emails for all U.S.-based colleges and universities with email addresses available for faculty members. These emails were sent both at the end of the fall semester in December 2020 and at the beginning of the spring semester in January 2021. Social media posts were sent through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter with the approved hashtags of #onlinefaculty, #onlineeducation, #virtuallearning, and #socialmediaeducation. All social media posts were updated weekly. The social media post to Twitter was paid to be boosted to more users and promote the post to a total of 11,703 Twitter account users, with three retweets by other users. The return on this post was one response that did not end up with a participant interview. Using instant messaging, I also reached out to individual social media users who discussed or promoted online education or online learning environments. I also joined private Facebook groups for online faculty, online education, psychology faculty, and Walden University psychology and sociology departments. Each private group was sent a social media post containing the flyer for recruitment. University emails appeared to have the best response, with eight participants responding through that route, with the other two participants responding from Instagram. Four potential participants responded

to the social media posts through Instagram that were ineligible for participation either because they were university faculty in Canada (2) or part-time or adjunct faculty (2).

I collected data through individual participant interviews held through the telehealth site doxy.me, after providing each participant the opportunity to set the date and time for their interview that would work best for their schedules. Each interview was audio recorded, with a transcript of each interview made later. I saved both the audio recording and the digital transcripts on an external flash drive. Printed transcripts are saved within a locked file cabinet in my home office.

Variation From Proposed Data Collection Plan

The initial proposal for this study specified that data collection would continue for 2 weeks, or until 25 participants were completed. The data collection and recruitment commenced for a period of 8 weeks in an attempt to reach 25 participants. I was unable to recruit more than the 10 participants within that time period despite the significant attempts. Despite the decrease in the number of total participants to the study, I surmised that no new information would be presented that would have added to the outcome of the study. I based this conclusion on the participant responses being similar in nature.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

The participants' interviews were audio recorded. I then individually transcribed the audio recordings and input the responses into NVivo for data analysis. Within the NVivo software, I created codes to correlate with the interview questions and the RQs. The software assisted in recognizing patterns in the information and developed common themes from the participant responses. A common theme emerging from the participant

interviews was the expectation that social media is beneficial to learning within the online learning environment. Other themes were a lack of university input on social media incorporation, a desire for more information or training on social media incorporation, and the need to significantly update pedagogical practices for successful social media incorporation.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I followed multiple quality control practices throughout the study to ensure trustworthiness. Credibility acted as the study's internal validity for the qualitative data collection. The credibility procedures that were used throughout the study to increase the internal validity and trustworthiness were persistent observation and member checking. I worked throughout the study to ensure persistent observation through constantly reading, rereading, and checking the data; analyzing the data both individually and using the NVivo software; and revising concepts as appropriate throughout the duration of the study. Member checking was completed by sending emails to each of the study participants with a review and content analysis of their interview, to determine if they agreed with the findings based on how they answered the questions. Each participant returned the member checking email with a positive response, approving the interpretations and offering no additional feedback for the analysis of their responses.

The second way I maintained trustworthiness throughout the study was to ensure transferability of data. Throughout the study, I documented and described every process in thick, rich detail, creating the opportunity for an outside party to derive meaning from the study resources. Participant recruitment and data collection procedures were

documented at length and described in detail to enable a recreated study by another researcher. Each of the participant interviews was recorded and transcribed, enabling an outsider to step in and replicate the data analysis.

The final components of trustworthiness in a qualitative study are dependability and confirmability, which act as the audit trail for the study through the records that are maintained by the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I checked all of the actions taken throughout the study through the lenses of dependability and confirmability ensuring that the content analysis remained consistent and neutral through the practice of reflexivity. I maintained a detailed record of the research path and a reflexive diary of the research process. Finally, the questions and the overall study underwent strict peer review by my dissertation committee, as required by the dissertation process.

Results

The results of this study seem consistent with the idea that social media implementation, in theory, is well received by faculty and thought of as a way to "heighten any content that you have", "enhancing production, emotional lives, interaction with people from outside the classroom, interaction with content that cannot be accessed any other way", "I think it improved that connectivity and the rapport with your students", the faculty all agreed on the idea that social media in the online learning environment enabled students to engage more freely with the professor and their peers, increase collaboration, and provide the opportunity to freedom of information. However, like the current research on the topic, there was a hesitancy to engage on social media for several of the participants because of the lack of university insight into requirements or

best practices, a lack of overall oversight on how to best implement this new technology. While several of the participants identified that they had been given training on things like Google Classroom, Blackboard, or other online learning environments, none presented that they had social media implementation specific continuing education. Each of the participants indicated that they would like to have more education on the topic.

Findings for Research Question 1

RQ1 was, How do university faculty describe their experience of using social media to facilitate social engagement in the online learning environment? The researcher identified that the common thread of faculty experience overall for social media implementation to enhance student engagement was divided between the idea of the potential for significant improvement in student engagement and difficulty in practical implementation due to the age gap between the traditional and non-traditional students. The participants noted that the age gap acts as a barrier for implementation because the varying ages do not utilize the same social media platforms. Several participants made statements about early attempts to use social media to increase engagement have not gone well due to barriers of lack of university insight or approval, lack of training or education, and student age gaps being reasons why their experiences with social media had not been entirely positive.

Considering the more positive side of engagement, the participants discussed how when their implementation of social media into the online learning environment had been successful, it had been considered extremely positive. One participant made the comment "I think it would be an attempt to engage learners in their own preferred language." The

participants discussed how they had been able to engage with students in ways that their personalities could be showcased, and engagement was in fact positively impacted. One participant used several social media platforms, and it enabled the students to provide daily video reflections of how they were doing, which gave the faculty member the ability to check in on how they were doing, if they understood the material, if they were struggling and needed more attention, etc. Another participant discussed how they were able to connect their students to other great minds within the field and see real-time updates on their data collection, and it helped the students to engage and collaborate, while positively increasing their critical thinking skills.

Themes Found in the Data

Social Media Use. All participants within the study admitted to using at least one social media platform within their courses. Most of the participants identified using three or more social media platforms within each online course that they taught. The most commonly used social media platforms, as determined by the mention of the platform by the participants, were YouTube, followed by Instagram, Facebook, Marco Polo, Slack, LinkedIn, Wiki, Reddit, and Podcasts (developed by the faculty).

Throughout the participants within the study, there was an underlying thought and perception that social media engagement within the online learning environment could be incredibly positive. The participants overall felt that social media could have a positive impact on learning through increasing learner engagement, collaboration, critical thinking and critiquing skills, and ability to interact with information. One participant stated, "so enhancing production, emotional lives, interaction with people from outside the

classroom, interaction with content that cannot be accessed any other way, these are just a few of the benefits." Another participant focused more on the "connection and collaboration" aspect of social media stating, "Right off the bat, you create some connection... students talk about when they're having trouble and seeing other folks jump in and help them out." Other participants pointed to purposefully engaging the students in "critical thinking through a request to analyze and critique information they are finding." The participants reported the use of social media with their students in everything from developing and uploading videos to social media sites, daily check-ins, the critique of content, collaboration, and distributing of content and information.

Findings for Research Question 2

RQ2 was, How do university faculty describe their experience of curriculum development or pedagogical changes, due to social media in the online learning environment? The interviews showcased that every participant had control over the content development in their classes, even in instances where the curriculum was pre-determined by the department. Each participant also indicated that if and when social media was to be implemented into their classrooms, they would want to be the ones who were in charge of how and when the technology was incorporated. Each participant would want to be in control of the way the information was presented and felt that the way in which social media was presented into the online learning environment would inevitably impact its effectiveness.

The participants who have heavily implemented social media into their online learning environments all have updated (and continue to update) their pedagogy in order

to properly accompany the technological changes. One participant discussed how important the pedagogical changes in her teaching style have become due to social media because of how the students themselves interact in the online learning environment. They said, "I think that the first thing that comes to mind in any online environment, not just because of social media, is you have to learn how to speak in sound bites. And I find that my students, they can't sit and concentrate through a heavy three-hour lecture like they could 10 years ago. Like they need to get things in, you know, 144 characters or picture that represents a lot of words, we really have all of this reliance on that sort of sound bite idea now, and my own personal use of social media, I think is really influenced my teaching and trying to incorporate that style." Pedagogical styles, according to the participants, inevitably have to change in order to positively implement social media into the online learning environment.

Themes Found in the Data

   Best Practices. When the interview transcripts were placed into NVivo, and the coding had begun according to the interview and RQs, a few themes began to emerge from the data. One of the key themes that began to emerge was the desire for social media incorporation to have some sort of a template or a "best practice" that had either not been developed or had not been shared with the faculty. One participant stated, "…because there's no framework, there's no framework for implementation, there's no framework for what best practice would be. And so, people started off pretty afraid of the privacy issues, right? Or just, frankly, not understanding it. And so, it just hasn't been done." Another participant used similar language with "Yes, the way that I do things is

through best practices. I feel like I understand my students. As the instructor you

understand how the students are going to respond so you need to be in control. I have yet

to receive any guidelines from the dean, the dept. or anything. I think I need them." The

participants seemed concerned that their colleges and universities had not come forward

with a specific set of rules and regulations or guidelines for them to incorporate social

media into the online learning environment. Several of the participants strongly hinted at

or outright said that the lack of college and university support on this matter has affected

the way in which they incorporate social media in their classrooms.

      Throughout the participant interviews, only one participant noted they have

minimally implemented social media into the learning environment other than utilizing

LinkedIn to help the students create "a professional online presence." The recurring

concern from this participant was that the implementation of social media in the online

learning environment was relatively new and since they are heavily focused on

developing their course with either heavily used best practices or evidence-based

instruction techniques, social media for the online learning environment best practices

have not been created at this time. However, even this participant discussed how

beneficial they believed social media would be in the online learning environment to

increase participation, collaboration, and overall, the participant reported, "I think it can

be very beneficial in different aspects if used proactively." Even this one hesitant

participant identified that further support by universities or development of best practices

for social media engagement and incorporation into the online learning environment

would be an encouragement for continued use and development of this tool.

Pedagogical Updates. Those participants who reported utilizing social media frequently within their online courses identified that they have changed or updated their pedagogical techniques significantly in order to incorporate the new technology successfully. Participants discussed the experience of changing from in-person to online teaching and how the interactions with the students changed from them interacting with each other, to only interacting with the materials, and updating their pedagogical techniques was a must in order to attempt some sort of social engagement from their students. One participant noted, "This is a lot of potential for instructors to use online trying to figure out how to engage students who want to be there."

Pedagogical practices are traditionally updated when it is seen to be in the best interest of the students, to engage them in a positive way in the classroom (Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2016). The participants within this study were no exception to the intention of increasing student participation through pedagogical practice updates. When the code for pedagogical updates was given a word frequency query in NVivo, the word cloud presented with "students" being the most used word when discussing pedagogical techniques and updates (see Appendix B for the word cloud). After identifying the emphasis on students, it was easy to showcase that the participants were concerned about incorporating things into their courses that would most benefit the students and create optimal engagement. For instance, many of the participants made comments about not incorporating things that the students would not use. Participants made several statements about not wanting to impose social media onto the students that they were not already using. Multiple participants made comments similar to this one in which they discussed

how having a gap between traditional and nontraditional students affected how they were

able to implement social media in the online learning environment. One participant stated

the following, for example:

> I'm going to say I haven't done it very much, primarily because of early attempts
>
> to do it didn't go so well. I, I teach students a wide variety of ages. So, I'm 51, it's
>
> not uncommon for me to have students who are older than me, all the way down
>
> students who are 19. And certainly, you can observe an age break in what kind of
>
> social media is used.

Another participant made a comment about age in their classroom stating, "Not

even Facebook, by the way, my students don't really use Facebook, the ones that are born

after 2002. They don't. Yeah, it's that's old people's social media. Right." And still

another participant mentioned the change in social media usage that has impacted how

they implement, "we would have a class page. And I still do that some, but not as much,

because my students don't have Facebook, don't use Facebook. I use it more for ancillary

supplement, like I pull things in, but I don't use it as a teaching tool."

The faculty seemed concerned about "meeting the students where they are" and

not attempting to force social media platforms onto the students that would be outside of

what they normally used. Both because the faculty felt as though they would not

implement something that was outside of their normal use, and because they did not want

to have to teach the students how to use a new platform and take away from the time they

would need to teach their curriculum. One participant mentioned that a way that they

have updated their social media implementation practices is to "Ask the students what

apps they want to be on. Giving them options to fit their learning style." As each of the participants discussed their social media use and pedagogical updates to incorporate the new technology, they were concerned about the students since if the students were not able to gain something from the new technology the incorporation would not be considered necessary.

Summary

In this study, I discussed the lived experiences of faculty members implementing social media into the online learning environment. The RQs were as follows: (a) How do university faculty describe their experience of using social media to facilitate student social engagement in the online learning environment? and (b) How do university faculty describe their experience of curriculum development or pedagogical changes, due to social media in the online learning environment? To answer these questions, I completed individual participant interviews and found consistent responses for the experiences of faculty members and their perceived usefulness and potential problems of implementing social media into the online learning environment.

Ten participants completed the interview process for this study. Of the 10 participants, all of them implemented at least one social media platform into their online learning environment. One participant was hesitant to implement and noted only using one site because they worried about the lack of best practices towards implementation and a lack of professionalism and privacy. A common theme on their experiences on enhancing student participation was when the participants were able to implement social media on platforms that the students were actually using already, the student engagement

was perceived to increase. However, participants reported difficulty with student

engagement on the same social media site, especially when the students' ages ranged

from traditional students to non-traditional students and the social media platforms that

they engaged on as individuals differed. Only those participants who had significantly

utilized social media in the online learning environment reported updating their

pedagogical practices to enhance implementation. However, all participants reported that

they are the ones who would be in control of developing and implementing social media

into their course content as needed.

In the final chapter of this study, I will interpret the data collected in more detail.

The consistency shown within the data collected helps to add to the validity of the study

and answer the posed RQs. In Chapter 5, the researcher will discuss how to interpret the

data and where research can go from this point.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

I used a qualitative, interpretive, descriptive design to extend understanding of an area of practical importance for educators, the experience of faculty implementing social media into the online learning environment. Prior research on social media implementation showcased a discrepancy in faculty perceived usefulness of the technology with a lack of continuous implementation in the classroom (Adams et al., 2018; Hashim et al., 2018; Sobaih et al., 2016; Stathopoulou et al., 2019). In my study, I interviewed participants with a goal of shedding light on how social media inclusion into the online learning environment is viewed, how it has impacted educational encounters within the online learning environment from the perception of the faculty, and how the faculty have had to update their pedagogical practices to appropriately engage with this new technology. With a better understanding of these issues, educational leaders may be able to take steps to correct any problems or misgivings and enhance faculty perception and engagement.

I identified that faculty perception of social media for engagement of students in the classroom was overall positive when faculty had groups of students who were willing to engage in the provided social media platform and when the ease of use of implementation outweighed the time for creation or collection of appropriate content. All faculty members interviewed for this study reported that they were willing to update their pedagogical practices to showcase appropriate student engagement with social media platforms in the online learning environment. Several participants noted that they would

like more training on social media in the classroom and access to a developed protocol of

best practices prior to updating their pedagogical practices. In this chapter, I will interpret

the study findings, consider the limitations and implications of the study, and offer

recommendations for further research.

Interpretation of the Findings

I interpreted all findings through the lens of the grounding theories for this study,

Azjen and Fishbein's TRA and Davis's TAM. According to TAM, a faculty member's

implementation of new technology is determined by several variables, including

perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and overall attitudes towards the technology

(Davis & Prakash, 2018; Scherer et al., 2018). To facilitate understanding of study

findings, I also drew from the TAM extended variables of teacher self-efficacy,

subjective norms, and facilitating conditions of technology implementation (Scherer et

al., 2018).

I interviewed the participants to increase understanding of faculty experiences of

implementing social media to enhance student engagement and to understand faculty

experiences of having to update their curriculum and pedagogical techniques in order to

implement social media into the online learning environment. The findings were overall

consistent with the literature (Holmes, 2017; Shipman, 2018) with some discrepancies

between positive views from faculty on the potential of social media in the online

learning environment and the feeling that the potential problems with the technology are

high especially with a lack of training and university guidance. Faculty participants in

this study noted that they had not received any information from their universities about

appropriate implementation or expectations, and participants who were hesitant to implement more social media mentioned a lack of established best practices, both of which were a perceived barrier to implementation that was showcased within the OBaidli et al. (2018) study.

One area of research within the existing literature that I explored through this study was the idea that having control over the implementation of social media within the classroom may have an impact on the participants' willingness to engage. Each of the participants stated that they had some control over their curriculum, even if control extended only to how they presented the information, and each of the participants stated that they would want to be the ones in control of what social media they utilized in the classroom and how it was implemented and for what purpose. The faculty participants said they would then be able to make decisions on their social media implementation based on what worked best for their courses, content, and how comfortable they felt within the scope of that social media platform in general.

Participants divided on what social media platforms they used and how they used the platforms to enhance instruction and participation. The variety of use of the participants was showcased within their various fields of study and how vastly different the views on the appropriateness for implementation of social media was for their curriculum. For example, the two faculty members from the business field reported using LinkedIn and YouTube; both participants discussed the importance of building a professional social media presence and maintaining a professional boundary with the students. However, the remaining participants from the fields were very adept at using

multiple social media platforms within the online learning environment to both enhance instruction and increase learner participation, although varying degrees of success within the implementation were reported.

One reason for participants' varying degrees of success that had not been readily discussed in the literature was the ages of the students themselves. Nine of the 10 participants reported that one of the reasons for less social media implementation in the classroom was because of a varying age demographic of their students. The participants reported that when their courses consisted of different ages of students, it was difficult to find a social media platform that all students were comfortable using. The participants championed social media for student engagement when able to meet the students where they are, on social media platforms that they already are using. A common thread that appeared throughout the data collection and analysis was that the faculty participants assumed that students were unwilling to implement a new social media platform (i.e., not one that they were already using) and that the learning curve for teaching students on how to use the platform successfully for the course was not worth the effort to implement. Often this difficulty was attributed to the age gap between the student populations and affected the faculty participants' ease of use of the new technology, thus affecting implementation.

Time Spent as a Faculty Member

An interesting finding of the study was that the time spent as a faculty member did not appear to change how much they implemented social media into the online learning environment. The participants varied in time spent as a full-time faculty

member, from two participants who were in their first year of teaching to several

participants who had been teaching for decades, with the most years spent teaching at 35.

Interestingly, the number of social media platforms used and the perceived usefulness

within the online learning environment for student engagement did not change depending

on the years spent as a faculty member. Those participants who were new to full-time

teaching and those who had been teaching for many years were more likely to implement

more than one, and in most cases, many different social media platforms, depending on

the courses they were teaching. The least number of social media platforms that were

introduced into the online learning environment were by those who had been teaching for

around 3 to 5 years. Faculty who reported a desire to engage their students in the online

learning environment reported use of social media platforms without a significant change

in use due to years spent as a full-time faculty member.

Limitations of the Study

All research designs are subject to certain limitations or weaknesses of the study

(Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). I gathered information for this study through individual

interviews, the focus of which was on how full-time faculty members experienced the

implementation of social media into the online learning environment.

The limitations of this study included:

- the researcher sought and selected participants through a purposeful
  sample, seeking full-time faculty members who engaged with at least 50%
  of their students through online learning environments,

- limited time to collect the data, data collection lasted for a period of eight weeks, with data collection being halted after ten participant responses,

- the research questions were worded as open-ended with the opportunity for participants to provide detailed descriptions, however, participants had the potential to not have discussed all techniques in which they use social media in the online learning environment either through purposeful or inadvertent omission,

- the sample size was restricted to faculty members from United States based universities, therefore generalization and inference about the worldwide population would be limited, due to the United States based sample.

This study remains a positive source of reference for future research focusing on the use of social media in the online learning environment. I originally sought to engage 25 participants across the U.S.-based sample in a 2-week data collection window. However, after 8 weeks of continued recruitment with minimal response or engagement with recruitment attempts, data collection was halted at 10 participants from a variety of educational fields of study.

Recommendations

I recommend that this study be expanded to the international population, opening up opportunities for participants who engage in the online learning environment throughout the world. The process used within this study could easily be applied to an international study. Expanding this study internationally would help to understand faculty

experience throughout the world, and perhaps shed further light on why some areas are more engaged with social media in the online learning environment than others. Given some of the phenomenon that this study pointed to, such as lack of time as a faculty member affecting social media implementation, a larger study with an international basis would expand understanding and increase a positive change for implementation of the technology.

Another recommendation, given the comments by the participants within this study, would be for a researcher or research group to set out to develop a set of best practices for social media implementation across platforms and fields of study. Many of the participants in the study who showcased fewer instances of social media implementation identified that was directly associated with a lack of a standardized set of best practices. Educators rely on research-based best practices to ensure quality results for their students. Further research in this area would provide an opportunity for a developed set of best practices, and engagement of educators in continuing education on the subject, which participants in this study reported, was lacking overall.

Implications

My aim was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media incorporation into the online learning environment by determining what the faculty members who use online formats were experiencing with this new technology. While some research had begun to seek an understanding of faculty experiences there had been a noted dissonance between faculty perceived use of the technology and actual instances of implementation practices (Holmes, 2017; Keenan et al., 2018; Shipman, 2018).

Previous research had showcased that faculty engagement in implementation without meaningful involvement in the practice or technology would not create positive changes in the classroom or curriculum (Connolly et al., 2019; Jang, 2015). More research on faculty implementation practices identified that if educators did not feel there was a justifiable need for social media inclusion in the classroom, it would inevitably negatively impact the way in which the technology was implemented and lead to a failure of the new system (Jang, 2015; Vongkulluksn et al., 2018). The previous research was detailing the need for further understanding of teachers' experiences with this new technology implementation of social media into the online learning environment.

This dissertation may yield knowledge that educators can use to enact social change at the organizational level. Understanding how faculty are currently experiencing social media implementation in the online learning environment, including their hesitations for use or previous difficulties with implementation as showcased through this study, can contribute to helping schools and teachers better prepare for the advent of social media. If you understand the experiences of the faculty, then it creates the opportunity to update organizational practices that would not only assist the faculty with appropriate implementation but also overall increase the engagement with and learning potential of their students.

One of the themes emerging from the data analysis was a lack of organizational leadership or professional development attached to the implementation of this new technology into the classroom. None of the participants indicated that their colleges or universities had initiated any conversations about social media incorporation into the

learning environment. Also, none of the participants noted having professional

development opportunities afforded to them based on the implementation of this new

technology into the learning environment. The participants noted that they would feel

more comfortable engaging in practices that they knew were within the scope of their

personal abilities and along the lines of what their organizations desired. One of the RQs

within this study concerned understanding how the participants had updated their

pedagogies because of social media incorporation into the online learning environment.

Organizational leadership and accountability, along with positive professional

development can assist faculty to successfully update pedagogical practices to implement

the new technology in a way that will lead to the continued and enhanced success of their

students. In highlighting these resources necessary for faculty members to feel as though

they can successfully update their pedagogical practices, this research can impact social

change.

Conclusion

Social media has made its way into the fabric of the formal learning environment.

It is currently being used both actively and passively by educators to help connect the

students to the curriculum, to their peers, and to their field of study as a whole. The way

that social media impacts the faculty who are working with the new technology is varied,

but overall, this study showcased faculty willingness to engage with their students in a

way that will best reach them and promote positive engagement and learning. Since the

research on social media is still new, the changes in pedagogy that go along with the

implementation are still something that the faculty are deciphering, and assistance from

their universities on expectations, and a well-researched set of best practices for educators would help more faculty to implement this new technology.

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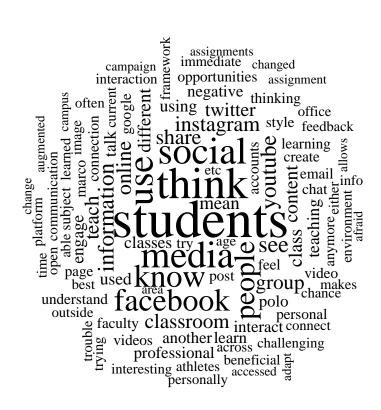   186. Retrieved from (3) (PDF) A Theoretical Extension of the Technology

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a full-time faculty member?

2. How would you describe your relationship with your students, both in the classroom and if/when you meet in person?

3. How many online courses have you taught throughout your career? Is it your primary mode of teaching?

4. What drew you to online learning environments?

5. In what ways have you implemented social media into your online learning environment?

6. What social media requirements or guidelines for implementation of social media into the classroom have been provided by your college/University?

7. Have you had the opportunity to create your own course content? Would you prefer to create your own course content with regards to social media implementation?

8. In what ways have you updated your pedagogical techniques to reflect social media in the online learning environment?

9. What professional development opportunities have you had specific to implementation of social media into the learning environment?

10. How would you describe social media's impact on learning?

11. How would you describe social media's impact in the online learning environment? Do you feel that the way it is implemented affects its overall effectiveness in the classroom?

12. How appropriate is the implementation of social media to the course content of the subjects you teach?

13. Which social media applications do you use, or wish to use, within your courses? In what ways do you wish to use those applications?

14. What are the expected benefits of using social media in the online learning environment?

15. What are potential problems or concerns with social media implementation in the online learning environment?

Appendix B: Word Cloud of Participant Responses

Appendix C: Participant Demographics

College/University sites	Program	Years as full-time faculty	Social media used in courses
Texas A&M University	Educational Psychology	6	3
Mississippi State University	Business Administration	3	3
University of Memphis	Film/Literature	1	4
University of Arkansas	Agricultural Education	9	4
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville	Communications	35	5
Academy of Art University	Art History	4	6
University of California	Kinesiology	> 1	5
Texas Women's University	Nursing	12	3
University of Arkansas-Fort Smith	Technology	4	3
University of Arkansas, Rich Mountain	Organizational Leadership	3	1